

LAKSMĪ TANTRA

A PĀÑCARĀTRA TEXT



Sanjukta Gupta

LAKṢMĪ TANTRA

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Translation and Notes with Introduction by

SANJUKTA GUPTA

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41 U.A. Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 007
8 Mahalaxmi Chamber, 22 Bhulabhai Desai Road, Mumbai 400 026
203 Royapettah High Road, Mylapore, Chennai 600 004
236, 9th Main III Block, Jayanagar, Bangaluru 560 011
Sanas Plaza, 1302 Baji rao Road, Pune 411 002
8 Camac Street, Kolkata 700 017
Ashok Rajpath, Patna 800 004
Chowk, Varanasi 221 001

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS *

Ag. P.	Agni Purāṇa.
Ahi. S.	Ahīrbudhnya Saṃhitā, ed. V. Krishnamacharya; Adyar Library series Vol. 4, 2nd ed. Madras 1966.
Āp. Ś. S.	Āpastamba Śrauta Sūtra.
Bh. G.	Bhagavadgītā.
Bhā. P.	Bhāgavata Purāṇa.
Bhāradvāja S.	Bhāradvāja Saṃhitā, ed. by Khemarāja Śrīkr̥ṣṇadāsa Śreṣṭhī; Bombay, Śaka 1827.
Bṛ. Ā. U.	Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad.
Br. P.	Brahmaṇḍa Purāṇa.
Ch. U.	Chāndogya Upaniṣad.
Ga. P.	Garuḍa Purāṇa.
I. P.	Introduction to the Pāñcarātra, by F. O. Schrader, Adyar, Madras 1916.
J. S.	Jayākhyā Saṃhitā, ed. E. Krishnamacharya, Gaekwad's Oriental Series No. 54, Baroda 1931.
K. K. C.	Kriya Kairava Candrika, Sri Varāhaguru, ed. Swami Ramnarayana Acarya, Ayodhya, Saṃvat 2017.
Ka. U.	Kaṭha Upaniṣad
L. T.	Lakṣmī Tantra, ed. V. Krishnamacharya, Adyar Library Series Vol. 87, Madras 1959.
M. Bh.	Mahābhārata.
M. P.	Matsya Purāṇa.
M. U.	Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad.
Mai. U.	Maitrī Upaniṣad.
Mā. P.	Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa.
Mā. U.	Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad.
Nā. S.	Nārada Saṃhitā,
Nṛ. P. U.	Nṛsimha-pūrvatāpanī Upaniṣad.
Nṛ. U. U.	Nṛsimha-uttaratāpanī Upaniṣad.
P. S.	Pārameśvara Saṃhitā, ed. Śrī Govindācārya, Srirangam 1953.
Pa. S.	Parama Saṃhitā, ed. and tr. Dr. S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, Gaekwad's Oriental Series No. 86, Baroda 1940.
Pād. T.	Pādma Tantra, Sadvidya Press, Mysore 1888.
Pau. S.	Pauṣkara Saṃhitā, ed. Sree Yatiraja Sampathkumara Ramanuja Muni, Melkote, 1934.
R. U. U.	Rāma-uttaratāpanī Upaniṣad.
Rām.	Rāmāyaṇa.
Rg V.	R̥gveda.
R̥g. V. K.	R̥gveda Khila, Dr. J. Scheffelowitz, Die Apokryphen des R̥gveda, Breslau, 1906.
Sa. S.	Sanatkumāra Saṃhitā, ed. V. Krishnamacharya, Adyar Library Series Vol. 95, Madras 1969.

* Only the Pāñcarātra texts, secondary texts and rare texts are mentioned here with a full bibliography.

Sā. S.	Sāttvata Saṃhitā, ed. P. B. Ananthachariar, Conjeeveram 1902.
Sar. U.	Sarva Upaniṣad.
Śvet. U.	Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad.
Tai. Ā.	Taittirīya Āraṇyaka.
Tai. Br.	Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa.
Tai. S.	Taittirīya Saṃhitā.
T. U.	Taittirīya Upaniṣad.
V. S.	Vedānta Sūtra.
Vā. P.	Vāyu Purāṇa.
Viṣ. P.	Viṣṇu Purāṇa.
Vi. S.	Viṣṇu Saṃhitā, ed. T. Gaṇapati Sāstri, Trivandrum Sanskrit Series, No. 85, Trivandrum 1925.
Viś. S.	Viśvāmitra Saṃhitā, ed. Undemane Shankara Bhatta, Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha Series No. 13, Tirupati 1970.
Yog. P.	Yoga Pradīpikā, Kashi Sanskrit Series No. 85, Benares 1931.
Yog. S.	Yoga Sūtra.

LIST OF NAMES OF THE LETTERS

a	aprameya, prathama, vyāpaka.
ā	ādideva, ānanda, gopana.
i	Rāma, iddha, iṣṭa.
ī	pañcabindu, Viṣṇu, māyā.
u	bhuvana, uddāma, udaya.
ū	ūrja, lokeśa, prajñādhāra.
ṛ	satya, ṛtadhāman, aṅkuśa.
ṝ	viṣṭara, jvālā, prasāraṇam.
ḷ	liṅgātman, Bhagavān, tāraka.
ḹ	dīrghaghoṇa, Devadatta, virāṭ.
e	tryasra, jagadyoni, avigraha.
ai	aiśvarya, yogadhātā, airāvaṇa.
o	otadeva, odana, vikramī.
au	aurva, bhūdhara, auśadha.
ṃ	trailokyaiśvarya, vyāpī, vyomeśa.
ḥ	visarga, sṛṣṭikṛt, parameśvara.
ka	kamala, karāla, prakṛti.
kha	kharvadeha, vedātman, viśvabhāvana.
ga	gadadhvaṃśī, Govinda, Gadādhara.
gha	gharmāṃśu, tejasvin, dīptimān.
ñ	ekadaṃṣṭrā, bhūtātman, bhūtabhāvana.
ca	cañcala, cakrī, candrāṃśu.
cha	chandaḥpati, chaladhvaṃśī, chandas.
ja	janmahantṛ, ajita, śāśvata.
jha	jhaṣa, sāmaga, sāmapāthaka.
ñ	īśvara, uttama, tattvadhāraka.
ṭa	candrī, āhlāda, viśvāpyāyakara.
ṭha	dhārādhara, nemi, kaustubha.
ḍa	daṇḍadhāra, mausala, akhaṇḍavikrama.
ḍha	viśvarūpa, vṛṣakarman, pratardana.
ṇa	abhayada, śāstā, vaikuṅṭha.
ta	tālalakṣman, vairāja, sragdhara.
tha	dhanvin, bhuvanapāla, sarvarodhaka.
da	dattāvakāśa, damana, śāntida.
dha	śārṅgadhṛt, dhartā, Mādhava.
na	nara, Nārāyaṇa, panthā.
pa	Padmanābha, pavitra, paścimānana.
pha	phullanayana, lāṅgali, śveta.
ba	vāmana, hrasva, pūrṇāṅga.
bha	bhallātaka, siddhiprada, dhruva.
ma	mardana, kāla, pradhāna.
ya	caturgati, suśukṣma, śaṅkha.
ra	aśeṣabhuvanādhāra, anala, kālapāvaka.
la	vibudha, dhareśa, puruṣeśvara.
va	Varāha, amṛtādhāra, Varuṇa.
śa	Śaṅkara, śānta, puṇḍarīka.

- ṣa Nṛsimha, agnirūpa, bhāskara.
sa amṛta, tṛpti, soma.
ha sūrya, prāṇa, paramātman.
kṣa ananteśa, vargānta, Garuḍa.

INTRODUCTION TO FIRST EDITION

Viṣṇuism is one of the chief religions of the Hindus and the Pāñcarātra is the oldest surviving Viṣṇuite sect. The influence of its tenets on later Viṣṇuism has undoubtedly been great, but has never been thoroughly explored. Despite change and corruption the ritual worship described in the old Pāñcarātra texts is still performed today in many of the famous temples in southern India and in some in the north. A deeper insight into the historical development of the Viṣṇuite sects, into their ritual, occultism and building of temples and images can only be obtained from the scientific study of these ancient Pāñcarātra texts which formulate the relevant basic concepts.

The theological and ritualistic aspects of the Pāñcarātra system have attracted scholars for some time past ¹ and a number of texts have been edited ². Some of these publications are of a high standard and include illuminating introductions. Amongst these, Professor F. O. Schrader's Introduction to the Pāñcarātra still ranks as the most comprehensive. So far only one Pāñcarātra text has been translated into English,³ but the omission of explanatory notes on the meaning of special terms detracts from its usefulness to the layman. In recent years valuable work in this field is being done by H. Daniel Smith.⁴

The reason why I have chosen to translate the text of the Lakṣmī Tantra is because its philosophical pronouncements incorporate many of the sect's earlier traditions. I shall elaborate on this point later on. A second reason is because of its occultism, which throws light on an aspect of the Pāñcarātra system that is not dealt with

¹ H. Govindacary, *The Pāñcarātras or Bhāgavatas*, J. R. A. S. Oct. 1911; R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Saivism and minor religious systems*, Varanasi 1965; H. Ray Chowdury, *Materials for the study of the early history of the Vaiṣṇava sect*; Mrinal Das Gupta, *Early Vaiṣṇavism and Nārāyaṇīya Works*, Ind. Hist. Q. 1931; Dr. S. R. Bhatt, *The Philosophy of Pāñcarātra*, Madras 1968; K. Rangachari, *The Shri vaiṣṇava Brahmans*, Bulletin of the Madras Gov. Museum, N. Ser., Gen. Section, II, 2, Madras 1931.

² For a detailed bibliography see K. K. A. Venkatachari, *Pāñcarātra Nūl Viḷakkam*, Madras 1967.

³ *Parama Saṃhitā*, Gaekwad's Oriental Series LXXXVI.

⁴ See his *Pāñcarātra prāsāda prasāadhanam*; *Vaiṣṇava Iconography*.

in any other known text. Since however the size of this book has grown to be quite alarming, I have here been obliged to refrain from discussing the interesting topic of ritualistic esoterism.¹

Before starting on my apologetics, certain preliminary explanations about my method of work are briefly called for. My translation is based entirely on the Sanskrit text edited by Pandit V. Krishnamacharya and published in the Adyar Library Series, no. 87. I have not used any manuscript of the Lakṣmī Tantra. Therefore, whenever I mention the text or the editor's commentary on it, I refer to Krishnamacharya's edition. Although I have studied the only other publication of this text, printed in Telugu and published at Mysore in 1888, I have not based my translation upon it since Krishnamacharya has utilized it in his edition.

I have aimed at accuracy in my translation—often unfortunately at the expense of style—and when explanation is needed, it is supplied in a footnote or inserted in parenthesis in the text of my translation. I have used parenthesis also to distinguish English words I have used in my translation to make a sentence complete. However the reader must not expect to find that every Sanskrit word has been translated consistently by the same English term. As words are affected by the context in which they are used, I have used alternative meanings when and as the sense required. Despite care, some irregularities may still persist in transcriptions of Sanskrit words. These are unintentional.

From chapter XXXIII onwards I have not translated the clues given for constructing the mantras, but have confined myself to supply the constructed mantras only. My translation of the first ten verses of chapter XXXIII should, I think, suffice to demonstrate how the mantras are construed.

Amongst the vast number of Pāñcarātra Āgamas,² the Lakṣmī Tantra stands out because of its almost exclusive treatment of the Viṣṇuite mother-goddess Lakṣmī, the Śakti of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa. The text not only glorifies Lakṣmī, but also women in general as beings created in the cherished form of Lakṣmī, and it advocates their worship. Moreover it alludes to the particular sādhanā of the

¹ That topic is discussed in my paper on the Mantras and Special Forms of Worship described in the Lakṣmī Tantra, which is awaiting publication.

² See F. O. Schrader, Introduction to the Pāñcarātra, Madras 1916, pp. 6-12; and K. K. A. Venkatachari.

left-handed Tantras that requires a female partner.¹ Our text is somewhat reticent about the details of that practice, perhaps because it was apprehensive about how the majority of Pāñcarātra followers would react. It even launches into a lengthy discourse upon its ethics and the cautionary measures to be taken. Nevertheless at the end of this discussion it asserts that, though not free from the moral danger involved in disregarding strict convention, the practice is not sinful since the participants are lifted to a supra-mundane level.² Undoubtedly this reveals the text's sympathy with left-handed Tantric practices, which is not at all surprising considering how prevalent the worship of Śakti was in India. Later scholars of Śaktism, such as Bhāṣkararāya, the commentator of the Lalitāsahasranāmam, Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa, the commentator of the Durgāsaptaśatī and Appaya Dikṣita, the commentator of the Candrakalāstuti, not only mention the Lakṣmī Tantra but cite it.³ Obviously by that time, i.e. the sixteenth century, the text had gained firm recognition as a standard Śākta Āgama. In spite of its predominantly Pāñcarātra character, its undivided concentration on the worship of Śakti and its assertion that Durgā, Bhadrakālī and Yogamāyā are merely other names for Mahālakṣmī, who is Viṣṇu's dynamic power,⁴ enabled our text to overcome sectarian boundaries.

The Lakṣmī Tantra deals mainly with Pāñcarātra philosophy and cosmogony (which are inseparable in texts of this kind), and with the mantra-śāstra ('linguistic occultism'). A minimum is said about the ritualistic side of worship, and iconography is discussed only in the form of the dhyānas of the most important deities, such as Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, the Vyūhas, the main emanations of Lakṣmī, her retinue etc. Temple architecture and temple worship are totally omitted. The text also ignores public festivals, *śrāddha-dharma* (death rites) and expiatory rites. This silence about rites connected with society and its conventions indicates that the Lakṣmī Tantra concerns itself with the individual adept, who desires to be released from the miseries of worldly existence. This can be achieved by

¹ L. T. XXVII, 44-47 and XLII, 30-31; see P. C. Bagchi, *Evolution of the Tantras, The Cultural Heritage of India*, vol. IV, Calcutta, 1956, pp. 217-218.

² L. T. XLIII, 75-90.

³ See V. Krishnamacharya, *The Sanskrit preface to the Lakṣmī Tantra*, Adyar Library series, Vol. 87, Madras 1949, pp. 39-40.

⁴ L. T. IV, 40 and 47.

practising yogic *sādhana* (worship of God and meditation visualizing Him as the personification of a mantra accompanied by the repetition of that mantra), which enables the initiate to receive divine grace, without which salvation is not possible.

In form, the Lakṣmī Tantra follows the tradition of both the Sāttvata and Jayākhyā Saṃhitās. It deals exhaustively with the Vyūha theory. In that connection, it not only mentions the Sāttvata Saṃhitā but proceeds to elaborate on its philosophy. Thus the concept of Viśākhayūpa—only briefly referred to in the Sāttvata—is explained in detail in the Lakṣmī Tantra. The metaphysical implications of the Vyūha theory and their bearing on the mantra-śāstra are put very clearly.¹ The basic need supplied by these concepts of divine manifestations is to provide the devotee with an object he can worship in accordance with his spiritual capacity and meditate upon whilst repeating the relevant mantra. This is the most important topic in the Sāttvata Saṃhitā, which is classified amongst the texts known as Āgama-siddhānta.² But in regard to the ritualistic aspect of worship, the Lakṣmī Tantra follows the tradition of the Jayākhyā Saṃhitā, which accords a central position to the worship of Viṣṇu and His consort Lakṣmī. Texts of this nature, advocating the worship of a single deity, are called Tantra-siddhānta. Indeed the Lakṣmī Tantra depends so largely on the Jayākhyā Saṃhitā that it frequently quotes lengthy passages of it. And moreover one is often obliged to consult the Jayākhyā Saṃhitā in order to clarify many of the actual procedures of worship described

¹ L.T, IV, 24 (dhyānaviśrāmbhūmayāḥ).

² The Pāñcarātra Āgamas are classed under four headings:—Āgama-siddhānta, Mantra-siddhānta, Tantra-siddhānta and Tantrāntara-siddhānta. The term siddhānta is apparently a synonym for Āgama. The classification is made according to the deity on whom the text focusses attention. When attention centres on the four Vyūhas, the text falls within the category of Āgama-siddhānta. When nine or twelve forms of Viṣṇu are worshipped, the text is classified as a Mantra-siddhānta. When a single form of Viṣṇu is the chief object of worship, the text is classified as a Tantra-siddhānta, and when worship centres on a non-anthropomorphic form of Viṣṇu (e.g. the Man-lion incarnation), the text is classified as a Tantrāntara-siddhānta. The Sāttvata Saṃhitā, the Pauṣkara Saṃhitā, the Jayākhyā Saṃhitā and the Hayagrīva Saṃhitā are respective examples of these four types of Āgamas. It is very important that the initiate should be careful not to confuse the different modes of worship prescribed in the various types of texts. Cf. Vedānta Deśika, Śrī Pāñcarātra Rakṣā, Adyar Library 2nd ed., Madras 1967, pp. 3-13.

in the Lakṣmī Tantra. For example, the description of the mystic diagram called 'nava-padma-maṇḍala'¹ is so terse and obscure that, without recourse to the Jayākhyā Saṃhitā, it is incomprehensible. But the Lakṣmī Tantra's point of departure from the Jayākhyā Saṃhitā is the emphasis it lays on the worship of Lakṣmī, rather than on that of Viṣṇu. It is her retinue that is described and only the Tārā-mantra is prescribed for almost all the various rites included in the full programme of worship. The text admits no ambiguity on this point. For instance, in chapter XVI it is said that the way to obtain liberation from the bondage of the material world is to worship Lakṣmī, the Viṣṇu-śakti. One should abandon all other activity and concentrate solely on propitiating the goddess either directly, or indirectly through Viṣṇu, in order to obtain spiritual release. Out of compassion she then comes to the devotee and liberates him by removing all his impurities ('*ahaṃ hi tatra viśvātmā viṣṇuśaktiḥ parāvarā, sākṣād eva samārādhyā, devo vā puruṣottamaḥ; iti te kathitāḥ samyag upāyās traya ūrjitāḥ, śṛṇūpāyaṃ caṭurthaṃ me sarvatyāgasamāhvayam. Tatra (sarva?) dharmān parityajya . . . mām ekām śaraṇaṃ vrajet, ahaṃ hi śaraṇaṃ prāptā nareṇānanyacetasā prāpayāmy ātmanātmānaṃ nirdhūtākhilakalmaśam*')².

The most striking feature of the Lakṣmī Tantra is its treatment of Pāñcarātra philosophy. Like most texts of this nature, ours is also basically eclectic. This point is accentuated by its preoccupation with establishing Śakti as the supreme metaphysical principle. At the same time, it attempts to make a synthesis out of all the various concepts current in the Pāñcarātra and Tāntric milieu. It does not always succeed in blending all these notions smoothly. Sometimes contradictory ideas, such as Sāṃkhya realism and radical monism (Advaitavedānta), are presented side by side.³ Nevertheless at least some degree of harmonization has been achieved, particularly in the delineation of the cosmogony. This has given the Lakṣmī Tantra a revered position amongst the Pāñcarātra Āgamas.

Date

The next important question is when and where did this text originate. The Lakṣmī Tantra mentions the Sāttvata Saṃhitā by

¹ L. T. XXXVII, 3-19; J. S. XIII, 16-40.

² L. T. XVI, 43-44.

³ Ibid. XII passim and XIII, 24-25.

name and quotes extensively from the Jayākhyā Saṃhitā.¹ It also bears a close resemblance to the Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā. But none of these Saṃhitās has been precisely dated. Seeking information from sources other than the Āgamas, we find in the Lakṣmī Tantra one list of divine incarnations which are joint manifestations of Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa. In that list the Buddha and Tārā (otherwise called Dhārā) are mentioned as one of these joint incarnations. It is generally conceded that the inclusion of the Buddha's name in a list of Viṣṇu's incarnations appeared fairly late in history. The other interesting point is that the text records the worship of Tārā as the Buddha's Śakti and, at the same time, identifies her with Dhārā or Vasudhārā, another Buddhist female deity representing the earth. It is true that in the usual list of Vyūha, Vibhava etc. of the pure creation, the Buddha is not mentioned. But when no loyalty to Pāñcarātra tradition is involved and purely Tāntric notions are discussed, the Buddha appears together with his Śakti Tārā. This point is significant for purposes of assessing the date of our text. In its present form the Lakṣmī Tantra cannot claim to be a very early text. In fact according to E. Conze,² the Buddhistic Tārā worship was not openly practised before 500 or 600 A.D. The acceptance of the Buddha as an incarnation of Viṣṇu is prominent in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. If the ninth century A.D. is accepted as the date of this last mentioned text,³ then the date of the Lakṣmī Tantra cannot be much earlier.

The first author to quote the Lakṣmī Tantra was Vedānta Deśika. This celebrated Śri-vaiṣṇava preceptor lived in the latter half of the thirteenth century.⁴ It seems that although he attributed some importance to our text, in his view it had not yet attained the status of a fully recognized Āgama. However, by the time of Bhāṣkararāya and other commentators previously mentioned it had acquired that

¹ L. T. IV, 2 and 59 and XI, 28. Our text quotes the Jayākhyā Saṃhitā so extensively that it is useless attempting to specify references.

² E. Conze, *Buddhism*, Oxford 3rd ed. 1957, p. 176. See also Kees W. Bolle, *The Persistence of Religion*, Leiden 1965, pp. 2-3.

³ See Adalbert Gail, *Bhakti im Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, Wiesbaden 1969, pp. 14-16.

⁴ Dr. Satyavrata Singh, *Vedānta Deśika (A Study)*, Varanasi 1958, p. 4. Also see G. Srinivasa Murti, *Introduction to the Śrī Pāñcarātra Rakṣā*, Adyar Library Series, Vol. 36², Madras 1967, p. XXII.

status, and we find it mentioned alongside the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa.¹ Hence, at latest it probably dates from the twelfth century. Since it is impossible to fix more than an approximate date for texts of this nature, we may assume that the Lakṣmī Tantra was compiled at some time between the ninth and twelfth centuries.

Place of Origin

The geographical problem of locating the origin of the Lakṣmī Tantra presents still greater difficulty. Although the text recommends that the bark of the Himalayan birch tree (bhūrja-patra) should be used for scribbling mantras on in order to endow amulets with magical properties, we have no evidence that the compiler ever actually saw that tree. Mention of bhūrja-patra as a material which can be written on, crops up so frequently in Sanskrit literature² that he may have only read about it. It is quite possible that this quaint bark was popularly thought to be suitable for magical purposes. Hence we cannot be sure that the text originated in the tree's natural region of growth. Since however Vedānta Deśika mentions the Lakṣmī Tantra by name, it is plausible to presume that in his day the text was available to devotees in his homeland, which was South India. The text also mentions the Malaya range situated in the South, which may be a later addition. (cf. ch. I, 19.) But whether or not it was actually compiled there still remains an open question.

General division of topics

In structure the Lakṣmī Tantra attempts to follow the classical pattern of four divisions, jñāna, kriyā, yoga and caryā. In fact however, the kriyā section has been omitted altogether and the caryā section has been reduced to a minimum. A curious sidelight explaining this omission can possibly be traced to the Appendix (ch. LIII), where the word kriyā pāda is used in the unusual sense of the ritualistic performance of upāsana and ārādhana, as met with in Buddhist Tantras.³ The jñāna pāda, or theological section,

¹ Lalitā-sahasranāṁam with Bhāskara-rāya's Commentary translated into English. Adyar Library edition 4th reprint, Madras 1970, p. 116.

² Cf. Kālidāsa's Kumārasambhavam, I, 7, 55; VII, 11, 2; VII, 17, 10; VII, 18, 1, 4, and 19; VII, 19, 1 and 3 and Raghuvamśam, IV, 73. L.T. mentions it in XLIV, 38.

³ Cf. Lalmani Joshi, The Buddhist Culture of India, Delhi 1967, p. 337.

occupies almost one third of the entire treatise, which opens with the traditional introductory chapter and then passes on to discuss the jñāna pāda until well into the eighteenth chapter. But within these chapters other topics often creep in, and likewise theology crops up rather persistently in chapters dealing with other subjects.

After theology, the mantra-śāstra (the science of 'linguistic occultism') figures next in importance. Third in importance come upāsana or the yoga pāda, and a short description of ārādhana (the ritual worship of God) or the caryā pāda. The only part of the kriyā pāda that is mentioned is the rite of installing the image to be worshipped privately by the initiate.¹ Pāñcarātra ritual requires the devotee to worship the deity in four places, viz. in the image, in the water pitcher, on the mystic diagram and in the sacrificial fire-pit. The text briefly touches on these points and describes the daily religious duties of an initiate. These observations help to explain the nature of Lakṣmī Tantra as predominantly a Śākta Tantra. It has two objectives in view: Firstly, to establish the supremacy of Lakṣmī as a philosophical principle ranking, if not higher than Viṣṇu, then at least as equal to Him. This is achieved by emphasizing the mystic tenet of unity in duality, the two-in-one accepted by the Śākta sects.² Lakṣmī as an integral part of Nārāyaṇa, the supreme Being, is the embodiment of His sovereign will and the instrumental cause of all creation. The Lakṣmī Tantra presents a systematic exposition of Pāñcarātra theology, which is firmly embedded in its description of the cosmogony with Lakṣmī at the head of it.

The second objective is to set down a full record of exclusive Śakti-upāsana within the frame-work of the Pāñcarātra religion. On these grounds it has to be admitted that the Lakṣmī Tantra can scarcely claim to be a full-fledged Pāñcarātra Āgama in the usual sense of the term, because all four categories of the Pāñcarātra Āgamas (viz. Āgama-siddhānta etc.) share the common characteristic of worshipping Nārāyaṇa in a single or multiple form. This may explain why the text is sometimes classified in the list of

¹ L. T. XXXVII, and XLI, passim.

² See Lalmani Joshi, o.c. pp. 353-354. D. L. Snellgrove, Introduction to The Hevajra Tantra, part I. London 1959, pp. 22-25. Also E. Conze, pp. 192-193: "In this way a feminine principle was placed side by side with the Buddha and to some extent even above him" The same tendency can be found in the Lakṣmī Tantra.

secondary books, as in the Adyar Library catalogue and in Dr. Satyavrata Singh's list.¹ Nevertheless its exclusive nature did not diminish its value to the Pāñcarātrins, who always showed a leaning towards Tantrism. Their rivals, the Vaikhānasas, directed Pāñcarātra worshippers to practise their special type of Viṣṇu worship in some solitary and secluded place.²

General philosophical postulates

As pointed out, the main contribution of the Lakṣmī Tantra to Pāñcarātra theology and cosmogony lies in its systematic treatment of these subjects. There are thirty-five Sāttvata realities.³ (Brahman of course transcends all these realities). Starting from the highest these are Bhagavān (God), the absolute void, Puruṣa (the Person), śakti, niyati, kāla, sattva, rajas and tamas, māyā, prasūti, prakṛti, the three component parts of the inner organ (buddhi, manas and ahaṃkāra), the ten cognitive and conative organs, the five subtle and the five gross elements. These represent the basic stages of the creation generally accepted by Āgama tradition. Among these, the term Bhagavān includes all divine emanations. The absolute void is the paramaṃ dhāman, where God lives and with which He is identical.⁴ This is also a transcendental category not influenced by the limitation of time. Puruṣa is the collective Man (i.e. living being)⁵ and his śakti is Mahālakṣmī, the kriyāśakti or the active aspect of God.⁶ Niyati is Mahāvidyā, who represents the cosmic wisdom recorded in the Vedas and who controls law and order in the universe.⁷ Kāla is Mahākāli, who is in fact primordial nature or the material source of creation. The further realities are variations of the Sāṃkhya categories. The subtle distinctions in the stages of primordial nature from kāla to prakṛti enable the Pāñcarātra system to achieve some degree of consistency in incorporating the Purāṇic concept of creation.

The cosmogony of the Lakṣmī Tantra coordinates various streams of ideas which were prevalent in the diverse religious traditions.

¹ O. c. p. 112.

² T. Goudriaan, Kāśyapa's Book of Wisdom, Thesis Utrecht 1965, p. 307.

³ L. T. VI, 42-44.

⁴ Ibid. VII, 9-10. See J. Gonda, Dhāman, Amsterdam 1967, passim.

⁵ L.T. VII, 11.

⁶ Ibid. VI, and VII passim.

⁷ Ibid. VII, 13 and IV, 66-67. For the doctrine of niyati, see Gopinath Kaviraj, Aspects of Indian Thought, Burdwan 1966, pp. 54-60.

Some of these are: the Vedic concept of the anthropomorphic creator God Puruṣa of the Puruṣa-sūkta; the mythological concept of Prajāpati Brahmā, who creates the cosmic embryo or egg and is then reborn in it as Hiranyagarbha; the Upaniṣadic concept of the undifferentiated, unlimited, immutable, transcendental, supreme Being, Brahman, which is absolute consciousness and bliss and which, through Its own will, became qualified and started manifesting Itself as the variegated creation; the Sāṃkhya concept of the ultimate duality of inert consciousness and evolving unconscious primordial matter (prakṛti); and finally the Āgamic concept of creation, coming into existence in three gradual stages, the pure, the mixed and the impure.

There were also many other ideas and factors that contributed towards the making of this synthesis. Thus, the creation of Brahmā and the pure creation (the Pāñcarātra's own contribution to the theory of creation) and the Sāṃkhya cosmogony of tattvas are all fitted into a well balanced pattern. The Upaniṣadic unqualified Brahman retains Its position as absolute transcendental Being, Consciousness and Bliss. It is one and integral, but the identification of this Brahman with Puruṣa of the Puruṣa-sūkta is quite obvious.¹ Moreover, the qualified Brahman, styled Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa (Becoming and Being) is by no means lower in existential status, as It is in the Upaniṣads or rather in Śaṅkarācārya's philosophy. The eternal unchangeable reality has two aspects. In one It is devoid of polarity (*nirālambanabhāvanam*), yet all God's qualities are present there in total suspension like a 'waveless ocean'. In the other aspect, all these divine qualities are manifest. Thus Brahman is Absolute Being, whereas Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa is both Being and Becoming, or in other words manifested Being. No reason for Brahman's manifestation or Becoming is proffered and none may be asked for. It is just a will, a pleasure or sport (*līlā*) of the supreme Being that It undergoes change and limitation.

The nature of Śakti

This will, this pleasure and the qualities that are manifested in the second aspect of the supreme Being are combined into one concept, which is that of Lakṣmī, God's Śakti who is knowledge, bliss and

¹ L.T. II, passim. Also consult J. Gonda, *The Concept of a Personal God in Ancient Indian Religion*, *Studia Missionalia*, vol. XVII, Roma, p. 124.

activity. Thus in the second aspect Brahman is polarized into the divine power (Śakti), and the possessor of the divine power (Śaktimat). Śakti is inherent in God just as light is inherent in the moon. She is inseparable from God, yet not absolutely identical with Him.¹ Two phrases are frequently used in the text to denote this relationship existing between Śakti (Lakṣmī) and God: *bhavat-bhāvātmaka* (Being and Becoming) and *ahamartha ahamtā* (I-entity and I-hood). These terms exactly describe the relationship. Lakṣmī is the Becoming, or the subsistence of the absolutely existing God. She is also the self-hood of the supreme self (paramātman), i.e. of God. In other words Lakṣmī, God's Śakti, is His essential nature. She is the divine presence. She forms the so-called body of Nārāyaṇa consisting of the six divine, or ideal, qualities (guṇas). Knowledge, the first of these, forms her essence, which is also the essence of Brahman. Her other qualities emerge from her first and do not constitute Śakti's essence, but are her attributes. These six guṇas are absolute knowledge (jñāna), sovereignty (aiśvarya), potency (śakti), strength (bala), virility (vīrya) and splendour or might (tejas). The precise implications of these terms are explained in the text together with the cosmic and moral concepts attached to them.² It is clear that these guṇas contain all the Pāñcarātra concepts of a supreme God. Hence Śakti, embodying these guṇas, actually replaces God by performing all His divine functions yet, being inseparable from Him, never supersedes His. This is a unity in duality, or two-in-one, the advaya tattva.

Once this is acknowledged, it becomes clear that every manifestation of God is Śakti's manifestation, be it transcendental as in the case of the Vyūhas, Vibhavas, incarnations, etc., or be it the material creation. Our text contains a striking statement about the nature of Śakti. She is not inert, she is not active, she does not even follow the middle course (i.e. of being periodically active). This declaration makes it clear that no specific characteristic can be pinned on to her. She is as unqualified and transcendental as Brahman. She is God's supreme will and she acts under His direction.

¹ L. T. II. passim.

² Ibid. IV, passim. For a detailed description of the Vyūha theory see Schrader, pp. 35-41 and also S. Gupta, *The Caturvyūha and the Viśākha-yūpa of the Pāñcarātra Religion*, *Brahmavidya, Bulletin of the Adyar Library* 1971, vol. 35, parts 3-4, pp. 189-204.

Or this may simply mean that she has no separate existence from God and yet possesses an identity of her own.¹

Śakti's five functions

The universe is a manifestation of this Śakti, and she is absolutely independent in translating her will into action. She possesses five functions. These are tirodhāna or delusion, sṛṣṭi or creation, sthiti or sustenance, laya or dissolution and anugraha or grace. These are also called her five śaktis as they sum up the different ways in which she exercises her power of action (kriyāśakti). The first is also known as māyā² or avidyā and, through its influence, part of her citśakti (consciousness) undergoes limitation (saṅkoca) and is called jīva (an animate being). These jīvas are numberless. They are affected by three limitations, namely that of space, of knowledge and of action. The reason for this degeneration of the jīvas is their karma-vāsanā, the beginningless accumulated potential effects of their deeds stored within themselves. Although Śakti's will is totally free, she has to create according to the requirements of these karma-vāsanās and the absolute citśakti becomes limited as bhoktās (i.e. those who experience the accumulated results of their deeds either in the form of pleasure or of pain). In order to ensure that jīvas experience the results of their actions, Śakti creates inanimate objects which are the medium through which jīvas obtain their experience of pleasure or pain. Thus basically transcendental and unlimited, citśakti becomes entangled in the process of creation and consequently in the recurrent cycle of life and death.

The second, third and fourth functions of Śakti are naturally connected with her first function. We shall revert to these when discussing the cosmogony. Like her first, Śakti's fifth function is an Āgamic innovation introduced to establish God's (here Śakti's) absolute control over living beings. It is Śakti who, by deluding them, subjects them to the ever-flowing stream of life and death. Again it is Śakti who has sole power to release them from that bondage, which she does out of compassion for the suffering jīvas. She performs this in two ways. On the one hand, she creates ways and means for the jīvas to bring about their own liberation and, on the other hand, she instils in them the inclination to seek her favour in order to obtain emancipation.

¹ L. T. XV, 9-10.

² Rāmānujācārya's concept of māyā as God's inscrutable power is inspired by this theory.

The first account of the cosmogony

There are three types of creation: the pure, the mixed and the impure. The first is the purely transcendental creation. It consists of all the emanations and incarnations etc. of God's Śakti. The sole purpose of this type of creation is to facilitate the release of living beings from the shackles of life, death and other miseries of this world by providing them with objects to worship and meditate upon. The mixed type of creation is purely mythological (the Jayākhyā Saṃhitā refers to it as Brahmā's creation). Here the traditional divine triad Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Rudra are created simultaneously with their consorts. Brahmā creates the cosmic embryo, Rudra breaks it, and Viṣṇu then sustains pradhāna (primordial nature transformed into the primordial waters) within this embryo. Within this cosmic embryo, Viṣṇu floats on these waters with Lakṣmī, and remains asleep. Brahmā is then reborn in the lotus stemming out of the reposing Viṣṇu's navel. Brahmā is now identified with Hiraṇyagarbha and Virāṭ (the cosmic Person or the collective jīva, who contains all the jīvas of the world whilst still retaining his own divine nature). The position of Rudra within the cosmic embryo is not stated by the text.

The third type of creation starts from this collective jīva stage. This is the evolution of the Sāṃkhya categories. The lotus bearing Hiraṇyagarbha with his consort Trayī is Time, which evolves out of the three divine guṇas, viz. bala, vīrya and tejas. This is the primeval evolving nature whose vibration results in material creation. Time is the primary limitation of the material world. Hiraṇyagarbha, who is the conscious principle, stirs primeval nature into activity. He exercises his own power of discretion or wisdom to regulate the activities of the evolving primordial nature. The wisdom of Hiraṇyagarbha (here his śakti) is called Trayī since, according to mythology, Brahmā first created the three Vedas (collectively called Trayī), and then the world on the pattern recorded in the Vedas. These three (viz. the lotus, Hiraṇyagarbha and his wife Trayī) ¹ were the first to be transformed into the category called mahat (the great). Mahat consists of the cosmic life-

¹ The Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā 3, 29 gives a different account of these three. In that text Śakti's bhūtiśakti (material aspect) consists of three principles, viz. avyakta (i.e. prakṛti), puṃ (i.e. the collective animate being) and kāla (time).

principle, the cosmic intelligence and the cosmic Person. Vibration is the attribute of the cosmic life-principle, discretion is that of the cosmic intelligence, and the cosmic Person possesses two sets of attributes. Morality, knowledge, detachment and majesty constitute his first set. The four opposite qualities form his second set. Mahat evolves into ahaṃkāra and from its three components (the three guṇas sattva, rajas and tamas) are created the sense organs, the motor organs, the mind with its three components, and the subtle and gross elements. From ahaṃkāra onwards, the process differs slightly from both the Sāṃkhya and the Vedānta concepts of creation. In the Lakṣmī Tantra, each subtle element is transformed into its own gross form and the succeeding subtle element. There are five subtle elements: sound-potential, touch-potential, form-potential, liquid-potential and smell-potential. The corresponding gross elements are ether, air, fire, water and earth respectively. Now the sound-potential transforms itself into ether as well as into the touch-potential, and so on. At every stage of evolution Śakti enters the category and activates it into the next transformation.¹ Direction (dik), lightning, the sun, the moon and the earth are the respective presiding deities of the five elements, ether etc.; Agni, Indra, Viṣṇu, Prajāpati and Mitra are the five presiding deities of the motor organs.

The second account of the cosmology

Besides dividing creation into the above-mentioned three types, the Pāñcarātra also divides it into six stages called kośas or sheaths. This term implies that in each stage Śakti projects herself into various manifestations while yet remaining the transcendental inner principle. These stages are the śaktikośa, māyākośa, prasūtikośa, prakṛtikośa, brahmāṇḍakośa and jīvakośa. The first sheath consists of Śakti herself in her transcendental form. This contains everything that belongs to the pure creation. Vāsudeva is the primary figure at this stage of creation. He has all his divine attributes and is on the verge of creating the diverse universe. He is manifest but not polarized. Saṃkarṣaṇa springs from him and represents the stage where creation still lies dormant, yet is dimly apprehensible. Pradyumna appears from Saṃkarṣaṇa and represents the mind of Saṃkarṣaṇa, while Aniruddha emanates from Pradyumna and

¹ L. T. V, 35, 37 and 39.

represents Saṃkarṣaṇa's ahaṃkāra or sense of individuality.¹ After the Vyūhas, appear the manifestations called Vyūhāntaras, Vibhavas and other incarnations both divine and human. Pervading these diverse manifestations of God's Śakti, His essence remains immutable and impervious to diversity. This is then called the Viśākhayūpa. Even though the Vyūhas show a tendency to represent a progressive manifestation from indeterminate existence to more determinate modes of being, the śaktikośa as a whole transcends material existence. Hence it is called the śaktikośa when Śakti, i.e. God's essential nature, remains basically unchanged.

Māyā, the second sheath, represents the starting point of the material creation based on the three material guṇas (sattva, rajas and tamas). It should be noted that here Śakti combines both the Agni and Soma aspects of God. The former represents God's kriyāśakti or dynamic power, and the latter His bhūti-śakti or power to sustain. Śakti is here called Mahālakṣmī and possesses both female and male characteristics.² Amongst other names, she is also called Durgā, Bhadrakālī and Yogamāyā. Possessing all three guṇas, she is the material source of the universe. When the perfect equilibrium of these three guṇas is disturbed, each guṇa manifests itself as a separate śakti, springing from Mahālakṣmī, the first transformation of a part of God's Śakti into matter. These three śaktis are named Mahāśrī, Mahākālī and Mahāvidyā and respectively represent the rajas, tamas and sattva guṇas. These three deities are the components of the third sheath called prasūti, or the mother. Each of these three mothers gave birth, as it were, to twins. With a part of Pradyumna, Mahāśrī created the twin deities Brahmā and Lakṣmī. With a part of Saṃkarṣaṇa, Mahāmāyā (or Mahākālī) created the twin deities Rudra and Trayī. With a part of Aniruddha, Mahāvidyā created the twin divinities Viṣṇu (Kṛṣṇa) and Gaurī. Thus whereas in the śaktikośa, the three Vyūhas Saṃkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha have Śrī, Sarasvatī and Rati as their respective śaktis, in the prasūtikośa the same male deities are consorted with three other female divinities and become

¹ L.T. VI, 6-12.

² Contrary to the prevailing religious notion that the source of creation is nearly always a male-female unit, Mahālakṣmī remains single. But she combines in herself both male and female in the form of Soma and Agni: L. T. IV, 37.

parents of the three Purāṇic primary gods Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Rudra and their respective śakti consorts. At Śakti's bidding, Brahmā married Trayī, Viṣṇu married Lakṣmī and Rudra married Gaurī. This traditional divine triad and their consorts together with primordial nature form the components of the prakṛtikośa. Brah-māṇḍakośa consists of the Sāṃkhya categories, while all the bodies of animate beings belong to the jīvakośa.

The third account of the cosmogony

Creation is in fact a gradual condensation (styānatā) of Śakti. From absolute transcendence, she finally transforms herself into determinate beings. Side by side with this material creation there is the sonic creation in which, from indeterminate absolute sound, Śakti becomes the determinate speech of everyday use. This aspect of creation is also divided into six stages called the six courses (ṣaḍ adhvanah). These are varṇa, kalā, tattva, mantra, pada and bhuvana. Resembling the absolute Being (Brahman), absolute sound is called Śabdabrahman. The next stage of sound is known as paśyanti. Here sound stands on the brink of polarization. The third stage is called madhyamā, when sound is polarized into word and its meaning, without however the polarization being fully manifest. The fourth stage is called vaikhari, which is the polarized state of sound. These four stages of sound-polarization form the varṇa course. Kalā consists of the six divine attributes. The tattva course contains the Vyūhas. The mantras, starting from the letters called mātrkāś, form the mantra course, and this is the topic that is of second special importance in the Lakṣmī Tantra. This is Tāntric 'linguistic occultism'. The pada course contains the four levels of consciousness viz. jāgrat or the waking state, śvapna or the dream state, suṣupti or the state of deep sleep, and turiya or the transcendental state. The bhuvana course consists of the material creation. Strictly speaking, out of the six courses, only the varṇa and mantra courses deal directly with Śakti's sonic creation. The others are only variations of the general cosmogony.

Jīva

Jīva, or the animate being, is the self-imposed limited state of the absolute consciousness which is God's essence. All conscious beings belonging to the five kośas starting with māyākośa and ending

with *jīva*kośa are called *jīva*. The three primary divine pairs (Brahmā-Trayī, Viṣṇu-Lakṣmī, Rudra-Gaurī) and all God's incarnations manifested within the cosmic embryo possess transcendental bodies. Apart from these all other conscious beings, from the celestial gods to plants, have material bodies resulting from the fruition of their deeds. Fundamentally speaking, *jīva* is not different from Śakti. Just as Śakti creates the universe based on herself as its support, so also does *jīva* manifest the universe reflected on him in the same way as a mirror reflects a mountain.¹ Like Śakti, *jīva* too has five functions. His cognition of objects is his creative function. His attachment to material objects is his function of sustenance. His satiation by those objects is his destructive function. His desire for material objects is his function of delusion, and his detachment from that desire is his function of divine grace. There are three types of *jīvas*: those who are fettered to worldly existence; those who are liberated from that bondage, and those who are ever free. *Jīva*'s liberation always depends on Śakti's compassion which persuades her to bestow her divine grace on the initiate. This occurrence is called 'śaktipāta'.

Liberation

Liberation from worldly bondage means that the *jīva* has been freed from his three limitations of space (*aṇu*), of knowledge (*asarvajña*) and of power to act (*anaśvarya*). There are four ways whereby a *jīva* may seek to attain liberation. These are karma, sāmkhya, yoga and śaraṇāgati—the first three are the traditional paths. In describing the first, our text follows the teachings of the Bhagavadgītā where it is called the karma yoga. The second path is the *jñāna mārga*, or the path of knowledge, which involves exact knowledge of truth about everything, i.e. knowledge of the categories, of the system of evolution, and of the nature of God, the supreme and essential consciousness. The third path is the way of

¹ L.T. XIII, 24. At first glance the comparison seems incongruous. But one should remember that our text is strongly influenced by the theory of reflection (*pratibimbavāda*) advocated by Śaṅkarācārya, e.g. his commentary on the Chāndogya Upaniṣad VI, 2. I refrain from jumping to the conclusion that Śaṅkarācārya preceded the Lakṣmī Tantra, simply because I do not know whether or not Śaṅkarācārya himself was not voicing an already prevalent notion. This also brings to mind theistic concepts, such as seeing the universe in one's body, or the ocean in a drop of water.

meditation. This is of two kinds, samādhi and samyama. Samādhi means merging into the existence of the absolute Brahman and entails direct realization of Brahman, the absolute Being.¹ This is achieved by practising introspective meditation (yoga). Samyama, the second type of yoga, is in fact the Pāñcarātra's ritual worship of God and His Śakti. This involves visualizing the rituals as well as actually performing them. This is the path that is most pleasing to Śakti.²

The fourth path to liberation is called the middle way because it steers clear of both conventionally good and bad deeds. It is the complete dedication of oneself to God's will, which leads one to His presence. This is the path of self-surrender (śaraṇāgati) to God in six different forms. Resolution to perform only those acts that please God; total abstention from any deed displeasing to God; unwavering faith that ultimately God will always come to one's rescue; throwing oneself on the mercy of God alone; unconditional surrender of oneself to God and absolute humility—these are the six components of the fourth path to liberation.

The nature of liberation is proper enlightenment about the essence of the supreme Being (Paravāsudeva), which is absolute consciousness. Upon receiving enlightenment one enters Śakti, the divine presence. She alone grants this enlightenment through her grace. The first path (karma), when scrupulously followed by a person pleases Śakti who, satisfied with his steadfastness, then bestows enlightenment on him. He who pursues the second path (sāṅkhya) obtains indirect knowledge of ultimate truth. His proximity to that truth which is none other than herself, pleases Śakti and she blesses him with enlightenment. The first variety of the third way is only for persons of great spiritual capacity, which indicates that they are already favoured by God. The second variety is obviously meant for the propitiation of Śakti. The fourth way is the best one because here the initiate sheds the last trace of his ego. He depends on divine grace with such complete faith that Śakti has no option but to reveal herself to him, and then the initiate becomes united with her. This shows, however, that the

¹ L. T. XVI, 32.

² Ibid. XVI, 40. Although the text praises the fourth path to liberation (viz. śaraṇāgati) as being the best, it here betrays its preference for ritual worship.

ultimate goal of each of the four paths is to win Śakti's favour. She then exercises her fifth function, viz. that of bestowing grace and, consequently, enlightenment on the initiate.

The word knowledge (jñāna) has various connotations in Pāñcārātra philosophy as, for that matter, it has in every system of Hindu philosophy. As the essential nature of conscious being, it means consciousness; in the context of liberation, it means realization or enlightenment; whereas in ordinary usage it simply means both understanding and cognition. The Lakṣmī Tantra describes the process of cognition as follows: knowledge is of two types, indeterminate and determinate. The first is the preliminary contact a person makes with an object through one of his senses.¹ In the case of determinate knowledge, the mind acts in the following manner. Its manas part cognizes the object along with its attributes; its ahaṃkāra (ego) part connects the experience with the personality of the cognizer who has the experience: this object appears before me and I am experiencing it. Finally buddhi (the discriminating faculty of the mind) takes a decision about the experience. The Lakṣmī Tantra recognizes three means of acquiring valid knowledge (pramāṇa): pratyakṣa or direct experience, anumāna or inference and śruti or verbal authority.²

Sthiti and Laya

Although sustenance is primarily Śakti's function, yet she herself carries this out directly only up to the creation of the cosmic egg. Then the traditional pattern is faithfully followed, and Viṣṇu, the great cosmic god, takes over the responsibility. On the worldly level the responsibility is vested in Manus, the primary rulers of kalpas, and then in Manu-putras.³ The burden of day-to-day responsibility falls on ordinary mortal kings.

The dissolution of creation is of seven types: nityā, the natural destruction of every being; naimittikī, the dissolution of the three worlds i.e. of the visible universe; prākṛtī, the dissolution of all cosmic categories in the category of mahat; prāsūtī, where avyakta prakṛtī dissolves in the prasūtikośa; māyī, where everything

¹ L. T. VIII, 5-67.

² Ibid. XII, 50-52.

³ Cf. the Bhāgavata Purāna, VIII.1. 1,5 and 7; 5.2-5; 13. 11-17; 22. 31; 1. 19-20; 13. 18-20 and 13. 27-29.

belonging to this prasūtikaśa is dissolved in the māyākośa; śaktī, where all that belongs to the māyākośa is dissolved in the śaktikośa; and finally ātyantiki, the emancipation of the yogin who merges in Śakti. But this is not a total annihilation of the yogin's existence. He continues to exist in a transcendental form. This is the true nature of Vaiṣṇava emancipation. The emancipated being is not absolutely extinguished in the existence of the Absolute Being, but is lifted up to the level of transcendental existence. This existence is identical with that of Śakti. The concept of emancipation basically depends firstly, on the concept of Śakti and her relation to God in the sense of two-in-one; and secondly, on the concept of jīva and jīva's relation to God as being parts of a whole. These concepts have been further elaborated by the later Vaiṣṇavas and, more especially, by the followers of Caitanya of Bengal.¹

Conclusion

Summing up, it is not possible to claim that the Lakṣmī Tantra has followed any particular philosophical system. As in the case of most Āgamas, here too concepts have been borrowed freely from various sources with the intention of working them into a synthesis, which has not entirely succeeded in producing a well-knit system. Besides combining the two important philosophical systems, Sāṃkhya and Vedānta, which are generally accepted by the Pāñcarātra religion, the text reveals traces of Mahāyāna Buddhism.² The influence of the Bhagavadgītā is also clearly apparent and passages from it have sometimes been quoted literally.³ But advocacy of Śakti's supremacy is the Lakṣmī Tantra's primary objective, and hence it has freely borrowed various concepts prevalent amongst all schools of Śakti worshippers. The text quotes extensively from the Devī-māhātmya section of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, gives a detailed and repetitious exposition of Śakti's identity with Nārāyaṇa, introduces the Tārā-mantra whenever possible in the performance of rituals, and discourses at length on

¹ See S. K. De, *Early History of the Vaiṣṇava Faith and Movement in Bengal*, 2nd. edition, Calcutta 1961, pp. 269, 277-285. Also cf. terms such as 'sāmarasya' in L. T. XXIV, 41 and Edward C. Dimock jr, *The Place of the Hidden Moon*, Chicago 1966. pp. 165-166.

² L.T. XIV, 7-16.

³ Ibid. XVI, 43 and XVII, 85.

the Śrī-sūkta.¹ All this is done for the sole purpose of underlining the major significance of Śakti worship in the Pāñcarātra system. The main discourse closes by stating that it is an abridgement of the original Lakṣmī Tantra: 'this is a summary of the Lakṣmī Tantra which contains hundreds of millions of verses (?) . . .',² and then from chapter LI to the end it goes on to provide a still more compact summary of the whole. Whether or not these last chapters were added at a later date is uncertain, but the advantage of being provided with a ready-made synopsis condensing arguments scattered all over the text cannot be denied. These chapters also confirm my assertion that the main burden of the text is to establish the supremacy of Lakṣmī as the basic philosophical principle and to centre ritual worship upon her.

This completes my attempt to outline the philosophy found in the Lakṣmī Tantra. As the scope of this introduction is necessarily limited, I have not dealt with the different stages in its development. Certain points of importance have been relegated to footnotes. The main purpose of this introduction is to offer the reader a rough tracing of the philosophical system upon which the religious beliefs of the Pāñcarātra sect are based. Some guidance seemed called for before tackling the text itself.

In conclusion, I wish to express my profound gratitude to Professor J. Gonda, who has been my unflinching source of inspiration. Without his valuable assistance and encouragement it would have been quite impossible for me to have undertaken the present work. He has carefully checked my translation and suggested innumerable improvements. I also wish to thank Professor Th. P. Galetin most warmly for his kind support in promoting the publication of this book. I am indebted to Professor V. Raghavan, Sri V. Krishnamacharya, Sri Parthasarathy Bhattacharya, Sri K. K. A. Venkatachary, Sri R. Raghava Bhattar and Sri Periyathiruvadi Bhattar for the useful advice they have given me; to Mrs. C. R. Strooker-Dantra for improving my English; and to my colleagues Dr. (Miss) J. L. de Bruyne and Dr. E. te Nijenhuis for typing the MS and correcting

¹ A detailed description of the mantras as treated in the Lakṣmī Tantra and also dhyānas relevant to various mantras will, I hope, shortly appear in an article of mine that is awaiting publication.

² L. T. XLIV, 52. The text does not specify whether it is referring to hundreds of millions of verses or books.

proofs. I am deeply obliged to the Netherlands Organization for the Advancement of Pure Research for contributing towards the costs of publication. My thanks are also due to Mrs. C. Hoekstra-Vos and Miss M. Kruk for kindly giving the final forms to the coloured diagrams. Last but not least, I affectionately recall all the help so readily given me by my colleagues at the Instituut voor Oosterse Talen and at the University Library of Utrecht.

INTRODUCTION TO INDIAN EDITION

The publication in 1990 of Vāmananadatta's *Samvitprakāṣa*, edited with English introduction by Mark Dyczkowski, has thrown considerable light on the date of the *Lakṣmī Tantra*. The *Samvitprakāṣa* is freely quoted by Utpalācārya in his *Spandapradīpikā* and by many authors both in the Kashmir Śaiva tradition and in the tradition of the *Śakti sādhanā*. It is of particular interest for the study of the *Lakṣmī Tantra* because the latter quotes quite a few verses from its first chapter. Vāmanadatta is respectfully quoted by Abhinavagupta. Vāmanadatta follows Śaṅkara's theory of idealistic monism up to a point, and then, in the true Pāñcarātra tradition, refutes the distinction between the Sāṃkhya theory of evolution (*pariṇāma*) and Śaṅkara's theory of illusory manifestation (*vivarta*) to account for causality: "In you (O Lord) there exists no difference between vivarta and *pariṇāma*" (*Samvitprakāṣa* I, 106). This could be equated with the ancient *bhedābheda* doctrine. This means that Vāmanadatta flourished after Śaṅkara and in the early period of the development of Kashmir Śaivism. The *Lakṣmī Tantra* also reflects some ideas found in Kṣemarāja's *Pratyabhijñāhrdaya* and some found in Rāmānuja. Therefore the *Lakṣmī Tantra* is later than these authors; we can assign its final redaction to the late twelfth or early thirteenth century C.E.

The *Lakṣmī Tantra*'s attempt to emphasize Śakti's position in the scheme of the Pāñcarātra theology explains why it borrowed from the *Samvitprakāṣa*. In order to establish Śakti's supremacy it also heavily borrowed from the Śākta *pratyabhijñā* tradition. Its general indifference to the temple cult makes me think that possibly the *Lakṣmī Tantra* belonged to the renouncer's tradition. An important feature of the *Lakṣmī Tantra* is its elaborate handling of the fourfold emanation of the supreme Deity. According to the commentator on the *Sāttvata Saṃhitā*, Alaśiṃgabhaṭṭa, this links the two texts. The *Samvitprakāṣa*'s author, a practising Pāñcarātrin, bows down at the end of the first chapter to the divine form called the Śaktīśa who has four faces. Both the *Sāttvata Saṃhitā* and the *Lakṣmī Tantra* (VIII, 19) assert that this is the form of the deity which displays total divine majesty and is a direct manifestation of divine awareness and omniscience, *samvit* and *jñāna* (SS IX. 50 and XII.175-6; LT XI). The same idea is found in the *Samvitprakāṣa*'s description of this form. The *Lakṣmī Tantra* quotes the *Samvitprakāṣa* extensively in chapter IV, where the text explains the Pāñcarātra cosmogony and Śakti's nature as the quintessence of the supreme divinity, Nārāyaṇa, which is pure consciousness (*samvit*); and again in chapter XIV, where the text elaborates on the true nature of Śakti as pure

consciousness and as the source of all creation, Vāc. Vāc is speech, Vāmanadatta calls her Sarasvatī (I, 76). The *Lakṣmī Tantra*'s account of Vāc closely follows the *pratyabhijñā* tradition, including the main *bīja mantra*, *brīm̐*. (See the *Yoginīhr̥daya Tantra*). For the same reason, the *Lakṣmī Tantra* enumerates the five Śaiva *kalā*, viz. Nivṛtti, Pratiṣṭhā, Vidyā, Śānti and Śāntyātītā, but adds five more, viz. Abhimānā, prāṇa, Guṇavatī, Guṇasūkṣmā and Nirguṇā and calls them just *śakti* of the ten cosmic principles, i.e. the five elements and the five *tanmātra*. (LT ch. XXXV, 14-16). On the other hand the *Lakṣmī Tantra* certainly remains in the tradition of the Pāñcarātra in describing *kalā* as the six divine attributes (chapters II and XXXV) when it describes the theory of the six courses.

Following the three important *Sambitās*: *Sātvata*, *Pauṣkara* and *Jayākhyā*, the *Lakṣmī Tantra* (chs. XIV and XXII) says that the active aspect of *Śabdabrahman* is Vāc and she is identified with awareness, both contentless and with content. In the theory of six courses of the divine pervasion of the creation viz. *varṇa*, *kalā*, *tattva*, *mantra*, *pada* and *bhuvana*, Vāc constitutes the primary one, *varṇa*; she is the pervasive, as yet undifferentiated, reality while the others are all pervaded by her and are differentiated as reference and referent. Śakti as Vāc is completely identified with the transcendent divine, pure awareness, but the difference is that as Vāc she represents the divine will to create, which refers to the divine act of thinking.

In fact the concept of Śakti is essential to Pāñcarātra monotheism, because the creation is not unreal, but as a projection of the Divine is in essence identical with the Divine. The Divine is, nevertheless, unchanging and unconditioned, ineffable reality. The act of creation cannot be predicated of Him; therefore Śakti, divine inscrutable Power and Majesty, embodies the paradox that God is both transcendent and immanent in all phenomena, being both pure consciousness and the evolving source of all. This is emphasized by Bhāskara in his commentary on the *Vedānta sūtra*. Vāmanadatta's monistic ideas come close to Bhāskara's *bhedābbhedavāda* and can be traced back to the *Pauṣkara Sambitā* XXXIII and XXXVIII. Bhāskara was a Vaiṣṇava and most probably a renouncer (*yati*). It is possible that Vāmanadatta too was a renouncer. Old Āgamas like the *Pauṣkara* and *Sātvata* prescribe that the *yoga upāsana* of the fourfold *Vyūha* deities are only for renouncers who have risen to the spiritual state in which they are capable of practising *nirvikalpa samādhi*. They have understood the unreal nature of all dual perceptions. All that remains for them is to directly realize in *samādhi* the essential identity between referent and reference, *vedya* and *vedaka*, both being the same

śakti. The theory of the six ways explains that clearly. As the divine resolve, *saṃkalpa*, to make creation manifest precedes the actual act of ceation, Śakti's first discernible appearance is as divine knowledge, Śabdabrahman or Vāc. In the Pāñcarātra idiom this is called the Vāsudeva-śakti whose fourfold *vyūha* manifestation neatly corresponds to the four-fold development of Vāc, viz. *parā*, *paśyanti*, *madhyamā* and *vaikhari*. This is again expressed as the development of pure being into phenomena (*bhavat* and *bhāva*) which then diversify into ideas, the content (*artha*) of ideal speech, and finally appear as conditioned, empirical cognition (LT. IV. 25). As Vāmanadatta says (I.87.), this is how the practitioner in his *nirvikalpa samādhi* gradually removes all conditioned awareness, which finally leaves him with pure awareness (*saṃvit mātra*).

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14, December 1999

Sanjukta Gupta

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCING THE ŚĀSTRA

1. My obeisance to the eternally pure, the ultimate cause of the world,¹ knowledge (absolute)², the being without agitation,³ who is the soul of (both) Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa.⁴

2. I worship the form of Lakṣmī seated on the bird,⁵ embodiment of compassion, shaped like *ī*,⁶ and adorned with Soma,⁷ the unblemished combination of Sūrya, Indu and Agni.⁸

3-6. (Addressing the sage Atri):—Discoverer of the essential purport of the Vedas and Upaniṣads, unchallenged master of all sciences, possessor of knowledge peculiar to all systems and source of all scriptures containing the tenets of all sects and creeds; who is in full mastery of his senses, has conquered the ādhāra,⁹ on whom neither attraction nor hostility (towards things of the world) has any hold, who is indefatigable in practising all fourteen branches of yoga¹⁰ and unflagging in the pursuit of true knowledge; who assumed the nature of tapana when in olden times the sun was pierced by the celestial bhānu; to whom penance is primarily addressed and who is a concentration of pure energy; (called) Atri,

¹ In definitions generally first the incidental, and then the essential, characteristic is mentioned. Here the immutable, non-dual, supreme God is mentioned first as the source of creation.

² Next the essential characteristic is mentioned as absolute knowledge, elaborated in Chapter II.

³ The primary state of the Absolute is complete passivity. Creation entailing activity is merely an incidental aspect.

⁴ The Absolute is higher, or more abstract, than the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa state in which God and His attributes are less impalpable and have assumed personification. Later on however this view was modified and both were equally regarded as being two aspects of truth.

⁵ Apparently Garuḍa.

⁶ 'ī' represents māyā or Mahāmāyā and as such is the all-pervading Śakti.

⁷ Either nectar or the moon. Nectar symbolizes Lakṣmī's immortality. The moon (seen partly in some images of the Śakti) personifies her as Time, the destroyer of all. It also means *ī* on *ī*.

⁸ The Śakti's *varṇādhvan* manifestation, elaborated on later in ch. XXII.

⁹ Mastery of the *ādhāra cakra*, a special yogic achievement. See ch. XLIII.

¹⁰ Cf. chapters XVI and XVII.

who is unaffected by the three phenomenal attributes,¹ has surpassed the first three aims of living beings,² is immortal, never fails to meditate at morning and at dusk and is the sage ever engaged in performing fire sacrifices.

7-9. (Anasūyā), unrivalled amongst all devoted wives, the illustrious lawful consort (of Atri), who for a certain reason became the mother of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa³, whom even the gods praise unceasingly, whose tranquility is never ruffled, who practises penance, is learned, familiar with all religions and ever faithful to her husband, having been instructed by her husband in many and diverse religious saṃhitās,⁴ bowed down and uttered these words:

10. Anasūyā:—Sir, my master, conversant with all religions, lord of the world, from thee have I learned about various religions

11-12. as well as about their divergent systems, structures and aims. In my view the Bhagavaddharma⁵ is superior to all of these. Whenever a text of the Bhagavaddharmasaṃhitās⁶ is expounded by thee, it never fails to indicate the supreme power of Lakṣmī.

13. Since its lore is secret and I have not as yet enquired about it,⁷ thou hast not disclosed it to me. Now I am eager to hear about Lakṣmī's power.

14. The nature of this goddess, her form, her origin, what human faculty enables one to recognize her, what is her substratum, by what means is (identification with her) achieved, and what results from knowing her?

15. All this I desire to learn from thee who art the most enlightened of all scholars of the Vedas. Through contact with thy knowledge I shall have accomplished all the aims of my life.

¹ *Sattva, rajas and tamas.*

² *Artha, kāma and dharma.*

³ Reference to the legend that, to test Anasūyā's devotion, these three deities implored her to tend them as sons. She turned them into two-year-olds and fulfilled their wish. They were so delighted that they promised to descend to earth as her real sons: Rāmāyaṇa, Araṇya Kāṇḍa.

⁴ Here denoting the book of laws.

⁵ Generic term for the devotional system known as the Pāñcarātra.

⁶ The Pāñcarātra saṃhitās as distinguished from the other Dharmasaṃhitās.

⁷ In order to be initiated in the sacred lore, it was customary for the aspirant to present a request for initiation to his preceptor.

16. Please show me the way,¹ teach me now that I have approached thee.² Having heard her words,³ the worthy Atri said:—

17. Atri:—O thou who art familiar with religion and duly practise religious rites, it is good that thou hast today reminded me of that which I did not previously reveal since I intended to do so only when requested.

18. O virtuous one, thou art worthy to hear about the supreme power of Lakṣmī which stands on the pinnacle of the Śrutis (i.e. that which is the very gist of the most important Śrutis) and which endures for ever.

19-20. Formerly when the sages of the Malaya range,⁴ devout in performing religious rites, had been instructed in the sacred lore of Sāttvata by Nārada of godly countenance, they put the same question to the noble and immortal Nārada, who resembles Brahman and is steeped in knowledge of the Bhagavaddharma.

21. The sages:—Noble sir, from thee have we heard the Bhāgavata dharma, known as Sāttvata,⁵ which comprises the elements of sattva (purity) and has but one aim viz. liberation.

22. When expounding the realities Lakṣmī's supreme power was frequently alluded to but, as no pertinent question was asked, it was not revealed (to us).

23. We are eager to hear about the divine attributes of Padmini (i.e. Lakṣmī) which afford protection against the (miseries) of life. Please enlighten us.

24. We bow our heads down to thy feet that save (devotees) from the grip of transient existence. As we repeatedly appeal to thee (i.e. to thy mercy), O sage we implore thee to instruct us.

25. Nārada:—It gives me satisfaction that you sages, who have observed vows,⁶ come with your request to me today. I am pleased and shall this very day relate (to you) the Tantra of the immortal Lakṣmī.

¹ Here there are minor variations in some Mss.

² *Asmy ahaṇ vibho* replaces *asmy adhīhi bho* in some Mss.

³ Some Mss. omit this line.

⁴ Reference to this South Indian range suggests that the Pāñcarātra system was influential in S. India, cf. Bhāradvāja S. ch. 1.

⁵ Sāttvata is used here as a synonym for the Bhāgavata dharma; but in all later Pāñcarātra saṃhitās the term is generally used in its derivative sense.

⁶ Religious disciplines.

26. in which she, the goddess Padminī, the divine consort of Padmanābha,¹ manifests herself on a lotus and appears with all her essential attributes and powers.

27. Formerly owing to Durvāsas's curse,² Indra lost strength and, deprived of the daily study of the Vedas and of the observance of sacrifices, the three worlds lost sight of Lakṣmī.

28-29. The gods languished and religion became almost extinct, split up (in sects) and nearly died. Then Brahmā along with (other) gods approached the Kṣīroda ocean and after doing terrible penance for many divine years awakened Janārdana, the lord of all and the god of gods (from his cosmic sleep).

30. And Brahmā informed him of the plight the gods were in. Next they (the gods) started churning up the Kṣīroda according to a plan devised by Viṣṇu.

31-32. (One by one then arose out of the ocean) Pārijāta,³ the best horse,⁴ the king of elephants,⁵ the host of celestial nymphs,⁶ the poison Kālakūṭa,⁷ Vāruṇī,⁸ and nectar; after which the goddess (Lakṣmī) emerged from the ocean accompanied by the moon, and Padminī immediately nestled on Padmanābha's breast.

33. As soon as she cast her eyes on the gods, they recovered their lost splendour but, since she did not cast her eyes on the Daityas, they were defeated.⁹

34. While Puraṇḍara was rejoicing over the recovery of his entire kingdom, Bṛhaspati approached him and told him this in secret.

35-37. Bṛhaspati:—I give thee timely warning. Now listen to me, O Puraṇḍara. By way of implication I have already told thee that the might of the great¹⁰ is subject, O lord, to her control. Lest thou forfeit thy supreme sovereignty, thou shouldst endeavour, O king

¹ Padmanābha is here another name for Nārāyaṇa, though later on he is stated also to be Nārāyaṇa's emanation (*Vyūhāntara*).

² Vide, Ag. P. 3, 1-11.

³ Cf. M.P. ch. 250, and Ag. P. ch. 3.

⁴ Uccaiḥśravas, M.P. ch. 250.

⁵ Airāvata, ibid. ch. 250.

⁶ Headed by Ghṛtachī and so forth.

⁷ The deadly poison held in the throat by Śiva: M.P. ch. 250.

⁸ An alcoholic drink: ibid. ch. 250.

⁹ Vide Viṣ. P. ch. I; J. Gonda, *Eye and gaze*, Amsterdam Acad. 1969, passim.

¹⁰ Some Mss. substitute *tasyāmāyāli te* for *tasyāmāyātate*.