

The Cult of composite Lakṣmīvāsudeva as reflected in the *Vāsudevakalpa*

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Three decades ago when Pratapaditya PAL reported about the composite images of Lakṣmī and Vāsudeva, it was thought that these images were limited to Nepal. In the ensuing years, more images of the same kind were reported from other corners of the Indian subcontinent. Now the scriptural sources for these images that have hitherto been reported and analysed are relatively late Tantric texts which give little notion of their symbolism and ritual context. In order to fill this gap in our knowledge, I will report on the discovery of an unpublished work called the *Vāsudevakalpa* (ascribed to a certain *Mahālakṣmīsaṃhitā*) which has survived in a 13th-century manuscript together with an almost complete ritual manual copied in the same hand.

This text is exclusively concerned with the composite form of Lakṣmīvāsudeva. It provides mantras and visualizations of the deity and retinue, and discusses all necessary details of the cult. It also reveals the symbolism involved in the iconography and presents the religious philosophy of the cult. In this paper, I plan to analyse the contents of this text with an extra focus on iconography and its symbolic meanings.