

## Patronage and social issues in the *Dīptāgama*

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The *Dīptāgama*, the critical edition of which has just been completed (three volumes, by M.-L. Barazer-Billoret, B. Dagens and the present author, Pondicherry 2004-2009), is deemed as one of the 28 main *āgamas* of the Śaivasiddhānta school from South India. Dealing mainly with installation rituals (*pratiṣṭhā*), its scope range from the setting up of the temple to the festivals organized in its precincts and around and to related topics. Most of the treatise being thus dedicated to public rituals and ceremonies, to which different parts of the society participate, social matters are one of the side issues of the text.

Broadly speaking, concerned people can be classified into temple staff and faithful laymen. The temple staff comprises officiating priests (*ācāryas*), together with several assistants and technicians; since several rituals also involve learned vaidika and śaiva Brahmins, the paper will present the different śaiva groups or sects evoked in the text. On the other hand, the lay community is present in many ceremonies, though this participation is rather silent. A certain number of professional categories, more or less related to temple activities, are mentioned (craftsmen, musicians, dancers, etc.); besides there are several references to the classical four *varnas* system of the *Dharmaśāstras*, the problem being to know what these references really mean.

This paper will try to show that the evolution of social history may be reflected in the evolution of the text, since it appears that the *Dīptāgama*, as it is today, is the result of a long (and sometimes contradictory) development.

Among the lay community a special place is held by the patron (*yājamāna*). He plays an important role in the founding of the temple and the setting up of the images; the beginning of many rituals often may depend on his own astrological data; he provides the necessary funds and, finally, he benefits from the whole operation. One of the peculiarities of the *Dīptāgama* is that this patron seems to be often linked to the “king” and one wonders whether he is not himself the king (*rāja*, *nṛpa* but it may sometimes mean simply *kṣatriya*). As a matter of fact, the patronage issue may be strongly associated to the date(s) and the history of the text. This paper will try to give, if not positive answers to all these questions, at least some clues to their solution.