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## *Śaṃskāras* in Theory and Practice<sup>1</sup>

The present paper deals with one of the transitional rites (*śaṃskāras*, *rites de passage*) of a South Indian caste of temple priests, the Vaikhānasas. We are fortunate to have a ritual (the *śaṃskāra niṣeka*) which can be traced back to the first literal exposition of a religious group (the Vaikhānasas), which is dealt with in many textual layers of this tradition, and which today still plays an important role in the self-definition of this group.

I shall track down the history and change of this ritual, and demonstrate the theoretical and practical impact of this change. It is evident that this ritual in spite of all changes is today nothing more than a formula which nevertheless establishes the uniqueness and superiority of the Vaikhānasa tradition within the Vaiṣṇava groups of South India. The considerations presented here are mainly based on Vaikhānasa Sanskrit texts,<sup>2</sup> but also on interviews with members of diverse Vaikhānasa communities in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

Present-day Vaikhānasas are members of a Brahmin caste of temple priests in South Indian Viṣṇu temples.<sup>3</sup> They have a very long literary tradition, reaching back most probably to the third or fourth century C.E., around the time when their Sūtras (*Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*, *Vaikhānasaśrautrasūtra*) came into existence.<sup>4</sup> At that time they formed a “branch” (*śākhā*) of the Taittirīya section of the black Yajurveda. Some centuries later a group called “Vaikhānasas” produced a number of Sanskrit-texts dealing with temple rituals to be performed by temple priests (*arcaka*) in a Viṣṇu temple. These texts are collectively called *Vaikhānasasamhitās*, the main corpus of which was written between the 9<sup>th</sup> and

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1 I would like to thank the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) for its generous financial support which made the research for this paper possible.

2 In the present paper I only take into account printed Vaikhānasa texts. Furthermore, I did not standardize the cited Sanskrit-texts according to the common orthography.

3 See Colas 1996: 111–138; Colas 1984: 73–86; Hüsken 2001: 169–179.

4 On the date of the Vaikhānasasūtras see Bloch 1896, Caland 1926 and Keith 1927: 623–624.

the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries C.E.<sup>5</sup> At the time of the compilation of the *Vaikhānasasamhitās* the *Vaikhānasas*—or at least some of them—evidently had developed from a Vedic school to a group of ritual specialists, occupied with the performance of the ritual in Viṣṇu temples.

This holds true until today: nowadays the *Vaikhānasas* are one of two main groups in South India<sup>6</sup> which perform the rites in Viṣṇu temples. Contemporary *Vaikhānasa arcakas* claim to be direct descendents of *Vikhanas*, the mythical enunciator of the *Vaikhānasasūtras*, and they frequently refer to the four mythical *ṛṣis*, who were pupils of *Vikhanas* and who compiled the *Vaikhānasasamhitās* on the basis of *Vikhanas*' personal instructions on temple rites. Therefore, the *Vaikhānasasūtras* together with the *Vaikhānasasamhitās* are collectively called *Vaikhānasabhagavacchāstra*, the “canon” of the *Vaikhānasas*.

While referring to their supposedly *vaidika* tradition the *Vaikhānasa* texts rarely mention a concrete “Vedic” ritual. One exception is the prenatal *saṃskāra niṣeka*, which is mentioned in the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* and therefore is Vedic in character. The contemporary *arcakas* belonging to this tradition frequently refer to one half-verse given in some of the *Vaikhānasamhitās* which characterizes one of the peculiarities of the *Vaikhānasas*: as temple priests they are “endowed with the *saṃskāras* beginning with *niṣeka*, as laid down in the *Vaikhānasasūtra*” (*vaikhānasena sūtreṇa niṣekādikriyānvit[a]-*).<sup>7</sup>

The contents of the *Sūtras* are very different of those of the *Samhitās*: while the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* is concerned with the religious duties during the four “stages of life” (*varṇāśramadharmā*), and the domestic duties and rituals of an individual *Vaikhānasa* male, the *Samhitās* are mainly guidelines for the public rituals to be performed by a “professional” *Vaikhānasa* priest in Viṣṇu temples. Therefore, the expression “being endowed with the *saṃskāras* beginning with *niṣeka*, as laid down in the *Vaikhānasasūtra*” in the *Samhitās* is the most conspicuous reference to the “Vedic roots” of the *Vaikhānasas* in their *Samhitā*-literature<sup>8</sup> and thus seems to bridge a gap of at least 500 years between the com-

5 Colas 1996. On the dates of the *Vaikhānasasamhitās* see esp. pp. 57–97.

6 The other group of temple priests are the so-called *Pāñcarātrins*.

7 This half-verse frequently appears in the *Samhitās*; see for example *Ānandasamhitā* 4.73ab, *ibid.* 9.2ab, *ibid.* 11.13cd, *ibid.* 13.37cd, *Yajñādhikāra* 51.2cd, *ibid.* 51.33cd, *Samūrtārcanādhikāraṇa* 27.10ab, *ibid.* 65.122cd, *Khilādhikāra* 1.38cd, *ibid.* 16.3ab, *ibid.* 41.6cd, *Kriyādhikāra* 1.22cd, *Prakīrṇādhikāra* 11.2ab, *ibid.* 18.4ab.

8 Although there are frequent references to the Vedic background and principles underlying the temple rituals of the *Vaikhānasas* (for example *Ānandasamhitā* 14.18ab: *yad vāstv a-ṅgālaye viṣṇor arcanam vaidikam bhaved* |; *Yajñādhikāra* 51.1cd: *viṣṇos tantram dvidhā proktam arcanārthan tu vaidikam* |; *Samūrtārcanādhikāraṇa* 65.120cd: *mukhyam vaidi-*

pilation of the Sūtras and the emergence of the Saṃhitās—a period otherwise covered rather poorly in the textual references to the Vaikhānasas.<sup>9</sup>

*Niṣeka*, the ritual referred to in the above-mentioned self-projection, is the first sexual intercourse of a newly married couple (literally *niṣeka* means “pouring [of semen]”). It is one of the rituals usually categorized as *saṃskāra* in the earliest texts on domestic rituals, the Gṛhyasūtras. *Saṃskāras* are transitional rites to be performed at crucial points in the life of an individual. Other common *saṃskāras* are for example the rituals connected with childbirth, name-giving, initiation to Vedic learning, marriage etc.<sup>10</sup>

### *Niṣeka* in the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*

The use of the term *niṣeka* for the first sexual intercourse of the newly married couple is by no means uniform in the early literature on domestic rituals, the Gṛhyasūtras. There are also other traditional terms: *garbhādhāna* (“giving of a foetus”), *ṛtusamgamana* (“coming together during the fertile period”)<sup>11</sup> and *caturthivrata* (“vow of the fourth night [after marriage]”), or *caturthikarman* (“the ritual of the fourth night [after marriage]”). The *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*, however, counts *niṣeka* as well as *garbhādhāna* and *ṛtusamgamana*. In our context *niṣeka* as “pouring of semen” mainly refers to the (possible) result of the husband’s emission of semen, namely “impregnation”. Therefore, it is considered “the first *saṃskāra*” of an unborn child in the Vaikhānasa tradition.

Since the mediaeval ritual texts as well as the present day representatives of the Vaikhānasa tradition frequently refer to the earliest preserved literary expositions of this group, the *Vaikhānasasūtra*, as the authoritative and primary source of their rituals, I will examine the ritual *niṣeka* as given in the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* first.

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*kam uddiṣṭaṃ gauṇaṃ vai tāntrikaṃ smṛtaṃ* |; *Ānandasamhitā* 2.87ab: *sa tu vaikhānase sūtre viṣṇvarcām āha vaidikīm* |; *Prakīrṇādhikāra* 30.6a: *vaikhānasaṃ vaidikaṃ syād*; *Ānandasamhitā* 8.21cd: *vaidikaṃ vikhanāḥ proktaṃ tāntrikaṃ pāñcarātrakaṃ* |) and although the *Vaikhānasasūtra* is sometimes even equated with the Veda (*Ānandasamhitā* 4.49: *vede vaikhānase sūtre yo dharmāḥ parikīrtitaḥ* | *sarvaiś sadharmo ’nuṣṭheyo nātra kāryā vicāraṇā* ||), the reference to a concrete “Vedic” ritual is rare.

9 On the rare inscriptional references to Vaikhānasas see Colas 1996: 58–63. Therefore, the development of a group called Vaikhānasa from a Vedic branch (*śākhā*) to a Hindu caste remains obscure for the time being.

10 On the Gṛhyasūtras see Gonda 1977. On *saṃskāras* see Pandey 1949, and see Kane 1997 vol. 2, chapter 6: *Saṃskāras*.

11 On menstruation as a period of fertility, see Slaje 1997: 207–234, see also Slaje 1995: 109–148.

The opening sentence there reads: “We will now explain the *saṃskāras*, which begin with *niṣeka*” (*atha niṣekādisaṃskārān vyākhyāsyāmaḥ*). Thus, not only do the *saṃskāras* start with *niṣeka*, but the whole *Vaikhānasasūtra* puts *niṣeka* in the first place. It is evident that the standard expression in the *Samhitās vaikhānasena sūtreṇa niṣekādikriyānvit[a]-*, “endowed with the *saṃskāras* as laid down in the *Vaikhānasasūtra*, beginning with *niṣeka*”, is based on this first sentence of the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*. The *Sūtra* then continues:

There are eighteen *saṃskāras* relating to the body: (*niṣeka* as the first, secondly the couple) comes together during the (wife’s) fertile period (*rtusaṃgamana*), the impregnation (*garbhādhāna*), the ceremony of securing male offspring (*pumsavana*), the parting of the (pregnant wife’s) hair (*sīmanta*), the *bali*-offering to Viṣṇu (*viṣṇubali*), the birth-rite (*jātakarman*), the getting up (from the child-bed) (*utthāna*), the name-giving (*nāmakaraṇa*), feeding (the child the first solid) food (*annaprāśana*), the return from (the first) excursion (*pravāsāgamana*), the increasing of the rice-balls (*piṇḍavardhana*), the (first) tonsure (*cauḍaka*), the initiation into Vedic studies (*upanayana*), the undertaking and the abandonment of the *pārāyaṇa*-vow (*parāyaṇavratibandhavisarga*), the (annual) taking up (of studies) (*upākarman*), the returning (home after the completion of the Vedic studies) (*samāvartana*), the grasping of (the future wife’s) hand (= marriage) (*pānigrahaṇa*); and the 22 sacrifices (*yajña*) (which also count as *saṃskāras*) are the sacrifice to Brahmā (*brahmayajña*), to the Gods (*devayajña*), to the Fathers (*pitryajña*), to the Bhūtas (*bhūtayajña*) and to the men (*manuṣyayajña*)—(these are the) five (which) have to be performed daily (and which together count as one). (Furthermore there are) the seven sacrifices of cooked food (*pākayajña*), (namely) *sthālīpāka*, *āgrayaṇa*, *aṣṭakā*, the sacrifice of rice-balls to the Fathers (*piṇḍapitryajña*), the monthly *śrāddha* (*māsiśrāddha*), the *caitrī*- and *āśvayujī*-sacrifices, (furthermore) the seven sacrifices of *havis* (*haviryajña*), (namely) *agnyādheya*, *agnihotra*, the two sacrifices at full and new moon (*darśapūrṇamāsa*), *āgrayaṇeṣṭi*, *cāturmāsya*, *nirūdhapaśubandha* and *sautrāmaṇī*, (furthermore) the seven sacrifices to Soma (*somayajña*), (namely) *agniṣṭoma*, *atyagniṣṭoma*, *ukthya*, *ṣoḍaśin*, *vājapeya*, *atirātra*, and *aptoryāma*. These are the 40 (*saṃskāras*).<sup>12</sup>

12 *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* I.1: *atha niṣekādisaṃskārān vyākhyāsyāmaḥ. rtusaṃgamanagarbhādhānapumsavanasīmantaviṣṇubalijātakarmothhānanāmakaraṇānnaprāśanapravāsāgamanapiṇḍavardhanacauḍakopanayanapārāyaṇavratibandhavisargopākarmasamāvartanapānigrahaṇānīty aṣṭādaśa saṃskārāḥ śārīrāḥ. yajñās ca dvāviṃśat brahmayajño devayajño pitryajño bhūtayajño manuṣyayajñās ceti pañcānām aharaharanuṣṭhānam. sthālīpāka āgrayaṇam aṣṭakā piṇḍapitryajño māsiśrāddham caitrīyāśvayujīti sapta pākayajñāḥ. agnyādheyam agnihotram darśapūrṇamāsāv āgrayaṇeṣṭiś cāturmāsyo nirūdhapaśubandhaḥ sautrāmaṇīti sapta haviryajñāḥ. agniṣṭomo 'tyagniṣṭoma ukthyaḥ ṣoḍaśi vājapeyo 'tirātro 'ptoryāma iti sapta somayajñā ity. ete catvāriṃśad bhavanti.*

This list in the beginning of the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* speaks of 18 *saṃskāras* “relating to the body” and 22 sacrifices, which also count as *saṃskāras*. This amounts to 40 *saṃskāras* altogether. While according to the opening sentence the series of *saṃskāras* starts with *niṣeka*, this ensuing list continues with *ṛtusamgamana*, the “coming together during the fertile period”, which is a term for the sexual intercourse of husband and wife at a certain time after the beginning of the wife’s menstrual flow.

This has been interpreted differently by the first Western investigators of the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*. Theodor Bloch<sup>13</sup> counts *ṛtusamgamana* as the first *saṃskāra* and counts *pārāyaṇa*, *vratibandhavisarga* and *upākarmaṇ* each as separate *saṃskāras*. Therefore, he evidently considers *ṛtusamgamana* identical with *niṣeka*. Caland in his translation of the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* follows the interpretation of Nṛsiṃha Vājapeyin’s commentary<sup>14</sup> and explicitly states that *niṣeka* is different from *ṛtusamgamana*. Kane in his *History of Dharmasāstra* states that in the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* *ṛtusamgamana* is also called *niṣeka*.<sup>15</sup> Pandey in his *Hindu Saṃskāras* interprets *ṛtusamgamana* as the Vaikhānasas’ first *saṃskāra*. However, he does not count *puṃsavana*, he separates *pārāyaṇa* from *vratibandhavisarga*, and places a *saṃskāra* called *utsarjana* after *upākarmaṇ*.<sup>16</sup> This interpretation cannot be based on the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*.

A close look at the text shows that the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* itself is not uniform in this respect either. In the description of the prenatal *saṃskāras* (from *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* 3.8 onwards) it leaves it largely to the reader to decide which of the described prenatal rituals is designated by which of the “key words” given in the list at the beginning of the text. Only in *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* 3.11 (*puṃsavana*) 3.12 (*sīmanta*), and 3.13 (*viṣṇubali*) are the names of the *saṃskāras* listed in *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* 1.1 mentioned,<sup>17</sup> but not in the sections on *niṣeka*, *ṛtusamgamana*, and *garbhādhāna*. In *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* 3.8 the first sexual intercourse of the newly married couple in the fourth night

13 Bloch 1896. It should be noted that Bloch also lists Varṣavardhana as *saṃskāra*, which is not given in the list, and thus counts 19 *saṃskāras*.

14 For his edition of the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* Caland used one manuscript in Telugu characters which contains the Bhāṣya of Nṛsiṃha Vājapeyin (see Caland 1941: v).

15 See Kane 1968ff. vol. 2.1: 195ff.

16 See Pandey 1949: 17–23.

17 For example *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* 3.11 starts with: *atha garbhādhānādicaturthe māsi puṃsavanaṃ bhavati*.

after the marriage ceremonies is prescribed under the heading *caturthivāsa*<sup>18</sup>. This is *niṣeka*, although the term *niṣeka* is not used here.<sup>19</sup>

*Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* 3.9 (the heading *ṛtusamgamana* is given only by the editor and translator Caland), describes the restrictions for a menstruating woman and prescribes sexual intercourse in the fourth night after the beginning of the menstrual flow, without actually using the term *ṛtusamgamana*. *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* 3.10, under the heading *garbhādhāna*, which is also inserted by Caland, describes a ritual which should be performed when the first signs of pregnancy are perceptible, again without explicitly using the term *garbhādhāna*. Thus according to *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* 3.8 and 3.9 *niṣeka* is indeed different from *ṛtusamgamana*, and is given—among other rituals—as part of the rituals subsumed under the heading *caturthivāsa*.

*Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* 6.1, the beginning of the *prāyaścitta*-chapter, reads: *atha niṣekādīsaṃskārāṇaṃ prāyaścittaṃ vyākhyāsyāmaḥ*, “we now will explain the atonement for the *saṃskāras* beginning with *niṣeka*”. Here the *saṃskāras* are characterized as “beginning with *niṣeka*”, too. Thus this sentence is in perfect accordance with the opening sentence of the Sūtra. However, in the beginning of the next sub-chapter, *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* 6.2, the opinion of “others” is given: *ṛtau saṃgamaṇaṃ niṣekam ity āhuḥ*, “they say that the sexual intercourse during the fertile period is *niṣeka*”. Here the Sūtrakāra quotes “their” opinion without giving his own. However, on account of indirect evidence one could be tempted to conclude that the Sūtrakāra himself is of the opinion that *ṛtusamgamana* and *niṣeka* are one ritual: the description of the expiation for *ṛtusamgamana* follows immediately, whereas no atonement for *niṣeka* is given at all.<sup>20</sup>

18 *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* 3.5 starts with *atha caturthivāso*. Under this heading we find a detailed description of the proceedings following the marriage rituals, that is a description of the regular sacrifices the husband has to commence as soon as he reaches home with his wife etc.

19 Caland, however, gives the heading “The ceremony performed on impregnation: *niṣeka*” for *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* 3.8. in his translation (p. 77).

20 Ibid. 6.2: *svabhāryāyāṃ ṛtusnātāyāṃ ṣoḍaśāhe saṃgamane hīne 'gnim ādhāyāghāraṃ hutvā vaiṣṇavaṃ brāhmaṃ aindram āgneyaṃ dadbhyaḥ svāhety aṅghomaṃ jayān abhyātānām rāṣṭrabhr̥to hutvāntahomaṃ juhōti snātām alamkṛtām bhāryāṃ pūrvavad gacchet*. “If he is without sexual intercourse on the 16<sup>th</sup> day with his own wife, who has bathed (after the first three days) of her fertile period, (then,) having placed the fire (in the sacrificial fire-place), having sprinkled ghee on the fire, having offered (while reciting) the Vaiṣṇava(mantras), Brāhma(mantras), Aindra(mantras) (and) Āgneya(mantras), (having offered) the *homa* for the limbs (reciting) ‘To the teeth, svāhā (etc.)’, (having offered reciting the) Jaya(mantras), the Abhyātāna(mantra)s and the Rāṣṭrabhr̥t(mantra)s, he of-

Evidently, even within the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* there is not always a clear dividing line between the prenatal *saṃskāras* *niṣeka*, *ṛtusamgamana*, and *garbhādhāna*. There is some evidence that the impregnation (*niṣeka/ṛtusamgamana*) in some cases is also referred to as *garbhādhāna*, which literally means “the giving of a foetus”. *Garbhādhāna* according to the “list of 18 *saṃskāras*” at the beginning of the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* has to be performed after *ṛtusamgamana* and before *pūṃsavana*. As already mentioned, the relevant passage *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* 3.10 does not use the term *garbhādhāna* and the ritual described there is in fact a public acknowledgement of the pregnancy. However, in other texts on domestic rituals the term *garbhādhāna* is often used in its literal meaning, designating the sexual intercourse resulting in impregnation,<sup>21</sup> instead of *niṣeka*, *caturthivāsa/caturthivrata/caturthīkarman* or *ṛtusamgamana*. This seems to be the case also in some passages of the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*. For example the proper time for the performance of *pūṃsavana* and *sīmanta/viṣṇubali* is calculated in relation to *garbhādhāna*. *Pūṃsavana* shall be performed four months after *garbhādhāna*,<sup>22</sup> and *sīmanta* shall be performed eight months after *garbhādhāna*.<sup>23</sup> If, as the “list of 18 *saṃskāras*” at the beginning of the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* suggests, *garbhādhāna* is a separate ritual, different from *niṣeka* and *ṛtusamgamana*, then it has to be the ritual described in *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* 3.10, marking the public acknowledgement of the pregnancy. This ritual takes place as soon as unmistakable signs of the pregnancy are recognizable. Thus, this ritual can be performed in the third month of pregnancy at the earliest.<sup>24</sup> The duration of pregnancy is ten (lunar) months. Accordingly, the proper time for *sīmanta* (and *viṣṇubali*) cannot possibly be in the 8<sup>th</sup> month after *garbhādhāna*, since this would be in the 11<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy—one month after birth. Therefore I assume that the two prescribed dates for *pūṃsavana* and

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fers the final *homa*; he approaches his wife, who has taken a bath and who is adorned, as told before”.

21 See for example *Bodhāyanagrhyasūtra* 4.6.1, *Bodhāyanagrhyasūtra* 2.2.1 and 2.2.7, *Gautamadharmasūtra* 1.8.14, *Kāthakagrhyasūtra* 30.8, Kullūka on *Manusmṛti* 2.16, 2.26 and 2.27, Harīta as quoted in *Saṃskāramayūkha*, p. 11, Aṅgīras as quoted in *Saṃskāramayūkha*, p. 11.

22 *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* 3.11: *atha garbhādhānādicaturthe māsi pūṃsavanaṃ bhavati*.

23 Ibid. 3.12: *atha garbhādhānādyasṭame māsi sīmantonnyanaṃ kuryāt*.

24 The signs of pregnancy are described in *ibid.* 3.10: *atha gr̥hītagarbhālingāni śarīrātopaḥ sakthisidanaṃ dveṣo bhartur arūcir āhāro lālāprakopaḥ kharatā vācaḥ spuraṇaṃ yoner iti garbhasya daivānubandhaṃ jñātvā [...]*. “After he [the performer] has perceived the signs of pregnancy, (namely) the swelling of the body, tiredness of the thighs, dislike of the husband, aversion to food (see Caland’s translation, p. 80 note 1), superabundance of saliva, roughness of the voice, quivering of the womb [...]”.

*sīmanta* do not refer to *garbhādhāna* as given in the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* 3.10, but to the—ritualized—moment of impregnation, which is termed *niṣekal ṛtusamgamana* in the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*, but *garbhādhāna* in other Sūtras. This hints at a potential interchangeability of the terms for those prenatal *saṃskāras*. It is possible that *niṣeka* as the first cohabitation of the newly married couple initiates the regular monthly sexual union during the fertile period of the wife and thus is directly connected to procreation, but also contains the aspect of defloration. Thus it encompasses two aspects which are also expressed separately by the terms *caturthīvāsa* and *ṛtusamgamana*. This could explain the non-uniform use of the respective terms.

There is one more passage in the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* where *niṣeka* is given as the first *saṃskāra*. In *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* 1.1, immediately after the list of 40 *saṃskāras*, a hierarchy of Brahmins laid down:

A *putramātra* (“only a son”) is one who is just born from a Brahmin out of a Brahmin woman, who is endowed with the *saṃskāras* from *niṣeka* to *jātaka*. He who is endowed with (the *saṃskāra*) *upanayana* is a Brāhmaṇa, because of the study of the *savitṛī (mantra)*. Having learnt the Veda, being endowed with the *saṃskāras* relating to the body up to *pāṇigrahaṇa*, he is a *śrotṛiya* as soon as he is also offering the *pākayajñas*. One who has kindled his fire, who is keen on studying (the Veda), through the *haviryajñas* is an *anūcāna*. Through the *somayajñas* he is even a *bhrūṇa*. Being endowed with these *saṃskāras*, due to (the practise of) *niyama* and *yama*, he is a *ṛṣikalpa* (“equal to a *ṛṣi*”). Because of (the knowledge) of the four Vedas with their limbs, because of *tapas* and *yoga*, he is a *ṛṣi*. One whose highest goal is Nārāyaṇa, without *dvandva*,<sup>25</sup> is a *muni*. Thus, in consequence of the particularity of each preceding *saṃskāra* respectively, he becomes the most excellent, thus it is taught.<sup>26</sup>

This hierarchy is explicitly arranged according to the *saṃskāras* a (potential) Brahmin should be endowed with (*śārīra saṃskāras*) or is supposed to perform (*yajña saṃskāras*). Additionally, in the cases of the *ṛṣikalpa*, the *ṛṣi*, and the *muni*, a Brahmin should have further qualities pertaining to his abilities to control his body and, as the best quality of all, he is exclusively devoted to Nārā-

25 Caland translates with reference to Nṛsiṃha Vājapeyin’s Bhāṣya (p. 2 and note 35): “Being intent on Nārāyaṇa (i.e. Viṣṇu) and indifferent to opposite pairs of feelings (pleasure and pain, etc.) he becomes a Muni”.

26 *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* 1.1: *niṣekād ā jatakāt saṃskṛtāyāṃ brāhmaṇyāṃ brāhmaṇāj jātamātraḥ putramātra. upanītaḥ sāvitṛyadhyayanād brāhmaṇo. vedam adhītya śārīrair ā pāṇigrahaṇāt saṃskṛtaḥ pākayajñair api yajan śrotṛiyaḥ. svādhyāyapara āhitāgnir haviryajñair apy anūcānaḥ. somayajñair api bhrūṇaḥ. saṃskārair etair upeto niyamayamābhyām ṛṣikalpaḥ. sāṅgacaturvedatapyogād ṛṣiḥ nārāyaṇaparāyaṇo nirdvandvo munir iti saṃskāraviśeṣāt pūrvāt pūrvāt paro varīyān iti vijñāyate.*



yaṇa. This passage expresses the concept of the *saṃskāras* in the early Vaikhānasa system, which is in full accordance with Brian K. Smith's definition that the *saṃskāras* actualize and realize the potential inherent in a human being.<sup>27</sup> In this case, one can even go further, since the Vaikhānasas not only gradually become "better" Brahmins, but they also become Vaikhānasas by undergoing the *saṃskāras* given in their Sūtra.

Here, as in the beginning of the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*, *niṣeka* is considered the first *saṃskāra*. However, I would like to give the expression *niṣekād ā jātakāt saṃskṛtāyāṃ brāhmaṇyāṃ brāhmaṇāj jātamātraḥ*, "[...] born from a Brahmin out of a Brahmin woman, who is endowed with the *saṃskāras* from *niṣeka* to *jātaka* [...]" a second interpretation. Although the performance of these rituals evidently is for the child insofar as the child successively becomes a better Brahmin through the *saṃskāras*, grammatically it is the mother who is "made perfect" (*saṃskṛtāyāṃ brāhmaṇyāṃ*) by the prenatal *saṃskāras* and the birth rites.<sup>28</sup> The opinion of "some", given in the *prāyaścitta* section of the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*, that the prenatal *saṃskāras* are performed only in the first pregnancy,<sup>29</sup> is in full accordance with this view.

To sum up, the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*'s description that *garbhādhāna* stands for a ceremony which marks the public acknowledgement of the pregnancy, is rather unusual for the Sūtra literature. In fact, the term is not explicitly used in the relevant passage of the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*. Moreover, in two cases *garbhādhāna* evidently refers to the moment of impregnation. The term *niṣeka* is also not used in an entirely uniform manner in the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*. A part of the marriage ceremonies—described under the heading *caturthivāsa* in *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* 3.8—is *niṣeka*. In two cases the "*saṃskāras* relating to the body" are referred to by *niṣekādisaṃskārān/niṣekādisaṃskārāṇāṃ*, and once the prenatal *saṃskāras* together with the birth rites are described as *niṣekād ā jātakāt*. This use of the term *niṣeka* may be inspired by Manu's *Dharmaśāstra*: in three *ślokas* he uses the expression *niṣekādi[-]* to summarize the *saṃskāras* without actually describing them.<sup>30</sup>

27 B.K. Smith 1998: 86f. and 92.

28 This fact is more explicitly expressed by later texts on the domestic rituals, where the "formal vow" (*saṃkalpa*) which initiates the respective ritual, is given. The performer (husband) says: "I will endow this wife [...] with the *saṃskāra* [...]" (*enām patnīm [...] saṃskariṣye*).

29 *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* 6.3: *garbhinyāḥ prathame garbhe kṛtā garbhasaṃskārās, tasyāḥ sarvagarbhāṇāṃ saṃskārā bhavantīty eke*.

30 *Manusmṛti* 2.16: *niṣekādiśmaśānānto mantrair yasyodito vidhiḥ | tasya śāstre 'dhikāro 'smiñ jñeyo nānyasya kasya cit ||*; *Manusmṛti* 2.26: *vaidikaiḥ karmabhiḥ puṇyair niṣekādīr*

### *Niṣeka* in the *Vaikhānasasamhitās*

As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, the most explicit reference the *Vaikhānasasamhitā* literature makes to the *Vaikhānasasūtras* is the expression *vai-khānasena sūtreṇa niṣekādikriyānvit[a-]*, “endowed with the rituals which begin with *niṣeka* according to the *Vaikhānasasūtra*”.<sup>31</sup> This standard expression is usually given as one defining characteristic of a priest (*arcaka*) who regularly performs the rituals in a Viṣṇu temple, or of the main priest who leads the performance of the temple rituals (*ācārya*). In more specific terms this view is also expressed in the *Ānandasamhitā* 4 (verses 45–49 and 70–73), although the term *niṣeka* is not used there: the *Vaikhānasas* perform Viṣṇu’s worship, they belong to the family (*vaṃśa*) of *Vikhanas*, they follow the *dharma* laid down in the *Vaikhānasasūtra*, and they are endowed with the 18 *saṃskāras* “relating to the body” (*śārīra*) and the 22 sacrifices (*yajña*).<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, the expression *vai-khānasena sūtreṇa niṣekādikriyānvit[a-]* also is frequently used in order to distinguish the *Vaikhānasas* from other *Vaiṣṇava* groups. One passage in the *Yajñādhikāra* deals with the “division of the *Vaiṣṇava-Śāstra*” (*vaiṣṇavaśāstrabheda*, *Yajñādhikāra* chapter 51). There it is stated that there are two teachings (*tantra*) for the worship of Viṣṇu. One is character-

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*dvijanmanām | kāryaḥ śarīrasaṃskāraḥ pāvanaḥ pretya ceha ca || Manusmṛti 2.142: niṣekādinī karmāṇi yaḥ karoti yathāvidhi | saṃbhāvayati cānena sa vipro gurur ucyate ||* This further supports Keith’s thesis that Manu’s *Dharmaśāstra* precedes the compilation of the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*. Caland (1926: 176ff.) argues mainly on account of the congruence of the “eight forms of marriage” that one of Manu’s sources was the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*. In his review, Keith (1927: 623–624), argues that Manu was one of the sources of the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*, mainly on account of the local character of the *Vaikhānasa* tradition

- 31 Another important connecting link between *Sūtras* and *Samhitās* is *Vikhanas* himself. He is said to have enunciated the *Sūtra* as well as the content of the *Samhitās* (see, for example, *Ānandasamhitā* 17.10–12, and 17.38–39).
- 32 In the *Yajñādhikāra* there are two passages dealing with the necessary qualifications of an *ācārya*, where—in both cases without reference to *niṣeka*—it is only mentioned that the *ācārya* has to be a *Vaikhānasa* (*Yajñādhikāra* 2.1–3, *ācāryavaraṇam*) and that he has to be “endowed with the rituals given in *Vaikhānasasmārta-* and *śrautasūtra*” (*Yajñādhikāra* 23.11, *ācāryavaraṇam: vai-khānasena sūtreṇa śrautasamārtakriyānvitān*). However, in the same text (ibid. 51.33–34) it is stated that not only the *arcakas*, but also less important assistants (*paricāraka*) and the cooks in the temple have to be “endowed with the *saṃskāras* as given in the *Vaikhānasasūtra*, which start with *niṣeka*”. I only found two further instances in the *Samhitās* where in a similar context the *saṃskāras*, beginning with *niṣeka*, are not explicitly mentioned or referred to: in *Khilādhikāra* 22 (162: *arcakamahimā*) it is only stated that the *arcaka* is identical with Viṣṇu, and in *Vāsādhikāra* 1 (*śiṣyalakṣaṇa*) *niṣeka* is also not mentioned.

ized as *vaidika* and *saumya*. It is followed by Brahmins, who are “endowed with the rituals given in the Vaikhānasasūtra, which start with *niṣeka*”. This method of worship is based on the Veda. The other method of worship is *tāntrika* and *āgneya* and is performed by people who have undergone an initiation (*dīkṣā*; *Yajñādhikāra* 51.1–7). This *dīkṣā* is not described in this passage of the *Yajñādhikāra*. One Vaiṣṇava group which is frequently described as “having a *dīkṣā*” in the Vaikhānasasamhitās are the followers of the Pāñcarātra system of Viṣṇu-worship.<sup>33</sup> Since some passages describe a *dīkṣā* as “consisting of marking/branding” (*Kriyādhikāra* 36.48, AS 8.27) and at the same time the Pāñcarātrins are frequently described as “having a marking/branding”,<sup>34</sup> it is legitimate to conclude that at least one of the possible *dīkṣās* for Pāñcarātrins consists of or includes a process referred to as *cihna*, *taptamudrā*, *taptacakrāṅkaṇa*, *cakralāñchana* or *tāpasamskāra* in the Samhitās,<sup>35</sup> a “marking” (*cihna*, *lāñchana*, *aṅkana*) with a “wheel” (*cakra*) which consists of “branding” (*tapta-*, *tāpa-*). This is explicitly stated in the *Ānandasamhitā*: a process called *bahistaptacakradīkṣā*/*bāhyataptadīkṣā* consists of heating (metal symbols of a) wheel in the fire for the oblations during the *upanayana samskāra* and the subsequent marking (branding) of the arms of the Pāñcarāta-initiant with it.<sup>36</sup> The term *cakrāṅkana* clearly refers to one element of the so-called *pañcasamskāras* of the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, as is evident from another passage of the *Ānandasamhitā*.<sup>37</sup> These *pañcasamskāras*, the “five *samskāras*”, are a set of rituals which already can be found in some of the Pāñcarātasamhitās and was later on taken over by the Śrīvaiṣṇavas as initiation into their tradition.<sup>38</sup>

In five Vaikhānasasamhitā texts a clear line is drawn between (the branding element of) the *pañcasamskāras* and the *samskāras* of the Vaikhānasasūtra: in the *Kriyādhikāra* Viṣṇu emphasizes that the Vaikhānasas are his sons, that they

33 See for example *Yajñādhikāra* 51.4ff., *Kriyādhikāra* 1.18 and 36.32.

34 See for example *Ānandasamhitā* 19.13, 19.15, *Samūrtārcanādhikāraṇa* 65.122–124.

35 *Ānandasamhitā* 4.50f., 4.57, 4.60–67c, 4.81, 8.1, 8.3, 8.8–10a, 8.13, 8.24, 8.25–28a, 8.31, 8.33, 9.11, 11.28–29, 12.30–31, 13.39, 16.19, 17.19, 19.11, 19.13, 19.15, *Samūrtārcanādhikāraṇa* 65.122–124, *Yajñādhikāra* 51.4ff., *Kriyādhikāra* 1.18, 32.94, 33.56–57, 36.32, 36.45f., 36.48d, 36.51ff., *Prakīrṇādhikāra* 18.25, 27.266, 30.7, *Khilādhikāra* 41.9.

36 *Ānandasamhitā* 8.26c: *upanayanāgninā taptacakreṅāṅkanam aṃsayoh* | Ibid. 8.27a: *yā sā bahistaptacakradīkṣety evam udāhṛtā* || and ibid. 8.29a: *bāhyataptadīdīkṣānusaraṇam pañcarātriṇāṃ*. See also *Prakīrṇādhikāra* 30.5–7.

37 *Ānandasamhitā* 12.30: *cakrāṅkaṇam cordhvuṇḍraṃ śrīharer dāsanāma ca* | *kṛṣṇamantrajapaś cāpi mādhavārādhanam tathā* || Ibid. 12.31: *amī tu pañcasamskārāḥ pāramaikāntya siddhidāḥ* | *pāramaikāntya yuktā hi gaccheyur vaiṣṇavam padam* ||

38 As Raman argues, this ritual since the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries was called “resorting to Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa”, *samāsrayaṇa* (see Raman in this volume).

are Vaiṣṇavas by birth (*garbhavaiṣṇava*), that they do not have the *taptamudrā*, that they are endowed with the rituals starting with *niṣeka*, and that they do not have a *mantradīkṣā* or any other teacher but Viṣṇu himself.<sup>39</sup> Since the *pañca-saṃskāras* also include a *mantra* element and the role of the teacher (*guru*) is very important, the reference to the *pañcasamskāras* is very clear here. There is a similar statement in the *Ānandasamhitā* (4.50–52), where Viṣṇu stresses that the Vaikhānasas are his sons and marked by him, and therefore do not need to undergo a branding (*cihna*) but are Vaiṣṇavas by birth (*garbhavaiṣṇava*).<sup>40</sup> The regular distinction drawn between Vaikhānasas and Pāñcarātrins therefore is between those, who are “endowed with the *saṃskāras* beginning with *niṣeka*” and those who have undergone the branding.

*Samūrtārcanādihikaraṇa* is another Saṃhitā-text which uses the expression *taptacakrāṅkana* to distinguish between Vaikhānasas and Pāñcarātrins. However, here the Pāñcarātrins are described as being “marked with a heated wheel, and being endowed with the *saṃskāras* beginning with *niṣeka* as given by Bodhāyana or Kātyāyana”. Furthermore, they are endowed with Smārta- and Śrauta-rituals other than Vaikhānasa, and they perform the worship according to the Pāñcarātra teachings.<sup>41</sup> A similar view on this topic is expressed in *Khilādhikāra*. There, while dealing with the two systems of worship (*vaikhānasa/saumya/vaidika* and *pāñcarātra/āgneya/tāntrika*; *Khilādhikāra* 41.1–2), it is explicitly stated that only those who are “endowed with the *saṃskāras* according to the Vaikhānasasūtra, which begin with *niṣeka*”, are allowed to perform the “Vedic worship” (*vaidikapūjā*). Those who are endowed with the *saṃskāras* according

39 *Kriyādhikāra* 36.53: *vaikhānasā mama sūtā garbhavaiṣṇavajātakāḥ | teṣāṃ bahir na tāpo na punaḥ karaṇam āpadi || madbhaktiyuktasya madaurasasya niṣekakarmādivirājitasya | vaikhānasasyāsya na taptamudrā na mantradīkṣā na gurur mayā vinā ||*

40 *Ānandasamhitā* 4.50: *kṛtamallāṃchanānāṃ ca garbhavaiṣṇavajanmanāṃ | matputrāṅṅāṃ na cihnāni dāsāś cihnasamanvitāḥ || Ibid. 4.51: vaikhānasā mama sūtā garbhavaiṣṇavajātakāḥ | teṣāṃ pṛthaṇa na cihnāni cakrādīnāṃ gurur na hi ||* Here another passage in the *Ānandasamhitā* explicitly states that an *ācārya* who is endowed with the rituals given in the Vaikhānasasūtra, which start with *niṣeka*, can bestow *taptacakrāṅkana* on others in order to transform them into Vaiṣṇavas (*Ānandasamhitā* 11.12–15).

41 *Samūrtārcanādihikaraṇa* 65.122: *gauṇe mukhyaṃ prakurvīta mukhyaṃ gauṇe na cācaret | vaikhānasena sūtreṇa niṣekādīkriyānvitāḥ || Ibid. 65.123: brāhmaṇā vaiṣṇavāḥ proktāḥ saumyāḥ paramasāttvikāḥ | pāñcarātravidhānena taptacakrāṅkitā bhuvī || Ibid. 65.124: bodhāyanādisūtroktaniṣekādīkriyānvitāḥ | āgneyā vaiṣṇavāḥ proktāḥ tathā kātyāyanādayaḥ || Ibid. 65.125: avaiḥkhanasasūtroktaśrautasamārtakriyānvitāḥ | vaiṣṇavās tāmasāḥ proktāḥ pāñcarātrādhikāriṇaḥ ||*

to another Sūtra may not do so.<sup>42</sup> A more complicated categorization partly based on the *saṃskāras* is given in the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of the *Ānandasamhitā*, classifying not only Vaiṣṇavas, but also different categories of Vaikhānasas. There are three categories of Vaikhānasas (*śuddha, miśra, smārta*) who, at the same time, belong to three categories of Vaiṣṇavas (*saumya, miśra, śuddha*). Those “endowed with the *saṃskāras* according to the Vaikhānasasūtra, which start with *niṣeka*” are Śuddhavaikhānasas/Saumyavaiṣṇavas. They are *garbhavaiṣṇavas*, “Vaiṣṇavas by birth”. Those who are endowed with the “*saṃskāras* according to a Sūtra other than the Vaikhānasasūtra, which start with *niṣeka*” and who underwent an initiation (*dīkṣā*) “according to the Vaikhānasāgamas” (i.e. *Samhitās*) are Miśravaikhānasas/Miśravaiṣṇavas. However, the category of Miśravaiṣṇavas does not apply to the Pāñcarātrins: while (Miśra-)Vaikhānasas do have a so-called *nigamadīkṣā*, the Pāñcarātrins have a so-called *āgamadīkṣā*. The third category of Vaikhānasas comprises all those who are in the third stage of life, the Vānaprasthas, they are Smārtavaikhānasas.<sup>43</sup> Thus, in this *Samhitā* different subdivisions are presented. However, here as everywhere else it is very clear that only the Vaikhānasas can be “endowed with the *saṃskāras* according to the Vaikhānasasūtra, starting with *niṣeka*”.

To sum up, there are five texts in this group which use the expression “being endowed with the *saṃskāras* according to the Vaikhānasasūtra, which start with *niṣeka*” in order to explicitly distinguish between Vaikhānasas and other groups of Vaiṣṇavas (*Yajñādhikāra, Prakīrṇādhikāra, Samūrtārcanādhikāraṇa, Khilādhikāra, Ānandasamhitā*). No matter whether these texts enumerate three or two groups, the Pāñcarātrins are always among them. One of the attributes of the Vaikhānasas in these passages always is that they are Vedic (*vaidika*), as against the Tantric (*tāntrika*) Pāñcarātra-tradition, although this concept is not elaborated there. The *saṃskāras* beginning with *niṣeka* are contrasted with the initiation (*dīkṣā*) of the Pāñcarātrins. A slightly different picture emerges from two

42 *Khilādhikāra* 41.6c: *vaikhānasena sūtreṇa niṣekādyais susaṃskṛtaiḥ* || Ibid. 41.7: *brāhmaṇair eva kartavyaṃ vaidikārāadhanam sadā | caturvargaphalam saumyapūjanāt phalati dhruvam* || Ibid. 41.8: *vaidikārāadhanam nānyasūtrasaṃskārasaṃskṛtāḥ | arhanti kartuṃ arhanti vikhanassūtrasaṃskṛtāḥ* ||

43 *Ānandasamhitā* 9.2: *vaikhānasena sūtreṇa niṣekādikriyānvitāḥ | śuddhavaikhānasāḥ proktās te saumyavaiṣṇavās smṛtāḥ* || Ibid. 9.3: *avaikhānasasūtroktanīṣekdikriyānvitāḥ | vaikhānasāgamoktāyāṃ dīkṣāyāṃ ye ca dīkṣitāḥ* || Ibid. 9.4: *miśravaikhānasāḥ proktās te miśravaiṣṇavās smṛtāḥ | vaiṣṇavā dvividhā miśrā nigamāgamadīkṣitāḥ* || Ibid. 9.5: *nigamo vikhanāḥ proktas tv āgamo haricoditāḥ | vaikhānasaṃ hi nigamaḥ pāñcarātraṃ tathāgamaḥ* || Ibid. 9.8: *ṛtīyāsramaṇas sarve smārtā vaikhānasās smṛtāḥ | saumyavaiṣṇavajātakāḥ* ||

Vaikhānasasaṃhitās: the *saṃskāras* of the Vaikhānasas, beginning with *niṣeka*, are contrasted not with a Pāñcarātra *dīkṣā*, but the Pāñcarātrins are said to be endowed with the *saṃskāras* laid down by another Sūtrakāra (*Samūrtārcanādhi-karaṇa*, *Khilādhikāra*). Finally, the *Ānandasamhitā* combines the notion of “belonging to a specific Sūtra-tradition” and initiation in a unique way: according to this text somebody who is endowed with the *saṃskāras* of another Sūtra can become an (inferior) Vaikhānasa through a Vaikhānasa-*dīkṣā*. In this passage neither the Vaikhānasa-*dīkṣā* nor the Pāñcarātra-*dīkṣā* is described. Thus all Vaikhānasasaṃhitās use the expression “endowed with the *saṃskāras* according to the Vaikhānasasūtra, which start with *niṣeka*” to describe those who are eligible to perform the rituals in a Viṣṇu temple. Only rarely is *niṣeka* not explicitly mentioned in such chapters. One text (*Yajñādhikāra*) goes even further by stating that these *saṃskāras* are a precondition even for assistants and cooks in the temple. However, there are also passages stating that if a Vaikhānasa is not available, others may be employed as cooks and assistants (*Ānandasamhitā* 13.36–39).

Therefore, the Vaikhānasa-*saṃskāras* are presented as the most prominent connecting link between the Vaikhānasa *arcakas* in the Saṃhitās and the Vaikhānasas of the time of the Sūtra. In the Saṃhitās *niṣeka* stands for the whole set of 18 *saṃskāras*: there an essential characteristic of a Vaikhānasa is “being endowed with the *saṃskāras* according to the Vaikhānasasūtra, beginning with *niṣeka*”. In a next step it is unanimously stated in the Saṃhitās that only a Vaikhānasa is eligible to perform temple worship. However, not a single passage in the entire Vaikhānasasaṃhitā-literature dwells upon the question as to how and when *niṣeka* is performed.

### *Niṣeka* in Nṛsiṃha Vājapeyin’s Commentary on the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*

Since, on the one hand, the use of the term *niṣeka* in the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* is not uniform, but on the other, the “mediaeval” ritual texts of the Vaikhānasas frequently refer to “the *saṃskāras* beginning with *niṣeka*” it may be worthwhile to look at other Vaikhānasa texts dealing with the *saṃskāras*. We are in the fortunate position to have two printed commentaries on the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*, which both deal with the Vaikhānasa *saṃskāras*. One is the *Vaikhānasa(kalpa)sūtrabhāṣya* (*Śrīnṛsiṃhavājapeyabhāṣya*) by Nṛsiṃha Vājapeyin,<sup>44</sup> who also

44 This text was printed in full only once. At first extracts of this commentary were given in the edition of the *Tātparyacintāmaṇi*, in Devanāgarī characters. In 1984 and 1987 the full

authored the text *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtradarpaṇa*,<sup>45</sup> a handbook on *grhya*-rituals. The only texts Nṛṣiṃha Vājapeyin quotes in his commentary are other *Gr̥hyasūtras*, and as far as I can see he is not quoted by others. Therefore there is no clue as to his date apart from the lists of the teacher-pupil succession (*Vai-khānasaguruparamparā*), which all place him seven to nine generations before the other commentator on the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*, Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita.<sup>46</sup> Compared to the works of Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita, Nṛṣiṃha Vājapeyin in his *Bhāṣya* remains very close to the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*.<sup>47</sup> Although in this case it is not even possible to establish a relative chronology, the statements of Nṛṣiṃha Vājapeyin's *Bhāṣya* will be dealt with first. Generally speaking, the *Bhāṣya* is a somewhat independent text and does not constitute or follow the main stream of *Sūtra*-interpretation within the *Vaikhānasa* tradition.<sup>48</sup>

Nṛṣiṃha Vājapeyin's commentary on the first sentence of the *Sūtra* literally explains *niṣeka* as "pouring of the semen into the Yoni of the wife".<sup>49</sup> His commentary on the "list of 18 *saṃskāras* relating to the body" consists of literal explanations for each term. He explains *ṛtusamgamana* as the sexual intercourse during the fertile period,<sup>50</sup> and *garbhādhāna* as the act of "giving a foetus".<sup>51</sup> This last explanation is neither in accordance with the content of *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* 3.10, nor does it agree with Nṛṣiṃha Vājapeyin's own explanations on this passage. There he closely follows the *Sūtra*, but adds that the performing husband shall start the ritual with the formula: "I will endow this wife with the *garbhādhāna saṃskāra*".<sup>52</sup> Here for the first time it is explicitly stated that this

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text was printed in two volumes in Telugu characters. In 1996, in his PhD thesis Sri S. Muthu edited the first three chapters of this commentary. The present paper refers to the Telugu edition.

45 Only three out of 11 chapters of this text are printed. There the performance of the "18 *saṃskāras* related to the body" is given.

46 *Vaikhānasaguruparamparā*, pp. 1–6; *Guruparamparā*, pp. 1–3; *Śrīvaikhānasācāryaparaṃparānusamdhānakrama*, pp. 20–23.

47 Since Caland made use of one manuscript of Nṛṣiṃha Vājapeyin's commentary, his translation in many respects is influenced by this text.

48 As far as I know, there are only two (*Vaikhānasa*) texts which occasionally refer to *Vai-khānasasūtrabhāṣya*: Pārthasārathi Bhaṭṭācārya in his Sanskrit commentary on the *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* (*Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇavyākhyāna*), and the *Sūtrānukramaṇikā*, part 2 (*Sūtrānukramaṇikā*).

49 *Vaikhānasasūtrabhāṣya* 1.1: *retasā bhāryāyāḥ yoniḥ niṣicyate saṃsicyate asminn iti niṣekaḥ*.

50 Ibid. 1.1: *ṛtau ṛtukāle saṃgamyate bhāryā aneneti ṛtusamgamanam*.

51 Ibid. 1.1: *garbhaḥ ādhīyate anenāsyām iti garbhādhānam*.

52 Ibid. 3.4: [...] *enām patnīḥ garbhādhānena karmaṇā saṃskariṣye iti saṃkalpya* [...].

*saṃskāra* is in fact supposed to be *garbhādhāna*. Also in the description of *garbhādhāna* in his *Sūtradarpaṇa*, Nṛsiṃha Vājapeyin states that this ritual shall be performed as soon as “he knows that she is pregnant” (*Sūtradarpaṇa*, p. 54: *grhītagarbhām jñātvā*). It is evident that Nṛsiṃha Vājapeyin considers *niṣeka* and *ṛtusamgamana* as separate *saṃskāras*. However, a few sentences later he explicitly discusses the question whether *niṣeka* is identical with *ṛtusamgamana* or not:

If someone says: How can one say that *niṣeka* is (an) individual (*saṃskāra*)? In spite of the statement of the Sūtrakāra: “They say that the sexual intercourse during the fertile period is *niṣeka*”?—this is true. Now this here is the opinion of the *ācārya* [= Vikhanas]: “Some say that the sexual intercourse during the fertile period is *niṣeka*, (but) not we”. If someone says: “If it is so, where is the characteristic feature (of *niṣeka*) given?” (the answer is:) “(One section begins with) *tad evaṃ trirātraṃ haviṣyāśināu*”<sup>53</sup>—here it is said by the *ācāryas*, thus we say. Otherwise the restriction on the number 18 (for the *saṃskāras* relating to the body) would be senseless. If someone says: “(The number 18 is not senseless if) we perform *pravāsāgamana* as two (*saṃskāras*)” this is not (correct), because in the statement “Without both, *pravāsāgamana* and *piṇḍavardhana*”<sup>54</sup> (the *saṃskāra* *pravāsāgamana*) appears individually.<sup>55</sup> If someone says: “Then I accept *varṣavardhana* as a ritual (= *saṃskāra*)”, this is not correct, because it is not mentioned (as *saṃskāra*) in the enumeration. And because it is again stated (in the next section:) “From *niṣeka* to *jātaka*”. Therefore (the *saṃskāras*) are established as having *niṣeka* as the first.<sup>56</sup>

At the beginning of the detailed description of the *saṃskāras*, which starts with *upanayana* in the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*, Nṛsiṃha Vājapeyin gives a reason for

53 This is a quotation of the first words of *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* 3.8, where the first sexual intercourse of the newly married couple under the heading *caturthivāsa* is described.

54 This is a quotation from the *prāyaścitta* section of the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* (6.5: *pravāsāgamanapiṇḍavardhanayor hīne mūlahomaṃ juhōti*).

55 In Muthu’s edition the following sentence is inserted here: *pārāyaṇavratibandhavisargaṃ dvidhā kurmaḥ iti cet tad asat. pārāyaṇavratibandhavisarga ity ekatvena upapādānāt*, “If one says ‘We split *pārāyaṇavratibandhavisarga* into two’—this is not good, because [this ritual] is given as a unit, (namely) ‘*pārāyaṇavratibandhavisarga*’”.

56 *Vaikhānasasūtrabhāṣya* 1.1: *niṣekam iti pṛthaktvena katham ucyate. “ṛtau saṅgamaṇaṃ niṣekam ity āhur” iti sūtrakāravacanād iti cet satyam. ayaṃ khalv atrācāryasyābhīprāyaḥ ṛtau saṅgamaṇaṃ niṣekam ity āhur eke na vyaṃ iti. tathā bhavaty asya tantraṃ kutroktam iti cet. “tad evaṃ trirātraṃ haviṣyāśināu” ity atroktam ācāryair iti brūmaḥ itarathā-ṣṭadaśasaṃkhyāniyamo nirarthakas syāt. pravāsāgamaṇam ubhayathā kurma—iti cet—tanna. pravāsāgamaṇapiṇḍavardhanayor hīna ity ekatvenopādānāt. tarhi varṣavardhanaṃ karmatvenāṅgīkaromīti cet—tad anupapannaṃ pariḡaṇanāyāṃ apaḥhitatvāt. niṣekād ā jātakād iti punar vacanāc ca, tasmān niṣekādayaḥ siddhā bhavanti.*



this sequence: only *upanayana* makes an individual eligible to perform all rituals by himself. Therefore, this *saṃskāra* marks the entrance of an individual into this excellent stage of life.<sup>57</sup>

Since Nṛsiṃha Vājapeyin argues that the sexual intercourse described in *Vai-khānasasmārtasūtra* 3.8. is in fact *niṣeka*, he splits the *caturthīvāsa* of the Sūtra in his description of the individual rituals into two, namely *caturthīvāsa* and *ni-ṣeka*. After giving detailed prescriptions for the first three days and nights after marriage (*caturthīvrata*), Nṛsiṃha Vājapeyin continues that the husband in the fourth night should utter the *niṣeka*-vow.<sup>58</sup> Here Nṛsiṃha Vājapeyin explicitly uses the term *niṣeka*, in contradistinction to the Sūtra.

To sum up, Nṛsiṃha Vājapeyin rejects the opinion that *niṣeka* and *ṛtusamga-mana* are identical. Therefore he claims that the first sexual intercourse of the newly married couple, which is described under the heading *caturthīvāsa* in *Vai-khānasasmārtasūtra* 3.8, is in fact *niṣeka*, whereas the other rites given there are *caturthīvāsa* “proper”.

### Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita on *niṣeka*

As shown, some Vaikhānasasaṃhitās seem obliged to explicate that the Vaikhānasa *saṃskāras*—beginning with *niṣeka*—are indispensable for being a Vaikhānasa and an *arcaka*, and that the *saṃskāras* provided by other Sūtras do not make the recipient eligible to perform the temple ritual in Viṣṇu temples. Some texts written in the period of the later Saṃhitās deal with the question of why the Vaikhānasa *saṃskāras* are indispensable and what the differences are between the Vaikhānasasūtras and other Sūtras. Here the “Vedic” (*vaidika*) aspect of the Vaikhānasa tradition plays an important role.

Contrary to that of the commentator Nṛsiṃha Vājapeyin the views of another Vaikhānasa teacher, Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita, did and still does have an enormous influence on the Vaikhānasa school(s) of thought and on the diverse Vaikhānasa communities in South India.<sup>59</sup> Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita is a Vaikhānasa of the Kauśika

57 Ibid. 2.2: *sarvāśramāṇām prathamavād uddeśakramam ullaṅghyātropanayanam ucyate. upanītasyaiva sarvakarmādhikāratvam iti jñāpanārthaṃ cāthānantaram.*

58 Ibid. 3.8: *trirātrānantaram caturthyām rātrau aparasyām, aparabhāginyām, rātryām a-laṃkṛtya patnīm ātmānam vastragandhamālyādyaiḥ vibhūṣya patnyāsaha prāñānyamya niṣekakarma kariṣye iti saṃkalpya agnim aupāsanam upasamādhāya parisamūhya pari-ṣicyāsminn agnau navaprāyaścittāni vyāhṛtiparyantaṃ juhuyāt.*

59 Pārthasārathi Bhaṭṭācārya for example expressed his high regard for Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita in one letter to Caland as follows: “[...] Thus they [the Vaikhānasas] form a separate and independent minority within the Vaishnava community, as the followers of their Acharya

clan. He was born in Śrī Venkaṭācala (Tirumalai, Andhra Pradesh). Only scant information on his life is given in Sundararāja Bhaṭṭācārya's *Śrīnivāsadīkṣitendracaritra*.<sup>60</sup> Sundararāja's lifetime is the *terminus ante quem* for Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita's dates, who most probably lived between the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> and the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>61</sup>

While the older commentary (*Vaikhānasasūtrabhāṣya*) only briefly deals with the *samskāra niṣeka*, this ritual plays a prominent role in the works of Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita, especially in his commentary on the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*, *Tātparyacintāmaṇi*, and in the lengthy "introduction" to this text with the title *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa*.

The explicit intention of the *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa*, the "presentation of the tenfold reason (why the Vaikhānasas are superior)" is to prove the superiority of the Vaikhānasas over other ritualistic traditions.<sup>62</sup> In the beginning of this work Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita presents ten arguments, the "ten(fold) reason" for two central propositions: (1) the Vaikhānasasūtra is the best of all Sūtras. It was taught by the four-faced Brahmā, who—in this form—is called by the name Vikhanas, and who was born of Nārāyaṇa. (2) Those who follow the *dharma* as propagated in the Vaikhānasasūtra are the best of all.<sup>63</sup>

The reasons are dealt with successively, but with considerable difference as to detail in his argumentation. Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita in his arguments makes use of many quotations from texts generally considered authoritative in his time, namely diverse Ṛgṛhya- and Dharmasūtras, the *Mahābhārata*, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, diverse Dharmasāstras, Upaniṣads and Purāṇas, some Pāñcarātrasaṃhitās etc. The author connects these quotations with his own (prose) statements and thus uses them as supporting arguments for his "ten(fold) reason". The *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* is the first Vaikhānasa text which explicitly expresses central positions of this tradition as against other religious or/and ritualistic traditions.

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[Vikhanas] and Bhashyakara Srinivasa Dikshita. [...] (quoted by Caland 1941: xxx–xxxī).

60 See *Śrīnivāsadīkṣitendracaritam*. However, there the year of Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita's birth is given as 1199 C.E., which is hardly possible, since Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita in his work *Vaikhānasamahimamañjarī* refers to the Vaiṣṇava scholar Venkaṭa Deśika, whose traditional dates are 1268–1369 C.E.

61 See Hüsken forthc.; for Sundararāja see Kunjunni Raja 1958: 253.

62 The *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* was printed twice, both editions were prepared by Pārthasārathi Bhaṭṭācārya. In the present paper I refer to the Devanāgarī edition.

63 *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* 2.1–3: *atha satyatvādisamastakalyāṇaguṇaviśiṣṭāt parabrahmaṇaḥ śrīmannārāyaṇād utpannena vikhanaśśabdavācyena caturmukhabrahmaṇā praṇītasya vaikhānasasūtrasya sarvasūtrottamatve tatsūtrotkadharmānuṣṭhātṛṇāṃ sarvotkrṣṭatamatve ca daśavidhahetavo nirūpyante.*

In our context the fifth “reason” is of importance. It reads: “Because (the Sūtra) gives *niṣeka* as the first *saṃskāra*” (*Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* 2.7: *niṣekasaṃskārādīmatvāt*).<sup>64</sup> Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita considers the fact that *niṣeka* is the first of the Vaikhānasa *saṃskāras* as characteristic and as expressing the advantage of his tradition over that of others. Only those are *śrotriyas*, he argues, who have had *niṣeka* as first ritual and only they are eligible to act according to the Dharmasāstras and therefore have ritual competence (ibid. 84.21–85.8).

Before Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita deals with the “fifth reason” in detail, the *saṃskāra niṣeka* is mentioned in passing a few times, for the greater part in quotations from other texts. There Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita anticipates his argument that *niṣeka* as the first *saṃskāra* is a feature peculiar only to the Vaikhānasas, and adds that this makes the Vaikhānasas eligible to perform temple worship. This connection is put into Nārāyaṇa’s mouth and therefore is undisputable: while relating how Vikhanas and the Vaikhānasa tradition came into existence Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita gives a lengthy quotation from the *Ānandasamhitā* stating that Nārāyaṇa created Vikhanas and ordered him and those who follow his Sūtra to worship him, Nārāyaṇa. In this quotation *niṣeka* as the first *saṃskāra* is presented as a peculiarity of the Vaikhānasas and therefore as a characteristic mark of those who are able and eligible to perform the worship of Nārāyaṇa.<sup>65</sup> In a similar context, describing the origin of the Vaikhānasas, Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita states that they are “endowed with the rituals, starting with *niṣeka*”. He describes the Vaikhānasas as a group originating from the *ṛṣis* “Bhr̥gu and so on” who are “mental sons” of Bhagavān. With reference to a passage in the *Mahābhārata*,<sup>66</sup> where nine *ṛṣis*

64 In ibid. 80.1–5 Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita repeats that this “reason” is proof of the fact that the Śrīvaikhānasasūtra is better than all other Sūtras and that the Vaikhānasas are therefore better than the all others. For the greater part those “others” are understood as “followers of other Sūtras”, see below.

65 *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* 14.7–8 [*Ānandasamhitā* 4.47]: *tvadvaṃśajānāṃ sarveṣāṃ kāle vai kṛtakarmaṇām* [*Ānandasamhitā*: *jātakarmaṇām*] | *niṣekādīśmaśānāṃtāḥ kāryāḥ mantrasamanvitāḥ* [*Ānandasamhitā*: *kriyāmantrasamanvitāḥ*] || Ibid. 14.9–10 [*Ānandasamhitā* 4.48]: *aṣṭādaśa ca karmaṇi śārīrāni pracakṣate* | *yajñās ca viṃṣatir dvau ca dharmam vaiṣṇavam uttamaṃ* || Ibid. 14.11–12 [*Ānandasamhitā* 4.49]: *vede vaikhānase sūtre yo dharmah parikīrtitaḥ* | *sarvais sa dharmo ’nuṣṭheyo nātra kāryā vicāraṇā* || and ibid. 14.22–23 [*Ānandasamhitā* 4.72]: *matprasādabhujas saumyā atipriyatamā mama* | *ṣaṭkarmānirātās te vai sātvikāhārataparāḥ* || Ibid. 14.24–15.1 [*Ānandasamhitā* 4.73]: *vaikhānasena sūtreṇa niṣekādikriyānvitāḥ* | *bhavanti bhāvitātmano matkarmakaraṇakṣamāḥ* ||

66 Ibid. 20.1–5 [*Mahābhārata*]: *bhr̥gvaṅgiromarīcyatripulastyapulāhāḥ kratuḥ* | *tathā vasiṣṭho dakṣas ca nava svāyambhuvā dvijāḥ* || *ete vaikhānasānān tu ṛṣiṇāṃ bhāvitātmanāṃ* | *vaṃśakartāra ucyante sātvikāhārabhojinām* || This verse, however, is not given in the standard editions of the *Mahābhārata*.

are given as founder of the Vaikhānasa families, Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita states that these *ṛṣis* as well as their family members are known as Vaikhānasas. He adds that they are endowed with the *saṃskāras* beginning with *niṣeka* and that only they are allowed to perform Nārāyaṇa's worship.<sup>67</sup> In a further step, Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita proves that *niṣeka* as first *saṃskāra* is a characteristic mark of the Vaikhānasas, makes them eligible to perform Nārāyaṇa's worship and is a sign that the Vaikhānasa tradition is Vedic. In the description of diverse groups of Vaiṣṇavas Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita quotes the Śaiva text *Suprabhedāgama*. There the Vaikhānasa tradition is presented as being "vaidika", Vedic, and it is stated that in larger settlements the worship of Hari should be performed according to the Vaikhānasa system. The additional information is given that the Vaikhānasas are "endowed with the *saṃskāras*, beginning with *niṣeka*".<sup>68</sup> Here the connection of "being Vedic" and "being endowed with the *saṃskāras*, beginning with *niṣeka*" explicitly is established.

So far in the discussion of *niṣeka* only the Vaikhānasas and followers of other Sūtras were mentioned. Therefore the expression "the *saṃskāras* beginning with *niṣeka* of the Pāñcarātrins", which is given in *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* 66.9–13 is exceptional. A set of *saṃskāras* requires a specific Sūtra tradition. The Pāñcarātrasaṃhitās, however, do not claim to go back to a specific Sūtra tradition, but in some cases the reference to the Vedic *ekāyanaśākhā*, which is the now lost root of all other *śākhās* can be found.<sup>69</sup> The specific textual tradition of the Pāñcarātrins is constituted by the so-called Saṃhitās, sectarian works of divine origin, (ideally) dealing with knowledge (*jñāna*), practice (*yoga*), (temple)rituals (*kriyā*), and (daily) conduct (*caryā*).<sup>70</sup> Within the Pāñcarātra tradition there seem to have existed four teachings (*siddhānta*), all of which

67 Ibid. 20.6–8: *tasmād bhagavatā nārāyaṇena brahmaṇā ca sṛṣṭānām bhṛgvādīnām ṛṣiṇām tadvaṃśajānām ca niṣekādikriyāvatām advārakabhagavadyaajanādhikāravatām eva loke vaikhānasā iti prasiddhiḥ.*

68 Ibid. 25.5–11 [*Suprabhedāgama*]: *sahasrabhūsurād ūrdhve grāme brahmāṅkaṇe 'pi ca | vaikhānasena sūtreṇa niṣekādisusaṃskṛtaiḥ || bhārgavādimahātantramāntrabhedavica- kṣaṇaiḥ | anuddhṛtair mantragaṇair vedavedāntasambhaviḥ || kramādhyayanasaṃpan- nais sāṅgopāṅgaiś ca saṃskṛtaiḥ | pañcamūrtiprakāreṇa pratiṣṭhāpyārcayed dharim || vaidīkaṃ tad iti proktaṃ rājarāṣṭravivardhanam ||* The printed text of the *Suprabhedā- gama* does not contain this passage. However, the *saṃskāras* as enumerated in this text seem to be inspired by the Vaikhānasasūtra (*Suprabhedāgama*, *caryāpāda*, chapter 5; see also Brunner 1967: 31–60).

69 See *Īśvarasaṃhitā* 1.18b, 18.474–475, 21.533–535, 21.540; *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* 20.269; *Paramapurusaṃhitā* 1.16a; *Pādmasaṃhitā caryāpāda* 13.67–8; *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* 10.134, *Pauṣkarasaṃhitā* 38.305; *Śrīpraśnasamhitā* 2.38–39.23.185a.

70 Schrader 1916; H.D. Smith 1975ff., vol. 1 and 2; Varadachari 1982.

required a special initiation (*dīkṣā*). Thus the Pāñcarātra as a system of ritual prescriptions<sup>71</sup> is performed by priests who have undergone one or more initiations (*dīkṣā/abhiṣeka*) into this system. The statements in the Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās are by no means uniform in this respect, but generally it seems (with one exception, see below) that—whether a Dīkṣita is to be a Brahmin or not—the respective *dīkṣā* is never performed according to a particular Sūtra but according to one of the four *siddhāntas*, which are four different types of worship patterns.<sup>72</sup> These four kinds of worship should not be mixed and those who have undergone an initiation in one *siddhānta* may not perform the worship or other ritual duties in one of the other three *siddhāntas*.<sup>73</sup> In the *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* some of these verses are quoted<sup>74</sup>. In addition, Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita gives the following picture of the Pāñcarātrins: They are in general followers of the Kātyāyana-Sūtra (a *śākhā* of the white Yajurveda), and they belong to one out of five *gotras*, namely Aupagāyana, Śāṇḍilya, Bhāradvāja, Gautama, or Mauñjāyana. Here Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita refers to a source described as *pāñcarātre*.<sup>75</sup> The only passage in a *Pāñcarātrasaṃhitā* which—according to Smith's index (1980)—possibly could contain information regarding five *gotras* and/or a Vedic *śākhā* is the *Īśvarasaṃhitā*. There are in fact five *munis* enumerated: Śāṇḍilya, Aupagāyana, Mauñjāyana, Kauśika, and Bhāradvāja.<sup>76</sup> However, later in the text the *munis* are mentioned in the following context: Śāṇḍilya taught the Śāstras (Sātvata etc.) to the *munis* Aupagāyana, Mauñjāyana etc., and Sanaka etc. Henceforth these *munīśvaras*—with Śāṇḍilya as their leader—practised the worship of Hari according to the Sātvata(śāstra). They endowed their pupils, who belong to their *vaṃśa* and who learnt the Kāṇvī-śākhā, with the initiation according to the

71 The many other aspects of the Pāñcarātra system will not be dealt with here.

72 These are: *mantrasiddhānta*, *āgamasiddhānta*, *tantrasiddhānta* and *tantrāntarasiddhānta*. See for example *Īśvarasaṃhitā* 21.559–587; *Pādmasaṃhitā jñānapāda* 1.80–82, 86, *caryāpāda* 19.110–132, 21.1–84a; *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* 19.522–543; *Pauṣkarasaṃhitā* 38.295–309.

73 See *Pādmasaṃhitā caryāpāda* 19.124–127 and 131–132.

74 *Pādmasaṃhitā caryāpāda* 19.112–113, 131–132 and 21.55. The division into four *siddhāntas* in the Pāñcarātra literature is sometimes equated with the fourfold division of the Veda (*Pādmasaṃhitā caryāpāda* 19.111–112). However, significantly this equation is not referred to in the *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa*.

75 *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* 66.9–13 [Pāñcarātre]: “*ekagotrasamutpannam pañcagotram pṛthak pṛthak || ityārabhya “sūtram kātyāyanam śākhām yājuṣam śuklam eva ca || aupagāyanaśāṇḍilyau bhāradvājo 'tha gautamaḥ | mauñjāyanis tu pañcaite pāñcarātrādhi-kāriṇaḥ ||” ity adhikāribhedasya vidhīyamānatvāt.*

76 *Īśvarasaṃhitā* 21.519: *pañcāyudhāṃśās te pañca śāṇḍilyas caupagāyanah | mauñjāyanah kauśikaś ca bhāradvājaś ca yoginaḥ ||*

Sātvata(śāstra).<sup>77</sup> It is thus evident that the text quoted by Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita gives a different picture.

Then Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita speaks about lost or unknown texts and draws a picture of Pāñcarātra *saṃskāras* from them which is not in accordance with the picture derived from the Pāñcarātra texts themselves: He artificially combines this notion of a “Pāñcarātra-Sūtra” with the notion of the four *siddhāntas*, each of which requires its own initiation. Here he refers to the above mentioned statement in the Pāñcarātrasaṃhitās that one should cling to one’s original *siddhānta*, and transfers this notion to the Sūtras. He concludes that (1) one should not change the *tantra* (equated with *siddhānta* here). Although the initiations into the four *siddhāntas* may be identical, the initiate is eligible only for the performance of the ritual in his *tantra*, not in one of the three other Tantras. Furthermore, (2) one should not change the Sūtra, and therefore, if one is endowed with the *saṃskāras* of one particular Sūtra, the *saṃskāras* of other Sūtras should not be resorted to. Therefore, the “*saṃskāras* beginning with *niṣeka* according to the Pāñcarātra” are, for example, not for Āpastambins, who are already endowed with *saṃskāras* according to their Sūtra.<sup>78</sup> It is noteworthy that Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita presupposes that there are in fact “*saṃskāras* beginning with *niṣeka* according to the Pāñcarātra”. However, his point of view is not as far fetched as it may seem: if one accepts that the *Kātyāyanagrhyasūtra* is authoritative for the Pāñcarātrins, one has to admit that the *Kātyāyanagrhyasūtra* does in fact give *saṃskāras*. Furthermore, in one passage in the *Pādmasaṃhitā*, which is closely connected with the description of the four *siddhāntas*, “the *saṃskāras* starting from *niṣeka*” are mentioned.<sup>79</sup> However, these passages are not substantial enough to warrant far-reaching conclusions. It remains to be noticed that in this passage of the

77 Ibid. 21.551: *labdhvaivaṃ sātvatādīni śāstrāṇi munipuṃgavaḥ | śāṅḍilyo ’dhyāpayāmasa munīṃ caivaupagāyanam ||* Ibid. 21.552: *tathā mauñjyāyanādīṃś ca sanakādyāṃś ca yoginaḥ | tataḥ prabhṛti te sarve śāṅḍilyādyā muniśvarāḥ ||* Ibid. 21.553: *sātvatādyuktamārgeṇa harer āradhanādīkam | kurvantaḥ svasvavaṃśyāṃś ca śiṣyāṃś cāpi sahasraśaḥ ||* Ibid. 21.554: *kāṇvīm śākhām adhīyānān vedavedāntapāragam | saṃskṛtya dīkṣayā samyak sātvatādyuktamārgataḥ ||* Ibid. 21.555: *abhiṣicya ca tān sarvān kṛtvā svārthaparārthayo | pūjādhikāriṇo viprā! tair etat sātvatādīkam ||*

78 *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* 66.16–18: *ity āpastambādīsūtraiḥ saṃskṛtasya pāñcarātroktamārgeṇa niṣekādīsaṃskāra-yogyatābhavakathanāt. tāntrikoktaprakāreṇa dīkṣitānām eva tantrotkārcanāyām adhikāritva sambhavāt.*

79 *Pādmasaṃhitā cāryapāda* 21.56: *niṣekādīś ca saṃskāras pañcakāloḍitaṃ tathā | tyaktvā trayīm tantram eva prapadya śaraṇaṃ sthitāḥ ||* In the *Sanat Kumārasaṃhitā* “the rituals starting with *garbhādhāna*” are mentioned (*Sanat Kumārasaṃhitā brahmarātra* 38: *garbhādhānādīkā vakṣye kriyāḥ sarvā yathākramaṃ | ṛtukāle ramet patnīm ekānte nirjane naraḥ ||*).

*Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita refers to a *Pāñcarātra-Sūtra* and to “Pāñcarātra *saṃskāras*, beginning with *niṣeka*”, both of which are not given in the *Pāñcarātrasaṃhitā*s as handed down to us.

The most detailed treatment of *niṣeka* in his *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa*, however, can be found in the section explaining the “fifth reason”. There Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita quotes the two opening sentences of the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*. Here he himself raises the first objection, which he puts in the mouth of “others”: *niṣeka* is performed only after the birth rites (*jātaka*),<sup>80</sup> *upanayana* and marriage (*vivāha*), not as first ritual action.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, there are descriptions of procreation without sexual intercourse.<sup>82</sup> Therefore, the objection continues, *niṣeka* cannot be called “the beginning” of a human being. This argument is rejected by Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita (*Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* 80.20–23). According to him, the instances given in the objection cannot be generalized. He continues that only Nārāyaṇa, Brahmā and the *ṛṣis* through the power of their asceticism and Yogic practice are able to create “mental progeny”.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, he states that even Rudra originated from sexual intercourse/*niṣeka*, as is described in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*.<sup>84</sup> The proper procedure for *niṣeka* is already given in the Śruti—here he refers to *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* 2.1.5 and *Chāndogyopaniṣad* 5.8.1 (*Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* 81.11–18).

Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita then develops a “chronology” of how *niṣeka* (sexual intercourse) as a means of procreation came into being, based on quotations from the

80 Here a quotation from the *Mahābhārata* is given, where the birth-rites (*jātaka*) are given as first *saṃskāra* (*Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* 80.11–15 [= *Mahābhārata* 12.182.2–3]: *jāta-karmādibhir yais tu [Mahābhārata: yas tu] saṃskāraiḥ saṃskṛtaś śuciḥ | vedādhyayana-sampannaḥ ṣatsu karmasv avasthitaḥ || śaucācāraratas samyak [Mahābhārata: śaucācārasthitaḥ samyag; v.l. the Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa reading] bhikṣārthī ca gurupriyaḥ [Mahābhārata: viḡhasāśī gurupriyaḥ] nityavratas satyaparaḥ [Mahābhārata: nityavratī] sa vai brāhmaṇa ucyate ||*).

81 This argument is discussed again in the *Tātparyacintāmaṇi* and not dealt with here elaborately.

82 Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita quotes the *Harivaṃśa* here (*Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* 80.17–19: *kva dārāḥ kva ca saṃsargaḥ kva ca bhāvaviparyayaḥ | yadiyaṃ brahmaṇā sṛṣṭā manasā mānāsī prajā || yady asti tapaso vīryaṃ yuṣmākaṃ viditātmanām | sṛjadhvaṃ mānasān putrān prājāpatyena karmaṇā ||*).

83 Ibid. 80.20–23: *iti niṣekaṃ vināpi utpattiḥ śrūyate iti niṣekasyādītvaṃ na sambhavati iti cet—tad asat. niṣekavirahe 'pi utpattis sambhavatīty etan nopapadyate. tapobalād yogabalāc ca bhagavato nārāyaṇasya brahmaṇo maharṣīṇāṃ vā mānasaprajāsṛṣṭau śaktis sambhavati. nanyeṣām*. He supports this argument with a quotation from the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* (*Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* 81.1–6 [*Śrīviṣṇumahāpurāṇam* 1.15.83–84]).

84 *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* 81.7–10: *rudrotpattir api niṣekeneti śrūyate śatapathe* [reference to *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 6.1.3.7, 8 and 10].

*Viṣṇupurāṇa*<sup>85</sup> and from the *Mahābhārata*.<sup>86</sup> He concludes this argument with the statement that without *niṣeka* there is no procreation, therefore *niṣeka* is the first “action” in the life of a being.<sup>87</sup> In this whole passage *niṣeka* is not primarily treated as a ritual, but is equated with the actual sexual union of a couple, resulting in impregnation.

The next section is presented by Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita as a discussion between the followers of Bodhāyana and those of Āpastamba. Thus Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita himself does not have to argue with these two traditions because the arguments are brought out by them, not by him. At first the difference between *niṣeka* and *garbhādhāna* is dealt with. The Āpastambins argue that *niṣeka* is the same ritual as *garbhādhāna*, because—on account of a passage in the Śruti—the semen which is sprinkled during sexual intercourse (*indriya*) is identical with the foetus (*garbha*). This means that “pouring of semen” is identical with “giving of *garbha*”. Therefore, they continue, they also have *niṣeka* as first ritual, which is called *garbhādhāna* in their case.<sup>88</sup> The Baudhāyanins contest this identification of *niṣeka* and *garbhādhāna*, since these two actions are described separately in their Sūtra.<sup>89</sup> In *Bodhāyanagrhyasūtra* 1.7.37–44 the sexual union of the couple in the fourth night after marriage is presented as *niṣeka* (*Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* 81.18–20), and the *garbhādhāna* ritual as described in the *Bodhāyanagrhyasūtra* 2.2.1 (*Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* 81.20–22) is referred to. On the other hand, the Baudhāyanins continue, the Āpastambins do not have *niṣeka* as a *saṃskāra* at all.<sup>90</sup> The Āpastambins’ conjectured reply to this is that the Baudhāyanins do

85 Dakṣa, who was ordered to create the beings by Brahmā, first created the gods and other heavenly beings. However, he had to discover that they did not reproduce by themselves. Therefore, Brahmā “invented” sexual intercourse, which henceforth was the cause for human reproduction (*Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* 81.19–82.2 [*Śrīviṣṇumahāpurāṇa* 1.15.86–88, 82, 79]).

86 *Mahābhārata* 12.200.35–37 (*Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* 82.3–8).

87 *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* 82.9–10: *evam śrutismṛtiṣu sṛṣṭikālād ārabhya niṣekād evotpattir iti śravaṇāt niṣekena vinā utpādana-sāmarthyābhāvāc ca niṣekādimatvād ity uktam.*

88 Ibid. 82.11–15: *atrāpastambīyā evam āhuḥ. “niṣeka nāma garbhādhānam eva. niṣekagarbhādhānayoḥ paryāyatvāt garbhādhānātirekeṇa niṣekasabdasyārthāntarāsambhavāc ca. garbhādhānaśabdasyārthe vicāryamāṇe ‘garbho ’sminn ādhīyate’ iti vyutpattiyā ‘indriyaṃ vai garbha’ iti śrutyanusāreṇa retas secanam eva garbhādhānam ity avagateḥ niṣekāditvam asmākam apy astī”ti.*

89 Ibid. 82.16–18: *atra baudhāyanīyaḥ pratyavatiṣṭhante: “yad uktaṃ ‘niṣeka nāma garbhādhānam niṣekagarbhādhānayoḥ paryāyatvād’ iti—tadasat. niṣekagarbhādhānayoḥ prthaktvena pratipādanāt paryāyatvaṃ na ghaṭate. [...] Ibid. 82.22–23: evam niṣekagarbhādhānayoḥ prthaktvena kīrtanāt “niṣeka eva garbhādhānam” iti vaktum ayuktam.*

90 Ibid. 82.24–25: *kiñca āpastambasūtre niṣekapūrvakatvenānuktatvāt catvāriṃśat saṃskārapariḡṇane agrhītatvāc ca teṣāṃ niṣekādīyās saṃskārā na bhavanti”ti.*



not have *niṣeka* as the first *saṃskāra* either, since their Sūtra describes *vivāha* in the first place. Additionally, in the Baudhāyanins' list of *saṃskāras niṣeka* is not even mentioned by name, and in the description of the *saṃskāras* the signs and the proper time of *garbhādhāna* are not given.<sup>91</sup> Therefore, the Āpastambins continue, neither Bodhāyana nor Āpastamba have *niṣeka* as first *saṃskāra*. This feature is peculiar only to the Vaikhānasa tradition.<sup>92</sup>

Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita interprets a passage given by Yājñavalkya accordingly (*Yājñavalkyasmṛti* 1.10c/11a; *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* 83.9–14). Moreover, in contradistinction to the Baudhāyanins, the Vaikhānasasūtra gives the proper time as well as the signs for *garbhādhāna*, as Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita observes (*Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* 83.15–20).

Now Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita proves the authority of the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* by stating that other *sūtrakāras* refer to Vikhanas as their *ācārya* (*Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* 83.23–84.12). All references to an (unspecified) *ācārya* in the *Bodhāyanagr̥hyasūtra* and by Āpastamba are interpreted by Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita as referring to Vikhanas alone (*Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* 83.23–84.13). Then Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita again rejects the idea that *niṣeka* and *garbhādhāna* are identical (ibid. 84.14–20) and afterwards elaborates on the importance of *niṣeka* (ibid. 84.21–85.13), which according to some quotations is a precondition for being a Brahmin. In the end, Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita concludes that only the *Vaikhānasasūtra* in fact lists *niṣeka* as the first *saṃskāra*, and therefore the followers of the *Vaikhānasasūtra* are the best.

### *Niṣeka* in the *Tātparyacintāmaṇi*

Since nowhere in the *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* is reference made to the actual performance of the ritual *niṣeka*, these details can be expected in the commentary on the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* by the same author, the *Tātparyacintāmaṇi*. However, as we will see, even in the *Tātparyacintāmaṇi* the ritual act of *niṣeka* plays no prominent role.

91 Ibid. 83.1–5: *atra āpastambīyā ūcuḥ*: “*yady asmākaṃ ‘niṣekādīyāḥ saṃskārā na bhavanti’ ty ucyate tarhi yuṣmākaṃ api tathaiva, bhavat sūtre ‘pi* [*Bodhāyanagr̥hyaśeṣasūtra* 1.1.1]: ‘*yato etad dhutaḥ prahutaḥ āhutaḥ sūlagavo baliharāṇaṃ pratyavarohaṇaṃ aṣṭakā pārvānahoma’ ityārabhya vivāhādīyevoktam—na tu niṣekādīvena. kiñca sūtropakrame saṃskāragāṇānyām api niṣekas tu saṃskāratvena vā śabdāmātreṇa vā na pratipādītaḥ.*”

92 Ibid. 83.5–8: *kiñca* [*Bodhāyanagr̥hyaśeṣasūtra* 1.7.37]: “*caturthyām snātāyām*” *ityādinā pṛthakīvena vidhīyamānasya garbhādhānasya lakṣaṇapratipādanābhāvāt viśiṣya kālānirūpaṇābhāvāc ca (vaikhānase sūtre eva niṣekādīvena uktatvāc ca vaikhānasānām niṣekādīvam), āvayoḥ ubhayoḥ api niṣekādīyās saṃskārā na bhavanti iti. ayam eva siddhāntaḥ.*”

After a short explanation of the composite *niṣekādisaṃskārān* (*Tātparyacintāmaṇi* 1.6–7) Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita deals with the bipartition of the ritual category “*saṃskāras*” into “*saṃskāra* relating to the body” (*śārīrasaṃskāra*) and “sacrifice” (*yajña*), which is already presented in the Sūtra. In order to support this division Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita quotes a corresponding division into *brāhmasaṃskāras* and *daivasaṃskāras*. According to this source the *śārīrasaṃskāras* of the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* are *brāhmasaṃskāras*, and the *yajñasaṃskāras* are called *daivasaṃskāras* there.<sup>93</sup> *Niṣeka* is therefore the first of the *śārīra-* or *brahmasaṃskāras*. Thereafter, Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita gives a further subdivision of the *śārīrasaṃskāras* (*brahmasaṃskāras*), arranged according to the effect of the respective rituals. According to this passage, the *saṃskāras* from *niṣeka* to *jātakarman* are so-called *bijakṣetraśuddhikara*, “causing purity regarding semen and womb”.<sup>94</sup> This again points to the fact that it is only through the *saṃskāras* (represented by *niṣeka*) that the “ritual body” of the *Vaikhānasas* is constituted, that is their eligibility to perform sacrifices and other rituals. The gradual classification of Brahmins depending on *saṃskāras* is also based on this assumption. According to Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita, Brahmins reach another state through each and every *saṃskāra*.<sup>95</sup> This fact is expressed by the words “through the (*saṃskāras*) from *niṣeka* to *jātaka*”. These words also make it clear that not only the father but also the mother has to be endowed with these *saṃskāras* and therefore that she has to be a Brahmin woman.<sup>96</sup>

93 *Tātparyacintāmaṇi* 4.6–8: *yajñāḥ kevalaṃ śārīrā na bhavanti, anena saṃskārāṇāṃ dvai-vidhyaṃ darśitaṃ. uktañ ca: “saṃskārā dvividhā jñeyāḥ brāhmā daivāḥ prakṛtīṭāḥ ||” iti;* and *ibid.* 4.10: *tatra niṣekādīpānigrahaṇāntāḥ brāhmasaṃskārāḥ. yajñāḥ daivasamkārāḥ.* The division of *saṃskāra* into *brāhma* and *daiva* is given also in *Hārītheadharmasūtra* according to *Saṃskāramayūkha* and according to Kane (1968 vol. 2: 193).

94 Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita later refers to this category again. There he explains that “causing purity regarding semen and womb” makes the person eligible to receive other rituals, whereas through the *yajña saṃskāras* the “other worlds” are attained by the performer (*Tātparyacintāmaṇi* 11.17–18: *niṣekādīpānigrahaṇāntāḥ bijakṣetraśuddhidvārā karmāntarayogyatā siddhimātram ity āśaṅkhyā bhūrādīlokāntarajayārthaṃ yajñasaṃskārā uktāḥ*). Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita substantiates this statement by a quotation from the *Yajurveda* (*Tātparyacintāmaṇi* 11.18–20).

95 *Tātparyacintāmaṇi* 6.17–18: *brāhmaṇānāṃ saṃskāraviśeṣād avasthāntarāvāptiṃ darśayati niṣekādājātakādī ty ādinā*. In this connection a quotation from *Manu* (*ibid.* 4.17–18; see also *Mahābhārata* as quoted in *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* 85.9–10) by Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita, where the Vedic rituals—the *śārīrasaṃskāras*—are presented as being auspicious and purifying for twice-borns.

96 Here Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita quotes a few verses taken from *Dharma* texts which are in full accordance with *Manusmṛti* 3.174–175 (164–165) (*Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* 6.21–25): the sacrifice from sons which are not born from the husband’s semen are ineffective. *Tāt*

Here as well as in the following quotation from the *Mahābhārata*<sup>97</sup> the expression “endowed with the *saṃskāras* from *niṣeka* to *jātakarman*” in form and content refers to the mother. Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita eventually wants us to conclude that *niṣeka* and the other *garbhasaṃskāras* are not only for the child but also for the mother.<sup>98</sup> Therefore it seems that the expression “endowed with the *saṃskāras* from *niṣeka* to *jātakarman*” hints at the fact that the wife also must be endowed with the *saṃskāras*, beginning with *niṣeka*, and therefore comes from a family which follows the Vaikhānasa tradition regarding the *saṃskāras*: a Vai-khānasa-family.

*Niṣeka* is dealt with by Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita in the *Tātparyacintāmaṇi* once again in the commentary on the presentation of different categories of Brahmins: here he quotes Bodhāyana who also classifies the Brahmins on account of the *saṃskāras* (*Bodhāyanagr̥hyasūtra* 1.7.1–9). A Brahmin is a *śrotriya*, if he is endowed with “the *saṃskāras* from *niṣeka* to *jātaka*, (performed) with *mantras*”, if he has taken upon him the observances which are connected with *upanayana* and if he has mastered one Vedic *sākhā*.<sup>99</sup>

The question as to why the list at the beginning of the Sūtra does not contain all the *saṃskāras* which are dealt with later on in detail is dealt with by Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita in one passage, where he briefly states that *varṣavardhana* etc. are subdivisions of *saṃskāras* enumerated in the list at the beginning of the Sūtra.<sup>100</sup> A few pages later he refers to the question as to why the Sūtrakāra does not deal with *niṣeka* in the first place. According to him, *niṣeka* as first *saṃskāra* is a precondition for the authorization to perform worship. Manu also mentions *niṣeka* as first *saṃskāra*, although he does not describe the *saṃskāras* in detail. Then, Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita alludes to the frequent references to *vaikhānasena sūtreṇa*

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*paryacintāmaṇi* 6.18–23: “*jātamātra*” ity uktau brāhmaṇena śūdrādikṣetre jātānām api brāhmaṇyaṃ sambhavatīti “*brāhmaṇyaṃ brāhmaṇād*” ity uktam. “*niṣekād*” ityādy anuktau: “*amṛte jārajaḥ kuṇḍo mṛte bhartari golakaḥ | te na jātāḥ parakṣetre dehinām pretya ceha ca || dattāni havyakavyāni nāśayanti pradātṛṇām | pitur hi narakāyaiva golakas tu viśeṣataḥ ||*” iti.

97 Ibid. 7.2–12 quoting *Mahābhārata* 13.49.313°.1, 13.49.15, 13App.7A, 128/129.

98 This also becomes clear from a look at the formal declaration (*saṃkalpa*) given in the Prayoga-texts which are in use today. These *saṃkalpas* are uttered before the *saṃskāras* are performed. They consistently tell us what ritual the performer is going to perform—for example during *garbhādhāna* he has to declare: “I endow my rightful wife with the *garbhādhāna saṃskāra*”.

99 Ibid. 7.19–21: *bodhāyana*: “*niṣeke garbhasaṃskāre jātakarmakriyāsu ca | vidhivat saṃskṛtā mantraiḥ cīrṇavratasamāpanāt || śrotriyaḥ iti vijñeyāḥ sākhāpārās ca ye dvijāḥ ||*” iti.

100 Ibid. 5.1–2: *niṣekād ā jātakād ityādibhiḥ sūtrakāreṇottaratra vakṣyamāṇā varṣavardhanādayaḥ uktasaṃskārāvāntarabhedā ity avagantavyam.*

*niṣekādikriyānvit[a-]* in the *Vaikhānasasamhitās*. He concludes that *niṣeka* is in fact the first *saṃskāra*. On the other hand the performance of *niṣeka* is only possible in immediate connection with the performance of *vivāha*. Thus—and also because in the description of the Sūtra righteous conduct is very important—*pāṇigrahaṇa* is described before *niṣeka*.<sup>101</sup> Therefore, according to Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita the difference between the list in the beginning of the Sūtra and the actual descriptions of the *saṃskāras* later on in the Sūtra is not a real discrepancy: the meaning of the words is of greater importance than their sequence. Thus, *niṣeka* is the first of the *saṃskāras*, although it is described in the chapter on *vivāha*.<sup>102</sup>

It is a fact that the ritually performed—or ritually accompanied—sexual intercourse is described in the Sūtra's *vivāha* section under the heading *caturthivāsa* (*Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* 3.8). This ritual evidently is conceived of as *niṣeka*, although the term *niṣeka* is not mentioned at all in that passage. In the commentary on the eighth *kaṇḍa* of the third *praśna*, Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita describes the three days of celibacy which immediately follow the marriage rituals (*Tātparyacintāmaṇi*, pp. 400ff.). Here again Bodhāyana is referred to as an authority. Then the *mantras* and “nine *prāyaścittas*”—as part of the ritual—for the sexual intercourse in the fourth night after marriage are briefly given. Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita then describes the offering of ghee sprinkled on the wife's head. Through these rituals, according to another source quoted there, the wife becomes part of the man and therefore part of the husband's *gotra*.<sup>103</sup> According to Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita the actual sexual union is performed after the final *homa* (*antahoma*) of this ritual, and therefore is not part of the ritual proper. It is evident, that here ritual and religious law are closely interlocked. Not the sexual union itself but the ultimate

101 Ibid. 12.18–26: *nanu sūtre tāvat “niṣekādisaṃskārān vyākhyāsyāmaḥ” ity uktam. niṣekasaṃskāras tu madhye (vivāhaprakaraṇe) paṭhita iti katham niṣekādītvam ucyate iti cet ucyate. “niṣekādisaṃskārān vyākhyāsyāma” ity uktvā punar api ṛtusaṅgamanetyādinā pradhānabhūtasāṅgamanasyādāv eva pratipādanāt ata eva “niṣekādiśmaśānāntā” iti manūktaparakāreṇa niṣekādyaparasaṃskārāntaṃ saikṣepeṇoktatvāt itarasūtreṣv anuktatvāt “vaikhānasena sūtreṇa niṣekādikriyānvitaḥ” iti bhṛguṇā pratipāditaniṣekādītvam upapadyate eva. niṣekasaṃskāram āditas saṅgrahēṇoktvā anantaram vistareṇa pratipāditavataḥ dvitīyakaṇḍād ārabhya ācārādirpūrvakatvenoktavataś ca sūtrakārasyāyam abhiprāyaḥ. niṣekaḥ prathamah saṃskārah sa ca pāṇigrahaṇābhāve na sambhavatīti pāṇigrahaṇam uktam.*

102 Ibid. 13.19–21: *evam ca niṣekād ārabhya pāṇigrahaṇāntatvena gaṇayitum śakyatvāt “pāthakramād arthakramo balīyān” iti nyāyād anyeṣāṃ madhye pratipādanē “pi niṣekādītvam astīti boddhavyam.*

103 Ibid. 401.12–13: *kiñca: “caturthīhomamantreṇa māṃsamedo ’sthibhir saha | ekatvaṃ saṃgatā bhartrā tasmāt tadgotrabhāk bhavet ||” iti.*

transfer of power of disposition (*svāmya*) from the bride’s father to her husband is of prime importance and thus also the future son’s right to inherit his father’s property.

Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita’s interpretation of the next passage in the Sūtra is equally interesting. First he quotes the end of the *caturthīvāsa* section in the *Vaikhānasa-smārtasūtra* (Tātparyacintāmaṇi 402.2–3):

“*suprajās tvāye*” *ty upagamanaṃ* “*sannāma mana*” *ity āliṅganaṃ* “*imām anuvrate*” *ti vadhūmukheṣṇam ity eke*:

(With the *mantra* *suprajās tvāyā* he approaches her, (with the *mantra* *sannāma mana* he touches her, (with the *mantra* *imām anuvratā* he kisses the mouth of the woman, thus say some.

Then he gives a list of women who should be “avoided”, among whom a girl before maturity (*kanyā*) is mentioned.<sup>104</sup> He explains that sexual intercourse with such a girl is forbidden. Therefore, the “intercourse” in this case consists of uttering the *mantras*.<sup>105</sup> He also interprets a passage quoted from the *Vaikhānasa-gr̥hyaparīṣṭasūtra* in this sense. There it is stated that when the fourth night is spent in the father-in-law’s house, the couple should return to the husband’s house the next day, perform *puṇyāha* there and feed the Brahmins. Henceforth the wife should be pure and obey her husband and take care of the fire.<sup>106</sup> Although Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita does not comment on this statement here, it is evident that he sees the reason for the fact that husband and wife spend the “fourth night” in the father-in-law’s house in the age of the wife—she has not reached puberty yet. This connection is elaborated in Pārthasārathi Bhaṭṭācārya’s 20<sup>th</sup> century commentary on the *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa*. Additionally, this point of view evidently is the key for the present day oral tradition regarding *niṣeka* and its performance.

In the *Tātparyacintāmaṇi* Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita surpasses the *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* insofar as he stresses the importance of the mother. This is an obvious hint that the mother too has to have a Vaikhānasa pedigree, an important aspect for the prenatal *ṣaṃskāras*. Here, together with Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita’s demand in the *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* that one may not change from one’s own to another

104 Ibid. 402.4–5: “*vṛddhāṃ vandhyāṃ svr̥ttāñ ca mṛtāpatyāñ ca puṣpiṇīm | kanyāñ ca bahuputrāñ ca varjayan mucyate bhayāt ||*”.

105 Ibid. 402.7–8: *iti kanyāyāṃ (maithunasya) aśakyatvād anucitatvād akṣatayonitvam eva bhāryāive hetur ity abhiprāyeṇa ca mantrajaparūpeṇa ṣaṃgamaṇaṃ pakṣāntareṇopapādayati—“suprajās tvāye” tyādi.*

106 Ibid. 402.9–11: *gr̥hya: “vadhūgr̥he caturthī cet paryeṇ svagr̥haṃ puṇaḥ | pravīṣya pūrvavat kṛtvā puṇyāhaṃ bhojayed dvijān || sā ca nityaṃ śucīś cāgnibhartr̥ṣūśrūṣaṇaṃ caret ||”.*

Sūtra, the Vaikhānasa's transition from a Vedic *śākhā* to a Brahmin caste becomes visible.

### Pārthasārathi Bhaṭṭācārya's *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa*-Commentary on *niṣeka*

In the subsequent Vaikhānasa literature *niṣeka* is not dealt with. Evidently this *saṃskāra* lost its significance. Although some passages still describe the Vaikhānasas as "being endowed with the *saṃskāras* beginning with *niṣeka*", the defining characteristic of the Vaikhānasas as against other religious and ritual groups became the prenatal *saṃskāra viṣṇubali* rather than *niṣeka*. This aspect will be dealt with elsewhere. Thus there are only few texts which deal with *niṣeka* in more detail: one of them is Pārthasārathi Bhaṭṭācārya's commentary on the *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa*, the other group of texts are the handbooks (Prayogatekṣas) for the domestic priests, which are guidelines for the actual performance of the domestic rituals.

Pārthasārathi Bhaṭṭācārya's commentary on the *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* is very informative regarding the contemporary performance and interpretation of the *saṃskāra niṣeka*. Pārthasārathi Bhaṭṭācārya (~1895–1987) played a very important role in the Vaikhānasa communities in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was one of six sons of a very conservative Vaiṣṇava Brahmin in a little village in Andhra Pradesh (Ākulamannāḍu, near Machilipatnam, East Godāvārī district). His father sent him to a missionary school so that he learnt English (he even won some prizes in Bible studies there) and therefore was able to communicate with the colonial representatives. Pārthasārathi Bhaṭṭācārya dedicated his life to the preservation and propagation of the Vaikhānasa system of worship. His knowledge of English also enabled him to establish contact with Willem Caland who prepared the edition of the *Vaikhānasaśrautasūtra*. One letter to Caland, entitled "a short note on the Vaikhānasaśrautasūtra", is quoted in the preface to the Śrautasūtra edition (pp. xxvii–xxxi). For many years Pārthasārathi Bhaṭṭācārya served as main *arcaka* in the very famous Veṅkaṭeśa temple in Tirumalai. He founded the supra-regional Vaikhānasa organization "Sri Vaikhānasa Divya Vivardhini Sabha" and edited many Vaikhānasa texts.<sup>107</sup> He was known as a very erudite Sanskrit scholar and as an authority on the Vaikhānasa system of worship in theory and practice. That is why his commentaries on and explanations of central Vaikhānasa texts have had a deep influence on subsequent generations of Vaikhānasa scholars and *arcakas*.

107 See the bibliography at the end of this article.

Here his statements on the role, function and performance of the *niṣeka śaṃskāra* are examined. In his voluminous commentary on the *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* he often corroborates Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita's arguments by extending the quotations already given there.<sup>108</sup> While commenting on the *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa*'s "fifth reason why the Vaikhānasas are superior", Pārthasārathi Bhaṭṭācārya elaborates on some points which were only hinted at so far.<sup>109</sup>

He rejects the opinion of "some" that *garbhādhāna* and *niṣeka* are one and the same ritual and that the two terms are therefore synonyms.<sup>110</sup> He explains that in other Sūtras *garbhādhāna* is the first *śaṃskāra*, and that this *garbhādhāna* is in many cases identical with *ṛtusamgamana*.<sup>111</sup> In the Vaikhānasasūtra, however, according to Pārthasārathi Bhaṭṭācārya, the term *garbhādhāna* indicates a ritual for the wife when she is already pregnant.<sup>112</sup> This, he continues, is the only correct interpretation. He underpins this with the claim that the Vaikhānasasūtra—which in this case includes the Vaikhānasasamhitās—is on par with the Veda, and therefore is the highest authority.<sup>113</sup>

108 For example he extends the quotation from the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* given in *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* (ibid., p. 81; *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇavyākhyāna*, p. 390), and a quotation from the *Chāndogyaopaniṣad* (*Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa*, p. 82; *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇavyākhyāna*, pp. 394f.) etc. While commenting on a passage dealing with *niṣeka* in the *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa*, Pārthasārathi Bhaṭṭācārya also gives an extensive quotation from a non-Vaikhānasa text which is otherwise unknown, the *Praudhivyānjikā* by Śrīvaikhānasadāsa Kṛṣṇakumāra.

109 There he also briefly deals with the fact that *upanayana*, and not *niṣeka*, is dealt with first in the Vaikhānasasūtra (*Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇavyākhyāna*, pp. 396 and 370: *tathā ca nāṃdimukhapūrvakatvenopanayanasaṃskāram ārabhya śaṃskāropadeśe 'pi sa prakramabhaṃgaḥ*).

110 *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇavyākhyāna*, p. 369: 'nye 'pi garbhādhānādisabdāms tad ekārthān vyākhyānīti. This opinion is briefly referred to also in *Tātparyacintāmaṇi*. However, Pārthasārathi Bhaṭṭācārya admits that Bodhāyana—in contrast to Āpastamba and others—does not say that *garbhādhāna* and *niṣeka* are synonymous (ibid., pp. 399–400: *tataś cānūcānādy utpādanaparakāram tato rajasśvalāyāṃ brāhmaṇapratīṣiddhakarmopadeśam uktvā 'ste "caturthyāṃ snātāyāṃ niṣi"tyādī prakṛthagrantha uktaḥ [khaṇḍaḥ 11] tato viṣṇor yonim antānukṛtvā "evam eva caturthīprabhṛtyāśoḍaśīm uttarām uttarām yaugmām upaiti prajāniśśreyasam ṛtugamanam ity ācāryāḥ sarvaṇy upagamanāni mantravanti bhavanti bodhāyanaḥ yac cādau yac cartāv iti śālikih [khaṇḍaḥ 12, saptamo 'dhyāyah]" iti samveśanaparakāra uktaḥ ayam eva niṣekaḥ*).

111 Ibid., p. 404: *athetaresāṃ "garbhādhānam ṛtāv" ity ādinā niṣekarahitān garbhādhānādin śaṃskārān*.

112 Ibid., p. 404: *śrīvaikhānasasūtre garbhādhānakālasya gṛhītagarbhāyā vihītatvāt [...]*.

113 This fact is already hinted at in the *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* (where Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita mainly dwells on the term *ācārya* for Vaikhānasas) but is elaborated in Pārthasārathi Bhaṭṭācārya's commentary. Ibid., p. 405: "veda" itī vedo vaikhānasasūtraṃ ca tulyaba-

What interests us most here is the description of the actual performance of *niṣeka* in Pārthasārathi Bhaṭṭācārya's commentary. From the beginning he makes it clear that *niṣeka* is performed at the end of the vow called *caturthivrata*.<sup>114</sup> In general, he agrees with Nṛsiṃha Vājapeyin's view that *niṣeka* literally means the pouring of semen.<sup>115</sup> At the end of this section of the commentary, Pārthasārathi Bhaṭṭācārya clearly subscribes to the view first expressed in Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita's *Tātparyacintāmaṇi*, that the last sentence in the *caturthivāsa* (= *niṣeka*) section of the *Vaikhānasasūtra* (*Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* 3.8: "*suprajāstvēye*" *ty upagamanam* "*saṃnāmana*" *ity āliṅgam* "*imām anuvrate*" *ti vadhūmukhekṣaṇam ity eke*) refers to a case where the wife has not yet reached puberty. Then *niṣeka* can only be performed by reciting the relevant *mantras*, which differ from the *mantras* to be uttered when a man marries a grown-up woman.<sup>116</sup> Here Pārthasārathi Bhaṭṭācārya quotes many Śāstras which clearly state that a girl should be given away in marriage before she reaches puberty. Evidently the "*mantra-version*" of *niṣeka* is considered the regular procedure.<sup>117</sup>

It is evident that Pārthasārathi Bhaṭṭācārya considered *viṣṇubali* a much more important defining element of Vaikhānasa identity than *niṣeka*. In his commentary on the *Ānandasamhitā* he gives eight authoritative descriptions of *viṣṇubali*,<sup>118</sup> whereas he does not describe *niṣeka* at all.

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*laṃ pramāṇam. vedah ṛgādih vaikhānasasūtram, śrautasmārtabhedena bhinnam dvātriṃśatpraśnāmakam cāturalakṣaparimita śrīvaikhānasabhaḡavacchāstram ca tatpra-paṃcanarūpaṃ tatra saṃgrhyate.*

- 114 Ibid., p. 370: *pāṇigrahanacaturthivāsavratavisarjanānte niṣekasabda*. Bodhāyana, as Pārthasārathi Bhaṭṭācārya indicates, places at this stage the sexual intercourse during the fertile period. Therefore, in Bodhāyana's case *ṛtusamgamana* would be the appropriate name for this ritual. See e.g. *ibid.*, p. 402: *tat pakṣan dūsayati "caturthyām" ity ādinā rajasvalādharmāny uktvā "caturthyām snātāyām" itidam sūtram ārabhyate*.
- 115 Ibid., p. 371: *atra vājapeyāyam bhāṣyaṃ "retasā bhāryāyā yonir niṣecyate, saṃsicyate 'sminn iti niṣekaḥ" iti prajāprajananārthaṃ yonyām retas sekasya nāntariyakatā sūtra-kārair ucyate*.
- 116 Ibid., p. 420: *kiṃ ca vivāhaniṣpādakās ca maṃtrās sarve prauḍhām evoddiśya vadhūm pravṛttāḥ, yathā: "grbhṇāmi te [...] prajāpatī sā jīva śaradām śatam" ityadi maṃtrāṇām anyāsv aṣṭavarṣavayaskāsu samanvayo 'saṃbhāvī*.
- 117 Ibid., p. 421: *iti sarvaṃ saṃgataṃ bhavati rajodarśanānantaravivāhasya doṣaduṣṭatvam aṃgikurvāṇām api tādr̥ṣavivāhe prāyaścittādikam api sulabham uktam*.
- 118 In his commentary on *Ānandasamhitā* 8.32 (pp. 115ff.) he quotes Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita's *Tātparyacintāmaṇi*, Nṛsiṃha Vājapeyin's *Bhāṣya*, Sundararāja's *Prayogavṛtti*, Vasantayājñin's commentary, Saṅjivayājñin's *Nibandhana*, Veṅkaṭayogin's *Nibandhana*, Gopānācārya's *Anukramaṇikā*, and Śrīkoṇḍarāmayajvan's *Samartakarmānukramaṇikā* on the performance of *viṣṇubali*.



### Prayoga-Texts on *niṣeka*

The idea that *niṣeka* as the first *saṃskāra* constitutes Vaikhānasa identity is perpetuated in the Sanskrit Prayoga texts, ritual handbooks for practitioners which are in use today. These are the most recent expositions on the domestic rituals of the Vaikhānasa tradition. They give detailed descriptions of the diverse elements of the rituals arranged in their proper order. These handbooks were actually consulted by the *ācāryas* in most of the rituals I witnessed during my recent stay in South India.

There are two series of Prayoga texts in use today, which are in use in different regions: the Telugu speaking Vaikhānasa communities (mainly in Andhra Pradesh) use the *Vaikhānasasūtrānukramaṇikā* in Telugu characters.<sup>119</sup> The first volume describes some sub-rituals which are an integral part of many other rituals (e.g. *viṣvaksenārādhana*, *puṇyāha*, *āghāra*, *nāndīmukha*, *anukurāraṇa* etc.). The second volume deals with the procedure for establishing the *aupāsana*-fire and the 18 *śārīrasaṃskāras* with their *prāyaścittas*. The third volume contains some additional sub-rites and prescriptions which are not at all dealt with in the Sūtras, such as *karṇavedha* and the *saṃskāras* for a girl etc.

The Tamil speaking Vaikhānasas (mainly in Tamil Nadu) use three Prayoga texts, namely the *Pūrvaprayoga*, the *Vivāhaprayoga*, and the *Aparaprayoga*, which are all printed in Grantha- and Tamil characters. The *Pūrvaprayoga* deals with the *saṃskāras* from *niṣeka*/*ṛtusamgamana* to *narāyaṇavratibandha*, an integral part of *upanayana*. The *Vivāhaprayoga* describes all rituals connected with marriage, and the *Aparaprayoga* gives prescriptions for the rituals *post mortem*.

One important difference between both Prayoga texts and the Sūtra is the sequence of the rituals. In the Prayogas the description of the *saṃskāras* starts with the prenatal *saṃskāras*, whereas it starts with *upanayana* in the Sūtra and the commentaries. Since in some respects there are considerable differences between the descriptions of the *saṃskāras* between the two Prayogas I deal with them separately.

According to the table of contents, *niṣeka* (*niṣekaprayoga*) is dealt with at the beginning of the *Pūrvaprayoga*. In the relevant passage first (*Pūrvaprayoga* 1.6–9) the beginning of the Vaikhānasasūtra is quoted. Then it is stated that a group of five Brahmins should be present, the couple should have taken a bath in the

119 This text was published in two volumes (1924 and 1928) as Kusumas 10 and 17 of the series Vaikhānasagrāṇthamālā in Īgāvāripāḷem. Later it was reprinted several times in three volumes in Nallūru. This is the text I used for the present article (*Sūtrānukramaṇikā*).

morning, and the performer should wear two rings made of *darbha*-grass on his hand, and that he should wear the twelve Vaiṣṇava-signs (*ūrdhvaṣṭra*).<sup>120</sup> The first ritual is described as a *homa* which is an atonement for not having performed *ṛtusamgamana* at the proper time (*Pūrvaprayoga* 5.4: *ṛtusamgamana-kālātītaprāyaścittahoma*). Then follows the relevant passage from the *Vaikhānasasūtra* (*Pūrvaprayoga* 5.5–9)—which starts with the sentence “some say that the union during the fertile period is *niṣeka*” (*Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* 6.2: *ṛtau samgamanaṁ niṣekam ity āhuḥ*). In the actual description of this *prāyaścitta* in the *Pūrvaprayoga*, however, the term *niṣeka* is not used. The relevant term consistently is *ṛtusamgamana*. Therefore, *ṛtusamgamana* is described under the heading *niṣekaprayoga*. However, the subsequent description (*Pūrvaprayoga*, pp. 16ff.) of the main offering for *ṛtusamgamana* (*ṛtusamgamana* *pradhāna-homa*) contains several sub-rites. In the subrite called *phaladānaṁ* (“the giving of fruit”, *Pūrvaprayoga*, p. 19) the *saṁkalpa* surprisingly reads: “I will perform, in order to attain the complete bliss for my rightful wife, named [...], a part of the *niṣeka* ritual, namely the giving of fruit, the giving of betel, and the giving of betel leaves”.<sup>121</sup> A similar expression can be found in the next two sub-rites, namely the “appeasing of the planets” (*grahaprīti*)<sup>122</sup> and in the “giving of betel”<sup>123</sup>. In the latter sub-rite the *saṁkalpa* reads: “For the complete bliss of both of (us) I will perform the *niṣeka* ritual”. However, the *mantras* the performer has to recite are taken from the *ṛtusamgamana* chapter of the *Vaikhāna-*

120 *Pūrvaprayoga* 1.10–13: *pañcavarān śrotriyān āhūyābhipūjayati. dāmpatyoh prātasnā-tvācāmya. dhṛtobhaya-pavitrapāṇiḥ dvādaśorddhvaṣṭradharah. samdhyām upāsya brahmayaññaṁ kāṇḍariṣi tarpaṇam ca kṛtvā.*

121 Ibid. 19.17–20.2: *prāṇānyāmya [...] svar oṃ. śubhatithau. nakṣatre rāśau jātasya śarmaṇah. nakṣatre rāśau jātāyāḥ nāmnyāḥ mama dharmapatnyāḥ samastamaṅgalāvāptyarthaṁ niṣekakarmāṅgam phaladānaṁ tāmbūladānaṁ haridrādānānicādyā kariṣye. apa.*

122 Ibid. 20.14–25: *grahaprīti prāṇānyāmya [...] svar oṃ. śubhatithau nakṣatre rāśau [...] mama dharmapatnyāḥ samastamaṅgalāvāptyarthaṁ niṣekamuhūrtalagnāpekṣayā ādityādīnāṁ navānāṁ grahānāṁ ānukūlyasiddhyarthaṁ ādityādi navagrahadvārā bhagavat prītyarthaṁ yat kiñcid dhiraṇyadānaṁ, tāmbūlaharidrādānānicādyā kariṣye. apa. upa. hiraṇyagarbhaḥ garbhasthaṁ [...] prayaccha me. niṣekamuhūrtalagnāpekṣayā—ādityādīnāṁ—navānāṁ grahānāṁ—ānukūlyasiddhyarthaṁ—ye ye grahāḥ—śubhasthāneṣu sthitāḥ—teṣāṁ grahānāṁ atyanta [...].*

123 Ibid. 21.5: *tāmbūladānaṁ; Pūrvaprayoga* 21.14–21: *prāṇānyāmya [...] svar oṃ. ubhayoh samastamaṅgalāvāptyarthaṁ niṣekakarmaṇā saṁskariṣye. apa. upa. viṣṇur yoniḥ kalpayatv iti tāṁ upagacchet. viṣṇur yoniḥ kalpayatu tvaṣṭārūpāṇipimśatu āsimcatu prajāpatir ddhātā garbhan dadhātu te. garbhan dhehi sinivālī garbhan dhehi sarasvati. garbhan te aśvinau devāv ādhattāṁ puṣkarasrajā. hiraṇyayī araṇīyañcirmatthato aśvinā tante garbhaṁ.*

*sasmārtasūtra* (3.9). The next ritual described is *garbhādhāna* (*Pūrvaprayoga* 23.12: *garbhādānādiprayoga*).<sup>124</sup> Therefore, the term *niṣeka* is evidently used here only by mistake. In the relevant chapter on *caturthīvāsa* in the *Vivāhaprayoga* (pp. 68ff.), there is another passage headed “*niṣeka*”. This passage is placed after *āgneyasthālīpāka* (*Vivāhaprayoga*, p. 71), *aupāsana* (*Vivāhaprayoga*, p. 73), *vaiśvadeva* (*Vivāhaprayoga*, p. 74), *śeṣahoma* (*Vivāhaprayoga*, p. 77), and *antahoma* (*Vivāhaprayoga*, p. 78). There a passage from the *Vaikhānasasūtra* (*caturthīvāsa*, 3.8) is quoted (inaccurately) and the relevant *mantras* are given in full—however, in this description the term *niṣeka* is not used at all.<sup>125</sup> Therefore there is strong evidence that the compiler(s) of the *Pūrvaprayoga* and the *Vivāhaprayoga* did in fact regard the rituals *ṛtusamgamana* and *niṣeka* as one and the same procedure.

The situation is different in the Telugu Prayoga text. The *Sūtrānukramaṇikā* is based on five sources: 1) the *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra*, 2) Nṛsiṃha Vājapeyin’s *Bhāṣya*, 3) Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita’s commentaries (on *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa* and *Tātparyacintāmaṇi*), 4) on the practice according to time and place, 5) on a text called *Vaikhānasagrhyapariśiṣṭasūtra*. Since the other texts mentioned have already been introduced a few words on the *Vaikhānasagrhyapariśiṣṭasūtra* are required here. The full text of this *Vaikhānasagrhyapariśiṣṭasūtra* is evidently lost—its only existent parts are the quotations given in Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita’s works and in the *Sūtrānukramaṇikā*. Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita frequently refers to this text, mainly in connection with his “seventh reason”, where he argues that the *Vaikhānasasūtra* is better than all other *Sūtras* since it does in fact contain each and every necessary ritual.<sup>126</sup> Here he refers to the *Vaikhānasagrhyapariśiṣṭasūtra*, which describes the rituals that are not found in the *Vaikhānasasūtra*.

Back to the question of how *niṣeka* is dealt with in the *Sūtrānukramaṇikā*. In the table of contents of its second volume dealing with the 18 *samskāras* relating to the body, *niṣeka* is not listed—neither (as in the *Pūrvaprayoga*) placed before

124 The whole passage is not given in *Sūtrānukramaṇikā*.

125 *Vivāhaprayoga*, pp. 78–79: *agniṃ pradakṣiṇaṃ kṛtvā. prācyāṃ udīcyāṃ vā tām upaveśya, abhiṣṭvā pañcaśākheti yonim abhimṛśya. abhiṣṭvā prañcaśākheti śivenābhitiṣvātā sahasareṇa yaśas vinā hastenābhimṛśām asi. suprajās tvāyeti. tām upagachet, suprajās tvāya suvīryāya. santā mamatassaṃ hṛdayā santābhis hattvavā. satvākāmasya yoktraṇayauñjāmya vimocanāya. imām anuvratā bhavasahacaryāmayābhava. yā te patiḡhṇitānūr jāraghṇīṃ tvenām karomi. śivātvaṃ mahyamedhikṣur apavirjārebhyaḥ. madhu hen maddhv idaṃ madhujihlāto bhavam aśvināmukhomā. sārasaṃ madhumat susaṃvadatāṃ kṛtaṃ. vakravākāṃ saṃvananaṃ yantadībhya udāhṛtaṃ. yady uktau devaḡandharvau tena saṃvaninai svaḡ.*

126 *Daśavidhahetunirūpaṇa*, pp. 90ff.

*rtusamgamana*, nor as a part of the *vivāha* rituals. However, looking at the formal introduction of the diverse sub-rituals connected with *vivāha*, one discovers that *niṣeka* is in fact given there: it is presented after the topics *aupāsana*, *vaiśvadeva* (*Sūtrānukramaṇikā* 2, p. 120), and *grhadevatābhyo baliharaṇam* (*Sūtrānukramaṇikā* 2, p. 121), namely under the heading *caturthīhoma* (*Sūtrānukramaṇikā* 2, p. 124, there is also a footnote on *niṣeka*).

First the introductory sentence from *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* 3.8 is quoted.<sup>127</sup> The relevant *saṃkalpa* is: “I will endow this wife with the *niṣeka* ritual”.<sup>128</sup> Then the procedure of *niṣeka* follows, in full accordance with the Sūtra and taking into account the additional prescriptions from the *Vaikhānasagrhyaparīṣṭasūtra*,<sup>129</sup> which are given in a footnote.<sup>130</sup> In this footnote the compilers of the *Sūtrānukramaṇikā* also discuss the question of the other method of performing *niṣeka*. According to them there are two options. One is that which is already given, the other is based on the last sentence in the Sūtra (*Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra* 6.2: “*suprajās tvāye*” *ty upagamaṇam* “*sannāmamana*” *ity āliṅganam* “*imānuprate*” *ti vadhūmukheksaṇam ity eke*). Both sides are equally valid, since already Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita (in his *Tātparyacintāmaṇi*) had stated that sexual intercourse with a girl who has not yet reached puberty is prohibited. In that case the second method is applied. *niṣeka* then only consists of the recitation of *mantras*.

127 *Sūtrānukramaṇikā* 2.124: “*tad evaṃ trirātram haviṣyāśinau brahmacāriṇau dhautavastravratacāriṇau syātām*” *tato* ‘*parasyām rātryām*’ “*caturthyām*” *ātmānaṃ patnīm cālamkṛtya*.

128 *Ibid.* 2.124: *prāṇānāyama deśakālau saṃkīrtya śubhatithau (gotrām nāmnīm) enāṃ patnīm niṣekena karmaṇā saṃskariṣyāmi. iti saṃkalpya (apa) vivāhāgnāv āghāraṃ hutvā. agniṃ pariṣicya. adite* ‘*numanyasva*.

129 *Ibid.* 2.124–125: *agne vāyav āditya vāyav āgne* ‘*gne vāyavādityeti nava prāyaścittāni vyāhṛtīs cājyena juhuyāt. agne vāyavādityāditya vāyavagne*’ *gne vāyavāditya. bhūis svāhā* 4. *atha vadhūmūrdhni svarṇam nidhāya bhūr bhagam ityādi caturbhir mantrais sruveṇājyam ādāya mūrdhni juhuyāt. bhūr bhagas tvayi juhomi svāhā, bhuvo yaśas tvayi juhomi svāhā. sivaśśriyas tvayi juhomi svāhā. bhūr bhuvās suvas śriyas tvayi juhomi svāhā. antahomānte* ‘*gniṃ pradakṣiṇakṛtya tam agniṃ aranyām idhme vā samāropya dampatī pra taṃ visṛṣtam ity ābhāṣya carmādi tyajetām. bandhubhis saha bhuktvā. bhuktvatvayāṃ patnyāṃ vitānādibhir alamkṛte grhet alpe prācyām udīcyām vā tāṃ upaveśya suprajās tvām ety upagamaṇam. suprajās tvāya suvīryāya. sannāmamana ity āliṅganam. sannāma manassamhṛdayāsannābhis sastvacā. santyākāmasya yoktreṇa yujñāmy avimocanāya. imām anuprateti vadhūmukheksaṇam kuryāt. imām anuvratā bhavasahacaryāmayā bhava. yā te vatighnī tanūr jāraghnīm tvenāṅkaromi. śivā tvam mahyam edhikṣuravavirjārebhyaḥ*.

130 *Ibid.* 2.126: *vadhūgrhe caturthī cet paredyuh svagraṇam punaḥ | praviśya pūrvaṃ sthitvā puṇyāhaṃ bhojayed dvijān || sā ca nityam śuciś cāgni bhartṛśuśrūṣaṇam caret ||. iti.*

It is evident that the compilers of the *Sūtrānukramaṇikā* regarded the ritual at the end of *caturthivāsa* as *niṣeka*, in contrast to the compilers of the *Pūrvaprayoga* and *Vivāhaprayoga*, who evidently considered *niṣeka* as identical with *ṛtusamgamana*. As a consequence of this difference of opinion the “variant” of *niṣeka*, consisting of the uttering of *mantras*, is known only in the *Sūtrānukramaṇikā*.

### The Opinion of Contemporary Vaikhānasa-ācāryas on *niṣeka*

In order to find out about the present day oral tradition I interviewed some members of the Vaikhānasa communities in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu about the significance and present-day performance of the *samskāra niṣeka*.<sup>131</sup> It was evident that, although many Vaikhānasas are of the opinion that being a Vaikhānasa usually is defined by “being endowed with the *samskāras*, beginning with *niṣeka*”, very few of them have a concrete perception of how and when the ritual named *niṣeka* is performed. As was to be expected, there is a difference of opinion between those Vaikhānasas who perform the domestic ritual for other Vaikhānasas, the so-called *bṛhaspatīs*, and those who are representatives of the Vaikhānasa tradition as a school of temple ritual (the so-called *arcakas*), but who have less theoretical knowledge of the sequence and the performance of the *samskāras*.

All practising *bṛhaspatīs* as well as all practising *arcakas* told me that *niṣeka* today generally is performed immediately after the marriage rituals or three days later.<sup>132</sup> However, uncertainty regarding the identity of *niṣeka* and *ṛtusamgamana* (sometimes also *garbhādhāna*) is very common. One *arcaka*, who also occasionally performs domestic rituals, is of the opinion that both, *niṣeka* and *garbhādhāna* are performed after the marriage rituals. *Niṣeka*, he adds, is performed after the first menstruation of the wife after marriage. For four days the couple is not allowed to have sexual intercourse, until the bleeding comes to an end. According to him, *ṛtusamgamana* is the monthly cohabitation on the fourth day of the wife’s menstruation. Another *arcaka* states that—although he regards *niṣeka* and *ṛtusamgamana* as separate rituals—identical *mantras* are used during both rituals.

However, one Vaikhānasa who occasionally performs temple rituals insists that *niṣeka* and *ṛtusamgamana* are separate rituals. In full accordance with

131 This passage contains the results of interviews I conducted as part of my field work in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh January/February 1998 and from August 2000 to March 2001, both possible only through the generous financial support of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG).

132 For obvious reasons the names will not be given here.

Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita he states that the ritual which concludes the ritual complex called *caturthīvāsa* is *niṣeka*. According to him, *ṛtusaṃgamana* is performed after the third day of menstruation. The present day performance of *niṣeka* is as follows: the husband touches the belly of the wife. Before that, husband and wife may only touch each other's hands for three days. However, this *arcaka* admits that nowadays *niṣeka* is usually not performed at all—and if so, it simply consists of the recitation of *mantras* at the end of the *vivāha* ceremonies. He attributes this custom to the “early times”, when girls were given away in marriage before they reached puberty. At that time, from *vivāha* until the wife's first menstruation, only the sub-rituals *aupāsana*, *sthālīpāka* and *vaiśvadeva* were performed. This is, he adds, the reason why these chapters in the *Vaikhānasa-smārtasūtra* are given between *vivāha* and *caturthīvāsa*.<sup>133</sup> This connection between the marriage age of girls and the actual performance of the *niṣeka* ritual is also drawn by other *arcakas* and *brhaspatīs*. One professional *brhaspati* states that in former times *niṣeka* was performed when the couple had not reached puberty. At that time *niṣeka* consisted of reciting *mantras*. The first actual sexual intercourse then was *ṛtusaṃgamana*. Another Vaikhānasa is of the slightly different opinion that “in former times, when girls were already married at the age of eight”, *niṣeka* was performed only after the girls reached puberty.

The uncertainty as to whether *ṛtusaṃgamana* and *niṣeka* are one and the same ritual continues until the present day. The same holds true for the objective of *niṣeka* and its actual time and method of performance. Contrary to the regional Prayoga tradition, as far as I can see the oral tradition is not dependent on regional factors but, it seems, on the degree of the theoretical and/or practical background of the respective priest.<sup>134</sup>

In some cases a connection is expressed between the actual marriage age of the couple (wife) and the concrete performance of *niṣeka*. Most probably this is based on the Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita's expositions, which introduced a distinction between *niṣeka* as first sexual intercourse and *niṣeka* as a symbolical act consisting of reciting *mantras*. The common present-day practice of *niṣeka* as a symbolic

133 *Caturthīvāsa/niṣeka* was performed only after the woman's first menstruation. The regular rituals *aupāsana*, *sthālīpāka* and *vaiśvadeva* are interrupted during the menstruation of the wife, because these rituals can only be performed together with the wife, who is, however, considered impure during menstruation. Thus for four days the place for the sacrifices may not be entered, after that *prāyaścittas* are performed, and then the usual procedure starts again.

134 This does not mean that those with the deepest theoretical knowledge are necessarily at the same time the most reliable informants regarding the actual present day practice.

act involves *mantras* and the act by which the couple looks into each other's face (and, occasionally, the man touches the woman's belly).

However, on a theoretical level, which is mainly concerned with the eligibility to perform the temple rituals in Vaiṣṇava temples, even today it is of great importance whether a Vaikhānasa is in fact "endowed with the rituals beginning with *niṣeka* according to the Vaikhānasasūtra" or not. Here the main issue is the marriage of Vaikhānasa men with Brahmin women of other Sūtra-traditions. Thus in the mid-nineties of the twentieth century it was vehemently discussed whether the children from a union of a Vaikhānasa father and a mother of a family with another Sūtra-tradition are eligible to perform temple worship in a traditional Vaikhānasa temple. It was decided that these children are considered "half pure", since the mother is not endowed with the *saṃskāras* beginning with *niṣeka*. In this case the relevant *prāyaścittas* are applied. This argument clearly is based on the passage in the Sūtra which reads *niṣekād ā jātakāt saṃskṛtāyāṃ brāhmaṇyāṃ brāhmaṇāj jātamātraḥ putramātraḥ* (Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra 1.1), which introduces the diverse categories of Brahmins. There *niṣekād ā jātakāt* grammatically refers to the mother, not to the child. Only the children in the next generation are "pure" Vaikhānasas, if their mother and father are both "endowed with the *saṃskāras* beginning with *niṣeka* according to the Vaikhānasasūtra". Here the conflict of two related but essentially different concepts of lineage becomes evident: that of a Vedic "branch" (*śākhā*), the content of which is transmitted from teacher to pupil, and that of a Brahmin caste, which is transmitted from father to son. Both concepts are claimed by the Vaikhānasas for themselves: the Vedic branch in order to underpin their unquestionable authority, the Brahmin caste in order to establish the hereditary and thus insurmountable boundaries of the group.

The awareness that being endowed with the *saṃskāras* beginning with *niṣeka* is a precondition for being a Vaikhānasa and to perform the ritual in Vaikhānasa temples is reflected by another *arcaka*'s statement. He considers *niṣeka* and *viṣṇubali* "additional" *saṃskāras*, peculiar only to the Vaikhānasa tradition. According to him *niṣeka* is performed together with *garbhādhāna* after marriage and before the first sexual intercourse of the couple. Its aim is to provide the child with the ability to perform the temple rituals.

## Summary

Since *niṣeka* is rarely performed today, its function must be on a more abstract level. *Niṣeka* is mentioned as a distinctive feature of the Vaikhānasas among Vaiṣṇava groups as well as among Sūtra traditions. In both cases *niṣeka* consti-

tutes a demarcation on the basis of genealogy. This becomes very clear when reference is made to the mother of the unborn child: she also has to be endowed with the *saṃskāras* according to the Vaikhānasasūtra and therefore has to stem from a Vaikhānasa-family. Therefore, the affiliation to the Vaikhānasa group invariably derives from descent. At the same time the Vaikhānasas claim to constitute a Vedic branch, which in principle is not based on descent, but on teacher-pupil succession, which is realized by an initiation. Through the linkage of a Vedic branch with specific prenatal *saṃskāras* this peculiar Vedic tradition is limited to the Brahmin caste of the Vaikhānasas. *Niṣeka* stands here for all *saṃskāras* of this tradition. These *saṃskāras* create ritual authorization for the concerned person by constituting his “ritual body”.<sup>135</sup> Based on the Vedic principle that biological facts by nature are defective and therefore have to be “formed” and “structured” through rituals, men overcome their natural deficits only through rituals, according to their inherent potential.<sup>136</sup> This process is enacted through *saṃskāras*: a man is “made perfect” and “appropriate” through ritual actions—he unfolds by and by. Literally this idea is expressed by Śrīnivāsa Dīkṣita who states that a Vaikhānasa who is endowed with *niṣeka* etc. has “the body of Brahmā”.

The *saṃskāras* “from *niṣeka* to *śmaśāna*” constitute a frame for the ritual construction and dissolution of the ritual body of a Vaikhānasa. On the concrete plane the performance of a “ritual decision” (*saṃkalpa*) and the “dismissal” (*visarjana*) of the god constitutes the beginning and the end of a ritual.<sup>137</sup> Therefore *niṣeka* on a more abstract level, as first *saṃskāra*, marks the beginning of the construction of the ritual competence of a Vaikhānasa. Since *niṣeka* at the same time is presented as a *saṃskāra* which is also necessary for the mother, it could serve until now as a badge for the Vaikhānasas as a group of hereditary ritual specialists, irrespective of the fact whether the ritual is in fact performed or not.

To sum up, while the practice as well as the interpretation—which is the meaning imposed by the actors, spectators, and other participants—of this ritual evidently always were at variance, *niṣeka* remained important as a label for a Vaikhānasa identity among ritual specialists. Thus this peculiar ritual is an example for the fact that even if the contents of a ritual change in every respect, even if its performance is suspended, still the ritual as concept does not necessarily lose its significance.

135 See B.K. Smith 1989: 51.

136 See *ibid.*: 82–86 and 92f.

137 See Michaels 1998; see also B.K. Smith 1989: 91.



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