Śārikā's Mantra

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The goddess Śārikā belongs to a group of Kashmirian lineage deities (*kuladevī* or *vaṃśadevī*) who, like Bālā, Rājñī, and Jvālā, are identified with particular locations.¹ Śārikā resides on the Pradyumna peak in Śrīnagar, also known as the “Śārikā peak,” and is worshipped there in the form of a large stone around which a temple has been constructed. If one wishes to identify the cult practiced there and locate it within the religious landscape of the valley, a visitor might start with the modern inscription shown in figure 14.1, which reads as follows:

*bindutrikōṇavasukoṇadaśārayugma-
manvaśranāgadalaśaṃyutaśoḍaśāram |
vṛttatrayaṃ ca dharaṇīsadanatrayaṃ ca
śrīcakrarājam uditam paradevatāyāḥ ||*

This verse describes the *śrīcakra*, the yantra of the “supreme deity” (*paradevatā*) commonly known as Tripurā, by merely listing in the first three pādas the geometrical elements of the yantra, for instance *bindu* (“dot”) and *trikoṇa* (“triangle”). It is quoted often, with variations,² and attributed to several scriptural sources in Tantric literature.

What we are to understand here, one must suppose, is that in modern times Śārikā was understood or presented as a form of Tripurā, or as belonging to her cultic context.

Unfortunately fieldwork of this kind does not disclose the history of the cult. We know that the first scriptures of the cult of Tripurā were written not before the eleventh century;³ needless to say, they make no mention of Śārikā. On the other hand, the local Kashmirian cult of Śārikā is at least as old as the *Kathāsaritsāgara* (second half of the twelfth century),⁴ and it is rather doubtful that the two goddesses' association is this old.

1 See Sanderson 2009, 111.

2 For instance, Lakṣmīdhara in his commentary on the *Saundaryalaharī* reads the third pāda as *vṛttatribhūpurayutaṃ paritāś caturdvāḥ* and in the fourth *śrīcakram etad* [...].

3 Sanderson 2015, 32.

4 See 12.6.111: *yena pradyumnaśikharaṃ śārikākūṭam ity api* [...], and 12.6.116: *tatra snātvā vīta-stāyām arcayitvā vināyakam saṃpūjya śārikāṃ devīm digbandhādīpuraḥsaram*.

FIGURE 14.1 Śārikā stone
PHOTOGRAPH BY WALTER SLAJE

For finding out more about the cult of Śārikā, including her ritual and possibly doctrinal details, we have a single published source, the *Devīrahasya*,⁵ which contains passages on the cult of the Kashmirian lineage deities. In particular, the ritual texts appended to the edition of the *Devīrahasya* give the *mantroddhāra*, *sahasranāma* and other typical elements of the worship of these deities. In this text Śārikā is clearly identified as having the form of a stone (*śīlārūpā*)⁶ on the Pradyumna hill. Her worship is said to remove the impurity (*mala*) stemming from such capital offences as the murder of a Brahmin or drinking alcohol, or eating what is forbidden.⁷ The details of the mantra are given, as are the Ṛṣi, etc., a *dhyānaśloka*, her *yantra*, and how to employ the mantra for the magic acts of immobilizing (*stambhana*) and so forth.⁸ This is followed by a *Śārikāpūjāpaddhati* (pp. 412–419).

5 *Devīrahasya*, pp. 407 ff.

6 Op. cit., p. 407.

7 Op. cit., p. 408.

8 Op. cit., pp. 410 ff.

Further sources are difficult to trace or remain unpublished. First is a so-called *Śārikāstrotra* attributed to the *Pradyumnāvatāra*. This text is “a mālā-mantra in prose with a dhyanāśloka in the beginning and two verses at the end.”⁹ Apart from its manuscript in the Bodleian, there are two more in the Lindenmuseum (Stuttgart),¹⁰ and one in Śrīnagar.¹¹ Judging from the excerpts given in the *Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland* (VOHD) catalogue, there are variations such as insertions of new names and additional phrases that cannot be reduced easily to a single critical text.¹² In any case, for our purposes a transcript of the Śrīnagar manuscript (S) is sufficient:

*bījaiḥ saptabhir ujjvalākṛtir asau yā saptasaptidyutiḥ*¹³
*saptarṣipraṇatāṅghripaṅkaja*¹⁴*yugā yā saptalokārtihā*¹⁵ |
kāsmīrapravareśamadhanagare pradyumnapīṭhe sthitā
devīsaptakasaṇyutā bhagavatī śrīśārikā pātu naḥ ||

*om jaya bhagavatyai vindhyavāsini kailāsavāsini śmaśānavāsini huṅkāriṇi kālāyini kṛtyāyani himagīritanaye kumāramātaḥ govindabhagīni śitikaṇṭha*¹⁶
bharaṇe aṣṭādaśabhuje bhujagavalayamaṇḍite keyūrahārābharaṇe jaya-kha-
*ḍgā-triśūla-ḍamaru*¹⁷*-mudgara-paraśu-caśaka-kalaśa-śaracāpa-varadābhaya-*
pāśa-pustaka-kapāla-khaṭvāṅga-gadā-musula-tomaravarahaste kṛpāpare pra-
bhūtavividhāyuddhe kṛpāprāgbhūtavigrahe caṇḍike caṇḍaghaṇṭe kirātaveśe
brahmāṇi rudrāṇi nārāyaṇi brahmacārīṇi divyatapovidhāyini vedamātaḥ gāya-
tri bhāvitri sarasvati sarvādāre sarveśvari viśvakartā (sic) samādhiviśrāntimaye
cinmaye cintāmaṇisvarūpe kaivalye kaivalyaśvarūpe śivasvarūpe śive nirāśraye
*nirupādhimaye nirāmayapade brahmaviṣṇumaheśvaranimitte*¹⁸ *mohani tosaṇi*

9 Aithal 1999, 35. Aithal gives a Kashmirian edition (*Bhaktivivekasāra*, Śrīnagar/Bombay: 1927), but this work has not made it into a catalogued and accessible library.

10 *Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland* 2.2.711 and 712.

11 Oriental Research Library, University Campus Hazaratbal, Srinagar, National Mission for Mss. DSO 0000/5517.

12 There are other sources that utilize the same material, but with variations: the *Siddhalakṣmīpūjāpaddhati*—I have merely access to the transcription of ms. “Kashmir Research Center accession no: 2376” by the Muktabodha Institute—has for instance a completely different third pāda of the starting verse. The *Agnikāryapaddhati* also transmits this verse.

13 *saptasapti*] em. The ms. reads *saptasapta* as does the one in the Lindenmuseum, Stuttgart.

14 *paṅkaja*] em.; *paṅka* ms.

15 *ārtihā*] S; *āśrayā* VOHD.

16 *śiti*] em.; *śati* ms.

17 *ḍamaru*] em.; *ḍumara* ms.

18 *nimitte*] em.; *nimite* ms.

bhayaṅkaranāśini dītisutapramathani kāle kālakiṅkarabhaṣini kālāgniśikhe kārārātri aje nitye sīṅharathe yogarate yogeśvari¹⁹nimite (?) bhaktajanavatsale surapriyakāriṇi durge durjaye hiraṇye śaraṇye kuru me dayāṃ kuru me jayam |

*oṃ pradyumnaśikharāsīnāṃ mātṛcakropaśobhitām |
pīṭheśvariṇ śīlārūpāṃ śārikāṃ praṇamāmy aham ||
amā caiva u kāmā ca cārvāṅgī taṅkadhāriṇī |
tārā ca pārvatī caiva yakiṇī śārikāṣṭamī ||*

iti śrīśārikāstotram

From this *stotra* we can gather something about the iconography of the deity, for instance the attributes held in her eighteen arms,²⁰ her names, the seven goddesses (*amā* etc.) that form her retinue and their symbolism.

The main information on a deity for ritual purposes is of course her mantra. Here one unpublished source²¹ gives the mantra in a Vedic style by stating its Ṛṣi, metre, and deity, but augmented with the tantric elements *bīja*, *śakti* and *kīlaka*,²² and there is of course also a tantric Gāyatrī devoted to Śārikā.²³

So it seems the cult of Śārikā is fairly old, but it has been influenced by the cult of Tripurā or Śrīvidyā. One such influence must have been the Kashmirian Kauls, a clan that migrated to Kashmir not before the fifteenth century²⁴ and brought their own cults with them, which were then fused with the local Kashmirian cults.²⁵ The most important figure in this group, Sāhib Kaul, is credited with three ritual handbooks and furthermore fused Advaita Vedāntic ideas with the Kashmirian *Pratyabhijñā*.²⁶ Sāhib Kaul has also composed a further text on the deity, a *Śārikāstotra*²⁷ in eighteen verses which, as he says, gives the derivation of her Mantra.²⁸

19 *yogeśvari*] em.; *yogaśvari*- ms.

20 We have to count the bow and arrow as one item held in the same hand.

21 *Agnikāryapaddhati*. Manuscript no. 781, Research Library of the Jammu and Kashmir Government, Shrinagar. Transcription of the Muktabodha Indological Research Institute.

22 *asya śrīśārikāmantrasya | śrīmahādeva ṛṣiḥ | triṣṭupchandaḥ || śrīśārikābhagavatī devatā || śāṃ bījaṃ || āṇ śaktiḥ hrāṇ kīlakam || home vinyogaḥ ||*

23 *oṃ hrīṃ śārikāyai vidmahe | saptākṣaryai dhīmahi || tan naḥ śīlā pracodayāt ||3||*

24 Sanderson 2003–2004, 362–366.

25 Sanderson 2009, 124–125.

26 See Hanneder 2001.

27 Not to be confused with the *Śārikāstotra* given above.

28 There are further *stotras* and other minor works of Sāhib Kaul, an edition of which is under preparation by the present author.

1 Sāhib Kaul's Śārikāstotra

vande devīm śārikāṃ mokṣadātrīm
sarvasthāṃ tām sarvato mohadātrīm |
mithyāmṛtyuprāptidurbhūtidātrīm
sadbhaktyāhaṃ mūrdhni candrāṃśadhātrīm ||1||

Mss.: O₃ (CSS e.264, ff. 529r–531v) L₁ (SOAS 44389, ff.1–5) B₁ (Berlin Hs. or. 12509). 1b *moha*] O₃B₁L₁^{pc}; *mokṣa* L₁^{ac} 1d *mūrdhni*] O₃ B₁; *mūrti* L₁ 1d *dhātrīm*] L₁B₁; *dātrīm* O₃

With true devotion I worship that divine and omnipresent Śārikā, who bears the crescent moon on her head, who grants liberation, destroys delusion everywhere, destroys the bad fear of meeting a wrong death.

Since we have to suppose a Kashmirian pronunciation, which does not properly distinguish aspirated from non-aspirated stops, all four lines are realized as an end rhyme. In this verse the goddess is adored as granting liberation, removing²⁹ confusion etc. One iconographical detail known from the other sources, that she bears the crescent moon on her head, is alluded to as well.

After the introductory stanza the main topic of the *stotra*, the *mantroddhāra* explicitly mentioned in v. 17, commences:

tāraṃ bījaṃ yo japed amba bhaktyā
saṃsārābdhes tāraṃ śārike te |
brahmajñānapraudhayā prajñayāyaṃ
vācāṃ nāthasyāpi kuryād vihāsam ||2||

2b *ābdhes*] L₁; *ābdhaṃ* O₃

O mother Śārikā, whoever devotedly recites your *tāra*-syllable, which carries one across (*tāra*) the ocean of transmigration, may, when his wisdom is ripened through the knowledge of the absolute, even put to shame the Lord of the Word (*brhaspati*).

“Your *bīja*” means the (first) syllable of the mantra of Śārikā. Sāhib Kaul uses code words for the syllables that make up the mantra, a common practice

29 In verse 1a the root *dāṇ* *dāne* (*Dhātupāṭha* 1.977) is used, while in 1b and 1c the root is *dāp* *lavane* (*Dhātupāṭha* 2.50).

which enables a writer to—as it were—speak of a mantra without actually pronouncing it. Thus, to those uninitiated and ignorant of the codes, the true form of the mantra must have, at least in theory, remained unknown.

tāra is a common code word for the syllable *om* and poses no problems. The codes that follow are partly difficult to interpret and will be discussed below.

*īśaṃ sājyaṃ vahnisaṃsthaṃ sapadmaṃ
bījaṃ te 'nyad yaḥ smaret taṃ smaranti |
nāke devyo bhūtale nāgakanyā
bhūmau nāryo vihvalā mārabāṇaiḥ ||3||*

3c *kanyā*] O₃; *patnyo* L₁B₁

He who remembers your next syllable, which is *īśa* with *abja*, *vahni*, and *padma*, is remembered by goddesses in heaven, Nāga maidens in the netherworld, and women on earth confused by the arrows of Kāma.

*lakṣmībījaṃ durlabhaṃ durjanānām
samyagbhaktyā yo japecc chuddhabuddhiḥ |
padmā nityaṃ darśanaṃ vīpsur asya
dvāre tiṣṭhaty ādarāc cañcalāpi ||4||*

4d *ādarāc*] L₁ B₁; *ādarā* O₃

One of pure mind who recites with complete devotion the *lakṣmī*-syllable, which is difficult for bad people to obtain, him the goddess of good fortune will always be eager to see, and although unsteady (by nature) she will remain at his doorstep out of devotion.

*īśaṃ sājyaṃ vāmakarṇordhvasaṃsthaṃ
bījaṃ te 'nyad yo japecc tasya śatruḥ |
sarvair devair apy ajayyaḥ kṣaṇena
dṛṣṭeḥ pātād yāmagehātithiḥ syāt ||5||*

5a *karṇordhva*] L₁ B₁; *karṇardhva* O₃ 5d *dṛṣṭeḥ*] B₁; *dṛṣṭoḥ* O₃L₁ 5d *ātithiḥ*] L₁B₁; *ātithi* O₃

He who recites your next syllable, which is *īśa* with *abja* and the one above the left ear, his enemy, although invincible even for all the gods, will instantly, in the wink of an eye, become a guest in the house of Death.

*īśaṃ bījaṃ vaktravṛttena yuktaṃ
 sābjaṃ yo 'nyat saṃsmared vahnisaṃstham |
 bhuktir muktiḥ sadvicārasya yuktir
 bhaktiś caitaddhastayātā bhavanti ||6||*

6b saṃsmared] O₃; saṃjaped L₁B₁ 6d bhaktiścai] L₁; bhakticai O₃

He who remembers your next syllable, which is *īśa* together with *vaktravṛtta* and *vahni*, will have at his disposal “enjoyment”³⁰ (*bhukti*), liberation, the method of real *vicāra*,³¹ and devotion.

*sābjaṃ bījaṃ vaktravṛttaṃ japed yaḥ
 samyagbhaktyā śuddhahṛc chārike te |
 vāṇī nānāsadrasair jṛmbhitaśrīr
 nityaṃ vaktre tiṣṭhati prauḍham asya ||7||*

7a sābjaṃ] O₃; īśaṃ L₁ B₁

He who recites your syllable with pure heart and proper devotion, O Śārikā, which consists of *abja* and *vaktravṛtta*, in his mouth a fully developed³² voice stays, which has the beauty of unfolding through various good emotions.

*sābjaṃ bījaṃ vaktravṛttena yuktaṃ
 asthyātmākhyam yo japec chārike te |
 jīvanmuktaś ceha bhuktvātibhogāl
 līnaḥ paścāt tvatpade syād bhavāni ||8||*

8c bhuktvā] L₁ O₃; bhuktā B₁

He who recites your syllable, consisting of *abja* and *vaktravṛtta*, and called *asthyātmā*, O Śārikā, is liberated in life and, enjoying supreme *bhogas*,³³ will later dissolve in your state, O Bhavāni.

30 In context, this may mean the enjoyment of powers (*siddhi*).

31 I understand the term in the sense of *ātmavicāra* as used in the *Mokṣopāya* (5.5.27), a text which Sāhib Kaul occasionally refers to.

32 *prauḍham* is of course an adverb, but to translate “stays ripely” would not really capture the intended sense.

33 This could again denote the *siddhis*, but in a less technical register the enjoyment of the pleasures of liberation.

etadbījaprāntagām śārikāyā
ityākhyām te saṃjaped yo namontām |
tat te dhāma prāpyate tena śāsavad
gatvā bhūyaḥ śocyate naiva yatra ||9||

9b *ityā*] L₁ O₃ B₁; *yityā* O₃

He who recites after that syllable your name, Śārikā, followed by *namaḥ*, attains forever to that abode where, when reached, one never suffers again.

saṃstaumi tvām tvām imām āśraye 'haṃ
seve devīm eva sarvaikaśaktim |
tvām atyuccair gadgadaṃ saṃbravāmi
sarvām sārvaṃ sarvato bhāvayāmi ||10||

10a *tvām tvām imām*] L₁ B₁; *tvā tvāmim* O₃ 10b *seve*] L₁ B₁; *seved* O₃ 10c *tvām atyuccair*] L₁ B₁; *tvām mṛtyuccair* O₃ 10d *sarvām sārvaṃ*] L₁; *sarvām sarvām* O₃ B₁

I praise you; it is you in whom I take refuge. I serve the Goddess alone, the one power of all (powers). I utter my noisy stammering to you; I contemplate (you) who are everything, suitable for all (*sārva*), and everywhere.

jātaḥ so' sau satkule tasya dhanyā
mātā tasmin saṅgatā āśiṣaś ca |
jñātaṃ sarvaṃ tena śambhupriyāyāḥ
samyakprajñā nirmītā yena bhaktyā ||11||

11a *satkule*] L₁ O₃; *satkulye* B₁ 11d *prajñā*] O₃; *prajā* L₁ B₁

He is born in a good family, his mother is blessed, and he receives good wishes. He knows everything about [Śārikā,] the beloved of Śiva, who has fathomed true knowledge through devotion.

bhaktiḥ puṣṇāty anvahaṃ mām tvadīyā
nityaṃ yadvat pūrṇacandrodayo 'bdhim |
tvadbhakteḥ satsaṃpadā prāptayāhaṃ
jīṣṇor lakṣmīm cāpy upekṣe purogām ||12||

12a *puṣṇātya*] L₁ B₁; *puṣṇātyu* O₃ 12b *candrodayo'bdhim*] L₁ B₁; *candrodayābdhim* O₃

My devotion to you nourishes me every day, as the rise of the full moon always nourishes the ocean. On account of the true affluence of victorious devotion to you I even ignore the excellent Lakṣmī.

*etat sarvaṃ tvanmayaṃ devadevi
tvam ciddehā kevalā suprasiddhā |
nāsty ajñānaṃ kvāpi tasmāt kva dr̥ṣṭo
vandhyāputraś cāpam āropya dhāvan ||13||*

13a etat L₁ B₁; et O₃ 13c nāsty L₁ B₁; nāsti O₃ 13d cāpam āro L₁; apasāro B₁; cāpimāro O₃

The whole world (*etat sarvaṃ*) consists of you, Goddess of Gods! Your body is consciousness, you are alone and perfectly established. Nowhere is there ignorance. Thus, where do we see the son of a barren woman run and raise his bow?

*āśāste me devabhāvaṃ na cittam
sūteḥ kāle strīva bhogaṃ kadācit |
tvatsadbhakyā nṛtyati prāptayālam
gāyañ chrutvā meghanādaṃ śikhīva ||14||*

14a cittam L₁ B₁; citta O₃

My mind does not strive after the divine state, just as a woman giving birth never craves enjoyment. Having gained perfect (*alam*) devotion to you it sings like a peacock who has heard the sound of the rain clouds.

*sā kā bhūmir yatra nāsti sthitis te
sā kā vāṇī nocyase vā yayā tvam |
ko 'sau śabdaḥ śrūyase yatra na tvam
ko 'sau bhāvo yatra te bhāsanam no ||15||*

15a bhūmiḥ] L₁; bhūmi O₃ B₁

There is no place where you do not reside; there is no voice in which you are not expressed. There is no word in which you are not heard; there is no thing in which you do not shine.

*tvatsadbhakyarkodayāt saṃpraphullaṃ
hr̥tpadmaṃ me 'tyadbhutāt sadraseddhām |*

nityaṃ yasmin sarvadā kāṅkṣaṇīyā
sarvais tiṣṭhaty ādarān mokṣalakṣmīḥ ||16||

16a *tvatsat*] conj.; *tvatpad* L₁ B₁; unclear in O₃ due to damaged folio

When the marvelous sun of true devotion to you rises, the lotus of my heart is inflamed through true emotion (*rasa*). In it always resides, out of respect, the good fortune of liberation that is coveted by all.

jñānasvāmiprāptasadbuddhisāro
jñātajñeyāḥ sarvataḥ svātmabhāvi |
stotraṃ mantroddhāry adaḥ śārikāyāḥ
sāhibkaulo vaṃśadevyāś cakāra ||17||

17a *sārah*] conj.; *sāra* L₁ O₃ B₁ 17c *mantroddhāry adaḥ*] L₁ B₁; *mantrodāry adaḥ* O₃ 17d *devyāś cakāra* O₃B₁] *devāś cakāra* L₁

Having attained the strength of true intelligence through Jñānasvāmin, I know what there is to know and everywhere contemplate my own self. I, Sāhib Kaula, have composed this hymn to the lineage deity Śārikā, which contains the construction of her Mantra.

Sāhib Kaul's *Śārikāstava* deals with some aspects of the worship of this deity; most importantly, as the author states in verse 17, it gives the *mantroddhāra* of the Śārikāmantra. The author's teacher Jñānasvāmin, according to Madhusudan Kaul,³⁴ was his maternal uncle.

yo vāpy etaṃ kīrtayet stotraṃ āḍhyaṃ
samyagbhaktyā śroṣyati śrāvayed vā |
nirmantro 'pi prāpnuyād devadevi
niḥsandehaṃ mantrajaṃ satphalaṃ saḥ ||18||

18a *vāpyetaṃ*] L₁; *vāpyetat* O₃B₁ 18a *kīrtayet*] L₁; *kīrtaye* O₃ 18a *āḍhyaṃ*] L₁; *mādyam* O₃ 18b *śroṣyati*] conj.; *śroṣyati* L₁; *śriṣyati* O₃ 18b *vā*] L₁; *vāvā* O₃

Whoever chants this rich hymn of praise with perfect devotion, hears it or has it recited, even if he be without mantra, he will, O supreme Goddess, without doubt reap the great fruit of this mantra.

34 See above.

This final stanza explains the idea behind this work. A person who is not initiated into the recitation of the mantra of Śārikā and may not even know how to decode the *mantroddhāra* can still benefit from this type of substitute recitation. In this the work is similar in approach to the *Sūryastutirahasya* of Sāhib Kaul's contemporary Ratnakaṇṭha, where the Vedic Gāyatrī-mantra is hidden within a hymn addressed to the sun as an acrostichon.³⁵

The aim in both cases is apparently to enable persons who lack proper *adhikāra*—for Vedic mantras, in the case of Ratnakaṇṭha, or Tantric mantras, in the case of Sāhib Kaul—to gain at least some kind of access to these restricted parts of the religion. This technique of “hiding” the actual form of the mantras in a *stotra* meant for religious recitation is not so much a way to conceal it from the outsider, but a method to enable him or her to use it without breaking religious rules, in other words a method to bypass religious and social restrictions. Theologically the matter is of course complicated, because Ratnakaṇṭha's *stotra* actually contains the sounds that make up the Gāyatrī, so in a sense by reciting the *stotra* one does recite the Gāyatrī. In the case of the *Śārikāstava*, since only code names are given, one does not utter the sounds that make up the mantra of Śārikā.

Despite the fact that the *stotra* contains the *mantroddhāra*, it is quite difficult to decipher the mantra from Sāhib Kaul's *stotra* alone, for the system of codes is not otherwise known. The most obvious place to search for a solution would be the *mantroddhāra* in the *Devīrahasya*, for this text deals in detail with the Kashmirian lineage goddesses, and according to Aithal,³⁶ the *Śrīvidyānitya-pūjāpaddhati* of Sāhib Kaul as available in the ms. Chandra Shum Shere c. 264 is roughly identical with the ritual manuals printed in the appendix to the *Devīrahasya*.³⁷ This is the relevant verse:³⁸

tāraṇ parā-mā-taṭa-sindhurārṇāḥ
khaṇ śarma tanmadhyagataṇ ca nāma |
ante śmarī pārvati śārikāyās
trayodaśārṇo manur asti gopyaḥ ||

35 See Stanislav Jager in Hanneder, Jager and Sanderson, 2012, 23.

36 Aithal, 1999, 35.

37 Judging from the excerpts a similar ms. is described in *Catalogue of the Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Library of the India Office. Part IV. A. VIII Tantra*. See Windisch, 1894, 861–862.

38 *Devīrahasya*, p. 407.

TABLE 14.1 The *bījas* as defined in the *Śārikāstotra*

Verse	<i>bīja</i>	Explanation
2	om̐	<i>tāraṃ</i>
3	hrīṃ	<i>īśaṃ sābjaṃ vahnisaṃsthaṃ sapadmaṃ</i>
4	śrīṃ	<i>lakṣmībijaṃ</i>
5	hūṃ	<i>īśaṃ sābjaṃ vāmakarṇordhvasaṃsthaṃ</i>
6	phrāṃ	<i>īśaṃ vaktravṛttena yuktaṃ sābjaṃ</i>
7	āṃ	<i>sābjaṃ vaktravṛttaṃ</i>
8	śāṃ	<i>sābjaṃ vaktravṛttena yuktaṃ asthyātmākhyāṃ</i>
9		<i>etadbījaprāntagāṃ śārikāyā ityākhyānte saṃjaped yo namo'ntāṃ</i>

The code words—*parā* for *hrīṃ*, *aśmarī* for *namaḥ* etc.—are explained in the edition of the *Devīrahasya*.³⁹ Furthermore, in its second chapter the mantras are given also in plain language (*spaṣṭam*), as is the mantra of Śārikā: *om̐ hrīṃ śrīṃ hūṃ phrāṃ āṃ śāṃ śārikāyai namaḥ*.⁴⁰ We might thus conclude that all is well, and that since the wording of the mantra itself is not (and, theologically speaking, should not) be in doubt, we have a good chance to understand Sāhib Kaul's *mantroddhāra*. Since these sets of codes cannot easily be corrupted in the course of transmission, no banal error should have crept in.⁴¹

However, if we look at the definitions in Sāhib Kaul's *Śārikāstava*, we find that not all can be brought into accord with this form of the mantra. Table 14.1 shows the expected *bījas* and their definitions in the verses. We may leave out verses 2, 4 and 9, because they do not use complicated codes: *tāra* usually means “*om̐*,” *lakṣmī* stands for “*śrī*,” and the conclusion of the mantra (dative of the deity and *namaḥ*) is as expected.

The problem arises when we try to decode the remainder as follows: (1) the element present in all definitions is *abja* and there is only one sound common to all five *bījas*, that is, *ṃ*. Apart from that nos. 6–8 have only one element in common, so *vaktravṛtta* stands for *ā*. Taking now elements that occur only once, it follows that in 8 *asthy-* must signify *ś*, *vāmakarṇa-* in 5 means *ū*, and *vahni*

39 Op. cit., pp. 19–21.

40 Op. cit., p. 13.

41 There is, of course, the counter-evidence of one manuscript of a *Śārikāstavarāja* (VOHD 2.2.116), which gives the mantra with the misspelling or wrong transcription of *hrīṃ* for *hūṃ*.

as expected stands for *r*. Now only *īśa* remains, which stands for *h* in 3 and 5, but—in view of our mantra—should stand for *ph* in 6.

Let us now look at another source. The mantra is also given in the *Dakṣiṇāmūrtyuddhārakośa*, where we find the following definition:⁴²

tāraṃ māyāṃ śrīyaṃ kūrcaṃ sindhuraṃ sūnyam eva ca |
kalyāṇaṃ śārikādevyā bījaṃ saptākṣaraṃ smṛtam ||

According to the index of code words in the appendix and the “*prakāśam*” version (ibid., 16) this translates into the seven *bījas* “*oṃ hrīṃ śrīṃ hūṃ hrāṃ āṃ śāṃ*.” The manuscripts reported have three other options for *hrāṃ*, one being *phrāṃ*, our reading from the *Devīrahasya*.

Now, in the index of the edition of the *Dakṣiṇāmūrtyuddhārakośa* the code word *sindhura* is given as *hrāṃ*, while according to the *bījākṣarapāribhāṣikasūcī* contained in the *Devīrahasya* (p. 21) it means *phrāṃ*. In other words we find two versions of the mantra in the available sources, unless the editors have misread their manuscripts. What we can say is that the evidence from Sāhib Kaul confirms the version of the *Dakṣiṇāmūrtyuddhārakośa*.

Abbreviations

conj.	conjecture
em.	emendation
ms(s.)	manuscript(s)
VOHD	Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland

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42 *Dakṣiṇāmūrti's Uddhārakośa*, p. 15. The first line up to *sindhura* is identical with another *mantroddhāra* in *Devīrahasya*, p. 13.

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