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The Śaiva Atimārga in the Light of *Niśvāsaguhya* 12.1–22ab*

SUMMARY: My essay investigates a short passage of the *Guhyasūtra*—the longest, most detailed, and arguably youngest of the ‘Sūtras’ constituting the *Niśvāsātattvasaṃhitā*, being the earliest Śaiva Tantra known to us. This is formed by verses 1–22ab of Paṭala 12, which single out the soteriological means and goals specific to such scantily documented Śaiva groups as the Pāñcārthika Pāśupatas, the followers of the Pramāṇasāstras, the Kārukas, and the Vaimalas. By categorizing such groups according to their emphasis on conduct, initiation, or gnosis, the text presents a taxonomy of the Atimārga as seen from the perspective of Mantramārga Śaivism. Having compared, and contrasted, this model to analogous ones found scattered over the extant literature of the Śaiva Mantramārga, I tackle the issue as to whether those taxonomies reflect actual social realities or are the result of *post hoc* systematising attempts by medieval authors.

KEYWORDS: *Niśvāsātattvasaṃhitā*, *Guhyasūtra*, *Svacchandatantra*, *Raurava*, *Pāśupata-sūtra*, *Pañcārthabhāṣya*, *Ratnaṭikā*, Sadyojyotis, Rāmakaṇṭha, Kṣemarāja, Pāñcārthika, Pāśupata, Lākula, Kāruka, Vaimala, Pramāṇa, Atimārga, Mantramārga, Alepaka.

Introduction

Surviving in a single 9th-century Nepalese palm-leaf manuscript, the *Niśvāsātattvasaṃhitā* is arguably the earliest Śaiva Tantra known

* This contribution is largely based on a much earlier draft presented at the ‘Workshop on early Śaivism: The testimony of the *Niśvāsātattvasaṃhitā*’, held at the Pondicherry Centre of the École française d’Extrême-Orient in January 1–15, 2007. I wish to thank Dominic Goodall for inviting me to that Workshop, as well as subsequent ones on the *Niśvāsa*.

to us. While its five sections or ‘Sūtras’—the *Mukha-*, *Mūla-*, *Naya-*, *Uttara-*, and *Guhya-sūtras*—appear to have been composed at different times, the oldest among them, the *Nayasūtra*, has been tentatively dated back to between 450 and 550 AD.¹ Because of its antiquity, and because it describes idiosyncratic doctrines and practices that are rarely—if at all—accounted for in other scriptures, the *Niśvāsattattvasaṃhitā* is regarded as a source of primary importance for our understanding of early Śaivism. It provides us with a precious testimony of the ‘formative’ phase of the Mantramārga, i.e. an early form of Saiddhāntika Tantric Śaivism, as well as the earlier Atimārga matrix, i.e. Pāñcārthika Pāśupata and ‘Lākula’ Śaivism, from which Mantramārga Śaivism has evolved.²

Unlike the majority of Siddhāntatantras known to us, the *Niśvāsattattvasaṃhitā* displays a keen, first-hand awareness of the cosmologies, doctrines and practices of the Śaiva Atimārga. In so doing, it reveals a direct dependence on the textual corpus of the latter tradition—the greatest part of which is irretrievably lost to us. As shown by Sanderson (Sanderson 2001:28, Sanderson 2006:166–175), long portions of Paṭala 4 of the *Niśvāsamukha* and Paṭalas 3–7 of the *Niśvāsaguhya* incorporate descriptions of the Lākula cosmic ladder of worlds and Rudras (*bhuvanādhvan*), which are likely to have been borrowed from a lost Atimārga source. Furthermore, a detailed account of the ascetic observances of the Pāśupatas (*pāśupatavrata*) is given in *Niśvāsamukha* 4.69–97, a section that virtually paraphrases large blocks of the *Pāśupatasūtra* (henceforth PS).³

¹ See Goodall and Isaacson 2007:6. Besides the *codex unicus* (NGMPP A 41/14 [here Ms]) there exist two 20th-century Nepalese apographs (NAK 5-2406, NGMPP A 159/18 [here K], and Wellcome Library MS Indic δ 41 [here W]), which are often helpful to reconstruct the missing *akṣaras* at the worn-out edges of the original manuscript.

² On the categories of Atimārga and Mantramārga Śaivism, and their characterization in the *Mukhasūtra* of the *Niśvāsattattvasaṃhitā* (henceforth *Niśvāsamukha*), cf. especially Sanderson 2006:158–160, 1988:664–667.

³ Cf. Goudriaan and Gupta 1981:35; Sanderson 2006:158.

The *Niśvāsattattvasaṃhitā* shows a tendency to intelligently incorporate doctrinal elements from the competing, albeit closely related, Atimārga systems and accommodate them as ‘relative truths’ existing within the superior doctrinal edifice of the Mantramārga.⁴ The elements of continuity with the earlier Atimārga tradition found in several parts of the text indicate that the shift from Atimārga to Mantramārga Śaivism was still ‘in the making’. This *status quo* in turn suggests that the text was composed in a historical period in which the traditions of the Atimārga and Mantramārga shared several elements in common and were just beginning to differentiate themselves as distinct, and competing, systems of salvation within the Śaiva stream (*śaivamārga*).

In this essay I shall investigate a short, yet remarkable, passage of the *Guhyasūtra*⁵ (henceforth *Niśvāsaguhyā*) that has thus far not been discussed in print.⁶ This is formed by verses 1–22ab of Paṭala 12, which single out the soteriological means and goals specific to such scantily-documented Śaiva groups as the Pāñcārthika Pāśupatas, the followers of the Pramāṇaśāstras (known variously as Lākulas, Mahāvratas, Mahāpāśupatas), the Kārukas (seemingly encompassed by the Pramāṇa system), and the Vaimalas. By categorizing such groups according to their emphasis on religious observance (*caryā*), initiation (*dīkṣā*), or gnosis (*jñāna*), the text presents a typology of the Atimārga as envisaged by the overarching Mantramārga Śaivism.

My main concern here is to show that some of the verses in question display themes that are directly traceable to Pāśupata sources, and,

⁴ What is probably the earliest evidence of this hierarchical system encompassing different Śaiva streams is found in the *Niśvāsamukha*, where the five streams Laukika, Vaidika, Ādhyātmika, Atimārga and Mantramārga are arranged as if having been revealed from the five faces of Sadāśiva—the Mantramārga being the superior one insofar as it springs forth from the upturned face of Īśāna (cf. Sanderson 2006:156–157; *infra*, pp. 31, 44).

⁵ This is the longest, most detailed, and apparently youngest of the Sūtras constituting the *Niśvāsa* (cf. Goodall and Isaacson 2011:125).

⁶ With the exception of 17cd–18, which is edited and paraphrased in Sanderson 2001:30, fn. 32.

even more importantly, that some of the elliptic statements scattered over the verses offer revealing information on the self-perception of the Mantramārga with respect to Atimārga Śaivism. This will hopefully add to the understanding of a poorly documented historical stage of the Śaiva religion.

Overview of *Niśvāsaguhya*, Paṭala 12

The 58 verses of Paṭala 12 (folios 87r6–88r1 of the Nepalese ms.) primarily deal with mantras.⁷ The verses may be subdivided into two thematic units. The unit dedicated to practical aspects of ‘mantric technology’ starts from verse 30, after Nandikeśvara mentions Devī’s protracted breath (v. 22)⁸ and her pledge to Śiva to provide an exhaustive account of the Brahmamantras (vv. 23–25). The Lord does fulfill her request by explaining the placement of the phonemes of the Sanskrit syllabary (*māṭṛkā*) in a *maṇḍala* enthroning Sadāśiva (30–44); the combination of ‘male’ and ‘female’ syllables (*yonis* and *bījas*, i.e. consonantal and vocalic phonemes), as well as more complex clusters, to realize various kinds of supernatural powers (45–49); the fruits of mantras, and the five *aṅgas* or mantric limbs of Śiva (50–58).

The first unit, up to verse 21, is concerned with a mantric subject insofar as it deals with the five Brahmamantras. However, its main focus is a characterization of the Śaiva (i.e. Mantramārga) system as stemming from the mantric body of Sadāśiva, from which lower divisions (i.e. the Atimārga) also spring up, and which form a constitutive part thereof. The five Brahmamantras themselves function in a way that epitomizes the continuity-cum-change between the former tradition and the latter: they are central and pervasive in the cult of Atimārga

⁷ The Paṭalas that immediately precede and follow it also deal with mantric subjects: Paṭala 11 details a version of the Vyomavyāpimantra, whereas Paṭala 13 provides practical instructions for the extraction of the Pañcabrahmamantras.

⁸ This will constitute the pretext for illustrating a *nirvacana* of *niśvāsa* (‘exhalation’, as well as the title of the Tantra) in verses 25–29.

Śaivism, and yet survive—alongside other even more important mantras, such as the Nāvātman—in the doctrine and practice of Mantramārga Śaivism.⁹

Hereafter I present an edition and translation of verses 1–22ab,¹⁰ which I have subdivided into five thematic sub-units. Each sub-unit is followed by a commentary where I discuss the points of interest in the verses and elaborate on the Śaiva groups they appear to refer to.

Niśvāsaguhyā 12.1–6: The Atimārga’s Pañcabrahmamantras

ṛṣ[[ir uvāca]]
 pañcānān tu pavitrāṇām uddhāraṃ¹¹ kathayasva me /
 tvam vettā śivaśāstrasya¹² bhagavan nandikeśvara // 1
 yathā yogañ ca yāgañ ca ekaikasya pṛthakpṛthak¹³ /

⁹ The five Brahmamantras constitute the early Mantric substratum common to both Atimārga and Mantramārga Śaivism; yet, it is the earliest sources that devote to them the highest attention. For instance, each one of the five sections making up the PS. is closed by an invocation to the aspect of Śiva characterized in the respective Brahmamantra. The five mantras remain central in the *Niśvāsattvasamhitā*, especially in *Niśvāsaguhyā* 12–15.

¹⁰ The edition presented here is largely based on the e-text prepared by Goodall et al., which collates the Nepalese manuscript (Ms) and its two apographs (K and W). Here I only use the original Ms, and occasionally supplement the readings from the apographs when useful to fill gaps in the palm-leaf manuscripts (marked by cruxes †...†), enclosing them within double square brackets [[]]. Triangular brackets < > enclose conjectural restorations of a portion of text that has been lost because of manuscript damage. Sporadic attempts have been made to emend the non-Pāṇinian, *aiśa*-register of Sanskrit characterizing these verses (and the whole *Niśvāsa*-corpus). Emendations already appearing in the e-text of the preliminary edition are marked as ‘(e-text)’. The appended translation was first produced during reading classes held at the former Kern Institute of Leiden University from September throughout December 2006, attended by Arlo Griffiths, Dory Heilijgers-Seelen, Raju Bakker and myself, and then thoroughly revised by myself in the course of 2012. Any flaws are, of course, mine alone.

¹¹ Em. (e-text); *uddhāra* Ms.

¹² Em. (e-text); *śivāśāstrasya* Ms *post corr.*; *śivāśāstrāsyā ante corr.*

¹³ Em. (e-text); *pṛthakapṛthak* Ms.

samudāyena ācakṣva sandigdham niścitam vada // 2
nandikeśvara uvāca
pañcamantramayaṃ devaṃ¹⁴ pañcamantraśarīriṇam¹⁵ /
pañcamantra †...† mantra †...† sadāśivam // 3
yat tayātrapadaṃ †haradi...† /
pramāṇe vaimale caiva śaive ca bahudhā sthitam // 4
paramantreṣu yat sādhyam pañcārthajñānaniścitam¹⁶ /
pañcamantrā viditvā tu vidhānam¹⁷ pratipadyate // 5
dikṣā jñānaṃ ca caryā ca mantrabhūtivinirṇayam /
mantrabhūtārthacaryā¹⁸ ca rudrasāyojyagāminī // 6

The Ṛṣi spoke:

Please tell me about the extraction of the five Pavitras. You are the knower of the Śaiva doctrine, o Lord Nandikeśvara. (1)

Explain to me the method and the ritual application¹⁹ of each one individually and collectively. Make clear what is doubtful. (2)

Nandikeśvara spoke:

The god made of five mantras, embodied in five mantras †...† mantras †...† Sadāśiva. (3)

That through which this plain, found multifariously in the Pramāṇa, the Vaimala and the Śaiva [systems] †haradi ...†.²⁰ (4)

What is [still] to be realized in other mantras, is [already] accomplished through the *Pañcārthajñāna*. Upon knowing the five mantras, the prescribed regimen is achieved.²¹ (5)

Initiation, gnosis and religious observance, certainty about the supernatural

¹⁴ Em. (e-text); *deva* Ms.

¹⁵ Ms *post corr.*; *pañcamantraśarīriṇam* Ms *ante corr.*

¹⁶ Em. (one the basis of the apographs); *pañcārtham jñānaniścitam* Ms, e-text.

¹⁷ Em. (e-text); *vidhāna* Ms.

¹⁸ I take this to mean *mantrabhūtyarthacaryā*.

¹⁹ This will constitute the main topic of Paṭala 14. Cf. 14.3: *pañcānām tu pavitrānām yāgām vakṣyāmi suvrate / yaṃ yaṣtvā ca japitvā ca āsuste [i.e. āśu te?] sarvakāmadāḥ //*

²⁰ *Hara* here is most unlikely to be a vocative ('O Hara' [=Śiva]) as Nandikeśvara is reporting the speech of Śiva; in any event, the reconstruction of these syllables is uncertain.

²¹ An alternative translation could be the following: 'Whatever might be accomplished with other mantras, is certain [to be attainable] through

powers of the [five Brahma]mantras, and religious observance with a view to [obtaining] the power of the [five Brahma]mantras lead to unity with Rudra. (6)

The five opening verses set the agenda of the topics that will be treated in the rest of the passage (up to verse 22ab): the extraction of the Pañcabrahmamantras and their relationship with the different traditions constituting the Śaiva stream.

vv. 3–4: The five Brahmamantras, which form the body of Śīva,²² are here implicitly linked to the subdivisions of the Atimārga, viz. the Pāñcārthika (i.e. Pāśupata, denoted by the term *pañcārthajñāna*),²³ the ‘Pramāṇa system’ (including the Lākulas/Mahāvratas and, seemingly, the Kārukas too),²⁴ and the Vaimala. The fifth member is represented by the Śaiva stream, understood in the narrow sense of (early) Saiddhāntika Śaivism. The five Brahmamantras play

[the mantras of] the Pāñcārthika system. Upon knowing the five mantras, the method for using them is set forth [in the ritual section that follows]’.

²² The idea that these mantras are connected with the faces (*pañcavaktra*) or aspects of Sadāśīva, and make up His five-limbed mantric body (*pañcamantratānu*), is ubiquitous in Saiddhāntika texts: cf. *Svacchandatantra* 11.43e–45b; *Niśvāsamukha* 3.191c, 4.40c–12b, 4.130, 4.133c–134b; *Mygendratāntra* Kriyāpāda 8.78–79 and *Vṛtti* thereof; *Mataṅgapārameśvara* Vidyāpāda, *Adhikāratattvaparakaraṇa* 14–15.

²³ The term *Pañcārthajñāna* is used in the *Samskāraavidhi* (54, cf. Acharya 2007:42–43, fn. 95) to indicate the seminal scripture of the Pāśupatas, i.e. the *Pāśupatasūtra*. As Peter Bisschop (2009*) notes, this usage is also attested in a newly recovered manuscript of the *Pañcārthabhāṣya*. On the other hand, the author of the *Ratnaṭīkā* apparently uses that term to refer to the philosophical system based on the Sūtras along with the *Pañcārthabhāṣya* (cf. 1.1ab, p. 3 l. 12; 1.3, p. 5 l. 28; 1.5cd, p. 9 l. 4). For the meaning of *-jñāna* as ‘scripture’ in Tantric texts, cf. Goodall 1998:xxxvi and 2004:139 fn. 5.

²⁴ The Kārukas are mentioned *infra* (v. 18b), and indeed we need them in order to fill all the slots of the fivefold Śaiva revelation. Perhaps here they were understood as being subsumed under the ‘Pramāṇa system’ (like the Lākulas/Mahāvratas, cf. Sanderson 2006:169–177 and Bakker 2000:4–7), or their name occurred in the missing portion of the line due to a lacuna in the Ms.

an important role in each one of the above groups, being the basis of their practices of visualization and worship, and they were also employed in the ritual of initiation.²⁵

v. 5: The knowledge of the Brahmanamantras leads to *vidhāna* ('method', 'rule'), which here could mean something to the effect of 'prescribed regimen' (of the Pāñcārthika Pāśupata system).²⁶ The point seems to be that the five *pavitras* ('purifying formulas', a synonym for Brahmanamantras)²⁷ as taught in the Pāñcārtha system are (even from the vantage point of the Mantramārga) superior to, or in any event as effective as, the mantras taught by different systems.

v. 6: *dīkṣā*, *jñāna* and *caryā* are the three fundamental 'ingredients' in the 'recipe' leading to salvation according to both Atimārga and Mantramārga Śaivism. The factor that differentiates one group from the other is the emphasis laid on one or the other element(s) at the expense of the other(s). The goal of unity with Rudra (*rudrasāyujya*, equivalent to *rudrasāyujya*) is a feature of the Pāñcārthika Pāśupatas—for according to this system Rudra is the supreme deity and highest principle of the universe, standing at the top of the twenty-five *tattvas* defined by Sāṅkhya ontology—and, more generally, of Atimārga groups such as the followers of the Pramāṇas, which added an extended hierarchy of Rudras and cosmic stations.

***Niśvāsaguhya* 12.7–8: The Pāñcārthika Pāśupatas**

*bhikṣā caryā yamādiś ca bhasmasnānapakriyā /
aṣṭāṅgabrahmacaryaṅ ca ā dehapatanā<d eva>*²⁸ // 7

²⁵ Cf. e.g., *Niśvāsamukha* 4.88 (discussed in Sanderson 2006:190), attesting to the central role of these mantras in the Lākula initiation.

²⁶ Compare the *vidhi* mentioned in Pāñcārthika Pāśupata texts, which is often understood as a synonym of *caryā*, the practice of the prescribed regimen or 'good conduct' comprising the observances of *bhasmasnāna*, etc.

²⁷ For the *pañcapavitras* as *pañcabrahmas*, cf. *Ratnaṭīkā* ad *kārikā* 1.7 (p. 17 l. 27, p. 18 l. 14, p. 19 l. 1).

²⁸ Conj.; *ā dehapatanā<ntikam>* conj. Sanderson (e-text). I opt for the ablative construction *ā dehapatanād* since it is attested in both

<ṣaḍaṅ>genopahāreṇa triṣkālam²⁹ anuvartinā /
yajñādānakriyādīni³⁰ manasā vinikalpayet // 8

The religious observance³¹ [of the Pāśupatas is] mendicancy and the principal commandments etc., the ritual of bathing in ash and muttering, as well as the eightfold celibacy until the end of the body. (7)

Attending³² the three times of the day through the sixfold offerings, [the Pāśupata practitioner] should mentally carry out the acts of sacrifice, giving, and so forth. (8)

Among the systems mentioned in vv. 4–5, the Pāñcārthika Pāśupatas are dealt with first. As such, they stand at the bottom of the Śaiva hierarchy as the lowest category of practitioners, whose practices are *per se* valid, yet not powerful enough to grant the level of liberation accorded to the followers of more advanced Śaiva doctrines.

The account shows a keen awareness of the Pāśupata doctrinal milieu as it describes a set of observances and doctrinal items that correspond to those laid out in the original sources that have survived, namely the PS. with the commentary attributed to Kauṇḍinya (*Pañcārthabhāṣya*), and the commentary (*Ratnaṭīkā*), attributed to Bhāsarvajña (or Haradattācārya), on the *Gaṇakārikā*. It is therefore reasonable to suggest that the author of this section of the *Niśvāsaguhya* either had a first-hand knowledge of the above mentioned texts, or in any event was sufficiently conversant with the philosophical and soteriological tenets of the Pāñcārthika system as they filtered into his milieu.

v. 7: The items enumerated here are part of the curriculum of the Pāśupata adept in the first stage of his ascetic career, as described

the *Pañcārthabhāṣya* and *Ratnaṭīkā* (cf. *infra*, p. 16), and is also commonly encountered in the Epics and Purāṇas (however, it is slightly unmetrical as the metre requires a penultimate short syllable here).

²⁹ Ms. has *triṣkālam*, as at many other places in the *Niśvāsattattvasamhitā*.

³⁰ Em.; Ms seems to read *yajñādānakriyādīni*.

³¹ For *caryā* as ‘prescribed regimen’ (*vidhi*) of the Pāśupatas, cf. my fn. 26 and my comments to this verse below.

³² I interpret *anuvartinā* as an *aiśa* nominative singular (m.c.?).

in *Pañcārthabhāṣya* ad *sūtras* 1.8–9. The entire verse indeed echoes a passage of the *Pañcārthabhāṣya* (ad *sūtra* 5.30, p. 129 ll. 9–11) characterizing that stage:

*tatrādiharmā apy asya tāvad āyatane vasaty arthaḥ vyttir bhaiḥṣyaṃ
balaṃ aṣṭāṅgaṃ brahmacaryam kriyāḥ snānahasitādyāḥ³³ snānaṃ kaluṣā-
pohaḥ śuddhiḥ jñānāvṛtīḥ akalūṣatvaṃ ca lābhā iti*

The factors when he is in the first stage are as follows: the dwelling place is in a temple; the way of livelihood is alms; the power is the eightfold chastity, the actions are such as bathing (in ashes), laughter, etc.; the purity is the removal of impurity; the attainments are the attainment of knowledge and freedom from impurity. (Trans. Hara 2002:176)

—*bhikṣā*: This technical term may stand for the practice of begging for alms, i.e. *bhaiḥṣyam*, as outlined in several passages of *Pañcārthabhāṣya* and *Ratnaṭīkā*.³⁴

—*caryā*: This term, along with *kriyā* and *vidhi*, is used in the sense of ‘proper ritual’ or ‘prescribed regimen’ in Pāśupata literature.

—*yamādīś ca ... ā dehapatanā*<*d eva*>: The *yamas* or general commandment are an integral part of the Pāśupata observance. They number ten, including the five *niyamas* (as opposed to Sāṅkhya and Yoga, which separate the five *yamas* from the five *niyamas*). According to the *Pañcārthabhāṣya* ad *sūtra* 1.9 (p. 26 l. 7), the ten *yamas* should be practised at all times, for there is no cessation of them up to the time of death (*ā dehapātād yamānāṃ na nivṛttir asti*). An analogous view is found in the *Ratnaṭīkā*.³⁵ This verse

³³ Em. Hara (2002:176); *sthāna*^o ed.

³⁴ Cf., e.g., *Pañcārthabhāṣya* ad *sūtra* 1.2 (p. 81.21) *grāmādibhyo bhaiḥṣyavad bhaśmārjanaṃ kartavyam*; 1.9 (p. 31 l. 12) *cāturvarṇyaṃ cared bhaiḥṣyam patitāṃś tu vivarjayet*; 5.14 (p. 118 ll. 18–19) *tac ca nagaragrāmādibhyo gṛhād gṛhaṃ paryāta-to bhakṣyabhojyādīnāṃ anyatamaṃ yat prāpyate kṛtānnādivacanād bhaiḥṣyam*; *Ratnaṭīkā* ad *kārikā* 1.2 (p. 4 l. 20 to p. 5 l. 18).

³⁵ Cf. *Ratnaṭīkā* ad *kārikā* 1.6cd (p. 17 l. 4): *ā dehapātāt tatraivānirgacchatā stheyam ityayaṃ viśeṣaḥ* [...]; *Yamaprakaraṇa* v. 4, App.

seems to imply that not only the commandments, but the wider set of practices characterizing the Pāśupata observance, should be carried out up to the practitioner's death.

—*bhasmasnānajapakriyā*: Ash-bathing and muttering are distinctively Pāśupata practices. The two items are specifically linked to the Pāśupatas—whose highest goal is the cosmic station of Īśvara—in two passages of the *Svacchandatantra*:³⁶

vratam pāśupatam divyam ye caranti jitendriyāḥ /
bhasmaniṣṭhā japadhyanās te vrajanty eśvaram padam // 10.1169
japabhasmakriyāniṣṭhās te vrajanty aiśvaram padam // 11.74cd

—*aṣṭāṅgabhramacarya*: The ‘eightfold celibacy’, or ‘eightfold religious studentship’, is a technical term of the Pāśupata system. It appears in the *Pañcārthabhāṣya* (ad *sūtra* 1.9 and 5.30) and the *Ratnaṭikā* (ad *kārikā* 1.3), where it is mentioned as a prerogative of the Pāśupata adept in his first stage of ascetic practice. *Pañcārthabhāṣya* ad *sūtra* 1.9 presents a (seemingly incomplete) list enumerating the actions of ‘standing [in the presence of the master]’ (*utthāna*), ‘rising from one’s seat [when he approaches]’ (*pratyutthāna*), ‘salute [him] respectfully’ (*abhivādana*), etc.³⁷

1 on *Ratnaṭikā*: *daśaivādehapatanāt pañcārthe yoginām yamāḥ*.

³⁶ Note, however, that verse 10.1169 is taken by Kṣemarāja as referring to the Lākulas (cf. *infra*, p. 25).

³⁷ Cf. *Pañcārthabhāṣya* ad *sūtra* 1.9 (p. 27 ll. 13–14): *aṣṭāṅgam brahmacaryam* [...] *tadyathā utthānapratyutthānābhivādanagurukārya-hitakārī* // ‘The eightfold celibacy [...] namely standing [in the presence of the master], rising from one’s seat [when he approaches], salute [him] respectfully, adoring the master, doing services [for him], [...]’. The list enumerates only three behaviors to be observed by the disciple, then continues with a seemingly additional series of behaviours and qualities of the disciple. This leads to the suspicion that a portion of text has gone missing between the first list and the second. Note that a series beginning with *utthāna* and *pratyutthāna* is regarded by the *Ratnaṭikā* (on *kārikā* 1.7) as part of *kriyā*.

On the other hand, the same text ad *sūtra* 5.30³⁸ refers to *aṣṭāṅgaṃ brahmacaryam* when defining the item ‘power’ (*bala*)—a view that is in harmony with the interpretation given by *Ratnaṭīkā* ad *kārikā* 1.3,³⁹ which understands *aṣṭāṅgabrahmacārya* as defining the eight intellectual qualities mentioned in connection with the power (*bala*) of devotion (*bhakti*), itself one of the eight *vāsas* (‘impregnating oneself with doctrine’ or ‘living by a teacher’).⁴⁰

v. 8ab: The first *pāda*, <*ṣaḍaṅ*>*genopahāreṇa*, contains a clear reference to the sixfold Pāśupata regimen of worship during the first ascetic stage. The lacuna in the text may therefore be nicely filled accordingly. Here *upahāra*, ‘offering’, functions as the standard technical term used in Pāśupata literature to denote the six acts of devotion to Rudra, namely (the offering of) laughter, song, dance, bellowing, adoration, and muttering of the five Brahmamantras.⁴¹ The scriptural basis for such acts is the injunction found in PS. 1.8:

*hasitagītanṛttahuḍukkāranamaskārajapyopahāreṇopatiṣṭhet*⁴²

One must serve with offering of laughter, song, dance, bellowing, inner worship and prayer.

The compound *ṣaḍaṅgupahāra* itself occurs in *Ratnaṭīkā* ad *kārikā* 1.7 (p. 19 ll. 4–7), where it refers to the six acts:

³⁸ Quoted *supra*, p. 16.

³⁹ Cf. *Ratnaṭīkā* ad *kārikā* 1.3 (p. 6 ll. 9–10): *yato balam aṣṭāṅgaṃ brahmacaryam ity asyāyam arthaḥ* //, and further lines 11–15.

⁴⁰ Cf. Hara 1958:15, fn. 49. The eight intellectual qualities are *grahaṇa*, *dhāraṇa*, *ūha*, *apoha*, *vijñāna*, *vacana*, *kriyā*, and *yathānyāyābhiniveśa*.

⁴¹ Compare, with some slight differences, *Atharvavedapariśiṣṭa* 40, 1.11: *nivedya nirmālyagandhahārī hāsagītavādanādyupahārān* //. Bisschop and Griffiths (2003:327, fn. 58) suggest that *nirmālyagandhadhārī* could be a corruption or conscious revision for *nirmālyaliṅgadhārī*.

⁴² °*huḍuk* conj. (compare *Ratnaṭīkā* p. 19 ll. 4–6 and *Niśvāsamukha* 1.153b); °*ḍumḍum* Ed. (probably a silent emendation of °*huḍuk* by the editor, as suggested by Bisschop and Griffiths 2003:327, fn. 59); °*huḍḍuṅ* conj. Sanderson (2001:30, fn. 32); °*huḍuṃ* conj. Bisschop (2009*).

*dhyāyann īsam hasitagītanṛtyahuḍukkāranamaskārajapyaiḥ
 ṣaḍaṅgopahāraṃ bhagavan mahādeva yuṣmadanuññayā nirvartitavān
 aham avabhṛthasnānaṃ ca kariṣyāmīty evaṃ nivedayet*

Meditating upon the Lord, he should declare thus: ‘O Lord Mahādeva, with your consent I have performed the acts consisting of six parts, [namely] laughter, song, dance, bellowing, inner worship and prayer, and [now] I will carry out the purificatory bath’.

—*triṣkālam anuvarttinā*: The occurrence of *nirvartitavān* (*nir-√vṛt*) in the above passage in connection with the *upahāras* calls to mind the odd form—an instrumental seemingly understood as a nominative—*anuvarttinā* (*anu-√vṛt*) in *pāda* b of our verse. That all the six acts of worship had to be performed in close temporal connection with three ‘bathing-times’ (the three daily *sandhyās*)⁴³ results evidently, besides from the passage quoted above, also from *Pañcārthabhāṣya* ad *sūtra* 1.8 (p. 13 ll. 9–10):

*atha triṣu snānakāleṣu sadyojātādisamṣkrtena bhasmanā japatā snātvā
 japataivāyatanam abhigantavyam [...]*

First, at the three bathing times, having bathed with ashes purified by the mantras Sadyojāta etc., and while still muttering, he should go to the temple.

The six acts are then described one by one in the portion of text following thereupon. The whole line 8ab of our section indeed echoes a passage of the *Niśvāsamukha* (1.153b–154ab), whose context is apparently the *pāśupatavrata*:

[...] *tantrīvādyasya vādakāḥ /
 huḍukkārasya nṛtyasya mukhavādyāṭṭhāsayoh // 153
 triṣkālaṃ caiva kurvāṇo bhaved gaṇaḥ*⁴⁴ *sa cottamaḥ /*

[...] The performer of lute-music, of the sound *huḍuk*, of the dance, of the mouth-sound and boisterous laughter, and he who performs for three

⁴³ Cf. PS. 1.2 and *Bhāṣya* thereof (p. 8 l. 24 to 9 l. 5): *bhasmanā triṣavaṇam snāyīta // triṣavaṇam iti // [...] pūrvasamdhya madhyāhnasamdhya aparasamdhyeti samdhyaṭrayam // triṣavaṇam trisamdhyaṃ trikālam ity arthaḥ //*

⁴⁴ Em.; Ms *gaṇa*.

times in a day the uttering of *huḍuk*, dance, drumming with the mouth and boisterous laughter, he becomes an excellent attendant [of Rudra].

Compare also *Niśvāsaguhya* 9.8cd, referring to a Pāśupata practitioner:⁴⁵

triṣkālam arcayed devaṃ triṣkālasnānam ācaret //

One should worship God [through the six acts] three times [a day]; one should carry out [ash-]bathing during the three times [of the day].

v. 8cd: The final half-verse contains a terminology that is reminiscent of Pāśupata themes. The pair *dāna* and *yajña* (both defined as *kriyās*) recalls the pair of technical terms *atidāna* (‘transcendental giving’) and *atijajana* (‘transcendental sacrifice’) mentioned in *Pañcārthabhāṣya* ad PS. 2.15 (*atidattam atīṣṭam*), as well as in *Ratnaṭīkā* ad *Gaṇakārikā* 1.7. In both texts the pair is further supplemented by a third element, *atitapas* (‘transcendental asceticism’),⁴⁶ which in our verse might be implied by the °*ādi* in the compound *yajñadānakriyādīni*. The emphasis laid on the mental aspect of giving and sacrifice through the word *manasā* in our verse would seem to carry the same force of the prefix *atī* (‘transcendental’) occurring in *atidāna*, *atijajana*, and *atitapas*. The *Pañcārthabhāṣya* (p. 68 ll. 3–21), in replying to the question as to how many divisions there are in performing good, quotes *sūtra* 2.15 and interprets it as referring to the offering of oneself (*ātmapradāna*) as opposed to the offering of

⁴⁵ The sectarian allegiance of the practitioner can be argued, apart from the reference to bathing (in ashes), from his being characterized as *japahomarato nityaṃ* in 9.8a, which calls to mind the *japadhyānaparo nityaṃ* in *Niśvāsamukha* 4.76cd—itself manifestly referring to a Pāśupata adept. The reading °*homa*° in *Niśvāsaguhya* 9.8a is suspicious, for sacrificial fire (*homa*) was forbidden to the Pāśupata adept but prescribed for the adept of the Śaiva Mantramārga. It might be a corruption, or ex-post revision, for °*dhyāna*°. For *japa* and *dhyāna* as constitutive elements of the Pāśupata regimen, cf. *Gaṇakārikā* 1.7.

⁴⁶ A short study dedicated to this triad may be found in Hara 2002:47–55.

material objects,⁴⁷ and as involving the giving of the six acts, which form *vidhikriyā*, in contrast to the offering of Vedic sacrifices.⁴⁸ The *Bhāṣya* goes on to list the third means, *atitapas* (PS. 2.16, *atitaptaṃ tapas tathā*), explaining it as an eminently mental form of asceticism.⁴⁹

***Niśvāsaguhya* 12.9–12ab: The Pramāṇa System (Lākula and Kārukas?)**

*mantrasūtrāṇi vidyāni rudrāś ceti catuṣṭayam /
bhasmasnānaṃ ca śaucaṃ ca upahāraṃ⁵⁰ tathaiva ca // 9*

⁴⁷ Compare *Ratnaṭīkā* ad *kārikā* 1.7 (p. 17 ll. 27–28): *pañcasu pavitreṣv āvartyamāneṣu daśabhir namaskāraiḥ parameśvarāyātmasamarpaṇaṃ dānam*, ‘Giving (*dāna*) is to surrender one’s self to Parameśvara by means of ten sorts of reverence (*namaskāra*) in the course of reciting the five purifying prayers (*pavitra*)’. Note that recitation (*japya*) of the five Brahmamantras is regarded as a mental operation by the *Pañcārthabhāṣya* ad *sūtra* 1.8 (in the section coming right after the explanation of the six acts): *mānaṣaṃ tu namaskaraṇaṃ namaskāraḥ* (p. 14 l. 4), ‘Salutation is mental salutation’, *japyaṃ nāma sadyojātādiṣv akṣarapaṅktyāṃ manasā bhāvasya saṃcāravicāraḥ*. (p. 14 ll. 6–7), ‘Recitation is reflecting on, and going through, with the mind, the nature [embodied] in the sequence of syllables of [the mantras] Sadyojāta, etc.’. Compare *Ratnaṭīkā* ad *kārikā* 1.7 (p. 18 ll. 29–30): *atra japanamaskārau mānaṣāṃ eva*.

⁴⁸ *Pañcārthabhāṣya* ad *sūtra* 2.15 (p. 68 ll. 18–19): *atīyajanaṃ nāma yadāyatane loke vā // tatrāyatane snānahasitūdyā loke ca krāthanaspandanādyā vidhikriyā //*

⁴⁹ Cf. *Pañcārthabhāṣya* ad *sūtra* 2.16 (p. 69 ll. 4–6): *nāyānty ādhyātmikādhībhautikādhidaivikās teṣāṃ svaśāstroktena krameṇa manasi saṃmatānāṃ matānāṃ anupāyataḥ pratīkāram akurvataṃ tapo niṣpadyate*, ‘Asceticism being produced within those who endure in mind (*manasi*) the sufferings arising from the self, from the outside world, and from fate, without resort to external means, in conformity with the manner prescribed in their own scripture’ (trans. Hara 2002:50–51). Regrettably, the text is corrupt and lacunose. Compare *Ratnaṭīkā* ad *kārikā* 1.7 (p. 18, l. 3) and *Pañcārthabhāṣya* ad *sūtra* 1.9 (p. 25.6–10—note the occurrence of *manasi*).

⁵⁰ Em.; *upasaṃhāraṃ* Ms (unmetrical).

*kapālaṅ*⁵¹ *caiva khaṭvāṅgaṃ*⁵² *bhāsmavāsaṅ ca sarvadā /*
cāturvarṇikabhaikṣyaṅ ca vastavyaṃ vijane vane // 10
*jñānānveṣṭi śive bhakti yogadhyānaparāyaṅaḥ*⁵³ /
e<kāḱī> brahmacaryaṅ ca yathālabdhena varttayet // 11
evaṅ carati vidvān so jītakrodho jītendriyaḥ / 12ab

Mantras, Sūtras, Vidyās, Rudras: thus is the tetrad. Then the bath in ashes and the purification, as well as the offerings. (9)

[Bearing] the skull, the skull-staff and the ash-dress at all times, taking alms from people of all four classes [is to be adopted]; residence should be taken in a depopulated forest. (10)

Devoted to Śiva, striving for knowledge, excelling in Yoga and Meditation. Alone, he should [observe] celibacy and survive with whatever he has at hand. (11)

Thus that sage goes about, with anger and senses subdued. (12ab)

Various elements in the above verses suggest that the focus has shifted from a Pāñcārthika Pāśupata milieu to a Pramāṇa-Pāśupata one, which presumably encompassed the Mahāvratas/Kapālavratins, as well as the Kārukas.⁵⁴

v. 9ab: Although we do not know from any other scriptures about a standard tetrad formed by Mantras, Sūtras, Vidyās, and Rudras, these elements appear to represent a series of additional doctrines and practices added by post-Pāñcārthika Pāśupata groups on top of the Pāñcārthika core doctrines and observances. ‘Mantras’ here might refer to the Pañcabrahmamantras; ‘Sūtras’ to the PS. and/or an additional corpus of scriptures, such as the Pramāṇaśāstras;⁵⁵ ‘Vidyās’ to a series

⁵¹ Corr. (e-text); *kapālaṅ* Ms.

⁵² Corr. (e-text); *khaṭvāga* Ms.

⁵³ Corr. (e-text); *yogadhyānaparāyaṅaḥ* Ms.

⁵⁴ The latter group will be mentioned further down in v. 18b. Cf. Sanderson 2006:170–179, discussing, among other passages, *Niśvāsamukha* 4.128–129ab: *kapālavratam āśrītya dhruvaṅ gacchanti tatpadam / lokāṭītaṃ samākhyātaṃ mahāpāśupataṃ vratam // prakriyāsu ca saṃyukto dhruvaṅ gacchati tatpadam /* (Dhruva being the Rudra in the cosmic level aimed at by the followers of the Pramāṇaśāstras, as well as (according to some sources) by the Vaimālas; cf. *infra*).

⁵⁵ The existence of this lost corpus of scriptures is suggested by second-hand accounts found in Mantramārga sources. The only original passage

of prescribed mantras and spells;⁵⁶ and ‘Rudras’ to the extended series of Rudra-manifestations and Rudra-worlds, correlated to the ladder of *tattvas* in the pure section of the Śaiva cosmos, worshiped by the adherents to the Pramāṇa system.⁵⁷

vv. 9cd–10ab: As we know from other accounts scattered over the Mantramārga corpus, there existed a continuity between the Pramāṇa-Pāśupatas and the Pāśupatas proper insofar as the former adopted many of the observances of the latter, such as bathing in ashes (*bhasmasnāna*) for the purpose of purification (*śauca*), and the six ‘offerings’ (*upahāra*), to which they however added an extra set of even more extreme observances such as the bearing of the skull-vessel (*kapāla*), the staff (*khaṭvāṅga*), and the perpetual (*sarvadā*) ash-smear (*bhasmavāsa*).⁵⁸ Insofar as they were following such a regimen, called great observance (*mahāvratā*), the Mahāvratas aimed at emulating the expiatory penance of Śiva the Brahmin-slayer, and in so doing ultimately look like living portions of Rudra (*rudrāmśa*), their *iṣṭadevatā*.⁵⁹

to have survived is a seven-verse fragment of the *Pañcārthapramāṇa*, quoted by Kṣemarāja (first half of the 11th century AD) in his commentary ad *Svacchandatantra* 1.41–43, which contains an analysis of the *aghoramantra*; cf. Sanderson 2006:169–176.

⁵⁶ Such is the standard usage of the word in Śaiva Tantric texts of the Mantramārga. Also note the class of semi-divine beings known as Vidyādhara or Siddhas, who are often associated with magic and antinomian practices reminiscent of those carried out by the post-Pāñcārthika Pāśupata groups.

⁵⁷ Cf. Sanderson 2006:170–176, 200–202, and Bakker 2000:2–6.

⁵⁸ Cf. the description of a Mahāvratin given by *Niśvāsamukha* 4.88–89: *ālabdhaḥ pañcabhir guhyair dīkṣitāś caiva so bhramet / khaṭvāṅgī ca kapālī ca sa jaṭī muṇḍam eva vā // vālayajñopavitā ca śiromuṇḍaiś ca maṇḍitāḥ / kaupīnavāso bhasmāṅgī divyābharāṇa[[bhūṣitaḥ]] //*

⁵⁹ As it is alluded to in *Niśvāśaguhya* 3.30–33, where a practitioner of the *mithyāvratā* falsely accuses himself of having killed, among others, a Brahmin; and who his said to bear *kapāla*, *khaṭvāṅga* and permanent ash-smear; to dance, sing and laugh like a madman; and to spend his nights in a cremation-ground (cf. Sanderson 2001:31 fn. 5, and 2006:209).

v. 10cd: *caturvarṇikabhaiḥṣyaṃ*: Mendicancy among people of the four classes is prescribed in the PS. for the Pāśupata practitioner during the first stage of his ascetic practice, while the injunction of taking residence in a depopulated forest (*vijane vane*) would seem to refer rather to the third stage, when he should live in solitude in an empty house or a cave (*śūnyāgāraguhāvāsī*, PS. 5.9). This entails no contradiction, however, as in *Pañcārthabhāṣya* ad *sūtra* 5.30 *bhaiḥṣyaṃ* is prescribed also to the Pāśupata in his third stage: ‘The dwelling place is an empty house or cave; the way of livelihood is alms’ (trans. Hara 2002:177), *tathā vasaty arthaḥ śūnyāgāraguhā vṛttir bhaiḥṣyaṃ*.

v. 11ab: *jñānānveṣī śive bhakti yogadhyānaparāyaṇaḥ*: The characterization of a practitioner as carrying out visualization and yoga (intended as ‘union’), totally and constantly absorbed in Śiva (i.e. Rudra), calls to mind a Pāśupata practitioner in his fourth and fifth stage of asceticism. Cf. *Pañcārthabhāṣya* ad *sūtra* 5.27, quoting from an unknown scripture:

*ākṛtim api pariḥṛtya dhyānaṃ nityaṃ pare rudre / yena prāptaṃ yoga
muhūrtam api tat paro yogah*

That union by which the constant visualization of the highest Rudra, albeit devoid of aspect, is obtained even for an instant, that is the highest union.

Compare *Pañcārthabhāṣya* ad 5.30, where visualization (*dhyāna*), constant union with God (*devanityatā*), and victory over the senses (*jīendriyatva*)⁶⁰ are attributed to the fourth stage of the Pāśupata practice:

*kriyā adhyayanadhyānādya ajīendriyavṛttitāpohaḥ śuddhiḥ lābhas tu
devanityatā jīendriyatvaṃ ceti //*

The actions are repetition and meditation etc.; the purity is the removal of the vice of possessing uncontrolled bodily organs in activity; the attainment is the state of being constantly associated with God and the control over one’s bodily organs.

⁶⁰ This is mentioned *infra* in our passage, *pāda* 12b.

Victory over the senses (*jitendriya*) is a quality attributed to the practitioner in the third stage too (cf. PS. 5.11, *jitendriyo*). This adjective occurs in *Niśvāsaguhya* 3.33,⁶¹ a passage describing the Pāśupata *gaṇavṛata*, as well as in *Svacchandatantra* 10.1169,⁶² a verse describing the practitioners of the Īśvara-leading *pāśupatavṛata*, but which is understood by the commentator Kṣemarāja as referring to the Lākulas rather than to the Pāñcārthika Pāśupatas. It may be argued indeed that stress on a constant and extreme form of Rudra-worship was peculiar to the post-Pāñcārthika Pāśupatas carrying out the Mahāvṛata. This extreme form of *rudrabhakti* clearly emerges from a passage of the *Niśvāsamukha* (4.90–91ab) characterizing a follower of the *lokātītavṛata*:

jagad rudramayaṃ matvā rudrabhakto dṛḍhavrataḥ /
sarvādaḥ sarvaceṣṭaś ca rudradhyānaparāyaṇaḥ //
rudraṃ muktvā na cānyo 'sti trātā me devataṃ param /

Being devoted to Rudra, steadfastly practicing his observances, eating everything (i.e. whatever is at hand), carrying out all [the prescribed] behaviours, and addicted to the visualization of Rudra, he thinks: ‘The whole Universe is entirely made of Rudra; there is none besides Rudra, the highest God, my saviour!’

v. 11c: *e<kākī>*: Conjecturally reconstructed on account of the solitary character of the Pāśupata observance in the third and fourth stage, as characterized in PS. 4.6 and *Bhāṣya* thereon (p. 97 ll. 6–7):

unmattavad eko vicareta loka
 [...] *eka ity asaṃvahaṭā cintyate // ekenetarebhyo vicchinnenāśahāyenyety arthaḥ //*

He must wander about by himself like a madman.

[...] ‘By himself’ is conceived of as being unaccompanied. The meaning conveyed by the word ‘by himself’ is that he is without others, without companions.

⁶¹ *bhāsmāṅgī cīravāśaś ca gaṇavratam idaṃ smṛtam / japayukto bhaiḥṣabhujō loṣṭuśāyī jīṭendriyaḥ //*

⁶² Quoted *supra*, p. 17.

v. 11d: *yathālabdhena varṭtayet*: The dietary regimen consisting of whatever one can find is prescribed in PS. 5.32, and attributed by the *Bhāṣya* (p. 131 ll. 8–10) to the fourth stage of the *pāśupatavrata*:

yathālabdhopajīvakaḥ labhate rudrasāyujyam
 [...] *tad yathālabdham annapānaṃ śmaśānād anirgacchatā divase divase*
jīvanāya sthityarthaṃ
tadupajīvan yathālabdhopajīvako bhavaṭīty arthaḥ

Surviving on whatever he may find, he obtains unity with Rudra.

[...] Thus, living on whatever food and drink he may find, [merely] for daily survival, without his going out from the cremation ground, he becomes ‘one who survives on whatever food he may find’.

Compare *Pañcārthabhāṣya* ad *sūtra* 5.30 (pp. 129 l. 18 to 130 l. 2), briefly characterizing the fourth stage as follows:

tathehāpi śmaśāne vasatyarthaḥ vasan dharmātmā // yathālabdham iti
vṛtīḥ kriyā smṛtiḥ asmṛtyapohaḥ śuddhiḥ lābhas tu sāyujyam //

Similarly, here [in the fourth stage]: the dwelling place is in a cremation ground; the power is the possession of merit of one’s own; the way of livelihood is food acquired by chance; the action is mindfulness (of God); the purity is the removal of failure of mindfulness (of God); the attainment is conjunction (with God). (Trans. Hara 2002:177)

Here *smṛti* is likely to be used as a synonym of *dhyāna*; *sāyujyam* denotes the highest goal of union (*yoga*) with the Lord.

v. 12ab: *vidvān so*: The epithet ‘wise’, rather than being a cliché, could have retained the technical meaning it has in Pāśupata literature. For instance, in the series of verses closing the prose commentary of *Pañcārthabhāṣya* ad 5.30 (p. 130 l. 5), we find the following statement:

yas tu budhyati pañcārthe sa vidvān nātra saṃśayaḥ //

One who knows the five categories is a wise man; there is no doubt about that.

The expression *sa vidvān* recalls the synonymous *vidvān so* in our *pāda* 12a, and may thus hint at a ‘knower of the Pañcārtha system’. On the other hand, the word *vidvān* in the meaning of ‘Brahmin’

is attested in *Pañcārthabhāṣya* (p. 88 ll. 15–16) ad *sūtra* 3.19:⁶³ ‘Knowledge (*vidyā*) is the distinguishing mark of a Brahmin, consisting in the clarification of the meanings of the words found in the scriptures’ (*vidyā nāma yā granthārthavartipadārthānām abhivyañjikā vipratvalakṣaṇā*).

Niśvāsaguhya 12.12cd–13ab: The Vaimalas

*vaimalācāryadīkṣā*⁶⁴ *ca śivasāyojyam ucyate* // 12cd
jñānacaryā ahimsā ca śivasāyojyatām vrajet / 13ab

And the initiation by a master of the Vaimalas is known as Unity with Śiva.⁶⁵ (12cd)
 [By] ascetic regimen, gnosis and non-violence [the Vaimala adept] will proceed to Unity with Śiva. (13ab)

This interesting, albeit rather elliptic, statement about the Vaimalas seems to be an attempt at distinguishing them from the Pramāṇa-Pāśupatas characterized in the preceding verses 9–12ab. The *ca* (‘and’) in the first line would seem to imply that the Vaimalas too carried out the above-mentioned observances, yet they added a ‘*dīkṣā* imparted by a Vaimalācārya’, as well as an element of gnosis (*jñāna*). Even if the alternative translation ‘The Vaimalas [say] that Unity with Śiva is known as initiation and ascetic regimen’ is chosen, the stress here still seems to be on a special kind of *dīkṣā* that was associated with the Vaimalas. This may also be inferred by the fact that, as the verse seems to imply, this *dīkṣā* leads to unity with Śiva instead of unity with

⁶³ *paribhūyamāno hi vidvān kṛtsnatapā bhavati*: ‘For a wise man, being ill-treated, accomplishes thereby all asceticism’.

⁶⁴ Conj.; *vaimalācāryadīkṣā* Ms.

⁶⁵ Following my proposed emendation of *vaimalācāryadīkṣā* into *vaimalācāryadīkṣā*. If we take *carya* as a shortened version of *caryā* (to suit the *pathyā* cadence) and *vaimalā* as an elliptical use of plural (with *visarga* dropped) to introduce their point of view, an alternative translation could be: ‘The Vaimalas [say] that Unity with Śiva is known as initiation and ascetic regimen’. This translation, however, is at odd with the fact that *caryā* is already featured in line 13ab.

Rudra—Śiva being superior to Rudra, the paramount aspect of Śiva worshiped by the Atimārga, from the perspective of the Mantramārga.

***Niśvāsaguhya* 12.13cd–22ab: The fourfold Atimārga and the superiority of the Mantramārga**

*jñānenaiva tu*⁶⁶ *śaivānām dīkṣā yā ca viśiṣyate* // 13cd
śivabhakti japo yajña dhyānaṃ prāṇanirodhanam /
*evam eva samākhyātā pañcamantravidhi[[s tu yah]]*⁶⁷ // 14
*sadāśivamukhodgīrṇaṃ*⁶⁸ *mokṣamārgaparakāśakam /*
jñātvā pāsūpatam jñānaṃ pañcamantreti pañcadhā // 15
pañcabrahma parityajya yo 'nyam vijñātum icchati /
viphalaṃ tac chivaṃ jñānaṃ jñānamokṣaṃ ca pañcabhiḥ // 16
pañcabhis tu tataḥ sarvaṃ yad bhūtaṃ yac ca bhāvayati /
*iśāne śaivam utpannaṃ vaimalaṃ puruṣā<t>*⁶⁹ *smṛtam* // 17
pramāṇaṃ hṛdayājī jātaṃ vāmade<vāt> tu *kārukam*⁷⁰ /
*sadyāc ca lakulīśāntāḥ*⁷¹ *pañcabhedāḥ prakīrtitāḥ* // 18
*brahmaviṣṇusurā sarve gaṇā skandapurogamāḥ*⁷² /
ṛṣayo 'psarasā yakṣā nāgagandharvakinnarāḥ // 19
*daityā vidyādharā sarvā ye cānye puravāsinaḥ*⁷³ /
*sthāpya pañcatanun*⁷⁴ *devam arccayanti sadāśivam* // 20
*na tatra mṛtyur nna jarā na vyādhir na ca duḥkhitāḥ*⁷⁵ /
evaṃ prāpya niḥ...† // 21
*īdṛṣaṃ ca paraṃ saukhyaṃ nityaṃ pramuditotsavāḥ*⁷⁶ / 22ab

⁶⁶ Conj.; *ajñānena tu* apograph K; *ajñānenaiva tu* Ms (unmetrical).

⁶⁷ Thus apograph K.

⁶⁸ Em. (e-text); *sadāśivamukhodgīrṇa* Ms.

⁶⁹ The ‘loss’ of final -t in ablative forms is a common feature in the *Niśvāsa* corpus.

⁷⁰ Em. (e-text); *vāmade†...†n tu kārakam* Ms.

⁷¹ Em.; *lakulīśāntāḥ* Ms.

⁷² Em. (e-text); *skandha*^o Ms.

⁷³ Verses 19–20ab are the same as *Mūlasūtra* 1.2cd–3 (with the variant *siddhas tathānye* in 1.3cd).

⁷⁴ Em.; *pañcatanur* Ms.

⁷⁵ The half-verse 21ab is the same as *Mūlasūtra* 1.7ab.

⁷⁶ Em. (e-text); *pramuditotsayā* Ms.

But for the Śaivas [*sāyojyam* is attained] indeed by Gnosis, and theirs is [also] an initiation which is distinguished as special. (13cd)
 Devotion to Śiva, Muttering, Worship, Meditation, Restraint of breath: thus the five-mantra-regimen is proclaimed. But he who, (14) having known as ‘the five mantras’ the fivefold Pāsupata gnosis, which has been cast forth from Sadāśiva’s mouth, and which shows the path to liberation, (15) leaves behind the five Brahma[mantras] and wishes to know more, [for him] that knowledge of Śiva is fruitless, and release through knowledge by means of the five [is too]. (16)
 Thus from the five⁷⁷ the whole [of the Śaiva knowledge] that was and will be [arises]. The Śaiva has arisen in Īśāna, and the Vaimala is said [to have arisen] from the Puruṣa. (17)
 The Pramāṇa was born from the heart (= Aghora), the Kāruka from Vāmadeva; from Sadya (= Sadyojāta) the doctrine [taught by] Lakulīṣa [arises]. [Thus] the five divisions have been proclaimed. (18)
 Brahmā, Viṣṇu and all the [other] gods; the troops headed by Skanda; the Seers and Apsarases; the Yakṣas; the Nāgas; the Gandharvas; the Kinnaras; (19) the Daityas; the Vidyādharas, and the other dwellers in [Śiva’s] city, they install Sadāśiva with five bodies and worship him. (20)
 There, there is no death, no aging, no disease, no sufferers. Having thus obtained †...† (21)
 and this kind of paramount happiness, always enjoying merriment. (22ab)

The final passage displays an attitude that may be considered ‘inclusivist’ insofar as it describes the various divisions of the Atimārga and their tenets as if springing forth from the four faces of Sadāśiva, the paramount deity of the Siddhānta. In so doing it praises—and therefore appropriates—the Pañcabrahma-based Mantric system of the Atimārga, which it warns against being abandoned even by the Śaiva practitioner within the more advanced Mantramārga path. Yet the superiority of the Śaiva Mantramārga, springing forth from the upper-oriented face of Īśāna, over the Vaimala system and the whole Atimārga is claimed on account of its superior, gnosis-bestowing initiation. The apologetic crescendo culminates with a praise of Sadāśiva as the paramount deity, worshiped by various gods in His heaven characterized by cessation of pain and utmost happiness.

⁷⁷ Assuming that instr. *pañcabhis* stands for abl. *pañcabhyas*.

v. 13c: *jñānenaiva tu śaivānām*: This is my conjectural emendation of the unmetrical *ajñānenaiva tu śaivānām*; other possible emendations could be *ajñānena tu śaivānām* (as in the apograph K), or *ajñānenaiva śaivānām*. The reading *ajñānena* would yield the following translation: ‘(But) [the initiation of the Vaimalas] is (just) through ignorance with respect to that of the Śaivas, whose initiation is superior’. Whatever the original form of this line might have been, its apparent intent is to convey the notion that the initiation of the Śaiva, entailing *jñāna*, is superior to the initiation imparted by the Vaimalas, and in any event superior to the Vaimala regimen (i.e. ascetic conduct, gnosis and non-violence).

v. 14: The five aspects of Pāśupata practice or *vidhi* are said to be Devotion to Śiva, Muttering, Worship, Meditation, Restraint of breath. I have not been able to find a corresponding list of five items in any Śaiva source known to me. However, the Pāñcārthika Pāśupata system—as its very name implies—is rife with pentads of means or categories that define its practices and goals. Witness, for instance, the five topics (*pañcārtha*) implied in the very title of the *Pañcārthabhāṣya*,⁷⁸ and the various pentads mentioned in the verses quoted by Kauṇḍinya in *Pañcārthabhāṣya* ad *sūtra* 5.30 (p. 130 ll. 4–13), correlating the five stages with respectively the five *lābhas* (‘attainments’), *malas* (‘impurities’), *upāyas* (‘means’),⁷⁹ *deśas* (‘places’).⁸⁰

⁷⁸ These are deemed to be *kārya* (‘effect’), *kaṛaṇa* (‘cause’), *yoga* (‘union’), *vidhi* (‘prescribed regimen’), *duḥkhānta* (‘the end of suffering’).

⁷⁹ According to *Gaṇakārikā* 1.7, the five *upāyas* are *vāsa* (‘impregnating oneself with doctrine’ or ‘living by a teacher’), *caryā* (‘good conduct’), *japadhyāna* (‘muttering and visualization’), *sadārurasmṛti* (‘constant mindfulness on Rudra’), *prasāda* (‘grace’); contrast the verse quoted in *Pañcārthabhāṣya* ad *sūtra* 5.30 (p. 130 ll. 10–11): *vāso dhyānam akhilakaraṇanīrodhas tathā smṛtiś caiva / prasāda iti copāyā vijñeyāḥ pañca pañcārthe* //.

⁸⁰ This series of five appears to be linked to the five items *vasatyaṛtha* (‘dwelling place’), *bala* (‘power’), *kriyā* (‘faction’), *śuddhi* (‘purity’), and *lābha* (‘attainment’) mentioned in the prose part of the commentary ad *sūtra* 5.30.

vv. 17–18: The passage presents a model of the Śaiva stream emanating from the five faces of Sadāśīva that is in every respect analogous, yet richer in details, to that presented in the beginning of the Paṭala (vv. 3–5). Besides the Śaiva, Vaimala, Pramāṇa and Pāñcārthika⁸¹ systems, the latter series of verses mention also the Kārukas, who were seemingly only implied in verses 9–12ab. This hierarchic model can be compared to analogous ones categorizing various Śaiva and non-Śaiva traditions, as well as the canon of Śaivatantras, as coming forth from the five faces of Sadāśīva:

		NiMu, SvT	NiGu	Mṛg CP
Sadyojāta	West	<i>laukika</i>	<i>pāñcārthika</i>	bhūta- tantras
Vāmadeva	North	<i>vaidika</i>	<i>kāruka</i>	vāma- tantras
Aghora	South	<i>ādhyātmika</i>	<i>pramāṇa</i>	bhairava- tantras
Tatpuruṣa	East	<i>atimārga</i> {	<i>vaimala</i>	gāruḍa- tantras
Īśāna	Zenith	<i>mantramārga</i>	<i>śaiva</i> {	siddhān- tatantras

A Typology of the Śaiva Atimārga

Niśvāsaguhyā 1–22ab presents an emic model accounting for the subdivisions of the Śaiva Atimārga as seen from the perspective of Mantramārga Śaivism. To sum up: verses 7–9 refer to the Pāñcārthika Pāśupatas, the lowest group in the hierarchy, who emphasized ascetic conduct (*caryā*) leading to the union with Rudra (*rudrasāyujya*). Verses 10–11 refer to the Pramāṇa system, which encompassed

⁸¹ I interpret the °*antaḥ* in the compound *lakulīśāntaḥ* (emended from the plural *Lakulīśāntāḥ*) as meaning ‘doctrine’ (compare ‘Siddhānta’), thus yielding the meaning of ‘the doctrine taught by Lakulīśa’ i.e. the Pāñcārtha. Sanderson (2001:30, fn. 32) proposes the emendation *lakulīśoṭthaṃ* (‘stemming from Lakulīśa’).

the Mahāvratas and Kārukas, who are attributed superiority over the Pāñcārthika Pāśupatas on account of their emphasis on gnosis (*jñāna*) besides *dīkṣā* and *caryā*, and who also aim at union with Rudra. Verse 12 refers to the Vaimalas, whose superior *dīkṣā* imparted by a Vaimala master, along with gnosis and ascetic conduct, leads to the union with Śiva (*śivasāyujya*). At the top of the hierarchy are placed the mainstream Śaivas, who are characterised by a superior form of gnosis-bestowing *dīkṣā*.

I shall now compare the data gathered from the verses analyzed above with relevant textual evidence scattered over later Śaiva Tantric sources, which make rare statements about the prerogatives and statuses of the Atimārga groups. This comparison will show that the *Niśvāsa-guhya* presents a typology of the Atimārga that agrees in many respects with the views found in later scriptures of the Śaiva Mantramārga.

At the very outset, I should like to point out that a great deal of textual and historical evidence relating to the Śaiva Atimārga and Mantramārga divisions of Śaivism has been gathered by Alexis Sanderson on the basis of his readings of the *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā* and other unpublished Sanskrit texts. In a series of masterful studies (1988, 2001, 2006), of which abundant use I have gratefully made here, Sanderson has elaborated a compelling theory on the historical development of Atimārga and Mantramārga Śaivism. In his ‘The Lākulas: New Evidence of a System Intermediate between Pāñcārthika Pāśupatism and Āgamic Śaivism’ (Sanderson 2006), Sanderson has discussed in detail the two types of Atimārga recognized by the *Niśvāsamukha*, namely Pāñcārthika Pāśupatism (Atimārga I) and Lokātīta, Mahāvrata or Pramāṇa Pāśupatism (Atimārga II). He has referred to the latter division as ‘Lākula Pāśupatism’, on the basis of seminal Tantric scriptures and exegetical works such as Kṣemarāja’s commentary on the *Svacchandatantra*.

Sanderson (Sanderson 2006:191–193) observed that *dīkṣā*, *jñāna* and *caryā* are the three indispensable items in order to obtain liberation according to the soteriology of the Lākulas, and further argued that the fundamental difference between Pāñcārthika Pāśupatas,

Lākulas and Saiddhāntika Śaivas precisely lied in their forms of *dīkṣā*. According to him, the Pāśupata type of initiation is a mere *saṃskāra*, after which the practitioner should enact the practices that allow him to achieve and maintain his purity; the initiation of the Lākulas differed from that of the Pāśupatas in that it defined itself as capable of purifying the initiate's soul from the bondage of the lower levels of the cosmic path, thereby bestowing liberation.⁸² A similar claim, underlying a new conception of initiation as capable of destroying the innate cosmic impurity (*mala*), will be made at a later stage by the Saiddhāntika Śaivas with respect to their *nirvānadīkṣā*.

The gist of the competition for supremacy among Śaiva groups appears therefore to have lied in the nature and power of *dīkṣā*, which validated their claims of superiority of one over the other. This predicament resulted in a model that Sanderson has defined as 'competitive extension', involving the accommodation of each group in the cosmic path according to a hierarchical scale. In his words (Sanderson 2006:193),

[The Lākulas] differ from the Pañcārthikas and agree with the Āgamic Śaivas in conceiving of the universe as a hierarchy of worlds divided into two parts, a lower, impure universe (*aśuddho mārgaḥ*) and a higher, pure universe (*śuddho mārgaḥ*), the two separated by a vast barrier termed Granthi which only initiation and the cultivation of gnosis during post-initiatory observance can enable one to go beyond. [...] For the Lākulas this is initiation followed by asceticism and gnosis whereas for the Śaivas it is initiation followed by a much more accommodating range of religious practice, from the devotion of the exonerated initiate, which differ in no way from those of the lay Śivabhakta, to specifically Śaiva practice in which Yoga, Gnosis or ritual may predominate.

The analysis of *Niśvāsaguhya* 12.1–22 presented here lends further support to the observations made by Sanderson, insofar as it individuates in the passage the description of a model according to which the various groups within the Atimārga, as well as the overarching Mantramārga Śaivism, shared as the core of their religion the three

⁸² Cf. Sanderson 2006:187–193 (especially p. 190).

means of *caryā*, *dīkṣā* and *jñāna*;⁸³ what set apart one from the other was the different emphasis put on any one, or two, of those means, as well as the goals granted by them. In this manner an ascending hierarchy is envisaged, according to which the groups that put emphasis on gnosis and transformatory initiation stand above the practice-oriented ones. This typology can be summarized in the following (tentative) scheme:

		<i>caryā</i>	<i>dīkṣā</i>	<i>jñāna</i>	Distinctive <i>sādhana</i>	Goal
Pāśupata (Pāñcārthika)	Sadyojāta	+	+	+	<i>pāśupatavrata</i>	<i>rudra-sāyojya</i>
Pramāṇa I (Kārukas)	Vāmadeva	+++	++	++	extended <i>pāśupata-vrata</i> , extended <i>prakriyādhvan</i>	<i>rudra-sāyojya</i>
Pramāṇa II (Mahāvratas)	Aghora	++	++	+++	extended <i>pāśupata-vrata</i> , transformatory <i>dīkṣā</i> , gnosis of full <i>prakriyādhvan</i>	<i>rudra-sāyojya</i>
Vaimala	Tatpuruṣa	++	+++	+++	extended <i>pāśupata-vrata</i> , superior transformatory <i>dīkṣā</i> imparted by a Vaimalācārya	<i>śiva-sāyojya</i>
Śaiva	Īśāna	+	++++	++++	superior transformatory <i>dīkṣā</i> bestowing gnosis	<i>śiva-sāyojya</i>

The view that the pair formed by *dīkṣā* and *jñāna* retains a primary importance in the purificatory process leading the soul of the initiate in the Pramāṇa and Vaimala systems to higher stations is documented in a number of passages in the *Niśvāsa*-corpus and related sources. These sources concordantly link the initiates whose souls have been ‘purified by initiation and gnosis’ to high cosmic stations in the pure path (*śuddhādhvan*). Their goals are identified with the stations of

⁸³ This appears to be the gnosis of the additional hierarchy of Rudra-worlds in the *prakriyādhvan* described in the Pramāṇaśāstras: cf. Sanderson 2006:189–190.

the Rudras Tejēśa/Tejīśa and Dhruva/Dhruveśa, both of which are characterized as the one goal of the Pramāṇa system. Such is the case in *Niśvāsaguhya* 7.261–262ab:

*tejīśas ca dhruvas caiva pramāṇādhvānaṃ kīrtitam /
kapālavratam āsthāya pramāṇāgamasiddhaye⁸⁴ //
gatā dhruvapadaṃ ye tu dīkṣājñānaviśodhitāḥ /*

Tejīśa and Dhruva are taught to be the world-path of the Pramāṇa [system]. Having carried out the observance of the skull in order to fulfill the doctrine of the Pramāṇas, those [adepts] reach the level of Dhruva, purified by initiation and gnosis.

Similarly, the Kashmirian *Svacchandatantra*—which notably builds its cosmological accounts by incorporating large sections of the *Niśvāsaguhya*—in 10.1174ab attributes both such goals to the so-called ‘Pramāṇas’:

tejēśas ca dhruveśas ca pramāṇānāṃ paraṃ padam⁸⁵

A passage of the *Niśvāsakārikā*⁸⁶ (44.77) agrees with the *Niśvāsaguhya* insofar as it links both Tejīśa and Dhruveśa to the Pramāṇa system, defining the follower of that path as ‘endowed with initiation and gnosis’:

*tejīśas⁸⁷ ca dhruveśas ca pramāṇādhve⁸⁸ prakīrtitāḥ
oṃ tejīśa namaḥ
oṃ dhruveśa namaḥ
pramāṇādhvaniviśṭhānāṃ⁸⁹ dīkṣājñānasamanvitam // 77*

⁸⁴ Conj. Sanderson (e-text); *pramāṇāgama†...†* Ms; *pramāṇāgama-samabhi†...†* apograph K; *pramāṇāgamasi†...†* apograph W.

⁸⁵ Compare a nearly identical line in *Niśvāsakārikā*, *Dīkṣottara* 7.78ab: *tejīśas ca dhruviśas ca pramāṇe paramaṃ padam* (I quote the whole verse *infra*, p. 37).

⁸⁶ This Tantra is a long appendix to the *Niśvāsātattvasaṃhitā* (its ‘fifth Sūtra’, as it calls itself), which has survived only through heavily corrupt South Indian manuscripts.

⁸⁷ A; *tejīśaṃ* C; missing in B.

⁸⁸ Conj. (entailing the *aīśa* locative °*adhve* instead of °*adhvani*, seemingly m.c.); *pramāṇatve* A, C; missing in B.

⁸⁹ Conj.; *prāṇādhvaniniviśṭhānāṃ* A; *prāṇādhvanī niśṭhānāṃ* C; missing in B.

Compare a lacunous passage of the *Dīkṣottara* (19.43–44ab), an appendix to the *Niśvāsakārikā*:

tejīśaś ca dhruvīśaś ca veditavyā prayatnataḥ /

†...† <dīkṣā>jñānasamanvitāḥ // 43

tatpadaṃ paramaṃ proktaṃ tathyam etan na saṃśayaḥ //

43a tejīśaś ca dhruvīśaś ca] A ; tejaś ca dhruvīśaś caiva B ; tejaś ca dhruvīśaś caiva C

43b veditavyā prayatnataḥ] BC ; veditavyaḥ †...† A 43d <dīkṣā>jñānasamanvitāḥ]

conj.; †...†jñānasamānvitāḥ A ; †...†jñānasamanvitāḥ B ; †...†jñān sāgnvitāḥ C

The passage mentions Tejīśa and Dhruvīśa besides the adjectival compound ‘endowed with (initiation and)⁹⁰ gnosis’ and concludes with the singular *tatpadaṃ paramaṃ*, so as to indicate that both Rudras constitute one common goal. Arguably, reference to the Pramāṇa system might have been made in the missing portion of the verse (compare *pramāṇādhrvaniviṣṭhānām* in *Niśvāsakārikā* 44.77).

Indeed it is only in *Svacchandatantra* 11.72cd–73 that we find a differentiation between the stations of Tejeśa and Dhruva as the goals of the Vaimalas and the Pramāṇa-system respectively:

tejeśo vaimalānām ca pramāṇe ca dhruvaṃ padam

dīkṣājñānaviuddhātmā dehāntaṃ yāva caryayā

kapālavratam āsthāya svaṃ svaṃ gacchati tatpadaṃ

For the Vaimalas, the goal is Tejeśa, and for the Pramāṇa [system] it is Dhruva. The soul being purified by initiation and gnosis, by keeping discipline until death, and by practising the observance of the skull, he reaches the respective goals [of those systems].

This differentiation is likely to amount to a *post hoc* attempt at systematizing the goals of various Atimārga groups and accommodate them into a coherent classificatory cosmological system. The same attempt may be detected in the preceding verses 10.71cd–72ab, which correlate the obscure Mausulas—about whom we know little besides their

⁹⁰ The missing portion of the compound can be conjecturally reconstructed by comparing it to *Niśvāsakārikā* 44.77 and other passages of similar context, where a compound formed by the pair *dīkṣājñāna* occur.

name—and Kārukas with the Rudras Kṣemeśa and Brahmaṇaḥsvāmin respectively.⁹¹

⁹¹ Sanderson (2006:169–170) has already pointed out the apparent contradiction between *Svacchandatantra* 11.72cd–73, which attributes the goals of Tejeśa and Dhruva to the Vaimalas and Pramānas respectively, and 10.1174ab, which attributes the level of Dhruva to both the Pramāna-Pāsupatas and the Vaimalas. He has further argued that the two statements can be reconciled on the basis of the following passage of the *Niśvāsakārikā/Dikṣottara* (7.78):

*tejīśaś ca dhruvīśaś ca pramāṇe paramaṇi padam /
dvau rudrau tu samākhyātau yogamokṣaphalapradau //*
78a dhruvīśaś] em.; bravīśaś AB; bruvīśaś C
78d yogamokṣaphalapradau] A; bhogamokṣaphalapradau BC

According to Sanderson, the compound *yogamokṣaphalapradau* would imply that Tejīśa and Dhruva bestow *yoga* and *mokṣa* respectively, thus involving a kind of hierarchy. This is in my mind debatable since the other two testimonia read *bhogamokṣaphalapradau*, and this very same compound is referred by them to four Rudras in the adjacent verse 7.79 (against A, which again reads *yogamokṣaphalapradaḥ*):

*tataḥ prāṇaḥ smṛto devi brahmadattaṃ tataḥ punaḥ /
catvāras tu smṛtā rudrā bhogamokṣaphalapradaḥ //*
48a tataḥ prāṇaḥ smṛto] A; tataḥ...ḥ smṛto B; tataḥ smṛto devi C
48b brahmadattaṃ tataḥ punaḥ] AB; brahman tataḥ punaḥ C
48c smṛtā] A; smṛto BC rudrā] BC; rudrāḥ A
48d bhogamokṣaphalapradaḥ] B; bhogamokṣaphala-
pradaḥ C; yogamokṣaphalapradaḥ A

I suspect that this compound constitutes nothing more than a frequent formulaic expression, implying no actual difference in the goals bestowed by the two Rudras. Compare, e.g., the clichés *bhuktimuktiphala-prada* and *sarvakāmaphalaprada* occurring in a passage of the *Matsyapurāṇa* (22.7–8), which describes the sacred sites devoted to the Rudras Avimukta and Vimaleśvara (the latter arguably being the tutelary Rudra of the Vaimalas): *tathā vārānasī puṇyā pitṛṇām vallabhā sadā / yatrāvimuktasāmnidhyaṃ bhuk-
timuktiphalapradaṃ // pitṛṇām vallabhaṃ tadvat puṇyaṃ ca vimaleśvaram /
pitṛtṛthaṃ prayāgaṃ tu sarvakāmaphalapradaṃ //*

A somewhat idiosyncratic account is found in the *Niśvāsakārikā* (*Dīkṣottara* 18.123–125), which places the Vaimalas in the level of Dhruva:

*vaimalāḥ kārūkās caiva tathā pāśupatās ca ye /
vaimalānāṃ dhruvaṃ devaṃ kārūkāṇāṃ tathopari // 123
granthī dhruvānadhīnānāṃ śivasṣṣṭer avasthitā /
teṣāṃ tatparamaṃ sthānaṃ dīkṣādhvānaviśodhitam // 124
īśvaraṃ pāśupatānāṃ sthānaṃ caivam udāhṛtam /
caryādhvānaviśuddhātmā gacchate nātra saṃśayaḥ // 125*

123a vaimalāḥ kārūkās] vaimalā kārūkās ABC 123b pāśupatās] C; pāśupatā A; †... †s B 123c dhruvaṃ] BC; dhṛvaṃ A kārūkāṇāṃ] em.; kārūkāṇāṃ ABC 124a granthī dhruvānadhīnānāṃ] conj.; granthidhruvaṃ mādīnāṃ A; grandhī dhruvadhīnāṃ B; granthī dhṛvanadhīnānāṃ C 124b śivasṣṣṭer avasthitā] A; śivaṃ ḡṣṣṭer avasthitā B; śivaṃ ḡṣṣṭe svasthitā C 124c tatparamaṃ] A; tatvaparam B; tattvaparam C 125a pāśupatānāṃ] em.; pāśupatyānāṃ ABC (m.c.?) 125c caryādhvānaviśuddhātmā] A; caryādhvānaviśuddhātmā BC

The Vaimalas, the Kārukas, and the Pāśupatas. Dhruva is the deity of the Vaimalas; then⁹² [there is the level] of the Kārukas. 123 The Granthi stands near the [pure] emission of Śiva; it is the supreme goal of those who do not rest in Dhruva (i.e. the Kārukas), [and is reached by those] whose cosmic path is purified by initiation [only]. 124 Īśvara is declared to be the goal of the Pāśupatas. [Their] souls being purified from the hold of the cosmic path by means of ascetic conduct, they go [there]; there is no doubt about it. 125

Here the goal of the Vaimalas is said to be Dhruva, who is placed above the *granthi* or ‘barrier’ reached by adepts who do not rest in Dhruva—seemingly the Kārukas mentioned in verse 123, whose cosmic path is purified (only) by initiation (*dīkṣādhvānaviśodhitam*). Further below are the Pāśupatas, ‘whose souls have been purified from the hold of the cosmic path by means of ascetic conduct [only]’ (*caryādhvānaviśuddhātmā*).⁹³ Although the Vaimalas’ and Kārukas’ specific features are not characterized, by comparing this passage to those of similar context quoted above one is tempted to see an implied

⁹² In this context, I understand *tathopari* in the sense of ‘besides’, ‘further’, ‘also’.

⁹³ Note the *aiśa* form °*ātmā*, apparently considered a nominative plural.

opposition between the Vaimalas, whose soul is purified by initiation and gnosis (*dīkṣājñānavīsuddhātma*), and other less-advanced practitioners, who lack a complete gnosis of the *prakriyādhvan*, or whose soul/cosmic path is purified by initiation or ascetic conduct only (such as in the case of the Pāśupatas).⁹⁴

This picture, although perforce still uncertain and ambiguous, is consistent with the scant information we possess about the Kārukas, who, unlike the more ‘gnostic’ Vaimalas and Mahāvratas/Lākulas, adhered to the chiefly practice-oriented among the Pramāṇaśāstras (*cf. infra*), thus standing at a lower level of the hierarchy, between the Vaimalas and the Pāñcārthika Pāśupatas. Their highest station, set over against (or even within) the Granthi, is regarded to be still in the realm of Māyā and therefore not yet purified to a degree sufficient to let them cross over into the pure universe.⁹⁵

Whereas the above Saiddhāntika accounts apparently reflect an attempt to sketch a hierarchy between the Atimārga groups on the basis of the degree of purification attained by initiation, gnosis, and/or ascetic regimen, they were by no means in agreement when describing their respective goals. It is evident that either the boundaries between such groups as the Vaimalas, Kārukas and Lākulas/Mahāvratas (the last two being considered part of the ‘Pramāṇa system’) were not clear-cut, or the compilers of later Mantramārga sources were not clear about the specific prerogatives and ultimate goals peculiar to each group. This confusion might have originated from the fact that these groups were largely superseded at the time when the Mantramārga took hold as the mainstream form of Śaivism in the Subcontinent. But one

⁹⁴ *Dīkṣottara* 12.25 (≈ 13.7) mentions the Pāśupatas, Kārukas and Vaimalas as the only examples of (non-Mantramārga) Śaiva schools when listing inferior (non-Śaiva) truths (i.e. Vedāntins, Pāñcarātrikas, Buddhists, etc.).

⁹⁵ Compare the cosmological accounts reconstructed by Sanderson (Sanderson 2006:199–200) on the basis of the *Niśvāsātattvasamhitā* and the *Svacchandatantra*, which put the Kārukas, along with the Mausulas, in the impure universe.

may also argue that a source of confusion was the allegiance of all these post-Pāñcārthika Pāśupata groups to a common canon of scriptures, called Pramāṇas, Pramāṇāgamas, or Pramāṇasāstras. That this was the case is suggested by a remark of the 11th century Kashmirian Śaiva commentator Kṣemarāja, who, in his commentary ad *Svacchandatantra* 11.73, regarded the followers of the Pramāṇasāstra and the Vaimala (*vaimalapramāṇasāstraniṣṭho*) as superior to the Mausulas and Kārukas on account of the latter's allegiance to the chiefly practice-oriented among the Pramāṇasāstras.⁹⁶ According to Kṣemarāja, the followers of the Pramāṇa and Vaimala systems are in *Svacchandatantra* 11.73a characterized as 'having their souls purified by initiation and gnosis' (*dīkṣājñānavisuddhātma*) precisely because of their allegiance to the eight gnosis-oriented Pramāṇas.⁹⁷

The concept of *ātmasuddhi*, closely linked to that of *adhvasuddhi*, is regarded by Sanderson (Sanderson 2006:190) as the feature that bridges the initiation of the Lākula groups with the Āgamic *dīkṣā*, involving the presence of an extended cosmic hierarchy. Thus the emphasis of gnosis and initiation was precisely what differentiated the Lākula from the Pāñcārthika Pāśupatas, in this respect setting

⁹⁶ These are the six Pramāṇas extracted from the *Hṛdayapramāṇa* (these are all lost), and chiefly devoted to the six ritual acts (*ṣaṭkriyāpradhānāni pramāṇāni*, cf. Kṣemarāja ad *Svacchandatantra* 10.1134); cf. Bakker 2000:4; Sanderson 2006:171.

⁹⁷ The passage runs (trans. Bakker 2000:6): 'For, he who follows the Pramāṇa Śāstra and the Vaimala, "His soul is purified by initiation and knowledge, by (keeping to) the prescribed praxis until death, while abiding by the Kapāla observance—he goes to that station that is his own." (SvT 11.73) The quarter-verse 'His soul is purified by initiation and knowledge' indicates the difference here from the afore-mentioned Mausulas and Kārukas, who are devoted only to observances that are chiefly ritualistic', *vaimalapramāṇasāstraniṣṭho hi dīkṣājñānavisuddhātma dehāntam yāva caryayā / kapālavratamāsthāya svaṃ svaṃ gacchati tatpadam // dīkṣājñānavisuddhātmetipadena proktakriyāpradhānavratamātraniṣṭhamausulakārukebhyo 'tra viśeṣo darśitaḥ*. For a discussion of Kṣemarāja's commentary and *Svacchandatantra* 10.1134, elaborating on the eight chiefly gnostic Pramāṇas (*jñānapradhānapramāṇāṣṭaka*), cf. Sanderson 2006:171–172.

the former closer to Agāmic Śaivism, whose initiation is considered superior because of knowledge.

Niśvāsaguhya 12.12cd–13 sheds light on the distinction between the Vaimalas and other Pramāṇa-Pāśupatas, as well as the Pāñcārthika-Pāśupatas, by claiming that the Vaimalas are superior insofar as their initiation leads to *śivasāyojya* (which is higher than *rudrasāyojya*). As line 13cd would seem to imply, the initiation of the Saiddhāntika Śaivas was in its turn considered superior to that of the Vaimalas insofar as it intrinsically bestowed gnosis to the initiate,⁹⁸ whereas for the Vaimalas and the other Pramāṇa-based groups ascetic regimen alongside knowledge of the *prakriyādhvā* was still required to achieve final liberation.⁹⁹ From the perspective of the Mantramārga, an even lower status was attributed to the proper Pāśupatas, admitting only to the *pāśupatavrata* as their chief means of liberation and lacking gnosis as well as a powerful, i.e. gnosis-bestowing, initiation.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Cf., besides our passage, also *Niśvāsanaya* 1.88cd–89ab (describing Saiddhāntika initiation, granted by Sadāśiva): ‘Initiation bestows gnosis through the descent of Śiva’s Power. Thus grace is regarded, and the bestower [of it] is Sadāśiva’, *śivaśaktinipātena dīkṣā jñānaṃ prayacchati // so ’nugrahaḥ smṛto hy evaṃ dātā caiva sadāśivaḥ /*.

⁹⁹ Speaking about the ‘Lākula’ variety of *dīkṣā* described in *Niśvāsamukha* 4.96–97, Sanderson (Sanderson 2006:189–190) remarks that ‘gnosis of the *prakriyādhvā* completes by the time of death the task that initiation had almost but not completely accomplished’.

¹⁰⁰ The Mantramārga *dīkṣā* was presumably special, in part because of the introduction of fire, but also because it entailed an element of gnosis. Besides *Niśvāsanaya* 1.88cd–89ab (quoted above, fn. 98), cf. *Niśvāsamukha* 1.156cd–157ab, where a critique to the *dīkṣā* of a (gnosis-less) Pāñcārthika Pāśupata is made: ‘In such way he worships, the one without Gnosis, devoid of initiation bestowed by (or leading to) Śiva. To such initiate, [aiming] at liberation, this fruit (i.e. the state of *gaṇatā*) is promised’, *evaṃ yaḥ pūjayed ajñāḥ śivadīkṣāvivarjitāḥ // tasyedaṃ phalam uddiṣṭam a[[pava]]-rgāya dīkṣ[[itah]] /*. This type of practitioner—whose Pāśupata affiliation can be unquestionably gathered from verse 1.153 attributing to him the ascetic regimen formed by such peculiar practices as bellowing (*huḍukkāra*), dancing

One may argue that for Mantramārga Śaivism it was vital to present itself as bestowing a powerful *dīkṣā* upon the initiates into its ranks, who were only required to carry out a bland and accommodating post-initiatory regimen.

It thus appears that, at a certain stage of the development of the post-Pāñcārthika Atimārga, initiation assumed a primary soteriological importance. This innovation is likely to have been triggered by a new conception of impurity (*mala*), which was not recognized by the Pāñcārthika Pāśupatas as a proper metaphysical entity. This new concept of *mala* might have been elaborated already in the proto-Saiddhāntika stage of Śaivism, and achieved its full maturity and ritual implementation in Saiddhāntika Mantramārga milieux from ca. the seventh century onwards.¹⁰¹ In view of the statements made in *Niśvāsaguhyā* 12.12cd–13, as well as in the above-quoted passages scattered over the Mantramārga corpus, it may be argued that

(*nṛtya*), making musical sound with the mouth (*mukhavādya*), and boisterous laughter (*aṭṭahāsa*), which lead to the state of Gaṇeśvara (i.e. Rudra)—is characterized as being devoid of gnosis (*ajñā*) precisely *because* he lacks *śivadīkṣā*, i.e. initiation bestowed by (or leading to) Śiva.

¹⁰¹ Although the term *mala* and its concept as a separate metaphysical entity is absent in the *Niśvāsātattvasaṃhitā* as well as early Saiddhāntika scriptures (see Goodall et al. 2008, esp. Introduction), Acharya (Acharya 2014) has argued that the *Niśvāsātattvasaṃhitā*'s description of bonds 'stands between the Pāśupata concept of bonds and the one found in the fully developed version of the Śaiva Mantramārga' (ibid.:12), and that, as suggested by an account by Buddhist logician Dharmakīrti (ca. 550–650 AD), the idea of sin as the unseen force of karmic effects was already present in the early phase of Śaiva Siddhānta and later developed into the idea of innate impurity as an abstract substance. In fact I feel that several passages of the *Niśvāsa* suggest that the idea of impurity (or, in any event, the concept that some obfuscating and impeding elements need to be 'cleansed' from the soul) was already present in some form. Cf., for instance, *Nayasūtra* 4.72, where a practitioner who meditates on himself as being like Śiva (*śivavan manyamāno*) and free from desire and repulsion (*rāgadveṣavivarjitaḥ*) becomes devoid of impurity and pure (*nirmalāḥ suddhāḥ, aiśa* plural).

it was the Vaimala system that implemented a more powerful form of *dikṣā*—i.e. one able to destroy the innate impurity binding the souls and leading to higher stations in the pure cosmic path, and one that was imparted by a specialist in Śaiva initiation, the *ācārya*. If seen from this perspective, the very name ‘Vaimala’ carries the implication of ‘lack of impurity’ (*vi+mala*), thereby denoting not only ‘the followers of [the Rudra] Vimala (‘the Spotless’), but also ‘those who call themselves “free from impurity”’ (however that impurity might have been conceptualised).

Indirect evidence in support of this hypothesis may be found in a verse of the *Raurava* that survived in the version commented upon by Sadyojyotis, which Rāmakaṇṭha quotes at the very beginning of his *Paramokṣanirāsakārikāvṛtti*. Here we find the compound *viśikhāmala-kārah*, ‘[those] agents [who hold that liberation is brought about by the transference] of powers, those agents who are devoid of Impurity’ (Watson, Goodall and Sarma 2013:222; see also 65–69). The *amalakāra*kas are identified by Rāmakaṇṭha as those who regard liberation as consisting in what Sadyojyotis calls *nirmalatvaṃ ca kevalam*, i.e. a lack of impurity alone (and not omniscience or omnipotence). This group might have been the Vaimala.¹⁰² Another indirect

¹⁰² In a series of emails exchanged in January 2013, Alex Watson and myself discussed the possibility that the word *-kāra* in the *Raurava* verse cited in the *Paramokṣanirāsakārikāvṛtti* could be a corruption of (or, better still, an attempt by Rāmakaṇṭha and even Sadyojyotis to make sense of) an original *kāruka* (on which, see Acri 2008:195 fn. 13, 196 fn. 14, and *Tāntrikābhīdhānaśāstra* II, s.v. *kāruka*); in that case, the compound as found in the *Raurava* could have referred to three distinct groups, namely those ‘without a topknot’ (*śikhā*), i.e. the Pāśupatas, those without impurity, i.e. the Vaimalas, and the Kārukas. On the identity of the *viśikha/viśikhā* as Pāśupatas, see Watson, Goodall and Sarma 2013:66–67; noteworthy is the mention in the *Samskāravidhi* of the removal of the topknot in Pāśupata initiation (see Acharya 2007:35–36 and 46–47), as well as the testimony of the Old Javanese *Kuñjarakarna* about a group of Śaiva ascetics named *viśikhin* (‘Those who lack a topknot’; see Acri 2008:201, fn. 37). For a preliminary

piece of evidence comes from Old Javanese sources from ancient Java and Bali, which apparently knew of Śaiva practitioners called Alepakas ('the Spotless ones'); these I have linked to the Vaimalas known from Sanskrit sources (Acri 2008). The word *alepaka* in Old Javanese carries the double meaning of both 'spotless, stainless' (Skt *alpha privans* + *lepaka*) and 'dirty, stained' (Old Javanese prefix *a* + *lepaka*). The *Rāmāyaṇa* Kakavin (ca. 9th century AD) playfully exploits this ambiguity to criticize the Alepakas and their alleged purity by ridiculing their extreme ascetic practices involving lying and/or bathing in ashes. On the other hand, the *Vṛhaspatitattva* (2.1–6, 3.36–43), a Sanskrit-Old Javanese treatise of early Saiddhāntika persuasion, describes a tripartite division of the Śaiva stream comprising Pāśupatas, Alepakas and Śaivas. The intermediate position of the Alepakas in the hierarchy, as the only intermediate group between the (Pāñcārthika) Pāśupatas and the (mainstream or Saiddhāntika) Śaivas, is in harmony with the relatively high position accorded to the Vaimalas by Sanskrit Mantramārgic sources, which put them in the cosmic station of Tejīśa/Dhruva, or in any event in the *śuddhādhan*. Similarly, the loftiest position in the hierarchy of non-Mantramārga traditions is accorded to the Alepaka system in *ślokas* 2–3 of the Sanskrit-Old Javanese *Brahmoka Vidhi Śāstra* (cf. Acri 2008:198–199), where it is correlated with the head of the body of the Holy Veda (*sañ veddha*), which is for the rest made up by Śīkṣā (tongue), Vaiśeṣika (neck), Māhānātha (chest), Pāśupata (heart), Mīmāṃsā (belly), and Kāmatantra (genitals). This is comparable to the Mantramārga model representing the Vaimalas as springing up from the eastern face of Sadāśiva, i.e. Tatpuruṣa, which is the highest in the hierarchy of the Atimārga as it is usually mentioned before the zenith-facing Īśāna from which the Mantramārga originates.¹⁰³

hypothesis concerning the identity of the Kārukas as an Atimārgic group of itinerant ascetics linked to bardic performance, see Acri 2011:78–79.

¹⁰³ It may be worthwhile to test this hypothesis against the evidence gathered from Sanskrit inscriptions engraved in Angkorian non-royal caves in Cambodia, where we find a mention of Dhruva-seeking ascetics

Conclusion

Niśvāsaguhya 12.1–22ab presents a model accounting for the subdivisions of the Śaiva Atimārga as seen from the perspective of the hierarchically-higher Mantramārga Śaivism. In comparing, and contrasting, this model to analogous ones found scattered over the extant literature of the Śaiva Mantramārga, I have suggested that the ensuing taxonomies, albeit different in the details and at times contradictory, seem to share an underlying rationale. This rationale is their emphasis on gnosis (*jñāna*), initiation (*dīkṣā*), or ascetic conduct (*caryā*) respectively.

Because of the lack of both first- and second-hand accounts on the little-known Atimārga groups mentioned in the sources, it is difficult to determine whether those taxonomies reflect actual social realities or are the result of *post hoc*, and inevitably partial, systematising attempts by the compilers of seminal scriptures and their learned commentators. The latter especially might have had only scant knowledge, if any at all, of the elusive real-world referents of those groups, namely the contemporary practitioners belonging to currents that were more often than not marginal and ascetic, and which might have been already extinct or significantly transformed by their time. Yet, interesting information on such groups as the obscure Vaimalas and the Kārukas can be found in several early Sanskrit sources, including the *Niśvāsa* and the *Raurava*, and what seems to be an awareness of both their tenets and the stereotypes connected with them is reflected in some Old Javanese and (Sanskrit) Khmer sources. In view of this fact, it seems safe

(*cf.*, e.g., the expression *dhruvanirantarattavandhuḥ* in K 371.8), and where the station of Dhruva is defined as ‘spotless’ (*dhruvam amalapadam*, K 1049.8). Such relevant inscriptions are currently being (re-)edited, translated and studied by Dominic Goodall, from whom I learnt about these interesting references at a seminar held at EPHE in 2006, and at the presentation ‘Can we identify the sectarian obedience of the Śaiva ascetics of non-royal cave-inscriptions in Cambodia?’ delivered at the 15th World Sanskrit Conference, held in New Delhi in January 2012.

to assume that these groups must once have been, if not institution-alised orders, at least ‘living realities’ (however peripheral), and not the mere product of what David White (White 2005:9) calls the ‘pre-scriptive imagination’ of Medieval South Asian landscapes.

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- (B) Devanāgarī transcript, IFP MS T 127, from MS GOML R. No. 16804; 506 pp.
- (C) Devanāgarī transcript, IFP MS T 150, from MS GOML R. No. 14403; 353 pp. e-texts (Roman) of the above transcripts, typed principally by S. A. S. Sarma and Nibedita Rout (T 17), R. Sathyanarayanan (T 127), Nibedita Rout (T 150) The verse and chapter numeration used in this article is that of the e-text of T 17.

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- (2) e-text (Roman and Devanāgarī) prepared by Dominic Goodall, with the contribution of Diwakar Acharya, Peter Bisschop and Nirajan Kafle, from MS NAK 1-227, supplemented with readings from its two Devanāgarī apographs, MS 5-2401, NGMPP Reel No. A 159/18 and Sanskrit MS i.33 of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, London. [Includes the *Niśvāsamukha*, *Niśvāsamūla*, *Niśvāsottara*, *Niśvāsanya* and *Niśvāsaḡuhya*]. The verse and chapter numeration used in this book is that of Goodall’s edition in progress.

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