

BUDHA-KAUŚIKA'S RĀMARAKṢĀSTOTRA : A Contribution to the Study of Sanskrit devotional Poetry by Gundrun Bühnemann. Publications of the De Nobili Research Library, Vienna- 1983. Pages 127.

The *Rāmarakṣāstotra* (*RR*) ascribed to the Ṛṣi Budha-Kauśika is one of the most popular Sanskrit Stotras of Maharashtra. (The reviewer remembers having recited it daily when he was a boy, when the lamps were lighted in the evenings.) Incidentally, the author assigns the popularity of the *RR* particularly in the Maharashtra to the fillip the worship of Rāma and Māruti received at the hands of the saint Rāmadāsa in the seventeenth century). The book consists of three chapters : I. Versions (pp. 23-68), II. Interpretations (69-87), III. Applications (88-119), followed by Conclusion (121-123) and an Index (125-127).

Having examined the MSS of the *RR* (available in Pune, Wai, Ayo-dhya and Varanāsi) the author discerns eight versions of the *RR* as under :

1. The modern version, printed in various Stotra collections.
2. Versions found in the MSS which widely differ (even in a text consisting barely of three dozen stanzas) from the modern version, one of them being the *Rāmarakṣāstotramālā*.
3. Version of the printed editions of the *Padmapurāṇa* and two versions which are ascribed to the *Padmapurāṇa*, but not found in the printed edition.
4. the version of the *Ānanda-Rāmāyaṇa*.
5. A version coming from Bali.
6. Versions commented on by Mudgala and
7. by Nīlakaṇṭha Caturdhara
8. The version used in the ritual described in the *Agastya-Samhitā* and the *Rāmarakṣāprayoga*.

Two or three points made by the author in this connection are worth noting : one is that ' Out of the [MS] material examined only three manuscripts had the text of the printed modern version. All the others showed a different sequence of the verses and included stanzas taken from other sources. The manuscripts coming from Maharashtra differed very much from each other : no two manuscripts had the same version. Those of Varanāsi showed more uniformity ' (p. 34). About the *Padmapūrāṇa* version (I) which has only 10 verses the author says that it ' does not have a single verse in common with the modern version ' (p. 56). Regarding the relationship between the modern printed *RR* and the one found in the *Ānanda-Rāmāyaṇa*, the author says that, contrary to the generally held opinion, there is no

reason to assume that the modern version is based on the $\bar{A}R$ (thus confirming a suggestion already made by the late Prof. N. A. Gore).

The interpretations are based on Sanskrit sources (Mudgala's *Rāmarakṣāṭīkā* and Nilakaṇṭha Caturdhara's *Mantra-Rāmāyaṇa*) and modern (Marathi) commentaries (S. K. Devdhar, Satyadevānanda Sarasvati and Pandit S. D. Satavalekar), the latter which 'were obviously written without knowledge of the Sanskrit commentaries. All of them try to establish a relation between the names of Rāma used in the *kavaca* section of the Stotra and the body parts mentioned. The Sanskrit commentaries moreover suggest a Vedantic interpretation of the Stotra' (p 122). The author adds: 'To modern men the various interpretations ... of the small Stotra are astonishing; many of them seem highly artificial'. Still 'They are a document of the popularity of the Stotra and they show how much thought and labour religious minded people invested in finding a hidden meaning in each verse which included the teachings of their philosophic systems and could have a message for their own lives' (p. 69).

One chapter—based on the *Agastya-Saṁhitā* and the *Rāmarakṣā-prayoga*—is devoted to the Tantric application of the *RR* (thus adding to the informativeness of the book): how the *yantra* is to be drawn, how often the Stotra should be recited to achieve a particular effect, and so on. Finally a section on recitation (with notation) is added to emphasize that the Stotras are meant for recitation by heart — often in a semi-musical way; 'thus they have without doubt a salutary effect on the mind and become a part of the reciter' (p. 123).

Let us hope that the book will kindle enthusiasm towards the Stotras which 'are unknown to Western Indologists and ignored by the Indian scholars' (Author's Foreword).

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