Somadeva Vasudeva, *The Yoga of the Mālinīvijayottaratantra Chapters 1–4, 7, 11–17*  

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This publication ranks as a rare exemplar of scholarship in the historical and Śāstric study of Śaiva Tantra. Somadeva Vasudeva has presented here a very detailed and excellent exposition of the yogic system described in the first seventeen chapters of the *Malinīvijayottaratantra* (MVUT), omitting Chaps. 5, 6 and 8–10. The book is arranged in three sections. There are four further sections added to the end of the book—“Abbreviations and symbols”, “Bibliography”, “Pāda index” and “General index”. A French résumé is provided at the end of the work. This is an original contribution to the study of Tantra-Yoga, especially the MVUT, which is an important and so far almost untouched text of the Trika system of Tantra.

Abhinavagupta followed and expounded on MVUT as the source of his presentation of the Trika system of the Śaiva Tantra. Its style is difficult to understand because of its terseness and ambiguity. Its study demands wide knowledge not only of other Śaiva tantric and Saiddhantic traditions but also knowledge of the philosophical systems of Śāmkhya, Vedānta, Mīmāṃsā, Pātañjala yoga and Nyāya-vaiśeṣika. This work is meant for advanced scholars in Śaiva tantric ideology in general and the Trika yoga system in particular.

The first section of the book consists of the Introduction to MVUT. In the first two parts of the Introduction, the author gives a very erudite description of his manuscript material and his method of making a critical edition of the text. It is clear and closely argued. The author has given a tentative stemma which he has used for his critical apparatus; tentative because he could not see the mss preserved in the Srinagara Library (p. XXXVI).

In the remaining two parts of this section the author discusses the sources of MVUT and the name of the text. It positions itself in the scriptural tradition of the

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Siddhayogeśvarīmatatantra and claims to be an abbreviation of the Mālinītantra. This makes it unambiguously a Trika text. The Trika system proclaims the Goddesses Parā, Parāparā and Aparā to be the highest deities in that order of hierarchy. The author claims that MVUT has absorbed materials from at least two other major Śaiva systems viz., the Śaiva Siddhānta and the Śaiva Kaula system. He argues that MVUT has made a successful synthesis of these above mentioned three Śaiva systems’ yogic method. The title of the text and its supreme deity is also discussed. The range of the meaning of the title is formidably vast and complex. Of course the more meaning one can pack into a divine name the more powerful the divine becomes. This is quite common in ancient Indian exegetical treatises of theological texts.

The book’s second section consists of the critical edition of MVUT’s Chaps. 1–4, 7 and 12–17. The critical apparatus is detailed and thorough. The author has used an amazing number of texts to prepare his text and followed a complex system of symbols and abbreviations which the reader needs to study carefully.

There are some mistakes that should be corrected in further editions. For instance, on page 84, Svaccchantatantrodhyata is SvaTaUd instead of SvaTaUdd (p. 451); also on pages 84 and 85, Parākhyatantra is abbreviated as PaAkhTa while it should be ParĀkh (p. 450). However, these are minor faults. The text is beautifully printed and the subtitles are immensely helpful.

The third and final section, ‘Conquest of the levels of Reality’, a translation of the yogic method called tattvajaya, contains a brief but very illuminating introduction to the special method of Yoga the MVUT follows. Following the subtitles of the Sanskrit text the translation is divided into twenty sub-sections. The translation and the exposition of the text are very clear. The latter contains material from a vast number of relevant original texts duly translated with the original usually given in the footnotes.

The author emphasises the fact that MVUT explicitly employs itself for the explanation of its system of meditation and as such focuses on the yogins, their process of cognition and their field of apperception, which their process of meditation makes ever smaller until total elimination. The MVUT therefore begins with classifying the world of the perceivers and the objects perceived into two categories—those which are beneficial for the goal of a yogin and those which are not and hence to be rejected. These two categories are then again divided into sub-categories, which are arranged vertically. The perceivers (pramāṭr) are divided into several categories, of which six form the beneficial group and the rest are not to be cultivated by a yogin. Six from the top are beneficial while the seventh—all creations of māyā—is considered non-beneficial (p. 151). The author’s translation of pramāṭr is ‘experient’. There are several charts to make these classifications clear.

On the empirical level, experients are called sakala and they are limited individuals. Sakala here means possessing sakti but not integrally. Also a sakala’s field of experience, based on the functions of its sensory system, consists of phenomena extraneous to the sakala individual. These experients are at the bottom of the hierarchy. At the top of the six beneficial experients are the mantra Mahēśvaras, also called vijñānakevalin; as the latter term makes it clear, these perceivers have no external objects in their field of perception. They are only aware of pure object-free knowledge. They should indeed be totally liberated individuals. But by divine ordinance these