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Conversion or Initiation? On the Removal of the Sectarian Marks (*liṅgoddhāra*) in Śaiva Siddhānta

The removal of the sectarian marks (*liṅgoddhāra*)

The removal of the sectarian characteristics or marks (*liṅgoddhāra*) that I propose to analyze in the context of initiation is taught in the eleventh century ritual manual of Somaśambhu immediately after the prescriptions for the different kinds of initiations (*samaya-* and *nirvāṇadīkṣā*) and consecrations (*ācārya-* and *sādhakābhiṣeka*).[1] It forms part of a section on the liberation or abandonment of vows (*vratamukti, vratasaṃtyāga*). This passage starts with prescriptions for Śaiva Siddhāntins who wish to remove a temporary vow of celibacy (*brahmacarya*). At the end of this rite the teacher pronounces the wish that his pupil should get married.[2] The subsequent section is meant for others, i.e. Non-Śaivas bound by vows of their respective religious traditions.[3] The removal of the sectarian marks is performed by the *ācārya* of the tradition but it is made clear that he is acting in Śiva's place. Divine presence is postulated and the agency is with Śiva, since he is present in the *ācārya*'s body (*ācāryamūrtistha*). In an attempt of hierarchisation each soul that undergoes *liṅgoddhāra* will be ascribed a level corresponding to a specific *tattva* chosen from the series of altogether 36 *tattva*s corresponding to its previous religious affiliation. The removal of the sectarian marks aims to destroy the link to this *tattva* and all merit related to this respective level. The soul thus looses all its existing characteristics and has to start its path of liberation from the very beginning, i.e. from the lowest *tattva* Earth and the stage of a householder (*gṛhastha*). The compounds "*liṅga-uddhāra*" or "*vrata-samuddhāra*"[4] are thus directly linked to this notion of the removal of sectarian marks as well as to the removal of all signs of the previous sectari-

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1   My presentation is largely based on Hélène Brunner's edition of the *Somaśambhupaddhati* (SŚPdh, 1963–98). In SŚPdh 3 (p. 1–565) the rituals are given in the following sequence: section 1) *samayadīkṣā*, 2) *viśeṣasamayadīkṣā*, 3) *nirvāṇadīkṣā*, 4) *tritattvadīkṣā*, 5) *ekatattvadīkṣā*, 6) *ācāryā-bhiṣeka*, 7) *sādhakābhiṣeka*, 8) *astrābhiṣeka* and 9) *vratoddhāra*.

2   *anurūpāṃ kulīnāṃ ca pariṇeṣyasi kanyakām* SŚPdh 3: p. 547.

3   *śaivānāṃ vratasaṃtyāgaḥ saṃkṣepeṇeti darśitaḥ | anyeṣāṃ vratayuktānāṃ prasaṅgāt so 'bhi-dhīyate |* SŚPdh 3: p. 547–51.

4   This is the term used at the end of this section: *iti vratasamuddhāro racitaḥ somaśambhunā* (SŚPdh 3: p. 565). Hélène Brunner translates *vrata-/liṅga-uddhāra* with "éradication d'une observance/du signe caractéristique" (SŚPdh 3: p. 550, n. 14) and *vratasamuddhāra* with "extraction du *vrata*" (SŚPdh 3: p. 564). A rite called *dīkṣoddhāra* is performed for *dīkṣita*s who are *śivabhaktivibhinna*; according to Brunner a "rite capable de défaire une *dīkṣā* śivaïte, soit que celle-ci ait été donnée dans des conditions irrégulieres, soit que l'initié s'avère indigne de son élévation ..." (SŚPdh 3: p. 564, n. 52).

an affiliation (*vratāṅga*s). This is a prerequisite for the transformation of the convert's soul.

Who are now the followers of other religious traditions mentioned in the *Soma-śambhupaddhati*? In two verses we find six religious groups enumerated, each one allocated to a specific *tattva*:

> *buddhitattve sthitā bauddhā jainās tu guṇamastake |*
> *vedāntajñās tu tadyonau puruṣe bhagavanmukhāḥ ‖ 7 ‖*
> *pāśupatās tu māyāyāṃ vidyāyāṃ tu mahāvratāḥ |*
> *bauddhādiliṅgināṃ eṣāṃ muktisthānāny anukramāt ‖ 8 ‖*[5]

The Buddhists reside in the *tattva* "intellect" (*buddhi*), the Jainas are at the top of the *tattva guṇa*, the knowers of the Vedānta in its origin [i.e. the *tattva* "nature" (*prakṛti*)], those, who turn their faces to Bhagavān [i.e. Viṣṇu], in the [*tattva*] soul, the Pāśupatas in the [*tattva*] "matter" (*māyā*), the Mahāvratas in the [*tattva*] knowledge. These are in the sequence of their respective places of liberation the bearer of characteristics (*liṅgin*) starting with the Buddhists.

It is remarkable that the Buddhists and Jainas although on the two lowest levels (see Table 1) are not dealt with in a different way than the other mentioned Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva groups that have been later labelled as being part of the "Hindu" religions.[6] The following are among these four groups: 1) The term "knowers of the Vedānta" does of course refer to the well-known orthodox system of monistic Indian philosophy. It is most likely that this refers to the tradition founded in the 8th century by Śaṃkara. 2) Those who turn their face to Bhagavān are the followers of Viṣṇu, here without any specific hints for a specific affiliation within this group. The Pāśupatas and the Mahā-vratas form part of the sphere of the religious traditions of Śaivism. They are sorted hierarchically above the other religious groups. The Pāśupatas (3) and the Mahāvratas (4) pertain to the "outer path" (*atimārga*) that is meant for celibate ascetics aiming for liberation. In the case of the Pāśupatas this path transcends the traditional Brahmanical system of the four stages of life (*atyāśramavrata*). The Mahāvratas do adhere to antino-mian practices. The Śaiva Siddhānta does not form part of this "outer path" but follows the path of the mantras (*mantramārga*) instead and is opposed to mentioned heterodox practices. The *mantramārga* is accessible for married householders and ascetics alike, the ascetics aiming primarily for extraordinary powers (*bubhukṣu*), the householders and the lay followers for liberation (*mumukṣu*).

The quoted verses do sort the soteriological quality of rival religious traditions in a hierarchical order corresponding to the sequence of the 36 *tattva*s. The followers of the

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5 SŚPdh 3, p. 553.

6 The passage under discussion has been already dealt with in the context of definitions or decon-structions of the term "Hinduism" in pre-modern and modern India. See von Stietencron (1995) and Michaels (2004: 15–21). In this context Michaels states that "the individual cults, sects, philo-sophies, and theistic systems are not different religions—as von Stietencron portrayed them—but rather cognitive systems of socioreligious institutions" (ibid.: 19).

six mentioned groups do reach the worlds of the Śaiva cosmos linked to "their" respective *tattva* and are thus excluded from the path leading via the highest *tattva* to liberation. Polemical passages that do deal with rival religious traditions can be found in non-ritual contexts as well. It can be noted that the Buddhists and Jainas are consistently linked to the *tattvas* *buddhi* and *guṇa* respectively whereas the number of the Śaiva und Vaiṣṇava systems varies. In some cases the classical philosophical systems like Sāṃkhya or Yoga are included.[7]

Six groups with sectarian marks (*liṅgin*)	Correlation to the 36 *tattvas*
	1–4 Śiva; Śakti; Sadāśiva; Īśvara
Mahāvrata	5 *śuddhavidyā*
Pāśupata	6 *māyā*
	7–11 five *kañcukas*
	12 *puruṣa*
Bhāgavata	
Vedāntin	13a *prakṛti*
Jaina	13b *guṇa*
Buddhist	14 *buddhi*
	15–16 *ahaṃkāra; manas*
	17–21 five *jñānendriyas*
	22–26 five *karmendriyas*
	27–31 five *tanmātras*
	32–36 five *bhūtas*

Table 1: The six religious groups and their respective placement in the sequence of the 36 *tattvas*

The prescribed sequence of acts to be performed during the *liṅgoddhāra* is believed to be a means to transform the souls of the adepts and destroy all the qualities and characteristics that pertain to their previous level. Three basic activities form part of the ritual performance. 1) The convert has to fast for a period lasting from three to five days. 2) Through an expiatory rite with an elaborate recitation of mantras the convert is purified. 3) Then follows the removal of the sectarian marks: during this process all the merit acquired so far has to be destroyed and all inner and outer qualities of the soul have to be removed. The soul has to be reinstated into its status prior to becoming a member of the mentioned religious traditions.

The characteristic of the Buddhists is the *tattva* intellect and the corresponding cosmological elements. That of the Jainas is the *tattva* quality and so forth. The process of the removal of the marks is similar for every convert, specific is the respective *tattva*. In the case of a Buddhist the *ācārya* starts with a veneration of Śiva by placing Śiva's soul in his own body and becoming Śiva (*śivīkaraṇa*). Then he recites the names of the

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7   For parallel passages see SŚPdh 3, p. 553–5.

22 *tattva*s starting with the *tattva* intellect and ending with *tattva* earth. Having poured these *tattva*s in the sacrificial fire he venerates them by reciting the names of all the 22 *tattva*s. Now the ritual specialist unites the soul of the Buddhist with his own soul, accompanied by specific *mudrā*s and mantras. With the mantra of the sword ending with "*phaṭ*", all the gained merit of the (former) Buddhist's soul is destroyed. With the five-syllabled root mantra of the tradition (*namaḥ śivāya*) each of the *tattva*s is separated from the soul. Finally the soul is re-united with its previous caste (*pūrvajāti*) and its prescribed behaviour. The signs of the religious affiliation (*vratāṅga*s) are dismissed into flowing water (*visarjana*). The soul that once was a "Buddhist" is now reinvested into its original condition. In case the acting *ācārya* is full of compassion (*anukampā*) towards his disciple, he is now as a househoulder entitled to undergo the various types of initiations (*samaya-* and *nirvāṇadīkṣā*) into Śaiva Siddhānta as described above.[8] Only then the convert is allowed to enter into the pavilion, the outsider is allowed inside in order to receive the previously described initiation into the tradition of the Śaiva Siddhānta. But it is important to note, that the outsider does never become a complete insider, since he is excluded from receiving consecration as a Śaiva *ācārya*. As Srilata Raman has rightly stated "his status as a convert (*punarbhū*) makes him forever inferior in the Śaiva hierarchy" (2007: 284). To sum up, the described process that leads to a conversion is therefore necessarily two-fold: the purification and removal of a previous vow (*liṅga-* or *vratoddhāra*) has to be followed by the initiation (*dīkṣā*) into the tradition. I will therefore describe the basic elements of the Śaiva initiation in the following section.

Initiation – the *samaya-* and *nirvāṇadīkṣā*

The Śaiva *dīkṣā*—called by Surdam "the central ritual act in the life of a Śaiva-siddhāntin" (1984: lxviii)—generally consists of two distinct levels, the initiation into the rules (*samayadīkṣā*) and the initiation to liberation (*nirvāṇadīkṣā*). The initiation into the rules (*samayadīkṣā*) is on the level of the manuals generally split into two sections called general initiation into the rules (*sāmānya-samayadīkṣā*) and special initia-

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8   *trirātraṃ pañcarātraṃ vā liṅginām upavāsinām | prāyaścittaviśuddhānāṃ sthitānāṃ maṇḍapād bahiḥ | 9 | saṃpūjya paśubhartāraṃ vistareṇa yathā purā | amīṣāṃ deśikaḥ kuryāl liṅgoddhāra-vidhiṃ yathā | 10 | buddhyādibhūmiparyantatattvavrātaṃ vibhāvasau | upasthāpya svasaṃjñābhir ekaikaṃ vā prapūjayet | 11 | bahiṣṭhānām athaiteṣāṃ nāḍīsandhānapūrvakam | kṛtvā tāḍanaviśleṣāv ākarṣaṃ svātmani sthitam | 12 | svāhāntena ca mūlena tadyogaṃ jātavedasi | iṣṭadevārcanāpuṇya-phaladhvaṃsāya homayet | 13 | śastrasyāṣṭau sahasrāṇi liṅginaṃ liṅginaṃ prati | pañca pañca ca mūlena pratitattvavimuktaye | 14 | buddhyādibhyo dharāntebhyaḥ samuddhṛtya niyojayet | pūrva-jātau tadācāre tadyogasthitaye punaḥ | 15 | pūrṇāntaṃ mūlamantreṇa yajed aṣṭottaraṃ śatam | tad-vat toye vratāṅgāni kṣiptvā kuryāt gṛhasthitān | 16 | ... tato vastrayugaṃ datvā gārhasthye vini-yojayet | teṣāṃ kurvīta vā dīkṣāṃ bhaktānām anukampayā | 23 | visrjya sthaṇḍileśāgnī vidhinā śodhayed bhuvam | iti vratasamuddhāro racitaḥ somaśambhunā | 24.* (SŚPdh 3, p. 555–65). Verses 18 to 22 (SŚPdh 3, p. 559–63) do refer to an alternative method probably linked to the rite of *vratoddhāra* and are therefore not relevant for the present context (see SŚPdh 3, p. 560, n. 39).

tion (*viśeṣadīkṣā*) or special initiation into the rules (*viśeṣa-samayadīkṣā*). On this first stage of initiation the devotee becomes a member of the Śaiva community, receives a new name, attains the right to perform the daily worship of Śiva and the fire ritual. This initiation ends with the enumeration of the rules (*samaya*) as a code of conduct and the handing over to the *samayin* of the signs of the vow (*vratāṅga*).[9] The *nirvāṇadīkṣā* intends to cut away the bonds of the disciple's soul and its basic aim is the unification of the disciple's individual soul called *paśu*, *aṇu* or *ātman* with the soul of Śiva.[10] After having temporarily reached the place of Śiva's soul, the soul of the *dīkṣita* is led back by the *ācārya* into its body. The adept has now become Śiva's son, a *putraka* and has thus attained a status where he can be certain that he will not be reborn after his death.[11] In addition to this promised liberation he has attained the right to obtain an ordination or consecration (*abhiṣeka*) as *ācārya* or *sādhaka*, but only if he is selected by his *ācārya* for either of the two positions.[12] The methods of performing the *nirvāṇa-dīkṣā* vary according to the category of elements that are purified during the initiation. Among the means of initiation are the nine *tattva*s (*navatattvadīkṣā*) or 36 *tattva*s (*tattva-dīkṣā*), the worlds (*bhuvana-dīkṣā*), the six *adhvan*s (*ṣaḍadhvadīkṣā*) or the five *kalā*s (*kalā-dīkṣā*).[13]

The complex *nirvāṇadīkṣā* is to be performed during two successive days (*atirātra*). The first day serves for the preparation (*adhivāsana*) of the initiation that takes place only on the second day. The complexity of the whole ritual is partially due to a "modular" structure: the prescribed ritual sequence is accompanied by numerous rites necessary for the preparation of the disciple, the *ācārya* and the creation of the presence of divine beings. Complex elements of the initiation are sometimes prescribed without a detailed explanation of the actual sequence of rites. This has to be studied in preceding or succeeding passages of the *paddhati*, thus for example the daily ritual (*nitya-karman*)[14] performed in the morning of the second day, the installation of the *dīkṣita*[15] or the adoration of Śiva, Agni and other gods are prescribed but not explained in the section on *nirvāṇadīkṣā*. The phases of the *nirvāṇadīkṣā* have been summarized in

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9   Five items are mentioned as insignia of the observance: *vratāṅgāni jaṭābhasmadaṇḍakaupīnasaṃ-yamān* SŚPdh 3: p. 149. The meaning of *saṃyama* is not totally clear, Brunner suggests to think of an "objet matériel" instead of "contrôle des sens". As fifth element the *yajñopavīta*, *akṣasūtra* or *kamaṇḍalu* are named in parallel passages (SŚPh 3: p. 153, n. 61).

10   See for a general definition of *dīkṣā*: *malamāyādipāśānāṃ viśleṣaḥ kriyate yayā | jñānaṃ ca janyate śiṣye sā dīkṣety abhidhīyate* (SŚPdh 3: p. 3).

11   For the concept of "instant liberation" (*sadyonirvāṇadīkṣā*) see SŚPdh 3: p. 10, n.16.

12   See Brunner (1975) for a closer examination of the categories *putraka* and *sādhaka*. The two terms *dīkṣā* and *abhiṣeka* are usually used for the different categories "initiation" and "consecration, ordination" respectively. See Surdam (1984: xc–xciv) on the evolution of the *dīkṣā*. In the current practice in South India the *nirvāṇadīkṣā* "is hardly ever performed as an independent rite" (1984: xciv) but as a prerequisite linked with the *ācāryābhiṣeka*.

13   See *Mataṅgapārameśvarāgama*, *kriyāpāda*, ch. 7 for a description of the *bhuvanadīkṣā*, ch. 8 for *tattvadīkṣā* and ch. 9 for *navatattvapīṭhadīkṣā*.

14   See Table 2, 2.3 and the detailed description in SŚPdh 1: p. 3–67.

15   See Table 2, 2.5 and the description in SŚPdh 3: p. 2–110 (*samayadīkṣā*).

Table 2, split into two sections with seven steps for the preparatory day and eleven steps for the day of the main ritual.[16]

Stages of the ritual	Sequence of rites
1. First day: Preparatory rites (*adhivāsana*) for the initiation	1.1 "Activation" of the mantras (*mantradīpana*)
	1.2 Preparation of the "cord of the bonds" (*pāśasūtra*)
	1.3 Consumption of the five cow products (*pañcagavya*) and sacrificial rice (*caruka*)
	1.4 Tooth-brushing (*dantadhāvana*) and dropping of the stick (*dantakāṣṭha*)
	1.5 Worship of Sthaṇḍileśa, Caṇḍa, Agni, the pot (*kalaśa*) and the Guardians of the World (Lokapālas)
	1.6 Purification of the pavilion (*maṇḍapa*) and entrance
	1.7 Sleep of disciple and *ācārya*
2. Second day: The liberating initiation	2.1 Morning bath
	2.2 Examination of the disciple's dreams, expiation for inauspicious dreams
	2.3 Daily ritual outside and inside the pavilion
	2.4 Preparatory rites performed by the *ācārya* inside the pavilion (*nityakarman*, worship of Śiva and Agni, nourishing (*tarpaṇa*) and activation of the mantras etc.)
	2.5 Entrance and installation of the disciple
	2.6 Purification of the 5 *kalā*s (*kalāśuddhi*) and visualization of all the elements
	2.7 Successive joining of each *kalā* with *pāśasūtra*
	2.8 Cutting of the tuft (*śikhā*)
	2.9 Unification of the disciple's soul with Śiva's soul (*yojanikā*)
	2.10 Reinstallation of the disciple's soul in his body
	2.11 Veneration of Śiva and disciple, bath of the disciple (now called *putraka*)

Table 2: The sequence of the *nirvāṇadīkṣā* according to the *Somaśambhupaddhati*

I would now like to give an exemplary description of the sequential purification of the five *kalā*s (*kalāśuddhi*) and the function of the cord of bonds as a substitute of the disciple's body (*pratikāya*) during the most crucial phase of the main ritual.[17] The cleaning of the five *kalā*s and the successive joining of each *kalā* with the cord of bonds form the most original, significant and elaborate part of the whole liberating initiation. The disciple's self is now being prepared for the final act, the unification with Śiva's soul that is

16 Jun Takashima gives in his article on *dīkṣā* in the *Tantrāloka* a list with "the program of *dīkṣā* rituals" and states correctly that the *dīkṣā* of the *Somaśambhupaddhati* "is not so different from the ordinary *dīkṣā* of the *Tantrāloka* at least on the level what is done (though not its interpretation)" (1992: 47).

17 Besides this *kalādīkṣā*, the *nirvāṇadīkṣā* in the form of a purification of the 5 *kalā*s, Somaśambhu teaches a *tri-* and *ekatattvadīkṣā* (SŚPdh 3: p. 427–54).

called *yojanikā*. But before this unification is made possible all factors that bind his soul have to be removed and destroyed. For this purpose powerful means and actions are employed.

The most important media and ritual object is the already mentioned cord of bonds (*pāśasūtra*). On this cord everything that binds the soul is projected and then finally destroyed. This cord is fixed at the body of the disciple reaching from his hair to his feet, it is fixed on the left side in the case of female adepts on the right in the case of male. The whole body is put into relation with the five *kalā*s. These *kalā*s called from beneath Nivṛtti, Pratiṣṭhā, Vidyā, Śānti, and Śāntyatītā encompass the totality of worldly phenomena structured into the five categories or sections. Each *kalā* has its own governor who is the sovereign over the whole section (*kāraṇeśvara*). The five *kalā*s thus correspond to the five parts of the body and form at the same time a section of the cord of bonds.

The liberating initiation as described in Somaśambhu's manual is based on the five-fold division according to the five *kalā*s and therefore also called *kalādīkṣā*. The preparation, purification and subsequent transformation of the disciple's soul is undertaken by a sequence of action that is repeated on the level of each of the five *kalā*s. In order to show the main steps of this process I will describe the sequence for the lowest *kalā*: The process starts with an extensive visualization (*bhāvanā*) of all that is contained in the *kalā* Nivṛtti. This includes the different worlds, sounds, organs, beings, gods etc. Then follows the extraction of the *kalā* Nivṛtti out of the disciple's body and the imposition on the cord of the bonds. At a next step divine presence is created on two levels: at a first step an invocation, nourishment (*tarpaṇa*), and adoration of Brahmā, the governor of the *kalā* Nivṛtti is performed. Now that Brahmā is present, the *ācārya* is uttering a request: "Brahmā, I am initiating this aspirant for liberation (*mumukṣu*) under your supervision. Please be favourable!"[18] Then the highest gods, the divine couple in the form of Vāgīśvarī and Vāgīśvara are invoked and adored.

With the presence of these gods being assured, the soul of the disciple trespasses for a last time all the spheres of the *kalā* Nivṛtti and then leaves this part of his bondage forever behind. The part of the cord of bonds that corresponds to the section of the *kalā* Nivṛtti is cut and the piece of the cord is burned so that it will be destroyed forever. After this action we do find an interesting notion of territoriality: Brahmā is invoked once again, he now receives the fee or price (*śulka*) for his permission to cross his territory. The *ācārya* then lets Brahmā know Śiva's order: "Brahmā, do no longer bind this soul, its bonds are completely burned!"[19] Finally after an adoration of the disciple who is now liberated of the lowest part of his bonds, Vāgīśvara and Vāgīśvarī are dismissed

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18 See SŚPdh 3 *nirvāṇadīkṣā* (p. 255–7) for the whole passage: *"oṃ hāṃ brahmaṇe namaḥ" iti brahmāṇam āvāhya saṃpūjya ca svāhāntena saṃtarpya ca, brahmaṃs tavādhikāre 'smin mumukṣum dīkṣayāmy aham | bhāvyam tvayānukūlena vidhiṃ vijñāpayed iti.*

19 See SŚPdh 3 *nirvāṇadīkṣā* (p. 285–91): *"oṃ hāṃ brahman śabdasparśau śulkam gṛhāṇa svāhā!" ity āhutitrayeṇādhikāram asya samarpayet | dagdhaniḥśeṣapāśasya brahman asya paśos tvayā | bandhāya na punaḥ stheyaṃ śivājñāṃ śrāvayed iti.*

(*visarjana*). This process is repeated for all four other *kalā*s and their respective spheres.

The context – Śaiva initiation and the monarch

Competition between rival religious traditions at court linked to royal initiations is a well documented feature. For the Śaiva tantric traditions Alexis Sanderson (2004; forthcoming) has shown that "for several centuries after the sixth it [Śaivism of the *mantramārga* J.G.] was the principal faith of the élites in large parts of the Indian sub-continent and in both mainland and insular Southeast Asia." (2004: 231). This influential position among the élites and the development of Śaiva rituals has led to close links with the institution of kingship and "the occupying by Śaiva officiants of the office of Royal Preceptor (*rājaguruḥ*) and in this position their giving Śaiva initiation (*dīkṣā*) to the monarch" (2004: 233). In addition the development of Śaiva rituals has enabled "a specialized class of Śaiva officiants to encroach on the territory of the Rājapurohita, the Brahmanical expert in the rites of the Atharvaveda who served as the personal priest of the king" (ibid.). Since this encroachment by Śaiva officiants on the territory of established ritual experts at court is linked to the performance of the Śaiva *dīkṣā* I would like to raise the question to what extant this practice can be seen as related to the Śaiva ritual of conversion that is called "removal of the sectarian marks" (*liṅgoddhāra*). This ritual as attested in an eleventh century ritual manual of dualisitic Śaivism is an encroachment on the territory of competing religious traditions and, as I have shown, the Śaiva *liṅgoddhāra* is closely related to the Śaiva *dīkṣā*.

The religious and ritual literature of the Sanskrit Śaiva Siddhānta does not reveal much about the social milieu and historical context of this tradition. The studied ritual manual of Somaśambhu forms part of a Śaiva tantric school that within the framework of tantric Śaivism belongs to the doctrines of the right: the Goddess and the concept of the feminine power (*śakti*) is depersonalized, the *śakti* is seen primarily as the male deity's power to act, the liturgy is based on the male deity Sadāśiva. He is worshipped without a female consort; no impure materials are used in ritual (*dvaitācāra*). All this distinguishes the Sanskrit Śaiva Siddhānta from the much better known non-dualistic tantric Śaivism—often misleadingly labelled "Kashmir Śaivism". This esoteric and heterodox strand of tantric Śaivism is characterised by the adoration and visualization of personified Goddesses as well as the usage of impure materials in ritual (*advaitācāra*). The scriptural authorities of the Śaiva Siddhānta are the Śaiva Āgamas or Tantras, a textual corpus with generally dualistic metaphysics and theology. The earliest scriptures of this Śaiva tradition date before 800 AD.[20] Important for the development of the

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20 See Goodall (1998: xxxix–xlvii) where he discusses criteria for a relative antiquity of Siddhānta Tantras and his excellent preface to the edition of the *Parākhyatantra* (2004). The earliest extant manuscripts seem to belong to the first half of the 9th century (xli, n. 95 and xliii, n. 97). Sanderson (1988: 663) gives a period of 400 to 800 AD for the composition of early Tantras.

Sanskrit Śaiva Siddhānta has been a lineage of Śaiva teachers forming a dualistic exegetical school of Śaivism that based itself on the Śaiva Tantras and started before the 10th century AD. This *guruparaṃparā* is known to us through a number of independent treatises, commentaries as well as ritual manuals. The authors of these *paddhati*s relied on the ritual sections of the Tantras but they presented the material of the different scriptural sources known to them in a homogenous and sequential way. This seems to be one of the reasons why these handbooks and not the ritual sections of the different Tantras became the main textual source for ritual practice. One of the most important sources is the *Kriyākāṇḍakramāvali* ("Continuous arrangement of the ritual sections [of the Tantras]") or simply *Somaśambhupaddhati* of Somaśambhu (11th century). Closely related with this work and much better known is the *Kriyākramadyotikā* ("Light on the arrangement of ritual") of Aghoraśivācārya (12th century).[21] Difficult to date but certainly later is the manual of Īśānaśivagurudeva (14th/15th cent.?).[22] Especially Aghoraśivācārya's and Īśānaśivagurudeva's manuals remained influential prescriptions for private worship (*svārthapūjā*) and to a large extant influenced public Śaiva temple worship (*parārthapūjā*) in South India until today.[23]

It is precisely because of the practice of royal initiation that we can postulate that the Śaiva Siddhānta was influential among the élites at various courts. Inscriptional evidence for the links of the Śaiva Siddhānta with royal patronage and regional monastic traditions has been already summarized.[24] I will therefore restrict myself to indicate some of the earliest references: a seventh century inscription in the Kailāsanātha temple in Kāñcī of the Pallava king Narasiṃha II (also called Rājasiṃha and Atyantakāma) mentions a "*śaivasiddhāntamārge*".[25] In the area of today's Madhya Pradesh we find references to the ninth-century royal initiation of Avantivarman by Purandara, the founder of the Mattamayūra and Raṇapadra monasteries. In Rajasthan the Rājor inscription by the Śaiva king Mathanadeva, vasal of the Gurjara-Pratihāra king Vijayapala, testifies of Śaiva Siddhāntikas and the construction of a Śaiva temple at Rajyapur (960 AD).[26] Finally the Karhad Plates of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king Kṛṣṇa III record a gift to a Saiddhāntika ascetic in 959 AD. These references for royal patronage of the Śaiva Siddhānta might be best summed up by an observation of Ulrike Teuscher. After a survey of the inscriptural evidence for the relation of the king with Śaiva ascetic groups in early medieval Mewar she concludes:

> Es zeigt sich deutlich, daß es kaum Institutionen gab, auf die er [der König J.G.] zurückgreifen konnte. Die einzige starke Institution war offensichtlich die der

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21 See Surdam (1984) on the *dīkṣāvidhi* in the *Kriyākramadyotikā*.
22 See Bühnemann (1999: 305) on the date of the Mantrapāda of this manual.
23 See the article of Brunner (1999) about the difficulties of comparing contemporary South Indian temple rituals with textual sources of medieval Śaiva Siddhānta.
24 See Davis (1991: 12–5; 168, n. 24) and especially Goodall (2004: xix–xx, n. 17, 18) for detailed references.
25 See Goodall (2004: xix, n. 17) for references and a discussion of the half-verse given by Hultzsch (1890: 12–4).
26 See Hooja (2006: 280) and Teuscher (2002: 61, 63).

Asketenorganisationen. ... Der König erhielt offensichtlich, wie in den Inschrif-
ten angedeutet, eine Initiation als Asket. (Teuscher 2002: 69–70)

These examples of links between ascetic institution and royal initiations can be supple-
mented by more recent examples linked to the study of court ritual and ceremonies with
a focus on the consecration of the monarch in the kingdom of Amber/Jaipur (Rajasthan)
during the 18th century. The court protocol on the installation of the king mentions var-
ious categories of ritual specialists. Besides the royal chaplain or *rājapurohita*,[27] the
rājācārya performing primarily the daily ritual, the already mentioned Royal Preceptor,
rājaguru or *dīkṣāguru* who bestows the *"guru-mantra"* form part of the ritual special-
ists at court. The ritual and ceremonial interactions linked to the installation of the
Mahārāja, the *rājyābhiṣeka* termed *rājatilaka* at the courts situated in Rajasthan, reveals
a complex interdependence of the monarch and the ritual and religious specialists of
various *saṃpradāya*s. Royal patronage of the religious groups and their temples and
monasteries is directly linked to aspects of legitimation of kingship. The local dynasty
of the Kachvāhās was connected to the Śaiva Nāthyogīs. This linkage to tantric Śaiva
religious traditions seems to be a regular feature of the Rājput-kingdoms of this period
that is especially well documented for Mewar and the Lakulīśa-Pāśupatas.[28] During the
16th century the Rāmānandīs took over the seat of the Nāthyogīs situated at Galtā near
Amber. Kṛṣṇadās Payohārī, the head of this group of Rāmānandīs became the *dīkṣā-
guru* of Mahārāja Pṛthvīrāja (r. 1503–1527) in Amber and donated two images to
Pṛthvīrāja that both became most important for the religious legitimation of the dynas-
ty: a statue of Sītārāma and a *śālāgrāma* representing Narasiṃha. Kṛṣṇadās Payohārī
thus succeeded in establishing a strong and lasting interrelation between the Rāmānandīs
and the Rājput dynasty of the Kachvāhās:

... il mit fin aux liens privilégiés que sa dynastie avait établis avec les Nātha, ...
Dès lors, Rāma remplaça Śiva comme élément central de la religion du royaume.
Cette révolution religieuse au palais porta un coup très dur à la tradition nātha:
forts du soutien royal, les Rāmānandī s'établirent à Galta, le lieu sacré des Nātha
au sud-est d'Amber, et en firent le centre de leur mouvement. (Clémentin-Ojha
1999: 28)

A recent dispute shows the importance of royal initiations and the position of being the
personal priest of the king. In 1944 this very lineage of Rāmānandīs with their seat in
Galtā near Jaipur had to prove that they are initiating the king in the prescribed way.

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27 The documents on the *rājatilaka* of Mahārāja Savāī Pratāpsingh (r. 1778–1803) distinguish be-
tween two kinds of *rājapurohita*s: the *purohita*s of the court (*hajūrī*) and the local or regional (*deś*)
*purohita*s (*Syāhā Hajūrī* V.S. 1835, Jyeṣṭha, vadi 2).

28 See for more details and references the excellent summary of available evidence by Ulrike Teu-
scher (2002: 59–70). She states that "śivaitische Asketenorden ... seit dem 10. Jh. in fast allen Raj-
putenstaaten eine außerordentliche Machtposition einnahmen." (2002: 60) and "Ihr Aufstieg zu
Offizianten königlicher Kulte verlief weitgehend parallel mit dem der neuentstehenden frühmittel-
alterlichen Staaten." (ibid.: 61). See Sanderson (2009) for a detailed study on the rise of Śaivism
during the early medieval period.

With the help of the 19th century court protocol (1828, 1845) this group of Rāmānujīya-Rāmānandīs could show that they apply the correct Rāma-mantra (*ṣaḍakṣara-mantra*, also *tulasī* and *taptamudrā*) of the Rāmānandī tradition and not the Nārāyaṇa-mantra (*aṣṭākṣara-mantra*) of the Rāmānujīyas.[29]

Conversion or initiation?

Coming back to the two elements of *dīkṣā* and *liṅgoddhāra* one might ask whether the sequence of acts prescribed during *liṅgoddhāra* that is given as a prerequisite for the initiation into Śaiva Siddhānta should be called a conversion? I would like to give a positive answer by referring to a classification of conversions given by Lewis R. Rambo in his monograph *Understanding Religious Conversion* (1993). He attempts to define "how far someone has to go socially and culturally in order to be considered a convert" (ibid.: 13) and enumerates five different kinds of conversions:

1) *apostasy, defection*: "the repudiation of a religious tradition or its beliefs by previous members."
2) *intensification*: "the revitalized commitment to a faith with which the convert has had previous affiliation, formal or informal."
3) *affiliation*: "the movement of an individual or group from no or minimal religious commitment to full involvement with an institution or community of faith."
4) *institutional transition*: "involves the change of an individual or group from one community to another within the same major tradition."
5) *tradition transition*: "the movement of an individual or a group from one major religious tradition to another." (ibid.: 13–4)

Of the five categories in Rambo's classification *institutional transition* (4) and *tradition transition* (5) are most relevant. If one considers Buddhism and Jainism[30] as "major religious traditions" as opposed to "Hinduism" the described ritual process would fall under the category of a conversion that leads to a "tradition transition". The conversion of the Vedāntins, Vaiṣṇavas, Pāśupatas or Mahāvratas would then take place within the same major tradition of Hinduism and belong to the category "institutional transition". But the ritual prescription of the *Somaśambhupaddhati* makes clear that the distinction between the mentioned religious traditions is gradual, not categorical. It is obviously not intended to distinguish between categories like Hinduism, Buddhism or Jainism. Although the six groups are listed in a hierarchical sequence, no distinct acts for the transformation of the soul of a Buddhist or a Jaina are prescribed on the level of the rit-

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29 See Horstmann (2009: 4–6; 171–9; 2002) for more detailed information about the present conflict in Galtā and its background. Another case of "conversion" in Jaipur, this time from Vaiṣṇavism to Śaivism, by Mahārājā Savāī Rāmsingh II (r. 1835–1880) and the subsequent *tilakavivāda* in the 1860s is described by Clémentin-Ojha (1999).
30 On the Śaiva-Jain encounter in medieval South India see Davis (1998) and Monius (2004).

ual activity. It makes no difference whether a Pāśupata-Śaiva or a Buddhist converts to Śaiva Siddhānta, only the number of *tattva*s that are deposed into the fire varies: 22 for the Buddhist and 31 for the Pāśupata. The Buddhists and Jainas are not subject to a specific treatment because they are considered to belong to a different "major religious tradition". Therefore the distinction between the categories 4) "institutional transition" and category 5) "tradition transition" does not apply in the present case. Nevertheless, the fact that absolutely no value is ascribed to the merit acquired by the previous religious and ritual acts of the members of the six groups underlines that the „tradition transition" has to be considered as a conversion.

Lewis Rambo (1993: 20–43) rightly states in his chapter on "context", that for a typology of conversion the social, cultural and historical context of the prescribed ritual of conversion has to be taken into consideration. In the presented ritual prescription the boundaries between the religious traditions appear to be rigid, a fact that might reflect the specific historical and religious context of this tradition. In their introduction to the volume *Religious Conversion in India* (2003) Robinson & Clarke state:

> What the boundaries of the renounced tradition are is itself by no means an unambiguous question and has been answered differently by different denominations at different periods of time. ... Moreover we are aware that certain historical periods have seen the rise of the pursuit of exclusion and the struggle to delineate boundaries tightly among traditions, which did not always subscribe to these notions... (ibid.: 7)

The term "conversion" is in South Asia most prominently used in the context of Hindu-Muslim interaction and in the colonial period. But as I have shown, issues of conversion and initiation should be seen in a larger historical context of competition between rival religious and ritual traditions as well as examples of actual ritual prescriptions.[31] But the perspective on conversion is still dominated by an approach highlighted in William Dalrymple's book on the *White Mughals* (2002) where he provides us for the 17th and 18th century with an image of vivid interactions between European mercenaries, businessman and employees of the East India Company. We find references of Europeans who not only smoke Huqqa, wear Indian cloths, are surrounded by a Harem and Indian servants, but also do convert to Islam, at that time the dominant religion at the courts. When it comes to Hinduism in this somewhat romantic description of an atmosphere of fluidity and amalgamation of varying cultural and religious practices, we do learn about a "Hindoo-Stuart" who apparently lived and travelled with a whole entourage of Hindu gods and goddesses. One would therefore expect the same kind of fluidity and accounts of conversions from Christianity to Hinduism. But Dalrymple makes

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31 The removal of the sectarian marks is only rarely taken into consideration in the modern discourses on conversion in South Asia. Among the examples that refer to *liṅgoddhāra* while discussing conversion are: Clémentin-Ojha (1994: 104, n. 5), von Stietencron (1995: 52–66), Michaels (2004: 20) and Raman (2007: 284).

out in all the instability, change and flexibility an unchangeable, universally accepted rule within the religion of the Hindus:

> Technically it is impossible to convert to Hinduism: as much a social system as a religion, to be a Hindu you must be born a Hindu; traditionally there was no ceremony for conversion. No one, however, seems to have told this to 'Hindoo Stuart'. (2002: 42)

This view seems to echo the statement by the authority on Dharmaśāstra P.V. Kane given in the chapter on *upanayana* in the context of a section on *vrātyastoma*:

> Hinduism has not been an avowedly proselytizing religion. In theory it could not be so. For about two thousand years the caste system has reigned supreme and no one can in theory be admitted to the Hindu fold who is not born in it.[32]

Kane then goes on by saying "The ancient smṛtis do not expressly prescribe any rites for bringing into the Brahmanic or Hindu fold a person who or whose ancestors did not belong to it" (1974: 388). But since as in the case of "Hindoo Stuart", who "in theory" could not exist, Kane admits that there exist exceptions to the prescribed rule. Not only by absorption[33] but also by the performance of rituals that allow the inclusion of outsiders into the Hindu religion:

> In a very few cases persons born in western countries have been taken into the Hindu fold by the performance of vrātyastoma and other rites. But such instances are very rare and are not yet supported by the vast majority of Hindus. (ibid.: 391–2)

To conclude I would like to raise the question if we possess additional evidence for ritual actions that fall under the category of conversions to the religious traditions labelled as "Hinduism". Most prominent in the numerous studies on conversions in South Asia are processes of apostasy and defection from Hinduism that have led to conversions to Islam, Buddhism or Christianity.[34] Dominant in the discourse on conversion to Hinduism is the movement that performed re-conversions of Christians, Muslims and Sikhs to Hinduism at the end of the 19th and in the beginning of the 20th century. These purificatory rituals called *śuddhi* are invented by Dayananda Sarasvati's (1824–83) Ārya Samāj and can be seen as a reaction to the activity of Christian missionaries mainly in North India (Punjab, Kashmir, Bengal).[35] The term *śuddhi* is used for this rite because it "restores to the Hindu that ritual purity which is necessary for the performance of Hindu

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32 Kane (1974: 387). I have corrected one obvious but crucial typo: "For about two thousand years the caste system has reigned supreme and on [read "no" J.G.] one can in theory be admitted to the Hindu fold who is not born in it."

33 "But as Hinduism has been extremely tolerant (barring a few exceptional instances) it had a wonderful power of quiet and unobstrusive absorption" (Kane 1974: 388).

34 See especially Robinson & Clarke (2003), Viswanathan (1998, 2003) and Oddie (1991, 1997).

35 See Jordens (1991: 218) who reports for the Punjab an increase of the Christian converts from 4,000 to 19,000 between 1881 and 1891.

rites, and for social interaction with his caste-fellows" (Jordens 1991: 215). While only two instances of reconversions are recorded during Dayananda Sarasvati's life the number of *śuddhi*s increased considerably from 1900 onwards. Jordens (ibid.: 221) mentions 60,000 to 70,000 re-conversions that have taken place in the Punjab by 1910; between 1911 and 1921 the number of members of the Ārya Samāj in Kashmir rouse from 1,000 to 23,000. This highlights the important fact that although the convert was reinstated in his former caste, generally access to religious rites was only possible by being enrolled in the Ārya Samāj. The ritual practice and the effectiveness of the *śuddhi* were not without contestations. Dayānanda Sarasvatī never prescribed the precise sequence of acts for the performance of the *śuddhi*. Since participation and involvement in the reconversion created danger of excommunication a sequence of rites that found approval by orthodox pandits was fixed in 1893. Among the prescribed elements were a purificatory fast and bath followed by a *homa*, the shaving of the head and the explanation of the *gāyatrī*. Investiture with the sacred thread followed where applicable and finally the duties of the Ārya Samāj were explained. The prescribed rites do therefore combine elements of a *prāyaścitta*, *upanayana* and *dīkṣā*.[36]

I have already stated that one should consider the removal of the sectarian characteristics as a conversion in the sense of a tradition or institutional transition. If one looks at the prescribed sequence of rites one should be more precise. The *liṅgoddhāra* proper does not create a new member or *punarbhū* of the group of Śaiva Siddhāntins. The result of the destruction of the sectarian marks of the Mahāvrata, Pāśupata, Bhāgavata, Vedāntin, Jaina and Buddhist is not a Śaiva Siddhāntin but a householder in the state prior to his becoming a member of one of these traditions. The bearer of the sectarian characteristics (*liṅgin*) looses all of these characteristics and in this state he could be placed in Rambo's classification under the last category "defection, apostasy", since it must be seen as a "repudiation of a religious tradition or its beliefs by previous members". But for a Śaiva ritual manual it would make no sense to stop on that level. The intention is of course to create a new *liṅgin* or *dīkṣita* who is initiated into the Śaiva Siddhānta. Therefore from the point of view of Somaśambhu's manual the ritual of conversion consists of two separate elements. The removal of the sectarian marks *liṅgoddhāra* and the initiation into the tradition. Therefore it seems to be necessary to add an additional aspect to the description of initiations in general as well as the royal initiations by Śaiva officiants. These initiations could be seen in the context of a practice of bestowing several layers of non-competing initiations as exemplified in the often quoted statement "privately Kaula, publicly Śaiva and Vedic in one's intercourse" (Sanderson 1988: 699). But it might as well be possible that at times where the delineation of sectarian and ritual boundaries was of importance a close link between *dīkṣā* and *liṅgoddhāra*, initiation and conversion did exist.

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36 The details of the ritual practice need further study, for a summary of some of the rites performed see Jordens (1991: 218–9) and Clémentin-Ojha (1994: 100–3). On the postulation of a relation between the *śuddhi* and *vrātyastoma* by some members of the Ārya Samāj see Clémentin-Ojha (1994: 107).

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