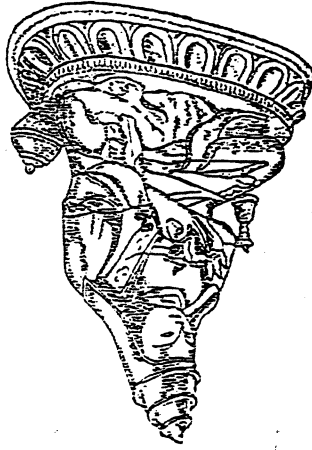


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Herausgegeben von
Michael Hahn, Jens-Uwe Hartmann
und Roland Steiner

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Kumārasambhava 3.15

Kālidāsa's Sources for Śaiva Theology

Jürgen HANNEDER

In his *Kumārasambhava* Kālidāsa, when describing the wish of the gods for a son of Śiva, makes Indra say the following:

*amī hi vīryaprabhavam bhavasya jayāya senānyam usanti devāḥ |
sa ca tvadekesunipātasādhyo brahmāṅgabhūr brāhmaṇi yojitātṁā // 3.15 //*¹

The verse is translated by Otto WALTER as follows:

Denn die Götter wünschen, um den Sieg davonzutragen, den Sohn aus Schiwas Kraft als ihren Herzog. Der Gott aber, den Du durch das Niederfallen nur eines Deiner Pfeile bezwingen könntest, hat sich ganz in Brahman versenkt, und mit Hersagen von heiligen Sprüchen berührt er die brahman-heiligen Stellen des Körpers.²

The sense of *brahmāṅgabhūḥ* in the last quarter of the verse remains opaque in this translation and has remained so in all the others which I could check.³ For it to be meaningful we first have to reverse the position of statements in Pāda c and d. KĀLE in his translation has done this: "... who has concentrated his mind on Brahman, can be subdued (managed) by the fall of your arrow only."⁴ His translation of *eka* gives the right emphasis in the context, because what is relevant here is not that Kāma would need only *one* arrow, but that *only his* arrow can accomplish the objective: the birth of

¹ The variant readings given in the editions (*harasya* for *bhavasya*, *-hāryo* for *-sādhyo* and *brahma-niyojitātṁā*) are not relevant for our context.

² Otto WALTER, *Der Kumārasambhava oder die Geburt des Kriegsgottes*, München-Leipzig, 1913.

³ *Kumāra Sambhava*, *Kālidāsa's Carmen*, editit Adolphus Fridericus STENZLER, Berlin/London, MDCCCXXXVIII; M. R. KĀLE, *Kālidāsa's Kumārasambhava Cantos I-VIII*, Delhi, 1981; Bernadette TUBINI, *Kālidāsa, La naissance de Kumara*, Gallimard, 1958; Renate SYED, *Kālidāsa's Kumārasambhava*, Reinbek, 1993.

⁴ M. R. KĀLE, *Kālidāsa's Kumārasambhava Cantos I-VIII* (see n. 3 above).

Kumāra!⁵ We would assume that the fourth Pāda gives the reason why it is only through Kāma's arrows that he can be conquered, that is, why he is invincible by ordinary means, a quality that is exactly the reason why the gods wish Śiva's offspring for their purpose.

But we shall first look at Mallinātha's commentary on the fourth Pāda, which has been the source for WALTER's and many other translations that we may ignore for the present purpose:

[He is] the abode [bhūh̄ = *sthānam*] of the *brahmans*, i.e. the mantras of Sa-dyojāta etc. [and] the *aṅgas*, i.e. the mantras called *hr̥daya* etc. The sense [of this qualification] is that he has performed the ritual placing (*nyāsa*) of [these] mantras [onto his body].⁶

There is reason to assume that Mallinātha was influenced by the undoubtedly more coherent interpretation of the earliest commentator on the *Kumārasambhava*,⁷ Vallabhadeva, who says on *brahmāṅgabhūh̄* after discarding two interpretations of others:

But we say that [*brahmāṅga* means] *brahmans* and *aṅgas* and these are specific well-known mantras; their source (*bhūh̄* = *prabhavaḥ*) [i.e. Śiva, is therefore *brahmāṅgabhūh̄*], because these mantras originate from him (*at*).⁸

⁵ Cf. Vallabhadeva on the first part of the verse: *atas ca tvadānyāḥ ka iva vaśīkartum īso bhavet*. For the text of Vallabhadeva's commentary the edition by M. S. NARAYANA MURTI (*Vallabhadeva's Commentary (Śāradā-Version) zum Kumārasambhava des Kālidāsa*, Wiesbaden, 1980) remains the most reliable. Gautam PATEL's edition (*Kumārasambhavam* [With the Commentary of Vallabhadeva], Ahmedabad, 1986) is methodologically weak, as it selects a Devanāgarī paper manuscript "as the base text because it is found to be the best preserved and faultless MS." (p. 8) As HOUSMAN says in his famous polemical article (A. E. HOUSMAN, "The Application of Thought to Textual Criticism", in: *The Classical Papers of A. E. Housman*, collected and edited by J. Wiggle and F. R. Goodyear, Volume III 1915-1936, Cambridge, 1972) one must wonder why the intrinsic worth of the readings of a particular manuscript can be damaged through mechanical processes.

⁶ *brahmāṅgam saḍyojātādimantrāṅām aṅgānāṁ hr̥dayādīmantrāṅām bhūh̄ sthānam brahmāṅgabhūh̄ / kṛtamantranyāsa ity arthaḥ* (*The Kumārasambhava of Kālidāsa with the Commentary of Mallinātha* [. . .], ed. N. Bh. PARVANĪKARA and Kāśinātha Pāduranga PARABA, Bombay: Nirṇaya Sāgara Press, 1886.)

⁷ In his commentary on *Kumārasambhava* 1.35 Mallinātha quotes Vallabhadeva by name.

⁸ *vyaṅgam tu brūmah̄ / brahmāṅy aṅgāni ca mantraviśeṣās caiva prasiddhās teṣāṁ bhūh̄ prabhavaḥ / taprabhavarvān mantrāṅām*. Gautam PATEL's text hardly makes sense (my addition in pointed brackets): *brahmano ṅgāni paḥcaṣaṭ mantraviśeṣāḥ śaivāgamaprasiddhās teṣāṁ bhūh̄ prabhavaḥ, teṣāṁ tatsambhavarvān mantrāṅām*. It adds the numbers of these mantras, namely five and six, and states that they are well-known in the Śaivāgamas, but the editor apparently did not understand the point of *brahmāṅy aṅgāni* and therefore accepted the reading of the "faultless" Devanāgarī manuscript against all the others!

The five *brahma-* and six *aṅgamantras* are indeed well-known to an author like Vallabhadeva, as they form the very basis of the Tantric Śaiva ritual system if wide-spread in Kashmir during his lifetime. These eleven mantras form the so-called *mantrasamhitā* or *śivasamhitā*⁹ to be recited in certain rituals. They are formed in four parts, (1) *om*, (2) the monosyllabic seed-syllable (*bija*) that defines this Tantric,¹⁰ (3) a word in the dative and (4) the concluding formula (*īriti*). The *b mantras*, as given by Kṣemarāja according to the mantric system of the *Svacc* would be the following:¹¹

om kṣaṃ iśānamūrdhne namaḥ
om yaṃ tapurusavaktrāya namaḥ
om raṃ aghoraḥṛdayāya namaḥ
om vaṃ vāmadevaguhyāya namaḥ
om laṃ saḍyojātāmūrtaye namaḥ

The five *brahmamantras* *om raṃ aghoraḥṛdayāya namaḥ*
om vaṃ vāmadevaguhyāya namaḥ
om laṃ saḍyojātāmūrtaye namaḥ

The effective part of these mantras are the *bijas*,¹² here the *bijas* of the first two, which differ according to the mantric system of the Tantra that is used. *Śārdhatisatikālotratāntra* (1.9c),¹³ for instance, teaches that these *bijas* are followed by the five short vowels and *anusvāra*, i. e. *hoṃ* for *kṣaṃ*, the *huṃ*, *hiṃ*, *haṃ*.¹⁴

⁹ HÉLÈNE BRUNNER-LACHAUX, *Somaśambhupaddhati*, Première Partie, Pondichéry, 1966. (vs. 1.51).

¹⁰ Pace STAAL: "To sum up, it is not possible to make a systematic distinction between Vedic, and other Hindu mantras." Frits STAAL, "Vedic Mantras", in: *Mantra*, ed. Harvey ALPER, 1989, p. 63.

¹¹ See *The Svaccānta-tantra with commentary by Kṣemarāja*, ed. by Madhusudan KAMU. S. [Vol. 1], Bombay 1921 (Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies, 31), p. 41 (vs. 1.46cd).

¹² For the Śaiva theologian Abhinavagupta the *bija* is effective, because it partakes of the full consciousness in as much as it is not confined by an object to be expressed (*vācya*): in a mantra is powerful, because it has no conventional meaning (*Tantrāloka* 4.141).

¹³ *Śārdhatisatikālotratāgama avec le commentaire de Bhaṭṭa Rāmakanṭha*, édition critique par BHATT, Pondichéry, 1979.

¹⁴ See Rāmakanṭha's commentary on the verse for the justification of the doctrine that *o* a short here.

om hām hṛdayāya namaḥ
 om hīm śirase svāhā
 om hām śikhāyāi vaṁṣaḥ
 om haim kavacāya huṁ
 om haum netrebhyaḥ vaṣaḥ
 om haḥ astrāya phat

The six *aṅgamantras*¹⁵

The *brahmanmantras* are used for instance in the ritual purification of the body in the worshipper's daily schedule (*nityakarma*): in order to purify the body with sacrificial ash (*bhasmasnāna*) the mantras are ritually placed (*nyāsa*) onto the body through dusting the parts of the body that correspond to the mantra with ash, i.e. the head while reciting the Īśāna-mantra etc.¹⁶ This is what Mallinātha refers to, but his commentary is a serious misinterpretation, for it is not Śiva who performs the *nyāsa* on his body, but—if we follow this line of interpretation—the essentially formless deity (*niṣkalaśiva*) has created himself a body through these mantras.¹⁷ The Śiva who can be perceived by the gods is a form created by these mantras, whereas the formless Śiva is the source of these mantras. It seems that Mallinātha, although aware of the doctrinal background of Vallabhadeva's interpretation, cannot make sense of it—he also gives the *brahmanmantras* in the wrong sequence¹⁸—, whereas Vallabhadeva gives us a concise, but sound Tantric interpretation of the passage.

And this interpretation would indeed provide us with the reason appropriate for the context: Precisely because Śiva's body is formed out of the mantras that are the instruments for the creation and destruction of the universe, the gods have reason to believe that his offspring will inherit this power, and be able to defeat the demon. From the

¹⁵ See HÉLÈNE BRUNNER, "Les Membres de Śiva", in: *Asiatische Studien* 40.1 (1986), pp. 89-132, and *Svacchandatantra* 1.71-72.

¹⁶ See *Somaśambhupaddhati*, 1.39: *īśānapuruṣāgḥoragūṇyākāṅkāmbaraiḥ / kramenoddhūlayen mūrdhvaktraḥśūkyavivrahān //*. See *Sārdhatriśatikāloṭṭara*, 2.10cd and 4.2cd-3.

¹⁷ See for instance *Mrgendratantra* (ed. Madhusūdan Kaul SHASTRĪ, Bombay, 1930 [Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies, 50], vidyāpāda, 1.3.8cd-9ab: "His body, starting from the head, is made of five mantras that are conducive to the five acts, namely Īśāna (*īśa*), Tapuruṣa, Aghora, Vāma[deva] and Sadyojāta (*ajā*)."*(śadvapuḥ pañcabhūr mantraiḥ pañcakṛtyopayogibhiḥ // īśānapuruṣāgḥoravāmājair mastakādīkam /)* Cf. also *Pūrvakāmikā* 4.327 (quoted in BRUNNER 1986 [see n. 15 above], p. 104): *sadāśivam [...] brahmāṅgaktvāgraham*.

¹⁸ The series beginning with Sadyojāta is derived from the Vedic *brahmanmantras* (*sadyojātam prapadyāmi ...*) that occur in the *Taittirīyāranyaka* (prapāthaka 10, anuvāka 43-47 in Śāyana's;

perspective of a Kashmirian of the tenth century like Vallabhadeva this makes sense, even the *vīrya* in Pāda a rings with a hidden sense: besides meaning sen also the technical term for the power of a mantra.¹⁹ To go back to a more usual meaning of *brahmāṅgabhūḥ* like 'born from the body of Brahmā', as suggest other commentators²⁰ is not satisfying,²¹ but the question remains whether Vallabhadeva's interpretation is anachronistic. We know of the practices referred to above texts that cannot be dated with any certainty: their terminus ante quem is provided by the Nepalese palm leaf manuscripts and commentaries by the Kashmirian like, in the case of the Mṛgendra, Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha (early tenth century) leave us with perhaps the ninth century. We might also imagine that the eleven which form the core of the ritual system of the Tantric Śaivas cannot be a late element and might have been part of the Śaiva canon that must have existed in the tenth century.²² We know that Kālidāsa lived most probably in the fourth or fifth century AD, which would mean that a further gap of two centuries has to be explained alternative interpretation that would not upset the historical framework would understand *brahmāṅga* as *brahmaṅgam aṅgāni* and to take it as a reference to the five Vedic *brahmanmantras* in the practice of the Pāsupatas. We can see in the *Pāsupatasūtra* that the five mantras play a decisive role in their practice and that the mantras are divided into parts in the Sūtras themselves. As Pāsupata Śaivism is a date Tantric Śaivism,²³ we could thus solve the incongruence between Vallabhadeva's interpretation and Kālidāsa's date. But is it more plausible? I think not, because we would then have to regard *brahmāṅgabhūḥ* as meaning no more than *brahma* and other words *aṅga* would be redundant. Furthermore *aṅga*, unlike *brahma*, is

¹⁹ See Abhinavagupta's *Tantrāloka* 30.121 (*The Tantrāloka of Abhinavagupta*, ed. [but in reprint] by R. C. DWIVEDI and Navajivan RASTOGI, Vol. VII, Delhi, 1987), and Śivasūtra 1.1.1. Vallabhadeva (*The Śivasūtravimarsinī of Kṣemarāja* [Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies, ed. by J. C. CHATTERJI, Srinagar, 1911].)

²⁰ See M. R. KALE, *Kālidāsa's Kumārāsambhava Cantos I-VIII* (see n. 3 above), commenta

²¹ One might wonder, why the most simple interpretation for *brahmāṅgabhūḥ*, "arisen from of Brahmā", is not the obvious solution. The episode in Sarga II, 53ff could be taken in favour of interpretation, that is, Brahmā declines only because of his role as a Creator, but remains the source of power. But this is contradicted in vs. 58, where he describes Śiva as superior to him Viṣṇu.

²² We know this much from a reference in the *Harṣacarita*. There Bāna describes a Śaivite, "who has the whole Śaiva canon on the tip of his tongue . . ." (*jihvāgrasthitāsvastava bhāreṇa*, ed. KALE, p. 47, l. 6/7.)

seem to be a technical term in the Pāsupata sources of which I am aware and we do not know of a Pāsupata practice similar to the Tantric [*brahma*]kālānyāsa, in which the parts of the five Vedic mantras are invoked singly with or without their powers or any other similar practice that would justify such an expression.²⁴

One may also wonder how serious one should take a doctrinal allusion in a Kāvya that is necessarily guided by other rules and may therefore by its very nature misrepresent the doctrine alluded to. Even the next attribute of Śiva in the poem, *brahmani yojitātmā*, could be seen to contradict Vallabhadeva's interpretation, because the highest deity of the Tantras would not be in need of meditation on the absolute. But there are no rules on how to refer to theology in a Kāvya and the fact remains that Vallabhadeva's interpretation is the only one that makes sense in the wider context and this can hardly be accidental. We therefore have to conclude that there remains the possibility that not only proto-Purāṇas,²⁵ but also proto-Tantras were among Kālidāsa's sources.

²⁴ One instance of such a practice can be found of in a text of unknown religious affiliation: *om aghorebhyo hrdayāya namaḥ / atha ghorebhyah śirase svāhā / ghoraghoratārebyah śikhāyai vauṣaṭ / sarvebhyo kavacāya huṃ / sarvaṇi śarvebhyo netratrayāya vasaṭ / namas te rudrarūpebhyah astrāya phaṭ /* (Rāmādulāra SMḤA [ed.]: *Collected Works of Aghora Manuscripts*, Vārāṇasī, 1986, p. 1)

²⁵ Ludo ROCHER (*The Purāṇas* [A History of Indian Literature II.3], Wiesbaden, 1986, p. 89) takes it for granted that the parallels between some Purāṇas and the *Kumārasambhava* point to an influence of Purāṇas on Kālidāsa. There is also a study by HENSGEN of the parallels between the *Kumārasambhava* and the *Śivapurāṇa* (Hans HENSGEN, *Kālidāsa's Kumārasambhava und seine Quellen*, PhD dissertation, Bonn, 1953). Even if HENSGEN's line of reasoning, in which he excludes the possibility that the *Śivapurāṇa* could have been on the receiving side, were compelling, it would not amount to much, for it would only mean that a prototype of the story which runs parallel to the *Kumārasambhava* was known to Kālidāsa. The rest of the Purāṇa may be much later than this story, and for the last chapter, the Vāya-vīya-Saphitā, this is not difficult to establish: it talks of "śivasāstra" when referring to what seems to be its own doctrine and in the edition this is made clear even in the colophon. It incorporates doctrines which are clearly lifted from Tantric sources, as for instance the *brahmakālānyāsa* in 22.32-36 and introduces doctrines in a way which makes the borrowing explicit: *śivāśāstre śivenaiva śivāyai kathitasya tu / ...* (23.1). The *brahma-* and *āneamantras* as well as the *mūlamantra* are mentioned in the first chapter