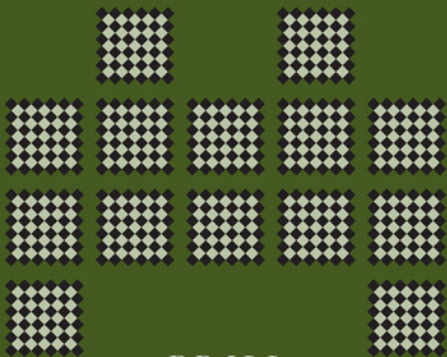


Matthew Clark



The Daśanāmī-Saṃnyāsīs
*The Integration of Ascetic Lineages
into an Order*



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THE DAŚANĀMĪ-SAMNYĀSĪS

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THE DAŚANĀMĪ-SAMNYĀSĪS

The Integration of Ascetic Lineages into an Order

BY

MATTHEW CLARK



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PREFACE

It concerns me that some of the results of this research may be objected to by traditionalists. However, my intention from the outset was simply to explore an institution that I believe is not only important within the religious environment of South Asia, but which has a great deal to teach anyone who engages with it on its own terms. No disrespect is intended either towards the Hindu tradition or *saṃnyāsī*-s; but history sometimes reveals that which may be contrary to conventional understanding. It also needs to be stated that the general conclusions of the research presented in this book concerning the history of *saṃnyāsī* institutions may turn out to be quite wrong in crucial respects. Should anyone find fault with any of the information provided or present data that undermine the historical arguments presented, reasoned criticism is invited. Despite considerable reluctance, it was finally decided to present this study to the general reader.

To this author, it is also undeniably evident that some *sādhu*-s have acquired what may be described as ‘special powers’, however such complex phenomena may be characterised or explained. It is manifestly a consequence of the philosophy, discipline and religious perspective of the *saṃnyāsī* that such powers may accrue. Although throughout this study attention has been devoted to the ‘wordly’ study of *saṃnyāsī* institutions and history, I would urge the reader to bear in mind that there exists another and more subtle dimension of *saṃnyāsī* life, a dimension that I believe is beyond the means of any kind of conventional understanding or academic explanation: *Oṃ Namo Nārāyaṇa*.

ABBREVIATIONS

(see the Bibliography for the editions of texts)

ADh	<i>Āpastambha-dharmasūtra</i> (see Olivelle 1999)
ARE	<i>Annual Reports on Indian Epigraphy</i>
ARMAD	<i>Annual Report of the Mysore Archaeological Department</i>
ARSIE	<i>Annual Report on South-Indian Epigraphy</i>
ASI	<i>Archaeological Survey of India</i>
AV	<i>Atharva Veda</i> (see Griffith 1985)
b.	born
BG	<i>Bhagavadgītā</i>
BSB	<i>Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya</i> (of Śaṅkara)
BDh	<i>Baudhāyana-dharmasūtra</i> (see Olivelle 1999)
c.	<i>circa</i>
CSV	<i>Cidvilāsa-śaṅkaravilāsa-vijaya</i> (see Antarkar 1973)
d.	died
EC	<i>Epigraphia Carnatica</i>
EI	<i>Epigraphia Indica</i>
fl.	<i>floruit</i>
GDh	<i>Gautama-dharmasūtra</i> (see Olivelle 1999)
HDŚ	<i>History of Dharmaśāstra</i> (see Kane 1977–1990)
l.	line
MBh	<i>Mahābhārata</i>
MS	<i>Manusmṛti</i>
r.	reigned
Rām	<i>Rāmāyaṇa</i>
RV	<i>Ṛg Veda</i> (see Griffith 1973)
ŚDV	<i>Śaṅkara-dīg-vijaya</i> (see Mādhava-Vidyāraṇya 1986)
SV	<i>Sāma Veda</i> (see Griffith 1986)
UVAT	Uttankita Vidya Aranya Trust (1985)
VDh	<i>Vasiṣṭha-dharmasūtra</i> (see Olivelle 1999)
v.	verse
YV	<i>Yajur Veda</i> (see Griffith 1927)

TRANSLITERATION

Transliteration of Hindi terms generally follows Parikh (1996); for Sanskrit, Monier Williams (1994 [1899]), with the exceptions: ‘r’ instead of ‘ri’; ‘ṣ’ instead of ‘sh’. Personal, place names and other terms that occur in both Hindi and Sanskrit registers are not always transliterated consistently. For example, places such as Allahabad occur in the Hindi register as ‘Prayāg’, and in Sanskrit as ‘Prayāga’; ‘renunciate’ is usually transliterated as *saṃnyāsī*, as accords with the Hindi register and the Sanskrit nominative singular, in distinction from the common rendering of the Sanskrit, as *saṃnyāsīn*. Names of Indian states (for example, Maharashtra) and well-known cities (for example, Delhi) have been transliterated according to modern English conventions, while smaller places have generally been transliterated according to Hindi conventions.

A slightly unusual convention has been utilised in the text of this book, of adding a hyphen before the ‘s’ of plural Hindi and Sanskrit terms. Although this occasionally results in the ‘s’ becoming detached from the term, owing to automatic formatting by the computer, an advantage gained is the clearer legibility of diacritical marks.

INTRODUCTION

0.1 Introduction to the Daśanāmī-Saṃnyāsīs

This book presents an account of the history and practices of Daśanāmīs,¹ or Daśanāmī-Saṃnyāsīs, one of the largest of the orthodox² sects³ of South Asian *sādhu*-s. *Sādhu*⁴ refers to someone who has, at least formally if not in practice, renounced family life and conventional means for making a livelihood. Under a *guru*, assisted by several Brahman *paṇḍit*-s, the candidate passes through the *saṃnyāsa* ritual, the abandoning of ‘worldly’ life, an important constituent of which is the performance of the initiate’s own funeral rites. This relieves the renunciate’s family of any future responsibility in that regard. *Saṃnyāsa* entails not only the formal renunciation of worldly life, but simultaneously initiates the renunciate into the lineage of the sect to which the initiating guru belongs. During initiation into the Daśanāmīs (meaning ‘he who has [one of the] ten names’), a *śaiva* sect,⁵ the neophyte is given a new *dīkṣā* (‘initiation’) name, the ‘surname’ being bestowed by an initiating guru with that particular Daśanāmī surname.⁶ The ten names are:

¹ The Daśanāmīs also refer to themselves as ‘Dasnāmī’, in conformity with the Hindi (as opposed to Sanskrit) rendering of the term.

² In this context and throughout the book, the term ‘orthodox’ is used to refer to the principles, beliefs, doctrines, categories and behaviour which the Brahmanical tradition itself defines as orthodox, whether or not the objects of reference define themselves as orthodox or otherwise. This is simply to conform to a norm established by the continued textual and religious authority of the Brahmanical tradition within Hinduism.

³ The term ‘sect’ is commonly used to refer to various Indian orders. In the Indian context ‘sect’ does not necessarily have the late-mediaeval Christian connotation of heretical opposition to orthodoxy, but simply that of a group of people with common religious beliefs, rituals and practices, even though some Indian sects (such as Jaina, Buddhist and Cārvāka) did explicitly challenge Vedic authority.

⁴ Derived from the Sanskrit root *sādh*, meaning ‘accomplish’, *sādhu* also means ‘good’ or ‘virtuous’ in both Sanskrit and Hindi.

⁵ Most *śaiva* sects, including the Daśanāmīs, perform the *saṃnyāsa* rite for initiates, while in most *vaiṣṇava* renunciate sects, instead, a relationship is forged between the initiate and the redeeming deity.

⁶ The initiates of the Agni *akhārā* are an exception: they do not take one of the ten names, but one of the four *brahmacārī* names (see Ch. 2.1).

Giri ('hill'), Purī ('town'), Bhāratī ('learning'), Vana (or Ban) ('forest'), Parvata ('mountain'), Araṇya ('forest/wilderness'), Sāgara ('ocean'), Tīrtha ('pilgrimage-place'), Āśrama ('hermitage'), and Sarasvatī ('knowledge').⁷

The *saṃnyāsī* acquires a new religious identity and is initiated into a parallel social world, with its own hierarchies and implicit codes of behaviour. In the case of a large renunciate sect, such as the Daśanāmīs, the renunciate also has potential access to an extensive network of *maṭha*-s ('monasteries') and *āśrama*-s throughout India, which may provide food and shelter.

According to tradition, besides his literary activity and his tour of India—his *digvijaya*—when he defeated a variety of opponents with divergent religious and philosophical points of view, it was the great *advaita* philosopher Śaṅkarācārya⁸ who founded or organised the Daśanāmī-Saṃnyāsīs and established four *maṭha*-s (known as *pīṭha*-s) under the authority of his four main disciples, in the west, east, north and south of India at, respectively: Dvārakā, in Gujarat; Jagannāth Purī, in Orissa; Jyośimāth, near Badarīnāth in Uttaranchal; and either Śṛṅgerī, in Karnataka, or Kāñcīpuram, in Tamil Nadu.⁹ The 'thrones' (*gaddī*-s) of these *pīṭha*-s (also known as *vidyāpīṭha*-s, 'seats of learning') are occupied by pontiffs known as Śaṅkarācāryas who all trace their lineage back to Ādi-Śaṅkara, via his disciples. If Śaṅkara did indeed organise the Daśanāmīs, it would have been the first Brahmanical order of ascetics. Although several scholars have commented that there is little evidence to support these claims of tradition,¹⁰ no one has yet proposed any alternative explanation for the origin of the order.

The aim of this book is, firstly, to provide the most comprehensive account of the current structure and organisation of the Daśanāmī

⁷ The most common of the names are Giri, Purī, Bhāratī and Sarasvatī. The meaning of Bhāratī and Sarasvatī, given as 'learning' and 'knowledge' respectively, is but the symbolic meaning attributed to those names by Daśanāmīs.

⁸ Most scholars date Śaṅkara to between 788 and 820 CE, but there is still some controversy concerning his dates and what he may or may not have written (see Ch. 4.1). This Śaṅkara is also referred to as 'Ādi' ('original') Śaṅkara, to distinguish him from subsequent Śaṅkarācāryas.

⁹ The issue of the *maṭha*-s supposedly founded by Śaṅkara is considered in Ch. 4.4.

¹⁰ Potter (1981:14) comments that no other Indian philosopher has been celebrated in so many legends, and that it is difficult to differentiate traditional stories from fact.

order; this is undertaken in Chapters 1 to 3. Secondly, having presented an overview of the various branches of the sect, the origins of the Daśanāmīs are investigated in Chapters 4 to 7 from a variety of historical perspectives. It should not be expected that the results of the research undertaken enable the provision of a complete or exact solution to the question when the Daśanāmīs came into existence as a distinct, recognisable sect. However, the standard claims of tradition will be critically examined, and various religious and political developments will be explored, in order to indicate particular factors that may have led to the formation of the Daśanāmī order, most probably in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century.¹¹

0.2 *Locating ‘the saṃnyāsī’*

Before embarking on the presentation of the organisation and structure of the Daśanāmīs as a renunciate sect, a preliminary concern is to tackle the prevalent notion of a renunciate as a lone, wandering individual. It is apparent that the self-projection by the Brahmanical tradition of the image of the individualised, male *saṃnyāsī* has been remarkably influential on a general understanding of the dynamics of Hinduism. It will be suggested in this section that this projection has contributed to several popular misconceptions concerning the life of *saṃnyāsī*-s.¹² This image, while bearing a partial reflection of social reality, nevertheless detracts from the significance of *saṃnyāsa* being conferred on a candidate by a guru within a lineage that generally operates within the framework of a sect—however loosely knit—with its own identificatory markers.

A related issue, also considered in this section, is the lifestyle of the *saṃnyāsī*. According to the ideal, as presented in texts, renunciates maintain celibacy and undertake austerities of some kind or other to purify the mind and body, in order to ‘realise God’ or obtain liberation (*mokṣa*), an objective considered to be difficult in worldly life. There is, however, a complex of sociological and economic factors

¹¹ Unless otherwise stated, all dates in this book are CE.

¹² *Saṃnyāsī* is often translated as ‘monk’, and *maṭha* as ‘monastery’. These terms derive from the Greek *monos* (‘alone’) and *monazein* (‘to live alone’), thus reinforcing a notion of ‘aloneness’ (see Meister 1990), which, it will be argued, is not entirely appropriate in a South Asian (or even Christian) context.

implicit in reasons for initiation, and in the lifestyle of the *saṃnyāsī*, who generally engages not only with members of his or her own sect, but with the wider world. It is to a consideration of the ‘lone ascetic’ and his or her lifestyle that we first turn. This discussion is followed by a survey of Daśanāmī-Saṃnyāsīs who are settled as a caste in various regions of India.

From the early centuries BCE, the Brahmanical textual tradition provides us with an image of the Brahmanical ascetic. In works on *Dharmaśāstra*, the *Saṃnyāsa Upaniṣad*-s and mediaeval texts on renunciation,¹³ we find a lone Brahmanical ascetic wandering from one Brahman household to another, typically collecting food from the womenfolk¹⁴ in his hands or other designated receptacles, when the pestles are silent and the cooking fires are but embers.¹⁵ Open a tract or book on Vedānta recently published in India, and there is considerable likelihood of seeing a picture of one of the Śāṅkarācāryas, portrayed as a living representative of the ancient Brahmanical practice of renunciation, *saṃnyāsa*.¹⁶ The Śāṅkarācāryas consciously identify themselves with ancient Vedic tradition and the four-fold *varṇa* and *āśrama*¹⁷ systems.¹⁸ As is well known, *saṃnyāsa*

¹³ See Ch. 3 for further details.

¹⁴ See Findly (2002).

¹⁵ Probably the earliest available evidence to be found in the Brahmanical tradition for codes of conduct for ascetics is in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, the grammatical treatise of Pāṇini, usually assigned to the fourth century BCE. Pāṇini (IV.3.110–111) refers to the *bhikṣusūtra*-s (codes of conduct for mendicants) proclaimed by Pārāśara and Karmaṇḍa (see Pāṇini 1987). The earliest clear formulation of a Brahmanical renunciate’s lifestyle is in the *Dharmasūtra*-s of Āpastamba (2.21.7–17), Gautama (3.11–25), Baudhāyana (2.17–18), and Vasiṣṭha (10.1–29), texts dating from around the third to the second centuries BCE (see Olivelle 1977:21; 1999:xxvii–xxxiv). For details of renunciation procedures in these texts, see Ch. 3.1. For a summary of the lifestyle and rules for the ‘ideal’ Brahmanical renunciate, see Shiraishi (1996:27–135), and Ch. 3.4.

¹⁶ The Sanskrit term *saṃnyāsa* originated as a specific reference to the ‘throwing down’ or abandoning of the ritual implements used by Brahmans for their daily Vedic ritual, the adoption of an ascetic way of life, and the renunciation of social obligations or ritual duties in pursuit of ‘Knowledge’. The term *saṃnyāsa* (‘renunciation’) occurs rarely in the *Veda*-s and *Brāhmaṇa*-s, and only appears once in the classical *Upaniṣad*-s, in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (3.2.6: liberation through “*saṃnyāsa-yoga*”), one of the later classical *Upaniṣad*-s, composed in the last few centuries BCE (Olivelle 1984:127; 1996:xxxvii).

¹⁷ The *āśrama* system became fully formulated within the Brahmanical tradition by around the beginning of the Common Era, only incorporating *saṃnyāsa* as the ‘ideal’ fourth *āśrama* in the final phase of its development (Olivelle 1978:28; 1993:103). Both Manu (6.33–36) and earlier *dharmaśāstra* commentaries—for example,

is the fourth *āśrama*, ideally only suitable for ‘retired-from-Vedic-ritual’ older men who have produced at least one son. The previous Śaṅkarācārya of Kāñcīpuram, for example, commenting on *saṃnyāsa* (Candraśekharendra Sarasvatī 1995:539), maintains that only a few (including, by implication, himself) “have the wisdom...necessary to skip two *āśrama*-s” (that of the householder, *gṛhastha*, and forest recluse, *vanaprastha*). The Śaṅkarācāryas project themselves in the image of fourth-*āśrama* *saṃnyāsī*-s—austere, detached and committed to liberation—yet are the nominal heads of a large *śaiva* sect that has had an intricate relationship with the economy and politics of India for many centuries, instances of which are explored in the latter part of this book.

The *saṃnyāsī* conceived in the stereotypical image of the lone Brahmanical renouncer is often supposed, in various ways, to represent an ancient ‘individualistic’ ascetic tradition receding into India’s remote past. References to what appear to be ascetics (though this is disputed)¹⁹ with varied nomenclature in ancient Brahmanical texts,

Baudhāyana (2.11.16–27)—emphasise the importance of producing children before renouncing. The stage of forest dweller (*āranyaka* or *vanaprastha*)—also, like *saṃnyāsī*, a relatively late development—was incorporated into the scheme as an *āśrama*, but seems in practice to have had relatively little import in the general organisation of the ideal stages to be passed through. It seems to have become obsolete in the first few centuries of the Common Era, its memory only preserved in legend, poetry, drama, and works on *dharma* which still discussed it up to mediaeval times. A modification of the system, as seen in the *Yājñavalkya Dharmaśāstra* (3.56), permitted a man to renounce without passing through the third *āśrama* (Olivelle 1993:174). For references in Manu, see *Manusmṛiti* (1983), Doniger and Smith (1991); for *Yājñavalkya Dharmaśāstra*, see *Yājñavalkya Smṛiti* (1913) and Dutta (1987, Vol. 1).

¹⁸ See, for example, Candraśekharendra Sarasvatī (1976; 1995).

¹⁹ There is still disagreement among scholars as to whether before the so-called ‘axial age’, in the sixth to fifth centuries BCE, asceticism existed in South Asia as a lifestyle, rather than as inherent periodic regimens of asceticism undertaken within the Brahmanical ritual world, such as undertaken by the *yajamāna* before the final bath (*avabhṛtha*). For the limited periods of Brahmanical asceticism, see Kaelber (1989:78); Lubin (2001). Amongst the most currently influential scholars of ancient Indian asceticism are Heesterman, Olivelle and Bronkhorst. Heesterman (see particularly 1985:34–43) famously argues that ‘orthogenetic’ developments in Vedic sacrificial ritual led to the individuation of the sacrificer, and then the ‘interiorisation of the ritual’ and the concomitant abandoning of Vedic rites in the person of the renouncer. In contrast, Olivelle’s thesis, developed in a number of publications (1980a; 1980b; 1984; 1993), is that, essentially, asceticism, as a lifestyle within the orthodox Brahmanical world, began as a parallel development within the Vedic world in the fifth to sixth centuries BCE. According to Olivelle, Brahmanical asceticism did not develop out of the Vedic ritual complex (as Heesterman maintains), but

if accepted uncritically, might also lend support to the notion of an individual ascetic. In the *Veda*-s, for example, there are references to *muni*-s²⁰ and *yati*-s,²¹ who seem to exhibit classical features of asceticism and aspects of shamanism.²² The terms *muni* and *yati* are still used in the Brahmanical tradition to refer to ascetics.²³ In the second century BCE, Patañjali (the grammarian) refers²⁴ to the *yati* (3.1.97.82), *muṇḍin* (1.1.1.42, ‘shaven-headed’) and *śramaṇa*²⁵ (2.4.12.2,

neither was asceticism a feature of what might be called an ‘ancient shamanic culture’ that, according to some scholars, was evident in the Indus Valley culture of the third millennium BCE. Olivelle (1993:13; discussion at SOAS, 22.02.01) maintains that *muni*-s, *yati*-s and *vātaraśana*-s who appear in the *Veda* were not ascetics (as they appear to be), and that the meaning of the terms changed. Bronkhorst (1998) cogently argues for two distinct streams in ancient India, but does not speculate on ancient origins. For a comprehensive review of opinions on the origins of Indian asceticism, see Bronkhorst (1998:1–9).

²⁰ The *muni* (‘silent one’) is mentioned twice in the earlier portion (Books II–VII) of the *Rg Veda*: VII.51.8 (*muniriva*); VIII.17.14 (*mūnīmān sākha*); and once in the *Sāma Veda* (I.3.2.4.3). In the well-known *keśin* (‘long-haired’) hymn of the *Rg Veda* (X.136), *unmaditā* (‘intoxicated/frenzied/ecstatic’) *muni*-s (v.3) are described (for references in the *Veda*-s, see Griffith 1927, 1973, 1985, 1986). Eliade (1972:407–411) believes this passage indicates affinities, but not a strict identity, with classical shamanism. Werner (1989:35–45) maintains that the *keśin muni* is “a spiritual personage of very high stature” who lives predominantly outside Brahmanical culture, practising meditation (*man*) and what came to be later known as the yogic life of the renouncer.

²¹ RV (VIII.3.9; VIII.6.18; X.57.7); SV (II.3.1.22.3); AV (I.2.5.3; II.20.9.3). Doniger (1981b:14) compares the *yati* with a shaman or magician. Mythologically, the *yati*-s are identified as an ancient race of ascetics who took part in the legendary creation of the world, and are connected with the Bhṛgu, a group of ancient, mythical beings who are sacrificers, renowned for the bringing of fire to men, and also associated with funeral ceremonies, the underworld and eschatology. Bhṛgu became identified as one of the seven *ṛṣi*-s, who are the archetypal seers and sages who transmitted the *Veda* and revealed the *Purāṇa*-s, and who are perhaps closer to shamans than any other figures in Indian literature, including *yogin*-s. The *ṛṣi*-s are usually depicted similarly to the classical *śaiva* ascetic, dressed in deer-skin or bark-cloth, their bodies smeared with ashes, their hair uncut, matted and tied in a knot. See Griffith, AV (1985:270); Macdonell (1974:140); Bhattacharji (1970:1); Mani (1975:139–141); Goldman (1977:5); Mitchener (1982:187–188). For the inclusion of Bhṛgu within the tradition of the seven *ṛṣi*-s, in, essentially, two lists, see Mitchener (1982:4, 30, 126).

²² For attempted definitions of shamanism, see also Basilov (1999:25–30); Blacker (1999:24–26).

²³ Another class of ascetics referred to in the *Brāhmaṇa*-s and *Atharva Veda* (XV) are the enigmatic *vṛātya*-s, variously interpreted as a *yogin*-s, mystics, *śaiva*-s, nomads, cattle-raiders, non-*ārya* (see Eliade 1969:103), Vedic sacrificers (Heesterman 1963), or a semi-military sodality with similarities to European death-cults (Bollée 1981).

²⁴ *Vyākaraṇa-mahābhāṣya* (ed. Kielhorn, 1892, 1906, 1909).

²⁵ The term *śramaṇa* (‘ascetic striver’) has the same root as ‘shaman’ (Blacker

p. 476), without distinguishing them. Another term for an ascetic that occurs in the *Brāhmaṇa*-s and *Āraṇyaka*-s is *vātaraśana* ('living on wind' or 'girdled with wind'),²⁶ a person who is described as both *ūrdhvamanthin*²⁷ and *śramaṇa*. In the epics, residents of hermitages (*āśrama*-s) are also sometimes identified as *śramaṇa*-s,²⁸ Manu, who wrote around the beginning of the Common Era, uses several terms for ascetics: *yati*,²⁹ *muni*,³⁰ *bhikṣu* ('beggar'),³¹ *tyāga* ('renunciate') and *parivrājaka* ('wanderer/circulator'), terms that had been used for ascetics in the older Brahmanical texts. Manu also refers to the state of renunciation as *parivrājya*/*pravrajya*, *saṃnyāsa* and *tyāga*, without distinguishing these as different kinds of asceticism or renunciation.³² It is somewhat difficult to determine the difference between these kinds of ascetics, but Manu's concern is with *saṃnyāsa* and how that relates to other phases of a man's life: he—as a Brahman—is not concerned with the aims and activities of non-Brahmanical ascetics, as any other ethnic group were considered to be *śūdra*-s,³³ and hence ineligible to renounce.

Manu is the first *Dharmaśāstra* author to use the term *saṃnyāsīn* (Bronkhorst 1998:24),³⁴ by which he refers to the fourth-*āśrama* renunciate, who is characterised in the image of the 'ideal', lone, begging

1999:23–24), and by the time of Aśoka (mid-third century BCE) is generally used to designate all non-Brahmanical ascetics, particularly Jains and Buddhists (Olivelle 1993:11).

²⁶ In the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* (2.7) (of the Black *Yajur Veda*) *vātaraśana* denotes a *śramaṇa* wearing coloured clothes, who has control over the senses, leads a chaste life and practises austerities. The TA is also the first Brahmanical text to use the term *śramaṇa* (Olivelle 1993:13).

²⁷ The term *ūrdhvamanthin* may refer to an erect penis (as a synonym for *ūrdhvaliṅga*) or to the control of sperm (Olivelle 1993:13).

²⁸ Rām, I.1.46, I.13.8, III.69.19, III.70.7. MBh, XII.150.18, XIII.135.104.

²⁹ MS, 5.20, 11.218.

³⁰ MS, 1.58–60, 1.110, 3.257, 3.272, 5.54, 6.5, 6.11, 6.25, 6.43, 7.29, 8.91, 8.407.

³¹ MS, 4.4–5, 10.116.

³² MS, 1.114, 2.97, 3.245, 4.17, 5.89, 5.108, 6.33–34, 6.38–39, 6.78. Concerning terminology, it seems that in Brahmanical sources the older terms for renunciates, such as *parivrāja* and *parivrājaka* ('wanderer/circulator') eventually became replaced with the cover-all term, *saṃnyāsa* (Olivelle 1984:140).

³³ "By failing to perform rituals or seek audiences with priests, the following castes of the ruling classes have gradually sunk in the world to the rank of servants: the 'Sugarcane-boilers', 'Colas', 'Southerners', 'Kambojas', 'Greeks', 'Scythians', 'Quicksilvers', 'Chinese', 'Mountaineers', 'Precipice-dwellers', and 'Scabs'" (MS, 10.43–44, trans. Doniger).

³⁴ See, for example, MS, 1.114, 5.108.

renouncer, as presented in the *Dharmasūtra*-s. It is this characterisation of what ‘the *saṃnyāsī*’³⁵ represents that seems to have cast an interpretative shadow up to the present day.³⁶ From the period preceding Manu until now, it seems that the status of many ascetics and ‘renouncers’ was and is far more phenomenologically and socially complex than the ideal conception might lead us to believe.³⁷ For example, it is generally assumed that once someone has renounced, then the condition is permanent. However, in the *Yama-saṃhitā* (Dutta 1987,

³⁵ Similar conceptions of the ‘ideal’ Buddhist monk have also been challenged by Schopen (1997), who has published a series of influential articles on the differences between the textual representation of the activities of Buddhist monks, and their activities as revealed through inscriptions, the latter indicating the widespread involvement of monks in a variety of ‘worldly’ and ritual activities.

³⁶ The theme of the ‘individual’ renouncer was famously articulated by Dumont (1960) in his seminal and influential article ‘World Renunciation in Indian Religions’. (See also Dumont 1998:184–187, 273–282). For useful critiques of Dumont, see Kolenda (1975) and Quigley (1999:21–53), who both suggest that Dumont never fully faced the relationship between social interaction and ideology. The ‘ideal’ lone renouncer is also a common motif in many recent works on Hinduism. Basham (1967:159, 175), Hopkins (1971:82–83), Fuller (1992:17), Lipner (1994:298), Klostermaier (1994:50), and Brockington (1996:198), for example, assume that the renunciate is ‘beyond’ caste and ritual (as that is the presentation of the *saṃnyāsī* supplied by Brahmanical texts). Although these scholars have a sophisticated understanding of the Hindu tradition, nevertheless ‘the renouncer’ is generally presented divorced from the sect within which his or her life is embedded, with the concomitant social hierarchies, caste-restrictions and social obligations. It is also apparent that the image of the *saṃnyāsī* in the western world was significantly influenced by Vivekānanda’s presentation within the general framework of what is generally known as ‘neo-Hinduism’. By the 1890s the notion of the *saṃnyāsī* had gained unprecedented significance, as a quintessential bearer of India’s spiritual culture (see Halbfass 1988:217–246; Chowdhury-Sengupta 1996; Radice 1998). However, ironically, Vivekānanda’s cabin-class journeys to Europe and the USA, and the establishing of foreign *advaita maṭha*-s, is almost the antithesis of the lifestyle of the traditional ancient Brahmanical ascetic. See Pagborn (1976:117) for the establishing of Advaita Ashrama *maṭha*-s.

³⁷ A similar idealisation by Dumont of the role of the Brahman and the king (juxtaposed with the *saṃnyāsī* in terms of power, purity and caste) has also been criticised on several fronts. On kings and Brahmins, see Derrett (1976); on the ‘ideal Brahman’, see van der Veer (1997); Quigley (1999:54–86). Van der Veer (1998) observes that, far from aspiring to a ritually pure state as the ideal exemplar should, the Brahmins of Ayodhya maintain a complex set of relations, in terms of financial exchange, with the rest of the community and visiting pilgrims. He challenges (1998:xiv) a prevalent idea, articulated in various forms in Dumont (1960), Heesterman (1985), Parry (1985), and Fuller (1992), that “there is a contradiction in the Brahman’s priesthood, [that] the ‘ideal Brahman’ renounces the priesthood and the dependence on donations. I shall argue that instead of limiting our research to values we should look at behaviour”.

Vol. 2:282) there is a penance prescribed for a Brahman mendicant who wishes to become a householder,³⁸ indicating that, historically, *saṃnyāsa* was not necessarily permanent. We will also see (in Chapter 1) that—in a modern context, at least—the caste background of the renunciate loses little of its significance after *saṃnyāsa*, and that specific sectarian identification is a crucial component of the *saṃnyāsī*’s identity.

From the Brahmanical perspective, *saṃnyāsa* is, by definition, to enter a non-ritual state, and only possible for those twice-born (non-*śūdra*-s) with the ritual implements, fires and formulae to renounce. However, those Brahmins or other twice-born wishing to renounce had already been initiated into the Brahmanical world through the *upanayana*³⁹ ritual when they earned the right to participate in orthodox ritual life and received their sacred thread.⁴⁰ An important issue is whether the other kinds of ascetics mentioned in the ancient texts referred to were—as a general rule—initiated into some kind of ascetic tradition.

Many commentators on life in ancient India distinguish between, essentially, two classes of ascetics, *brāhmaṇa*-s and *śramaṇa*-s. They were clearly distinguished by early Jaina and Buddhist sources,⁴¹ and also by Megasthenēs (4th century BCE), who provides some of the earliest recorded visitors’ impressions of India. Megasthenēs made a distinction between two kinds of ‘philosophers’: the *brāhmaṇa*-s, following the *brāhmaṇa* ritual life, and the *śramaṇa*-s,⁴² the ‘strivers’ for liberation.⁴³ Both kinds of ‘philosopher’ practised asceticism, the *brāhmaṇa*-s less extremely, but the *śramaṇa*-s intensely, “undergoing active toil, and by the endurance of pain being able to remain motion-

³⁸ He should perform three *prājāpatya* and three *cāndrāyana* penances, becoming again purified with the *jāta-saṃskāra* and other *saṃskāra*-s, previously referred to in the text. See Ch. 3.1 for an explanation of the penances.

³⁹ For details of *upanayana*, see Prasad (1997).

⁴⁰ This is theoretically discarded during *saṃnyāsa*, but see Ch.1.

⁴¹ See Bronkhorst (1998:78–88); Thapar (1996:56–93). Skurzak (1948; 1967:202–210) argues for three types of ascetic.

⁴² See McCrindle (1877:97–103 [Fragment XLI; Strabo XV.1.58-60]).

⁴³ Megasthenēs also distinguishes between two kinds of *śramaṇa*-s. The Hylobioi lived as celibates in the forests, subsisting on leaves and wild fruits; they were the most respected and “advised” kings. The other kind (next in honour) were the physicians who were “engaged in the study of man”. Besides these, there were the diviners and sorcerers who went around begging in towns and villages.

less the whole day”.⁴⁴ Patañjali (the grammarian) noted the extreme and innate hostility between the *brāhmaṇa*-s and *śramaṇa*-s.⁴⁵ The two kinds of ascetics were also distinguished in Aśoka’s inscriptions⁴⁶ (mid-third century BCE); by Strabo⁴⁷ (19 CE); by Bardesmanes of Babylon⁴⁸ (second century CE); by the Chinese Buddhist scholar, Hūang Tsang⁴⁹ (seventh century CE); and by Alberuni⁵⁰ (eleventh century CE). According to Brahmanical norms women are not entitled to renounce⁵¹—having not passed through the *saṃskāra*-s, they are

⁴⁴ Zysk’s research (1998) reveals how Indian medical knowledge was also developed between 1,000 and 200 BCE by wandering *śramaṇa*-s uninhibited by Brahmanical restrictions on contact with such things as ‘impure’ dead bodies.

⁴⁵ I.2.4.2 (Kielhorn edn., p. 476, line 9). Here, Patañjali, citing one of Pāṇini’s rules, provides the phrase *śramaṇa-brāhmaṇa* as an example of a compound in which the component words refer to objects that were opposed to each other.

⁴⁶ *Edicts of Aśoka*, Rock Edicts 3, 4, 8, 9, 11; Pillar Edict 7. The Edicts indicate a double class of religious people worthy of honour and donations (see Mookerji 1928).

⁴⁷ Section 70: “The Pramnai (*śramaṇa*) ridicule the Brachmanes who study physiology and astronomy as fools and imposters” (McCrinkle 1979:76).

⁴⁸ He divides Gymnosophists into two sects: Bragmanes and Samanaioi (Strabo XV.1.58–60 [McCrinkle 1979:67–68 fn. 1; McCrinkle 1877:97–103]).

⁴⁹ See Beal (1884).

⁵⁰ He refers to the antagonism between Brahmanas and Shamaniyya (Buddhists), even though they are akin (Sachav 1996, Vol. 1:21).

⁵¹ However, some Brahmanical commentary also provides evidence in support of the eligibility of women renouncers. In the *Jīvanmuktiviveka* (a fourteenth/fifteenth century text attributed to Vidyāraṇya, but see Ch. 6.4 of this book), it is stated that women, either before marriage or after the death of their husbands, have the right to renounce, subsist on alms, study the *Upaniṣad*-s, meditate on the Self, carry the *tridaṇḍa* (a form of the mendicant’s staff), and exhibit all the marks of *saṃnyāsa*. References from *Veda*-s, *Upaniṣad*-s and the *Mahābhārata* are cited in support of this position (see Vidyāraṇya 1996:6–8). In his *Yatidharmaprakāśa* (61.39–44) (see Olivelle 1976–1977), Vāsudevāśrama (c.1625–1800) cites Vijñāneśvara (c.1100–1120), who cites *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* (which in turn cites a *sūtra* attributed to Baudhāyana, “*strīṇām caike...*”) to the effect that, in some circumstances, a woman may renounce. Vāsudevāśrama states that the *yati* should not associate with women renouncers (*saṃnyāsini*-s), even though some (such as Baudhāyana) declare renunciation also for women. The *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya states that under some circumstances, such as in the case of a queen whose husband dies, women did in fact renounce. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (IV.5.3) there is also the well known case of Maitreyī, the wife of Yājñavalkya, who announced her intention to renounce. Women renouncers were, however, generally regarded with disapproval by Kauṭilya, Manu, Vāsudevāśrama and other orthodox commentators (see Kane HDŚ, Vol. 2:948; Olivelle 1977:24, 34, 175; 1984:115). Although these days women do not become *saṃnyāsini*-s in the Śrī-Vaiṣṇava order (see Ch. 2.1 fn. 7), there is evidence from the thirteenth century that they did so (Narayan 1993:282). For discussions of women and renunciation, see also Young (1987:68–70); Leslie (1989:318–321).

technically equivalent to *śūdra*-s—yet there is ample evidence of the existence of female ascetics,⁵² whether or not they had ‘renounced’.⁵³ Pāṇini,⁵⁴ Megasthenēs⁵⁵ and Strabo,⁵⁶ who wrote in the period of the compilation of the *Dharmasūtra*-s, refer to both male and female *śramaṇa*-s (ascetic ‘strivers’).⁵⁷ From references in the *Mahābhārata* and Kauṭilya’s *Arthaśāstra* (c. second century CE) it is also apparent that ascetics had a reputation for being useful to the state for a variety of nefarious activities, including spying and assassination.⁵⁸

Although there are abundant references to ascetics in South Asia—dating from the first millennium BCE until the present day—the

⁵² Women *tapasvinī*-s and *śramaṇī*-s, such as Vedavati, Śabarī and Svayamprabhā, appear in the *Rāmāyaṇa* (III.74.7, IV.50.38, VII.17.2) and also in the *Mahābhārata*, where several devoted themselves to life-long austerities and remained unmarried (see Bhagat 1976:206, 263). They wore deerskins, matted locks and bark garments, kept their ‘senses restrained’, and practised righteousness.

⁵³ Nothing, to my knowledge, is revealed anywhere in the Brahmanical tradition about how women who were permitted to renounce did so. It would seem reasonable to surmise that they took *saṃnyāsa* from a male preceptor, as is usually the procedure these days (see Ch. 1.1).

⁵⁴ *Aṣṭādhyāyī* II.1.70, VI.2.26 (see Pāṇini 1987, trans. Katre).

⁵⁵ Strabo XV.1. 60, citing Megasthenēs (McCrinkle 1877:103).

⁵⁶ Strabo (Sec. II, 60, 70) refers to women who study philosophy with the ‘Sarmanses’ (*śramaṇa*-s) and remain celibate; and also (Sec. II, 66) to women philosophers who live austerely among the ‘Brachmanes’ (McCrinkle 1979 [1901]:67, 76; 72).

⁵⁷ Women were admitted into the Ājīvika order (Basham 1951:106) and early Buddhist order (Hüsken 2000).

⁵⁸ In Kauṭilya’s *Arthaśāstra*, one of the recommended articles of state policy is to attempt to control all aspects of society, including ascetics. Olivelle (1987:42–59) notes that the *Arthaśāstra* (2.1.30–31) and *Mahābhārata* (XII.63.11–15) both state that government permission is required for entry into the ascetic life (only for *vaiśya*-s and *śūdra*-s in the MBh). It is apparent from these texts that their authors considered wandering ascetics (particularly ‘fallen’ renouncers) to be the ideal spies: they should exhibit austerity (but may secretly eat), and events should, if possible, be arranged to make it seem that their predictions have come true, thus enhancing their status as visionaries and magicians. Ascetic spies (including women) were to be used by kings to infiltrate monasteries, provide a secret service, initiate conspiracies, and carry out assassinations. Ascetics are one of five kinds of people mentioned by Manu (7.154) to be used as spies. The dangers of ascetic spies, who are regarded with suspicion, are also evident in the *Arthaśāstra*. They are to be removed from the road the king is travelling along (1.21.26); they should only be granted an audience in the company of trusted armed guards (1.21.24); the queen was forbidden contact with ascetics, who were also notorious as go-betweens for lovers (1.20.18). Ascetics were to be arrested at state borders should they not be wearing or carrying the proper emblems of a renouncer (2.28.20); a close watch is maintained over their movements, and any kind of suspicious behaviour could lead to arrest (2.36.13–14); they are subject to a night-curfew (2.36.39). See Olivelle (1987); Paranjpe (1991).

ascetic' is generally presented in works on the Hindu tradition as someone divorced from any historical or social context, as an unchanging 'ahistorical' archetype. An aim of this book is to examine the roles that *saṃnyāsī*-s have played in various contexts, and to illustrate some of the social, economic and political circumstances that have impelled their activities and organisation, a survey of which illustrates to some extent the historical development of *saṃnyāsī* institutions. A related point, which also needs stating, is that ascetics, as a general rule in South Asia, are initiated into a sect. The archetype of the typical ascetic usually presented within the Hindu religious tradition is a *śaiva*,⁵⁹ usually covered with ashes, and renowned for the practice of austerities and the acquisition of extraordinary powers. *Śaiva* ascetics are attested in Brahmanical literature from the second century BCE,⁶⁰ around the same time as the production of the first Brahmanical texts that deal with renunciation. It is apparent that ascetic 'renunciates' were not only ageing Brahman ex-ritualists. I would argue that although there are examples of individual lone renouncers, as a general rule, like initiated Jains, Buddhists, Ājīvikas and Cārvakas, nearly all of the various kinds of non-Brahmanical ascetics mentioned in ancient Brahmanical texts would probably have been initiated in some fashion into an ascetic tradition by a preceptor within a lineage.⁶¹ This is true today and it seems improbable that it was otherwise in the ancient world, though this would be difficult to substantiate. The significance of initiation is the acquisition of a new religious identity (and usually sectarian markers), bestowed by the initiating guru. The social, political and economic significance of initiation into a sect is simply dependent on the socio-political status of the sect at the time of initiation. However, whether as an

⁵⁹ The evolution of sectarian Śaivism is discussed in Ch. 6.

⁶⁰ The first textual references to Śaivism are found in Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* on Pāṇini's grammar, probably written in the second century BCE (Dyczkowski 1989:4). Patañjali (5.2.76, Kielhorn edition, 1906, Vol. 2:387) refers to *Śivabhaḡat*-s, whom he describes as itinerant ascetics wearing animal skins and carrying an iron lance.

⁶¹ Thapar (1996:56–93) has commented that there are essentially two types of renouncer: one is the relatively rare 'ideal' lone ascetic; the other is an initiated member of a group. She argues that organised groups of renouncers (of the post-Vedic period) were not seeking to negate or alter society, but rather to establish a parallel society, as members of an order constituting an alternative lifestyle; a kind of counter-culture, often using social heresy to organise a religious identity.

individual or as a member of a sect, the role of the *saṃnyāsī* within the religious and social history of India is far more complex than the image represented by the archetype.

Both within and between the various renunciate sects, a wide spectrum of behaviour, practice and lifestyle is apparent amongst renunciates. While most members of sects of *sādhu*-s are avowedly celibate, other sects, such as the Dādū, Gauḍīya, Rāmānandī and Vallabhacārī *panth*-s ('paths/sects') also have married initiates. Within the Daśanāmī order, lifestyles range from that of the poor *sādhu* undertaking austerities,⁶² to the privileges enjoyed by some of the Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras⁶³ and Śaṅkarācāryas (*jagadguru*-s, 'world-gurus'), who (on occasions) display royal insignia.⁶⁴ A typical Daśanāmī *mahant*, an owner or proprietor of an *āśrama* or *maṭha*, frequently has a demanding and complex occupation, managing the income, taxes, finances, repairs, food supplies, *pūjā*, festivals and labour disputes of a large landed property. Successful *maṭha*-s are run as businesses, which may expand to establish branch *maṭha*-s; and wealthy establishments are sometimes the object of intense jealousy from other local landlords.⁶⁵ In general, even poor *sādhu*-s have much closer ties with the world than might be supposed from the ideal.⁶⁶

Since the seventeenth century, another term that has been used

⁶² Depending on predilection and social factors, *saṃnyāsī*-s may be more or less involved in the institutional life of *maṭha*-s or *āśrama*-s. Some *sādhu*-s are referred to as *virākt* (meaning 'detached' or 'indifferent'): they shun *āśrama*-s and other such institutions, believing them to be contrary to the aims of *saṃnyāsa*. (*Virakta* is also a generic name in south India for renunciates who belong to the Vīraśaiva sect.)

⁶³ For the role of Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras within the Daśanāmī order, see Ch. 2.4.

⁶⁴ Such as at the great festivals of Navarātri and Śrī Śāradāmbā Mahārathotsava (but not at Śaṅkarajayanī): see Sawai (1992:170).

⁶⁵ See Morinis (1984:89–96) for an account of the affairs of the *mahant*-s of the Tarakeśvar temple in Bengal. He notes (p. 91) some cases of "extreme forms" of deviation from the ideal role of the *saṃnyāsī*, including a couple of murder cases connected with *mahant*-s' mistresses.

⁶⁶ Formally, *saṃnyāsī*-s renounce their families and the rituals connected to family life, 'home' and conventional means of livelihood. However, Tripathi's statistical surveys (1978:98–109) reveal that 76% of *sādhu*-s provide financial help of some kind to their families, and that only 20% earned their money mainly through begging, other sources of financial income being mainly from private offerings (26.6%), social services (19%), attention-catching devices (6.8%), landed property (4.8%), employment in an *āśrama* (1.6%), dubious devices (1.0%), and miscellaneous sources (26.2%).

to refer to Daśanāmī *saṃnyāsī*-s is *gosain*.⁶⁷ Daśanāmī *gosain*-s (non-monastic ascetics) are often but not always married, and many lead the lives of householders (*gharbārī*-s), pursuing a variety of business, priestly and working activities. In the Daśanāmī context, the term *gosain* usually refers to *saṃnyāsī*-s who have become semi-secularised and who have married, but who have retained a nominal allegiance to their hereditary order. In the final sections of this book, the activities of *saṃnyāsī nāgā gosain*-s in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries will be discussed. Many thousands of militant *nāgā saṃnyāsī*-s (also known as *gosain*-s) were involved as mercenaries in numerous political conflicts in north India during this period, becoming wealthy as bankers and traders, and acquiring substantial property. The demise of their military activities around the end of the eighteenth century resulted in the settling of *gosain*-s, mostly in the Gangetic delta and several places in the Himalayas. Some Daśanāmī *gosain*-s migrated and settled in south India.

Ethnographic accounts dating from before Indian Independence typically treat Daśanāmī (or *saṃnyāsī*) *gosain*-s as a caste or an order engaged in a wide variety of activities, not only as mendicants (*sādhu*), but also as priests, bankers, farmers, traders and mercenaries, thus illustrating the complex relationship that *saṃnyāsī*-s have had with their social environment. Historically, it seems more accurate to consider the Daśanāmīs as a caste or a sect with many facets, rather than as lone individuals.⁶⁸ Writing on the castes of Mysore, Ananthakrishna

⁶⁷ *Gosain* (or *gōssain/gosāin/gōsāyi/gosaeen*) is also the name for heads of monasteries of the *vaiṣṇava* Bairāgī/Vairāgī/Rāmānandī order, and of the followers of Vallabhācārya (1479–1531). One of the earliest recorded uses of the term is in the memoirs of Emperor Jahāngīr (r.1605–1628), where it is used to describe an ascetic with whom he had religious conversations (Clarke 1998:52). The term most probably derives from the Sanskrit *gosvāmin*, perhaps meaning ‘the master or possessor of a cow or cows’. Sadānanda Giri (1976:57–59) suggests that *gosain* may derive from *go* (‘sense-organ’) and *svāmin* (‘master’). The first six disciples of the *vaiṣṇava* Bengali mystic, Caitanya (1485–1534) are referred to as the six *gosvāmin*-s—of Vṛndāvan—(see De 1986:111–165; Dimock 1963:110–113), later followers being referred to as *gosayi*. (Followers of Caitanya constitute the *Gauḍīya panth*.) Certainly by the nineteenth century, the term *gosain* was used locally and by British commentators to refer to both *śaiva* and *vaiṣṇava* mendicants, *fakīr*-s and yogis (Pinch 1996:43–44). *Gosain*-s are also referred to as *atīl* (‘beyond’).

⁶⁸ Partly in response to Dumont’s notion of the ‘lone-renunciate’, Burghart (1978; 1983a; 1983b; 1996) developed a thesis of two parallel hierarchies operating within India: one essentially religious and one essentially political. Some of his central observations are that renouncers of various sects may be married or

Iyer (1930:256–258) remarks that one of the chief peculiarities of the Gōsāyis is that they constitute not only a religious order, but also a caste. Besides the caste’s natural increase from within, Brahmans, *kṣatriya*-s and women are also recruited (via initiation) to the order, which then excludes them—via rules of commensality—from their previous caste.⁶⁹ Concerning the Saṁnyāsīs of the Panjāb and North-West, Crooke (1896, Vol. 2:274) remarks that “the members of the sect are supposed to be strict celibates, but of late not a few of them have taken to marriage, and still continue to beg though married”.⁷⁰ Initiation into the Daśanāmīs, whether the initiate subsequently becomes a *gharbārī*, a celibate living in a *maṭha*, or a wandering *sādhu*, requires the performance of the *virajā-homa*, the *saṁnyāsa*

unmarried, of various and differing caste restrictions, and intrinsically involved ‘in the world’ in various types of power, ritual and material exchanges. Regarding the Daśanāmīs, the main thrust of Burghart’s thesis seems apt. However, we will see (in Ch. 7) that the mercenary, military, trading and banking activities of the Daśanāmīs in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries transgress practically all boundaries between religion and state, and between religious and political hierarchies. The activities of the Daśanāmīs—and indeed several other sects of renunciates in India—exhibit a complexity and diversity that seems to defy classification in any anthropological structural model. However, that said, the models of both Dumont and Burghart are particularly useful—and not invalid—as general frameworks within which the complex phenomena of renunciation may be initially apprehended.

⁶⁹ Marriage between first cousins is prohibited, but widow marriage and divorce are possible. “Women are admitted into the order, when they have their heads shaved, assume the ochre coloured shirt and smear their bodies with ashes. These women are supposed to live in nunneries, leading a chaste and pious life. But many of them live with men of the order, and the sons born of such unions would be adopted as *chelas* or disciples of other Gōsāyis, who make them their heirs by reciprocal arrangement... During their visits to villages, they engage in intrigues, and ribald Gond songs sung at the Holi festival describe the pleasures of the village women at the arrival of a Gōsāyi owing to the sexual gratification they derive from him. Nevertheless they have done much to maintain the Hindu religion, and are the *gurus* or the spiritual preceptors of the middle and lower castes” (Ananthakrishna Iyer 1930:256–258).

⁷⁰ “They are, as a rule, of a higher class than the Jogis, and their morality is of a higher order, but scandals about their enticing away the wives of rich Hindus are said to be not infrequent, though generally hushed up. The whole order is in theory devoted to contemplation and abstraction and abstracted from the cares of the world, and a large number of Sannyāsīs are actually religious mendicants without wives and without money, who wear ochre-coloured clothes and distribute quack medicines, who refuse to touch a coin or to take in alms more food than will suffice for the day; but there are also many who work in business and are men of great wealth” (Crooke 1896, Vol. 2:274).

rite (see Ch. 3.3), which is theoretically irrevocable, yet there are counter-examples.⁷¹

Samanta (1997:115) lists the thirty major castes of Ujjain, which include Gosains. Maclagan (1911:304–305) provides an account of the Gosāins of the Punjab and North-West, who are divided into celibates⁷² and others who “form a separate caste, as well as an order, and are known as Sanniāsīs or Dasnāmīs, because they are divided into ten schools...and may be regarded as a semi-secularised offshoot of the Sanniāsī order”. Sherring (1879, Vol. 2:339) describes the Dowrī Gosāvīs, found in central India, who profess to be Hindu, dress in the ochre robe, have no permanent abode, bury their dead, and who are known to steal crops, thieve and commit highway robberies. They are non-vegetarian, with the exception of beef, and keep weapons ready for use at night. In the west Bengal area, the festival of Śivarātri is known in many places as *gājan* or *ghambīrā*. Amongst the votaries of this cult of Śiva are *bhakta*-s known as *saṃnyāsī*-s (Sarkar 1972:73–87; Morinis 1984:98–102). These are villagers who, for the week-long duration of the festival—and for up to a month—take temporary vows (*vrata*) and are initiated (*dīkṣā*) into the lineage (*gotra*) of Śiva as *saṃnyāsī*-s. They follow preliminary dietary restrictions, are adorned with sectarian marks and shaved. A *mūla-saṃnyāsī*, who is the chief votary, is also required during celebrations. Those castes participating are often known in west Bengal as *saṃnyāsī*-s, though there are no restrictions regarding caste or gender on those taking part, who may be householders with families, and even Muslims in recent times.

Maclagan (1911:304–305) describes the *saṃnyāsī gosain*-s who settled at Kāngra and Shimla in Himachal Pradesh (in the foothills of the Himalayas). In some places they became cultivators,⁷³ gradually

⁷¹ Reference was earlier made to the *Yama-saṃhitā* in this regard. I have also met a number of householders who had previously been *saṃnyāsī*-s.

⁷² The celibates are described as being of one of three kinds: first, the *maṭhdhārī* (‘head of a monastery’), whose dwelling (*matha*) is in the village, and who may engage in all worldly pursuits but not marry; second, the *āsandhārī* (‘someone who has a place’), whose house is on the outskirts of the village; third, the *avdhūt* (‘someone who wanders about begging’), who does not beg for more than seven hours in one place. Maclagan also claims that the fraternities who live in the *matha*-s keep women.

⁷³ Sadānanda Giri (1976:57–59) comments that, besides celibate *gosain*-s, there are a large number of *gharbārī* (i.e. married) *gosain*-s—who are also religious teachers—in the Garhṣāl and Kullū areas of the Himalayas where, generally, they either

accumulating much wealth from both trade and usury.⁷⁴ Maclagan notes that, in theory, the Gosāins were celibate and recruited to the order by adopting *celā*-s from pure castes who may have been willing to dedicate their sons to them. However, in practice marriage was usual, married Gosāins being known as *gharbārī*, and sons succeeded to the order by becoming *celā*-s. At Sirsa, there is a separate caste of *gosain*-s, founded by Śimbu Ācārj, most of whom are either ‘Giri’s or ‘Puri’s.⁷⁵ Marriage in these Himalayan sub-orders is still usually endogamous.⁷⁶ Steele, whose information was obtained in Nāsik, Maharashtra, also maintains (1868:444) that a *gharbārī gosain* of the “ten sects” may only marry a female ‘Gosawnee’ if he wishes to remain a *gosain*.⁷⁷ Exogamous marriage results in exclusion.⁷⁸ While

own temples or work in the fields as manual labourers. They are also to be found in Gujarat, where many own their own *maṭha*-s, and also in Maharashtra, where they are very rich and own large properties. Such married *gosain*-s dress in white, maintaining only the turban in the traditional ochre colour. Their sons and daughters are married within their own society. Married *gosain*-s are generally regarded as ‘outcaste’ by celibate Daśanāmī-s, who do not dine with them. Daśanāmī *maṭha*-s and *akhārā*-s usually have rules expressly forbidding the association of celibate *saṃnyāsī*-s with women.

⁷⁴ “The hill people, including their Rājas and Rānās, were in their debt and they controlled all the trade between the hills and the plains. In their practice of usury they were rapacious to an incredible degree...To the power of capital they added the influence of their own sanctity and though the Gurkha invasions broke up their dominion they continued to exhaust the resources of the people in the Outer Sarāj tract of Kullu till quite recently. On the other hand the Gosāins of Kāngra, who are principally found in Nādaun and Jvālamukhi, were an enterprising and sagacious community engaged in wholesale trade. They monopolised the trade in opium and speculated in *charas*, wool and cloth. Their transactions extended to the Deccan and indeed all over India...they are now impoverished” (Maclagan 1911:304–305).

⁷⁵ The gurus of these lineages were, at that time (1904), presiding over *maṭha*-s in, respectively, Bālak and Kharak, both in Hissar district.

⁷⁶ The *ghastha gosain*-s of Himachal Pradesh, who are believed to have migrated from Rajasthan, marry within the same order but outside their own *gotra* (‘lineage’) (for example, a Giri may not marry a Purī). Divorce is granted on grounds of adultery, chronic mental sickness, impotency and cruelty, and a male or female divorcee may remarry (Sarkar 1986:245).

⁷⁷ If a woman born to a *gosain* fails to marry by the age of seventeen she is obliged to pass her life in celibacy and may not become a disciple. However, once past the age of discretion, she may choose—and is apparently not coerced—to become initiated, which prohibits her from marriage. The natural son of a *gosain*, born to a woman even of *śūdra* caste, has equal rights to those of an official *celā*, after he has been initiated in the usual way. The initiation cannot, however, be performed by the father; the uncle or next nearest relative should officiate.

⁷⁸ Divorce is said to be permissible only as a consequence of impotency, for-

there are exceptions, most *gosain* communities enjoy a relatively high caste-status, and are frequently amongst the largest land owners wherever they live.⁷⁹

Daśanāmīs, some of whom are married, also serve as priests at many temples throughout India. Samanta (1997:30–31), for example, notes that the most venerated *devī* temple of Ujjain is that of Harsiddhi *mātā*, one of the fifty-two *Śaktipīṭha*-s. The priests of the temple are *grhastha* Daśanāmīs who have served the temple for many generations. At Janakpur in Nepal, near the border of India, a succession of ‘Giri’ *mahant*-s of the Daśanāmīs has long managed the Rāma temple, said to have been founded by Catūrbhūj Giri (Jha 1978:116–121). However, in general, *gosain*-s do not perform any priestly functions, most probably as many do not have a Brahman background. In *gosain* households, the functions of the *purohit* are generally performed by Brahmans who are not of their order. Also, in distinction from *saṃnyāsī*-s, many *grhastha saṃnyāsī*-s (*gosain*-s) wear the sacred thread.

In some areas of Nepal there are many householder *saṃnyāsī*-s, who are recognised in official surveys as being a caste. (In Nepal the term *saṃnyāsī* is usually understood to refer to a caste rather than a renunciate, the term *yogī* generally being used to refer to a *sādhu*.)⁸⁰

malised by a divorce document (*chor citṭhā*). Interestingly, a childless wife—who is not a widow—of an absent husband may enter into what is known as a ‘left-handed/perverse’ (*vām*) relationship with another man. However, she is obliged to go back to her husband, should he so desire on return. If the returned husband decides to stay with his wife, he should reimburse the lover for expenses, though he is not obliged to support any illegitimate offspring. Otherwise, the husband may relinquish his wife to the lover, annul the marriage, and receive payment from him. Adultery committed with any woman outside the order results in expulsion. Warden (1847:75) maintains that (female) ‘Gosawunees’ must marry before the age of fifteen; otherwise, without a satisfactory explanation, they are obliged to pass their lives in celibacy. Only in the Deccan are married *gosain*-s accepted by other Daśanāmīs. *Śūdra*-s are also said to be recruited in the south.

⁷⁹ See, for example, Mayer (1960:80). In one (fictitiously identified) village in Madhya Pradesh, out of twenty-five castes, the *gosain*-s are second only to Rājput̄s in terms of land ownership. Bhattacharya (1973:307) also comments on the *grhastha gosain*-s as a very respectable caste.

⁸⁰ Frank (1974:90) records that in the district of Nawakot, just north of Kathmandu, out of a population of 146,940, comprising twenty-two ethnic groups, the second largest caste—after the Tamangs, constituting 41.4% of the population—are the *saṃnyāsī*-s. In the mountainous areas surveyed—which only include a few of the mountainous districts—Giris (one of the lineages of the Daśanāmīs) numbered 21,816 persons.

A caste of Giris living in central Nepal around sixty miles east of Kathmandu are the subject of studies by Bouillier (1976; 1979). According to local tradition, the ancestor of the caste was Nārāyaṇa Giri, a *saṃnyāsī* with a *kṣatriya* background, who came from Banaras and arrived in the village of Kattike at the beginning of the nineteenth century. He married and had children, and up to the mid-1970s there had been seven generations of *saṃnyāsī*-s.⁸¹ In lifestyle and general culture, the Giris, according to their caste, are typical for the area (Bouillier 1979:32–58). However, they follow two distinctive *saṃnyāsī* customs, concerning initiation⁸² and funeral rites.⁸³

Bouillier (1978) has also examined the Articles of the Nepalese penal codes (*Muluki Ain*) concerning ascetics, those of 1853,⁸⁴ 1935 and 1963.⁸⁵ The term *jāt* is used in two senses in the codes, one

⁸¹ Kattike has a population of 2,895, of which there are 335 Giris in thirty-five houses. 90% of the Giris are descended from Nārāyaṇa Giri, and the *saṃnyāsī*-s are a dominant caste in the village, in status slightly inferior to Upādhyā Bāhun (Brahmans) and Cetri (or Kṣatri). Over 90% of Giri marriages are within the caste. 17.85% of the Giris are polygamous, all are farmers, and they are non-vegetarian, but with some restrictions.

⁸² Formal initiation into the caste of Giris is in two stages (see Bouillier (1979:96–101). The first is the *upanayana* (*bratabandha*), which is performed by a Brahman *purohit* and follows the customary rites for twice-born boys. The second stage is the *gurumukha*, which is a rite distinctive to the Giris. The *gurumukha* rite may be before or after marriage, and is performed identically for both boys and girls, who become *saṃnyāsī*-s. In Kattike three people are considered ‘guru’ for the men, while there is one woman guru in Kattike for the women. Initiates receive the *Śivagāyatrī* mantra, a trident (*triśul*), a staff (*daṇḍa*), fire-tongs (*cimṭā*), a water-pot (*kamaṇḍal*), a small drum (*damaru*), a seed (*rudrākṣa*) necklace, and Daśanāmī *saṃnyāsī* sectarian marks. Even though a ritual confirmation of the guru-disciple relationship is enacted, henceforth the guru plays no role in the life of the initiate. If a Giri has not received *gurumukha* before death, the mantra is whispered into the ear of deceased by the guru and a lock of hair is cut.

⁸³ Technically, the renouncer is automatically liberated at death from the rounds of rebirth, and does not become a spirit or ghost (*piśāc*), thus freeing his family from the need to feed it. However, the Giris of Kattike observe funeral rites which are similar to those of orthodox householders (Bouillier 1976); see also Parry (1982:84–85); Prasad (1995).

⁸⁴ Although there were earlier legal codes—notably, those of Jayasthiti Malla (1350–1395) concerning laws applicable to sixty-four castes; and the edicts (incomplete) of Rām Śāh of Gorkha (1606–1633)—the *Muluki Ain* of Jaṅg Bahādūr Rānā, promulgated in 1853, is the first code to legislate for the whole population of Nepal.

⁸⁵ In the codes, ascetics are generally referred to either by the Persian term *phakīr*, or as *bheṣ dhārī* (a wearer of ascetic’s clothes), and specifically as *saṃnyāsī*, *bairāgī*, *udāsī*, *janīgam* and *sevaḍā*, terms which refer to, respectively, Daśanāmī, Rāmānandī, Udāsīn (Sikh), Viraśaiva and Jaina orders.

being ‘caste’ in general (including the particular caste a renunciate previously belonged to), and the other being the order (such as *saṃnyāsi*) that the renunciate belongs to. Three categories of ascetics are considered in the code of 1853: *ramtā*, those always on pilgrimage, who are assumed to be Indian; *maṭhdhārī*-s, who own or reside in a monastery; and *gharbārī*-s, married ascetics (for whom, in this code, there is less information). All three types of ascetic may initiate disciples, but only *maṭhdhārī*-s and *gharbārī*-s are subject to the punishments prescribed for transgressions under the code. Transgressing *ramtā*-s, for nearly all types of offences, are shaved and expelled from the country. The two chief concerns of the legal code are (improper) initiation into the ascetic life (*phakirsita muḍinya*),⁸⁶ and (improper) sexual relations. There is also a prohibition on renunciates performing the *bratabandha* for householders. Concerning sexual relations, the code makes no distinction between ascetic orders and other *jāt*-s in the general hierarchy of castes, no reference being made to the ascetic tradition or the ideology of renunciation which prohibits sexual relations. The code is not concerned with infraction of celibacy rules, but with infraction of caste rules of association.⁸⁷ The revised penal code of 1935 contains many of the earlier provisions but also some changes.⁸⁸ Only two categories of ascetic are mentioned, the

⁸⁶ To summarise some of the relevant proscriptions and penalties: initiation into renunciation is forbidden to impure castes; if a girl or boy who is under twelve years old should be initiated, then the initiator (*gharbārī* or *maṭhdhārī*) is subject to three years in prison and the confiscation of property (or losing all rights at a *math*); initiation of a girl under sixteen (whether married or a widow) results in a one year prison sentence; no one may be initiated against their will, and an initiator will be punished for doing so; under specified circumstances, one forceably initiated may be readmitted to his or her caste, with appropriate rites.

⁸⁷ In the hierarchy of castes, at the top are (‘pure’) Upādhyā Brahmins, under which, respectively, are Tākuri and Rājput, then Jaisi, Tāgādhāri (*kṣatri*), and Indian Brahmins. In sixth place, regardless of renunciate order, are the aforementioned renunciate *jāt*-s, ranking just under Jaisi. The *bheṣ dhārī* are considered as quite high caste and treated as such according to the law. The code specifies that if a Dasnām (or another order of ascetics) has sexual relations with a woman of a caste higher than him, then, as a member of any other caste of similar rank, he is subject to punishment, the severity of which depends on the number of women violated, and the age of the girl. The most severe punishment, of ten years in prison, is for sexual relations with a girl under eleven years old. There are also provisions for the punishment of an ascetic who seduces a woman whom he has initiated (Bouillier 1978:141).

⁸⁸ In general, the code of 1935 is more restrictive, in terms of caste and age, than the previous code concerning eligibility for renunciation; no one under eighteen

ramtā and the *maṭhdhārī*: the *gharbārī* is not mentioned.⁸⁹ In the codes prior to 1963, renunciates were under the direct edicts of the king, who legislated against specific activities. However, that domain of influence only came to bear on the renunciate who had chosen to interfere in the ‘ways of the world’—such as the performance of *bratabandha* ceremonies for householders—a domain he is supposed to have renounced upon initiation. The enacting of legislation by the king nevertheless indicates the extent to which some practices of renunciates had become prevalent.

This brief review indicates that Daśanāmī *maṭha*-s are not only the seats of celibate *saṃnyāsī*-s,⁹⁰ and that a distinction between the *gosain*-s as a ‘caste’ and as a religious sect is not clear. A distinctive characteristic of a religious sect is obviously, but in a sense quite trivially, that the sect members are particularly ‘religious’, of whatever persuasion that may be. But a general survey of various Indian castes would reveal that, like the Daśanāmīs, many castes trace

years old may be initiated. In this code it is also stated (p. 146) that a husband of a woman initiated into renunciation by a *bheṣ dhārī* still has the right to sleep with her, so long as she has not committed adultery, for which appropriate punishments are specified. However, a man of a lower caste who seduces a woman renunciate is liable to punishment. A husband may kill a *saṃnyāsī* who seduces his wife, but not if the renunciate is a Brahman (Bouillier 1978:149).

⁸⁹ The 1963 *Muluki Ain* contains only one Article concerning ascetics, in contrast to the several contained in the two previous codes. Initiation is still limited to those over eighteen, but there is no mention of sexual prohibitions (or discriminatory punishments related to the degree of caste-rule violation) nor of a restriction on initiating men and women from lower castes, discrimination concerning caste having been abolished not only for renunciates but for all sections of society. In the new code the justice system only intervenes concerning the initiation of those under age. Bouillier (1978:150) remarks that, “En effet, ce nouveau code, fortement inspiré par les conceptions du droit occidentales, marque une nette rupture avec les codes antérieurs; dorénavant l’accent est mis sur l’individu, en tant que citoyen népalais, et sur l’égalité des droits de tous.”

⁹⁰ There have been several legal cases in the Bombay area (Kane HDŚ, Vol. 2:952), wherein it was decreed that a *saṃnyāsī* who inherits a *maṭha*, as a disciple of a deceased *mahant*, does not forfeit his rights to the trusteeship of the property—which is invariably attached to a temple—should he subsequently marry. Bouillier (1997) examines a dispute that first arose in 1923, concerning the rights and property of the Kwāṭhaṇḍo (Baneśvar Mahādev) *maṭha*, a Daśanāmī *saṃnyāsī maṭha* in Bhatgaon, near Kathmandu. The long-running dispute between the Kwāṭhaṇḍo *maṭha* and the state concerned rights to the property and the surrounding fields, but Bouillier discerns that central to the claims of the various protagonists was the issue of whether entitlement to the *maṭha* and its benefits should pass to another *saṃnyāsī* or to the son of the *mahant*.

their ancestry to semi-divine beings, contain sub-castes who often have a relationship with other sub-castes in terms of caste hierarchy and commensality, and who exhibit some features of hierarchical ordering not dissimilar to those of the Daśanāmīs.⁹¹ While a general distinction may be made between married, semi-secularised *gosain*-s and celibate *saṃnyāsī*-s, who do not usually inhabit the same social milieux, it is apparent from current and historical evidence that distinctions between *gharbārī gosain* and celibate *saṃnyāsī*-s become tenuous when the various contexts of the Daśanāmīs are examined. Whether as a *gharbārī gosain* or a celibate *saṃnyāsī*, the initiate is a member of a community that has complex relations with the rest of society, which in many respects defy the archetype of the 'lone' *saṃnyāsī* that is presented in ancient Brahmanical texts.

0.3 Sources for this book

Of necessity, a wide range of textual (including hagiographic), ethnographic and epigraphic sources are drawn upon throughout this book. The work of many scholars and commentators is utilised in the fields of several of India's religious traditions, and in particular periods of the history of South Asia. Many of the insights presented in this study are not novel; however, the drawing together of research from such a wide range of areas has enabled a tentative reconstruction of the historical formation of an identity for the Daśanāmīs. Nearly all the available ethnographic accounts of the Daśanāmīs have been consulted, including travel accounts from the Mughal period, British Government reports from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and contemporary sources. A number of Hindi publications are availed of, which provide details of the organisation, structure and mantras of the Daśanāmīs. Some of these publications usually only circulate amongst Daśanāmī initiates, and I am very grateful to the *sādhu*-s who made these available. Research was further informed by fieldwork conducted in 2001 and 2002.⁹²

⁹¹ Gnanambal (1973:199), for example, observes how some of the castes of south India have substituted Sanskritic names for low-caste names, tracing their mythological origin to ancestors like Sāgara, Vālmīki and Jambava.

⁹² Thanks to generous grants from research organisations, I was able to attend

An ethnographic overview of the Daśanāmīs is presented in Chapters 1 and 2, considering the subdivisions, hierarchies, caste and functionary positions within the order. The Daśanāmī order has two main wings, one being what might be called the monastic tradition, represented by the *daṇḍī*-s, who are ‘staff-carrying’ *saṃnyāsī*-s, the preeminent representatives of this tradition being the reigning Śaṅkarācāryas. The other main wing within the order is represented by *paramahansa* ascetics and (previously) militant *nāgā*-s⁹³ (‘fighting ascetics’), the latter being organised in quasi-military divisions known as *akhārā*-s (‘wrestling ring’). While considerable use has been made of the work of other scholars in the ethnographic domain, fieldwork has yielded many details of the organisation of the Daśanāmīs, some of which were not previously apparent, particularly concerning the hierarchies and organisation of the *akhārā*-s.

The rites of renunciation and initiation are analysed in Chapter 3. References are made to the *Dharmasūtra*-s, the *Samnyāsa Upaniṣad*-s and several mediaeval texts on renunciation. What is not apparent from a reading of *dharmaśāstra* texts—on which commentators on the Daśanāmī tradition generally rely for their understanding of *saṃnyāsa*—is that initiation into the Daśanāmīs via an *akhārā* transpires in two stages. The first is the *pañc-guru-saṃskār*, wherein the neophyte acquires five gurus. The second stage of initiation is the performance of the *saṃnyāsa* rite, usually performed at a Kumbh Melā, which brings together the two wings of the Daśanāmī order, with their own lineages, which generally have little contact with each other. Both the monastic and militant wings supply preceptors for the

the Kumbh Melā in 2001, and the Māgh Melā in 2002, both held at Allahabad (for details of the Kumbh Melā, see Appendix 3). These *melā*-s (‘festivals’) being the preeminent calendar event for the Daśanāmīs, it was particularly convenient for conducting interviews (in Hindi and English) and lengthy inquiries into the hierarchies, lifestyles and organisation of the various branches of the Daśanāmīs. I was also able to inspect various Hindi publications found in libraries in Banaras, and others kindly provided by Daśanāmīs from *maṭha*-s and *akhārā*-s in Allahabad, Banaras and Haridvār. I also attended Kumbh Melās at Allahabad (1986), Haridvār (1989) and Ujjain (1992). Between 1982 and 1996 I also spent around seven years visiting Hindu holy places (a total of around 250 religious complexes) in nearly all states of India, on several occasions travelling with *sādhu*-s of various orders on pilgrimage, particularly to holy places in the Himalayas, where more than 2,000 miles were covered on foot.

⁹³ From the Hindi *nāgā*, meaning ‘naked’.

performance of the *saṃnyāsa* rite. A third initiation rite is performed for *saṃnyāsī*-s who wish to become *nāgā*-s.

A series of short Sanskrit texts are the main source and focus of Chapter 4. Generally known as (*Śrī*) *Mathāmnāya*-s,⁹⁴ these texts were supposedly, but improbably, written by Śaṅkarācārya. In the *Mathāmnāya*-s, amongst other details, the ten Daśanāmī names are specified and attached to one of the four *matha*-s putatively put under the direct charge of Śaṅkara's four main disciples. It is apparent that the information in the *Mathāmnāya*-s provides the primary framework within which Daśanāmī identity is constituted, as no other textual or epigraphic source supplies the crucial details pertinent to the constitution and emic history of the order. The information in the *Mathāmnāya*-s, representing the locus of popular understanding of Daśanāmī history, is consequently central to the transmission of Daśanāmī tradition, though it is argued that these texts are most probably not more than three or four hundred years old. The well-known claims of the tradition regarding the founding of four *matha*-s and the organisation of a sect of *saṃnyāsī*-s are contrasted with historical evidence and some legal judgements, revealing numerous *matha*-s all over India which have at times claimed to be founded by Śaṅkara, and casting some doubt on the notion that Śaṅkara founded any *matha*.

The main sources for Chapter 5 are the hagiographies of Śaṅkara. Use has been made of the work of Antarkar and Bader (see Bibliography), two scholars who have worked extensively on these texts. Śaṅkara's own works are also examined, illustrating that Śaṅkara was almost certainly a *vaiṣṇava*, and not a *śaiva* as projected in the hagiographic tradition. An examination of the twenty or so extant hagiographic works reveals that the first mention of four *matha*-s appears briefly in Cidvilāsa's *Śaṅkaravijaya-vilāsa*, produced most probably in the late sixteenth or seventeenth century. However, no mention is made of the founding of any *matha* in the most popular of Śaṅkara's hagiographies, the *Śaṅkara-dig-vijaya* attributed to Mādhava, written, at the earliest, in 1650. Further, no reference to Śaṅkara's founding of the Daśanāmī order of ascetics is to be found in any of Śaṅkara's genuine works, or hagiographic texts.

⁹⁴ These texts, also variously known as *Mathāmnāya-stotra*, *Mathāmnāya-setu*, *Mathetivṛtta*, *Mathāmnāyaśāsanam* and *Mahāmuśāsanam* are contained, together with translation, in Appendix 2.

References to the term *daśanāmī* appear to occur first in a couple of late mediaeval texts on renunciation, also produced, at the earliest, in the late sixteenth century.

Within the Hindu religious tradition generally, and the Daśanāmī world specifically, Śaṅkara is intimately associated with the *advaita maṭha* at Śrīrgerī (in south Karnataka) which he supposedly founded. In Chapter 6, a detailed examination is undertaken of political and religious developments during the period of the Vijayanagara empire, which flourished in south India between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. The work of eminent historians of the period is availed of, supplemented by epigraphic research. It is argued that in the mid-fourteenth century, the early Vijayanagara rulers patronised what was, essentially, a ‘new’ orthodox *śaiva advaita* tradition, though this had little to do with Śaṅkara, who appears to have been relatively unknown in this period. In the image of their *śaiva* royal patrons, Śaṅkara’s hagiographers subsequently projected Śaṅkarācārya as an incarnation of Śiva who vanquished heresy and reinvigorated the orthodox Brahmanical tradition. This established Śaṅkara’s reputation as a great *śaiva*, even though it is apparent he and his immediate disciples were *vaiṣṇava*-s.

As already mentioned, even the hagiographic tradition does not mention the founding of an order of Daśanāmī ascetics. If Śaṅkara did not found the Daśanāmīs, then an explanation is needed as to how the sect came into existence. The final layer of the argument presented in this study, in Chapter 7, explores the context in which a Daśanāmī identity may have formed. A variety of sources show that between around the mid-sixteenth century and the end of the seventeenth century a number of groups of radical militant ascetics from Nāth, Sikh-related and (nascent) ‘Hindu’ orders—including what was to become the militant division of the Daśanāmīs—became organised in military units (*akhārā*-s), largely as a consequence of state patronage. Relying on the work of specialists in Islam, the development of Sūfī sects and lineages in India are explored in respect of their influential relationship with the dominant Islamicate orders of north India in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It will be seen how the organisation of Sūfī lineages mirrors, in several important aspects, parallel features of Daśanāmī organisation. This analysis tends towards the supposition that influential Sūfī institutions may possibly have provided both a contributory template and a political rationale for the organisation of the Daśanāmīs, and the formation

of a distinct identity for an order of *saṃnyāsī*-s; even though this cannot be conclusively demonstrated. In the formation of what is argued is a newly created identity, diverse lineages pertaining to both radical militant ascetics and *advaita* monastic traditions were merged into one order that gained its orthodox legitimacy from its putative inception by Śaṅkara.

The integration of the two wings of the Daśanāmīs—the *nāgā* and monastic traditions—is apparent in initiation procedures. The sharing of common religious practices and sectarian markers, the identification with a distinct (*advaita*) philosophy, and the adoption of a common mythology—as reflected in the most popular hagiographies of Śaṅkara and in the *mathāmnāya*-s—provide the substance for the identification of the Daśanāmīs as a distinct sect. Although some Daśanāmī lineages may stretch back indeterminately, it is argued that particular political processes most probably impelled the formation of an identity for the Daśanāmīs, resulting in the dissemination of the frame-structure of the *mathāmnāya*-s and the integration within one sect of disparate lineages of ascetics. It is possible that traditionalists might not only disagree with some of the findings of this research but also suspect that the author may have had something like Paraśurāma’s axe to grind in the deconstruction of oriental saints (such as Śaṅkara), Hindu tradition or Indian history. However, the author is aware of the extent to which not only religious but also social history has been ‘invented’ in practically all periods of human history in the service of various ideologies.⁹⁵ Even a cursory investigation into hagiography and constructions of various social and religious histories frequently illustrates broadly common processes in a variety of socio-political contexts.⁹⁶ If we consider Ireland in the seventh century CE (approximately the time of Śaṅkara), it has been remarked that, “By and large, each dynasty had its own saint, its own foundation, on a principle resembling the

⁹⁵ In this regard, the popular work of Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) might be mentioned in connection with some British traditions. This collection of learned articles illustrates the ‘invention’ of several ancient traditions, including: the kilt-wearing Highland tradition of Scotland (Hugh Trevor-Roper); the rediscovery of some ‘ancient’ (but, in fact, non-authentic) Welsh traditions in the eighteenth century (Prys Morgan); and the involving of royalty in British parliamentary procedure (David Cannadine).

⁹⁶ For studies in Indian hagiography, see Snell (1994); Granoff (1984, 1988a, 1988b); Schober (1997).

Continental *eigenkloster*...Very clearly, the saints' lives, as propaganda for the power and influence of their subjects, had a crucial role to play in aggrandizing specific monastic centres at (inevitably) the expense of others" (Stevenson 1995:25). Such remarks would be entirely appropriate to the discussion concerning the Indian monastic tradition, Śaṅkara and his Vijayanagara hagiographers (presented in Chapter 6).

A final but important rider to the discussion is the consideration that the Daśanāmīs and others who find their way into this book—whether as mendicants, *mahant*-s, mercenaries, scholars, philosophers, political envoys, traders, raiders, property-owners or bankers—are those who by their actions have found their way into history. Those who live more closely to the ideals of *saṃnyāsa*—as lone renunciates undergoing austerities, far removed from worldly, economic and political life—and who constitute a significant proportion of *saṃnyāsī*-s, leave little, if any, trace in history; perhaps just the proverbial and barely perceptible smoke of a fire on a hill. A kind of paradox is implicit in attempting to reconstruct the history of a renunciate movement from accounts of those who have left historical traces: perhaps the true history of *saṃnyāsa* would be simply an almost empty account.

CHAPTER ONE

BRANCHES OF THE DAŚANĀMĪ ORDER

In this chapter, the overall structure of the Daśanāmīs is introduced from a contemporary anthropological perspective, examining the branches and customs of the sect in its constitution as an order of nominally celibate *sādhu*-s. Although there are traditional Brahmanical restrictions that deny women the option of taking *saṃnyāsa* and renouncing, it is evident that amongst Daśanāmīs and some other renunciate sects there is a significant number of women renunciates. Also briefly considered in this chapter is the issue of sectarian identity within the South Asian context, and the ramifications within recent Daśanāmī history.

1.1 *The Daśanāmī sect, as currently constituted, in relation to other renunciate sects*

As noted in the Introduction, there are three subdivisions of the Daśanāmīs,¹ namely: 1) the *daṇḍī*-s, who carry a staff (*daṇḍa*); 2) the *paramahaṃsa*-s; and 3) the *nāgā*-s (sometimes referred to as *astradhārī*-s, ‘weapon-holders’), who belong to one of the seven Daśanāmī *akhārā*-s (‘wrestling rings’ or ‘military formations’).² *Daṇḍī*-s may be recognised by the *daṇḍa* that they carry, a stick that may be plain or embellished and which usually has a piece of saffron cloth wrapped around it, under which is tied an axe-head and the sacred thread.³ Unlike *daṇḍī*-s, *paramahaṃsa*-s and *nāgā*-s do not carry the mendicant’s staff.⁴ Although

¹ See also Ghurye (1964); Tripathi (1978); Sinha and Saraswati (1978); Dazey (1990).

² See Ch. 2.1

³ Many *daṇḍī*-s carry either a small *liṅga* or a *śalagrāma*. *Śalagrāma*-s are ammonites found in two or three places in the bed of the Kālī Gaṇḍaki river in eastern Nepal, which are one of the most important emblems of Viṣṇu. They occur in as many as eighty-nine varieties, each type having a symbolic significance (see Ramachandra Rao 1997).

⁴ A staff is acquired by *paramahaṃsa*-s during the *saṃnyāsa* rite, but it is subsequently discarded (see Ch. 3.3).

the tripartite division of *danḍī*, *paramahaṃsa* and *nāgā* is recognised within the Daśanāmī order, the foremost means of self-classification is primarily in terms of the *paramparā* of the initiating guru, in one of the ten lineages⁵ supposedly deriving from Śaṅkarācārya. All the three branches of the Daśanāmīs have a large network of *maṭha*-s, spread throughout India, though most concentrated in north India, particularly in Banaras, Allahabad and Haridvār. Most of even the largest *āśrama*-s and *maṭha*-s began as a simple dwelling of a *sādhu* who had ceased travelling and settled, frequently after many years of pilgrimage to holy places⁶ throughout the Indian subcontinent.⁷

Several scholars provide a general overview of around sixty sects of *sādhu*-s⁸ functioning in India in the last decades of the twentieth century.⁹ The greatest concentration of *sādhu*-s, both now and for the last three or four hundred years, is to be found in north India, particularly in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The three largest sects of *sādhu*-s are the *vaiṣṇava* Rāmānandīs and the *śaiva* sects of Nāths and Daśanāmīs.¹⁰ There are currently, perhaps, around one hundred thou-

⁵ Amongst the *danḍī*-s, the names used are Tīrtha, Āśrama and Sarasvatī. Some few are called Bhāraṭī. Amongst the *nāgā*-s of today, the names attributed are Giri, Purī, Bhāraṭī and Sarasvatī, though not all *saṃnyāsī*-s with that name are *nāgā*. Aranyas are rare, while Vanas, Sāgaras and Parvatas have practically disappeared.

⁶ Many *saṃnyāsī*-s (including the *akhārā*-s) begin the year at the *melā* (in January) at Gaṅgā Sāgar, east of Calcutta. Proceeding west, Paśupatināth and Banaras are popular for Śivarātri (in February/March), after which many follow the Gaṅgā to *tīrtha*-s in the Himalayas, for the summer. Autumn and winter are the seasons when *saṃnyāsī*-s may go south, occasionally visiting some of the twelve *jyotir-līngam*-s en route, finally reaching Rāmeśvaram and Kanyā Kumārī.

⁷ Before the introduction of passports in the early twentieth century, some *sādhu*-s also travelled widely in Central Asia and the Middle East. See Duncan (1799) for a *saṃnyāsī* who went to Russia and the Middle-East. See Bennett (1965) for an account of a *saṃnyāsī* who walked right round the world.

⁸ Some of these sects also have a substantial lay community.

⁹ Sinha and Sarasvatī's (1978:51) study was based in Banaras; Tripathi's (1978:156) study conducted in Uttar Pradesh. Tripathi was initiated into both Daśanāmī (*śaiva*) and Nimbārki (*vaiṣṇava*) sects (*sampradāya*-s) and conducted sociological fieldwork over several years during the late 1960s and 1970s. Samanta's (1997:49–52) study was conducted in Ujjain. See Appendix 1 for lists of sects.

¹⁰ According to Tripathi's survey of a relatively small sample of 500 *sādhu*-s, the two largest sects are the Daśanāmī and Kānphaṭa (Nāth), each of which comprises around 12% of the *sādhu* population. According to Tripathi, the next largest sect is the Rāmānandī (6.6%). However, van der Veer (1998:xiii) believes that the Rāmānandī sect has become the largest monastic order of North India. Sinha and Sarasvatī's research (1978:51) revealed that in Banaras—the main stronghold of Śaivism in India—the two largest ascetic sects are the Daśanāmī and the Rāmānandī

sand Daśanāmī *sādhu*-s in South Asia.¹¹ Examples of female ascetics and renunciates in ancient India were referred to in the Introduction, and census reports from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reveal that women *saṃnyāsīn*-s¹² then constituted up to forty percent

orders, the Daśanāmīs having 610 initiates and the Rāmānandīs 253. Statistics on *sādhu*-s are notoriously hard to obtain, because where records are kept in *matha*-s and *akhāyā*-s, information is rarely divulged.

¹¹ Hartsuiker (1993:122) gives a figure of five million for the number of *sādhu*-s, without, however, citing a source for that estimate. If that figure were approximately accurate it would indicate that *sādhu*-s, at the time of writing, would have constituted just under 0.5% of the population of India, which at the time was around 930 million. Crooke (1896, Vol. 2: 261) cites the Punjab report of 1891, which lists the number of Daśanāmī Gosains in forty-six places in north-west India, most of which are now in the state of Uttar Pradesh. 103,320 Daśanāmīs are recorded, of whom 55,347 are male, and 47,973 are female. The total population of the province in 1891 is recorded as 46,905,085 (1896, Vol. 1: clix) of whom 623,506 are 'Fakir'. According to these figures, Daśanāmīs would have constituted approximately 16% of the renunciate population of north-west India and 0.23% of the general population. These figures are not so different from the estimates arrived at for the percentages of Daśanāmīs in relationship to other sects but would indicate a figure of approximately one half that of the figure estimated previously for the entire renunciate population.

Briggs (1982:4–6) made a useful, if somewhat disorganised, survey of Government Census statistics concerning 'Jogis', 'Faqīrs' and 'Mendicants'. The census returns for 1901 (*Census of India*, Vol. 1, part 2, *Tables*, pp. 283, 288, 301) enumerate 436,803 Hindu Faqīrs; 659,891 Hindu Jogīs; 43,139 Muhammadan Jogīs; 45,463 Hindu Nāths (Kānpḥaṭa). This makes a total of 1,185,296 ascetics. According to the census, the population of India was at that time around 200 million, so ascetics would have constituted around 0.5% of the Indian population, a similar figure reached above by rough calculation for today. If Tripathi's (1978:156) figure of 12% is accurate for the percentage of *sādhu*-s who are Daśanāmīs, and if we assume that the relative percentages of members belonging to the different sects remains approximately the same (even if the total number of *sādhu*-s has declined since the time of Tripathi's work in the early 1970s), then the total number of Daśanāmī *sādhu*-s would these days be around 600,000. However, this figure seems too high. An indicator of the possible size of the Daśanāmī population would be the fact that at the Ujjain Kumbh Melā in 1992, the Jūnā *akhāyā*, one of the largest sub-branches of the sect, initiated around 3,000 new *saṃnyāsī*-s (Hartsuiker 1993:64). Bedi and Bedi (1991:85) comment that over 2,500 *sādhu*-s were initiated into the Jūnā *akhāyā* at the 1989 Kumbh Melā at Allahabad. Nearly all initiations into all branches of the Daśanāmīs, through the *saṃnyāsa* rite, are performed at the Kumbh Melās at Haridvār, Prayāga (Allahabad) or Ujjain, over a periodic cycle of (almost) twelve years. If, at a rough guess, bearing in mind the relative sizes of the sub-branches of the Daśanāmīs, perhaps 7,000 or 8,000 men take *saṃnyāsa* in total on each occasion, then every twelve years there would be around 20,000 to 25,000 new Daśanāmī *saṃnyāsī*-s. Given an average lifespan of sixty or seventy years, a figure of around 100,000 would be reached.

¹² Hindi: *saṃnyāsīn*; the term is Sanskritised by some commentators as *saṃnyāsīnī*, though this term is rarely used in classical sources.

of both the general *sādhu*¹³ and Daśanāmī populations in certain regions of India. These days, however, women *saṃnyāsīn*-s, who are usually referred to as *māī* or *mātā-jī*, may constitute perhaps between approximately two and ten percent of both the general *sādhu* and Daśanāmī populations.¹⁴ Although there are still a significant number of women ascetic renunciates in South Asia, there are very few orders where the *guru-paramparā* is handed down from woman to woman.¹⁵ Most of the orders and *maṭha*-s that comprise women are dependent on male preceptors, who in several instances are Daśanāmīs.

There have been several studies of Hindu women saints, some of whom are ascetics,¹⁶ though relatively few devoted to female Hindu renunciates.¹⁷ Caplan (1973) describes a small group of Daśanāmī *māī*-s, all Girīs, living in Duari in western Nepal. In this area most ascetics are unmarried women, *saṃnyāsī*-s usually being a settled caste, only distinguished from other castes of a similar rank by particular customs of initiation and funeral rites.¹⁸ In the village of Duari, besides the women ascetics, there were twenty-eight Girīs (2.2% of the village population) at the time of the study, in 1969. The *māī*-s of Duari live together in a monastery (*kuṭī*) which has a temple of

¹³ Female *sādhu*-s are also referred to as *sādhvī*.

¹⁴ Table XVII of the Imperial Census of India for 1931, cited by Briggs (1982:4–6), shows, under the heading of Aghorī, Faqīr, Sādhu and Sannyāsī, a total of more than one million persons. According to the Censuses of 1901 and 1931, women constituted approximately 40% of the wandering ascetic population. Modern commentators, for example Denton (1981:212) and Hartsuiker (1993:62), give an estimated figure of 10%, or just under, for female ascetics, many of whom are widowed. Denton's estimate is derived from a sample of 1,300 ascetics in Banaras, of whom 130 are girls or women. Sinha and Saraswati's (1978) general survey of 1284 *sādhu*-s in Banaras included 97 women (i.e. approximately one in twelve). However, it has been pointed out to me that estimates based on urban surveys may be significantly higher than surveys would reveal for India as a whole, which might indicate a much lower percentage of female renunciates than the 10% derived for Banaras.

¹⁵ Ramaswamy (1992:134) briefly mentions an example of a female preceptor: Venābāī, a disciple of Samartha Rāmadāsa (17th century), became head of a *maṭha* at Mirāj (in Karnataka). Also, it seems that the followers of the saint Mirābāī (15th/16th century) once constituted a sect of 'Mirābāīs'. See Sethi (1979) and Alston (1980c) for brief resumé of Mirābāī's life.

¹⁶ See Ramanujan (1973:111–142; 1982); Gupta (1991); Ramaswamy (1992; 1997). Very few women saints married, and almost all were initiated by males.

¹⁷ For the position of (women) *sādhvī*-s/ *śrāvikā*-s within Jainism, see Jaini (1991); Shāntā (1997); Balbir (2002); Valley (2002).

¹⁸ One such caste of *saṃnyāsī*-s is discussed in the Introduction (see Bouillier 1976; 1979).

Bhairava. They survive by begging, donations, on the produce of the attached land, and sometimes by lending out money or grain. The head *māī* is usually the guru for the other ascetics, her status being determined not by age but by how long she had been resident in the *kuṭī*.¹⁹

[Clémentin-] Ojha has published several studies of women *sādhvī*-s in Banaras, the first (1981) being of forty-five individual women ascetics, another (1984)²⁰ examining three communities of female *saṃnyāsīn*-s in Banaras, most of whom are Bengalis. Two are communities of Nimbārkiś²¹ (also known as the *nīmāvat* or *Sanaka-saṃpradāya*),²² the Śobhā Mā and Gaṅgā Mā.²³ Around a dozen women ascetics live at an *āśrama* which Śobhā Mā founded in 1950. The third community is of followers of Ānanda Mayī Mā²⁴ who live at the Kanyā Pīṭha, founded in 1926. The women of the three communities live communally in *maṭha*-s, under the guide of female preceptors,²⁵ and dedicate part of their time to teaching in various schools. Traditionally, the orthodox Nimbārki order denies renunciation to women, so they undergo an initiation ceremony that contains fewer syllables of the sacred mantra than either householders (lay

¹⁹ Similar to the settled *saṃnyāsī* castes of Nepal, the women are not of Brahman caste, but the slightly inferior Jaisi caste. Despite being *saṃnyāsīn*-s, caste still operates amongst the women, in terms of commensality, purity and pollution (p. 181). They were initiated between the ages of nine and thirty-five, two of them being daughters of ascetics. Some had become ascetics due to marriage problems, and one was widowed.

²⁰ See also Clémentin-Ojha (1985; 1988).

²¹ Followers of Nimbārka, the twelfth/thirteenth century *vaiṣṇava bhakta*, who was born in Bellary, Karnataka, but spent most of his life in the Vṛndāvan/Mathurā area; his philosophical system is *dvaitādvaita*, 'difference-in-non-difference'.

²² One of the four *vaiṣṇava saṃpradāya*-s (see Ch. 2.1, fn. 7).

²³ Both Śobhā Mā and Gaṅgā Mā were initiated by a Bengali, Svāmī Santadās Kāṭhiyā Bābā (Clémentin-Ojha 1988:WS-34).

²⁴ A mystic (1896–1982) born in Kheoḍā, East Bengal. See Lipski (1977); Ray (1983).

²⁵ Clémentin-Ojha also presents (1985) four female 'gurus' (a term for which there is no exact equivalent in Sanskrit for females, owing to their traditional ineligibility to perform that role; though the term *guruṇī* is used for a woman *guru* amongst Jāinas, see Shāntā 1997:189). The female gurus (who are generally referred to as 'Mātājī') are from the Daśanāmī, Rāmānandī, Nimbārka and Vallabha *saṃpradāya*-s. All were initiated by male preceptors. After Ānanda Mayī Mā's demise, Śobhā Mā became the most important female guru in Banaras, with around 1,000 disciples. The female guru from the Vallabha *saṃpradāya*, Śāradāvallabhā Beṭī-jī, runs a temple and an educational institution, and can perform initiation (*dīkṣā*) into the sect.

followers) or male renunciates (*virakta*). The order of Ānanda Mayī Mā is ‘heterodox’—having a woman as preceptor—yet the women are initiated by male Daśanāmī priests, under the name of Ānanda Mayī Mā (Ojha 1984:208). It is believed that, during the ceremony, the *śakti* of Ānanda Mayī Mā is transmitted to the initiate, who becomes a disciple of the guru. The women become *brahmacāriṇī* but are not fully ‘*saṃnyāsini*’ as they do not perform the second stage of initiation, the *virajā-homa*.²⁶ Nevertheless, the *saṃnyāsini*-s have a higher status than lay followers. While generally dressed in the typical garb of a *sādhu*, women renunciates do not usually wear any jewelry, as one of the signs of their renunciation.

Sinclair-Brull (1997) and King (1984:75–79) provide accounts of the nuns of the Śrī Śāradā Maṭha, and those of the Rāmakṛṣṇa Śāradā Mission,²⁷ organisations that run parallel to, but function independently, of the Rāmakṛṣṇa Mission.²⁸ King (1984:79–81) also discusses several branch-orders of the relatively few women ascetics in other sects, those of the Svāmī Nārāyaṇ, Sāī Bābā of Śīrdī, Brahmā Kumārīs,²⁹ and Liṅgāyats.³⁰ C. S. J. White (1989) describes

²⁶ See Ch. 3.

²⁷ The Śrī Śāradā Maṭh, the largest of these female orders, was founded in 1954, and in 1981 had six centres, at Madras, Trichur, Pūṇe, Bangalore, Banaras and Haridvār. Women must be over thirty years old to be initiated into the order; novitiate (*brahmacāriṇī*) vows may be taken after two years, and the full *saṃnyāsa* rite of renunciation after another five years. Then, (theoretically) irrespective of previous caste affiliations, the women initiates may perform Vedic rites. Founded in 1960, the Rāmakṛṣṇa Śāradā Mission (a sister institution) has eight more branches (five in Bengal, one each in Delhi, Arunachal Pradesh and Kerala). In 1981 it had 170 monastic members (King 1984:78). See McDaniel (1995) for a profile of a Bengali *saṃnyāsini*, Arcanā Mā (b.1928) of the Rāmakṛṣṇa order, who has a large *āśrama* in Calcutta, inherited, unusually, from her male guru.

²⁸ Rāmakṛṣṇa himself initiated a woman named Gaurī Mā (d.1938), who became a renunciate and founded an *āśrama* for women’s education in 1895 in Calcutta. It came to diverge in ethos from the Rāmakṛṣṇa Mission, becoming orthodox in terms of caste and rites, and establishing a line of ascetic female initiates succeeding Gaurī Mā. Another *āśrama* (first called Mātṛ Mandir and then Śāradā Mandir) was opened by Sudhira Basu (d.1920) in 1914 for women to practice renunciation. The *āśrama* was under the authority of the Rāmakṛṣṇa Mission until 1963. Vivekānanda also seems to have initiated several women, but only through mantra. Proper *saṃnyāsa* was not given to women until 1947, in the first western Vedānta convent, founded in Hollywood in 1940 (King 1984:77–78).

²⁹ See Babb (1984) for comment on the role of women in the Brahmā Kumārīs.

³⁰ The few female ascetics of the Svāmī Nārāyaṇ order are called Sāṃkhyā Yoginīs; they live in a separate temple and follow their own guru. Śrī Upāsanī

darśan ('vision/spiritual presence') and an interview with Her Holiness Sadguru Śrī Jñānānandasarasvatī of Madras, a woman who was previously married, raising five children. She renounced the world, most unusually taking *saṃnyāsa* personally from the Śaṅkarācārya of Kāñcīpuram, the first time he had performed the *saṃnyāsa* rite for a woman. More recently, Khandelwal (2004) recounts the life of several female renunciators, focussing mainly on two female Daśanāmī *saṃnyāsini*-s, Ānand Mātā and Bāījī, both of whom run *āśrama*-s in Haridvār.³¹

While the Daśanāmī *paramahaṃsa* subdivision has some female ascetics, there are fewer amongst the *daṇḍī*-s and very few who are *nāgā*.³² Amongst the *akhārā*-s there is only one order of *māī*-s, who are affiliated to the Jūnā *akhārā*,³³ the largest of the seven Daśanāmī *akhārā*-s. While most of the women come from eastern Nepal or the adjacent Kumaun district of Uttaranchal, some few come from West Bengal. They have their own Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara (similar to an abbot),³⁴ and the current *mahant* of the *māī*-s is Mīrām Purī. Around eight hundred *māī*-s attended the 2001 Allahabad Kumbh Melā,

Bābā, a disciple of Sāī Bābā, founded a nunnery, the Kanyā Kumārī Sthān in Maharashtra, in either 1917 or 1932, another branch being subsequently established in Nāgpur. The women study and perform Vedic sacrifices. In 1940, the Brahmā Kumārīs *āśrama* for women ascetics was founded in Sindh. The founding ethos of female asceticism has been replaced by *āśrama*-s catering for both men and women. In 1966, aged twenty, Mathe Mahādevī took *saṃnyāsa*, to become the first female *jaḡadguru* of the Liṅgāyats, a *śaiva* sect founded in the twelfth century in Karnataka. The Vishva Kalyan Mission was established in Bangalore (and then Hubli and Dharwar), where women ascetics live (King 1984:79–81). See also Llewellyn (1995) for a profile of another female renouncer, Mīrām (b.1929), who was from an Ārya Samāj family background, and wrote an autobiography, subsequent to renouncing in 1979.

³¹ Ānand Mātā is said to have been initiated by a "prominent swami" (p. 49), and Bāījī by a Daśanāmī *saṃnyāsī* (p. 80).

³² See below for the *daṇḍī*, *paramahaṃsa* and *nāgā* branches of the Daśanāmīs.

³³ Even though the other *akhārā*-s do not generally admit women, Sinha and Saraswati (1978:98) note that at one time the [Mahā]Nirvāṇī *akhārā* had a female ascetic raised to the position of Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara, causing a boycott by the other *akhārā*-s. Sinha and Saraswati (1978:68) report the presence in Banaras of two female ascetics who are members of the *daṇḍī* subdivision of the Daśanāmīs. One was residing with her male counterparts (*gurubhātī*-s) in the Dakṣiṇamūrti *maṭha*, and the other, Gaurī Mā, was a *mahant* who had succeeded the *gaddī* of the Pūranānanda Svāmī Āśrama *maṭha*. She was the only resident ascetic.

³⁴ See Ch. 2.4 for an account of their role in the Daśanāmīs.

camping in an area adjacent to the camp of the Jūnā *akhārā*.³⁵ During the Māgh Melā, in January 2002, as per custom, many women camped alongside men in the *daṇḍī* camps. This is in sharp distinction to practices in the *akhārā*-s where there are usually no women, except in the case of the Jūnā *akhārā* which has a separate camping area for the women *saṃnyāsīn*-s.

Daśanāmīs usually refer to only themselves as *saṃnyāsī*-s, distinguishing themselves from other sects of *sādhu*-s who generally refer to themselves by their sectarian names, as for example, Nāth (Kānpḥaṭa), Udāsīn (Sikh-affiliated), Bairāgī/Vairāgī (Rāmānandī), *et cetera*. *Sādhu*-s are typically dressed so as to indicate, in some manner, their sectarian affiliation. *Saṃnyāsī*-s usually wear orange, ochre, saffron, or salmon-coloured cloth, the traditional colour of the *saṃnyāsī*. Sectarian affiliation is also shown by the kind of necklace (*mālā*) worn,³⁶ and often more distinctively by sectarian marks that adorn the face and body. Hair may be shaven, short, long, or in dreadlocks (*jaṭā*) but, unlike the custom in some other *sādhu* sects, the top-knot (*coṭī*) is not worn by the Daśanāmī-Saṃnyāsīs. It is removed during initiation, as is the sacred thread (*janeū*) if it was previously worn,³⁷ as a sign that the *saṃnyāsī* has renounced his right to perform sacrifices.³⁸ While Daśanāmīs usually apply the *tripuṇḍra* (or *tripuṇḍ*) to the forehead, a sectarian mark of three parallel lines of holy ashes (*vibhūṭī*), it is usually only *nāgā*-s who cover the body entirely with ashes. The equipment carried by itinerant Daśanāmī *sādhu*-s usually consists of fire-tongs (*ciṃtā*), blankets, sometimes a deer or tiger skin, a water-

³⁵ The author spent three weeks in October 1987 living with a female initiate of the Jūnā *akhārā* at her roadside shelter near Barkot, in Gaṛhvāl, Uttaranchal. Her husband had died some years previously in a road accident and she had taken *saṃnyāsa*. She was well respected locally and her brother helped her with many practical affairs. She died in 1995.

³⁶ *Vaiṣṇava*-s wear *tulsī* beads, which are beads carved from the wood of a basil plant (*ocimum sanctum*) which grows all over the subcontinent. *Śaiva*-s wear *rudrākṣa* seeds, which come from a tree (*elaecarpus ganitrus*) that grows mostly in Nepal. Necklaces and bracelets usually comprise 108 seeds, but may also be worn singly or in other numbers. Accounts of the properties, associated mantras and significance of the number of segments vary considerably and may be found in several texts, including: *Śiva Purāna* (*Vidyēśvara Saṃhītā*); *Padma Purāna* (ch. 57); *Śrīmaddevībhagavat* (11th Skandha, ch. 3–7); *Rudrākṣajābala Upaniṣad*. See Rai (1993a); Majumuria (1982:223).

³⁷ *Daṇḍī*-*saṃnyāsī*-s keep the *janeū* concealed under a cloth that is attached to their *daṇḍa*.

³⁸ This is in distinction from the practice of the *vaiṣṇava* Rāmānandīs who maintain the top-knot after initiation, and may still perform sacrifices.

pot (*kamaṇḍal*) made from coconut,³⁹ wood or metal, sometimes a trident (*triśūl*), and a small bag (*jhoṭī*) for a few belongings such as religious pamphlets, identity papers, money, holy ash, soap, and for members of some *akhārā*-s, smoking materials.

The ancient notion of *tapas*/*tapasyā* ($\sqrt{\text{tap}}$, ‘heat’), to be found in the *R̥g Veda*, is that austerities (*tapas*)—particularly celibacy—produce a kind of internal heat⁴⁰ that is associated with spiritual and creative powers, and in the later context of the *Purāṇa*-s, liberation.⁴¹ While most *Daśanāmī*s periodically perform limited regimens of austerity (*tapas*/*tapasyā*), such as taking a vow (*vrata*) to fast on a particular day or during a certain period,⁴² or of limiting their diet,⁴³ some few also perform *haṭha-yoga* postures. A few *sādhu*-s practise more radical forms of *tapasyā*, not infrequently for a period of twelve years.⁴⁴ There is a

³⁹ The most sought kind of coconut used is the extra large variety from the Seychelle Islands.

⁴⁰ On *tapas* in a Vedic context, see Knipe (1975); Kaelber (1989).

⁴¹ The acquisition of power, through *tapas*, is also used for immoral purposes. Historically, *tapas* is not essentially related to ethics, and its association with ‘penance’ is misleading (see Rüping 1977). In the *Veda*-s and *Brāhmaṇa*-s, *tapas* is characterised—broadly—as heat, poetic inspiration, and the life-force born through the power of *tapas*, while in the *Mahābhārata* (MBh 1.25.10–18; 1.101.25; 1.166.9; 1.208.15–20; 1.36.8–19; 3.95.1–4) are to be found instances of powers accrued, and curses being exercised, through the *tapas* of a renouncer or ascetic (see Olson 1997:8–13). In the epics, *tapas* is seldom used for liberation, but for worldly gain (such as a son), revenge, status, honour, glory, and military success (see Holck 1969). For psychological interpretations of austerities, see Masson (1976); Cantlie (1977).

⁴² *Vrata*-s (‘vows’), particularly to fast on a particular day, are a general feature of traditional Hindu culture. See Kane (HDS, Vol. 5, part II:255–462) for an exhaustive list of around 1,500 different *vrata*-s. See also Dutt (2002). On women householders’ religious vows, see Babb (1975:110), who describes the *solah somvār vrat* (the ‘sixteen Mondays vow’); McGee (1991); Iltis (1996); Pearson (1996).

⁴³ The most common form of limiting diet is *phalāhār*, technically fruitarian, but usually also consisting of milk, fruits, nuts, and—if a grain is consumed—*rāmdān*, a kind of reddish millet. The important point about a *phalāhār* diet is that all foodstuff may ‘fall’ into the recipients hands.

⁴⁴ Practices include those when the *sādhu* does not lie down or remains seated (when he is known as *khareśvarī*), usually supported by suspended sling, or keeps one arm permanently in the air (*ūrdhvabāhu*). Some permanently wear a metal chastity belt (a practice more common amongst *Vairāgīs*); while others lie on a bed of nails (a practice far less common today than even in the 1970s). Particularly at *melā*-s, *sādhu*-s may be seen supporting large weights (usually rocks) tied to the genitals; while some *Daśanāmī*s hang upside-down (*ūrdh-mukhī*) for some time on a wooden contraption that supports the feet. Long periods of immersion in water (*jal-śayyī*), particularly the river Gaṅgā, are undertaken on a regular basis by some *sādhu*-s. Another, and it seems ancient, form of *tapas* is the *pañcāgnitapasyā*. For performing

general public perception that a *sādhu*-’s powers, accumulated from *tapasyā*, are real—and they are feared—though attitudes to *sādhu*-s vary widely. While in north India *sādhu*-s are generally revered—particularly by villagers—sometimes almost as a form (*mūrti*) of deity,⁴⁵ *sādhu*-s who have toured south India frequently complain of the difficulties they have experienced there.

In distinction from the usual Hindu practice of cremation, when a *saṃnyāsī* dies he is usually buried in a grave (known as a *samādhi*), facing east or north-east, supported on the wooden ‘T-shaped’ frame (*baragan*) that is used for meditation, which maintains the corpse in a seated posture. He is usually buried with some cannabis leaves (*bhāṅg*) and a water-pot gourd. Salt and spices are thrown in to assist the process of putrefaction.⁴⁶ Some time after the burial the *saṃnyāsī*-’s disciples will organise a meal (*bhandārā*) for associated ascetics and Brahmans. Tombs and sometimes temples are erected over the graves of important heads of monasteries (*mahant*-s and *mahāmaṇḍaleśvara*-s) and worship of the *samādhi* continues. *Mahant*-s are occasionally entombed in stone coffins (*taika*) which are thrown into the Ganges, notably in holy places along the river, such as Haridvār, Banaras and Prayāg. Poorer ascetics are sometimes merely thrown into the river Gaṅgā with stones attached to their limbs.⁴⁷

this austerity, the ascetic sits in the noonday sun surrounded, in the first stage, by five heaps of smouldering cow-dung. He utters mantras of the Lord’s name, with the aid of a necklace (*mālā*) hidden under a cloth. In the following stages the number of smouldering fires is then increased to seven, twelve, eighty-four, and ‘innumerable’ fires. In the final stage a fire is lit in a clay pot (known as *kapār*) and placed on the meditating ascetic’s head (*kapār*), leaving him surrounded by fire. This form of *tapasyā* is typically performed for three consecutive summers, usually only by *sādhu*-s of the Rāmānandī order. For pictures of these activities, see Hartsuiker (1993).

⁴⁵ See Gross (1992:161).

⁴⁶ A number of castes use a method for burials similar to that of *saṃnyāsī*-s; for example, the Pisharotis, a settled caste of Kerala (see Ananthakrishna Iyer 1912:143).

⁴⁷ Thurston (1909, Vol. 2:299) reports that a dead *saṃnyāsī*-’s head is broken with a coconut, to facilitate *mokṣa*, and that his body is then wrapped with a red-dish cloth and thrown into the Ganges. A south Indian Brahman *saṃnyāsī*-’s head is also said to be so broken, but his body is buried.

1.2 Caste

Regarding the Brahmanical textual tradition, according to the *Byhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* (4.4.22; 3.5.1), the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (1.2.12), Manu (4.38; 6.97), and the *Kūrma Purāna*, (II.28.2), only Brahmans may renounce. Such is the opinion of the *advaita* commentators, Śaṅkara and Sureśvara, and most mediaeval authors. However, the *Jābāla Upaniṣad* (4)⁴⁸ and *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* (3.61)⁴⁹ maintain that all twice-born (*dvija*: *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*) may renounce. In the mediaeval period, Brahmanical commentators were still undecided as to whether only Brahmans or all twice-born were eligible to renounce,⁵⁰ an ambivalence also apparent amongst more recent commentators.⁵¹ The majority view is that the three higher *varṇa*-s are entitled to *saṃnyāsa*.⁵² However, in the *Viṣṇu Smṛti* (5.115)⁵³ and *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* (2.241) a punishment is specified for those who entertain a *śūdra parivrājaka* in rites for the gods or manes, indicating that, disregarding *varṇa* prescriptions, there were instances of *śūdra* renunciates, which seems to also pertain in more recent times.⁵⁴ In a landmark ruling in 1980 by the Supreme Court, which is frequently reiterated, a *śūdra* has the right to become a *saṃnyāsī*.⁵⁵ The judge-

⁴⁸ See Olivelle (1992).

⁴⁹ See Dutta (1987, Vol. 1).

⁵⁰ See Olivelle (1977:33–34). Vāsudevāśrama, for example, in his *Yatidharmaprakāśa* (composed between 1675 and 1800), expressed both views.

⁵¹ See Sarkar (1958:65).

⁵² See Killingley (1991) for a useful discussion of *varṇa*, *jāti* and caste, and how these categories have been interpreted by several influential commentators.

⁵³ See Jolly (1991).

⁵⁴ Sinha and Saraswati (1978:180) report that an Ācārya Maṇḍaleśvara, Nar-siṃh Giri, had a highly educated disciple from the Kunbi caste (a ‘clean’ *śūdra* caste). Steele (1868:440) remarks that if a person of too inferior a caste has through inadvertence been admitted to the order, should he be discovered he is branded with a hot coin and expelled. However, Thurston (1909, Vol. 2:299) notes that ‘Gōsāyis’ never marry, and that *brāhmaṇa*-s, *kṣatriya*-s, *vaiśya*-s and *śūdra*-s may all become Gōsāyi. Crooke (1896, Vol. 2:260, citing Maclagan, *Panjab Census Report* 1891:112) states that some lineages of Daśanāmīs have lower-caste initiates. Rose (1914, Vol. 3:358) believes that originally only Brahmans were admitted, and that Rājput̄s were subsequently admitted in the recruitment of *nāgā*-s. *Vaiśya*-s, who administered finance, were later admitted, and even men of impure ‘castes’. However, Rose maintains that the order is mostly made up of Brahmans and *kṣatriya*-s, and that caste restrictions concerning commensality are maintained.

⁵⁵ The case (*Krishna Singh v. Mathura Ahir*) ran from 1951 to 1980, and originated from a dispute over a *śūdra saṃnyāsī*-s’ right to inherit property (see Narayanan 1993:286–291).

ment on this case was reached primarily on the basis of custom within a community, which was interpreted as taking legal precedence over the proscriptions of *dharmasāstra* in this regard. After initiation by an *ācārya-guru*, the initiate theoretically loses his previous caste identification. Nevertheless, caste remains an important background element in the life of the *saṃnyāsī*,⁵⁶ as his pre-*saṃnyāsa* caste position is often known by other *saṃnyāsī*-s, higher caste initiates generally being accorded greater respect.

Three of the four *daṇḍī* lineages, namely the Tīrtha, Āśrama and Sarasvatī, initiate only Brahmans⁵⁷ and regard themselves as superior to the *paramahaṃsa*-s and *nāgā*-s. Bhāratīs are to be found amongst both *daṇḍī*-s, *paramahaṃsa*-s and *nāgā*-s, while the non-*daṇḍī* lineages appear to also admit lower-caste initiates. It seems probable that when the *akhārā*-s first formed, most probably between the mid-sixteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries,⁵⁸ lower-caste initiates were admitted as *nāgā*-s to some of the lineages. In accounts of events in northern India during this period it is apparent that it is the names ‘Giri’ (particularly), ‘Purī’ and ‘Bhāratī’ which figure most prominently in *nāgā* armies.⁵⁹ Many of these may have been recruited from lower castes (see Chapter 7).

Amongst the *akhārā*-s, my research has made clear that it is

⁵⁶ Sadānanda Giri (1976:28) maintains that before acceptance for initiation the neophyte is questioned about his caste and religion. Brahmans and *kṣatriya*-s from some parts of India are not accepted, for reasons he has not managed to determine, and ‘Untouchables’ are also excluded.

⁵⁷ See Wilson (1861:197); Oman (1903:161); Anantakrishna Iyer (1930:255); Kane (HDS, Vol. 2:951); Tripathi (1978:64-67); Sinha and Saraswati (1978:69). Hartsuiker (1993:31) claims that Āśramas are of solely Brahman backgrounds, and that Brahmans predominate in the Tīrtha, Bhāratī and Sarasvatī sub-sects. There are five main southern divisions (Pānc-Drāviḍa) of Brahmans, who reside south of the river Narmadā (with the exception of the Gujarati Brahmans who live to its north), and five northern divisions (Pānc-Gauḍa). There are numerous further sub-divisions, and yet further sub-divisions of those. In the south are: Mahārāṣṭra (12 sub-divisions), Tailaṅga (or Āndhra) (8), Drāviḍa (6), Karmāṭak (7) and Gurjara (84). The five northern divisions are the Sārasvat (4), Gauḍ (15), Kānkubja (or Kanaujia or Kānyakubja) (5), Maiṭhila (4) and Uṭkala (3). There have, of course, been extensive migrations of all castes of Brahmans over thousands of years; and caste is sometimes contrived. See Steele (1868:79); Sherring (1872:19–113).

⁵⁸ See Ch. 7.

⁵⁹ See Sarkar (1958). Many *nāgā* Giris figure in Sarkar’s account; also mentioned (p. 266) are three battalions of Purīs and one of Bhāratīs, in the service of the Jodhpur state in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

extremely difficult to determine with any certainty the caste background of many initiates, for the obvious reason that some of them might wish to escape it. However there is a general tendency by informants to emphasise the Brahmanical nature of initiates, some *akhārā*-s, such as the Nirañjanī, claiming that all initiates are Brahmans. The initiate should also be physically fit and without any disabilities, yet it is clear that there are exceptions.⁶⁰ In general, it seems that apart from *daṇḍī samnyāsī*-s, many *sādhu*-s, particularly those wandering, are from lower castes.⁶¹

1.3 Subdivisions within the Daśanāmī order: Daṇḍī

Daṇḍī-s are sometimes referred to as *śāstradhārī*-s ('scripture holders'), or as *daṇḍadhārī*-s, and constitute the monastic wing of the Daśanāmīs.⁶² Many of them have some knowledge of Sanskrit, and their higher caste status is generally recognised (Tripathi 1978:64). They have a reputation for observing convention and conservatism (*rūdhivādī*), usually keep their hair cut short, and often maintain deep caste prejudices.⁶³ They generally disassociate themselves from the Daśanāmīs of the *akhārā*-s, tending to regard only themselves

⁶⁰ Tripathi's (1978:88) survey elicited a figure of 8.4% for *sādhu*-s with disabilities.

⁶¹ The openness of renunciate orders to low-caste initiates varies from order to order. Rāmnāmī *sādhu*-s, for example, are almost exclusively low-caste, while one branch of the usually strictly Brahmanical Śrī-Vaiṣṇavas, the *sāttā ekāki*, were an order of celibate *śūdra* ascetics who performed important ritual service at the Tirupati temple complex in the fifteenth century (Stein 1968:89). Lamb (2002:18 fn. 15) comments that although (*daṇḍī*) *samnyāsī*-s are high-caste, many *nāgā*-s and other wandering *sādhu*-s are low-caste.

⁶² During the Māgh Melā at Allahabad in 2002, I visited camps of *daṇḍī*-s for around ten days, interviewing numerous *sādhu*-s.

⁶³ See Sinha and Saraswati (1978:70): *daṇḍī*-s from one of the five main northern Brahmanical castes neither eat nor reside in the same *maṭha*-s with those from the five main southern Brahmanical castes. Tamils and Keralites do not associate with members of either group of Brahmans. Further, amongst the *gauḍa* Brahmans of Uttar Pradesh there is a further sub-division, the Kānyakubj—from Kanauj, one of the five main divisions of northern Brahmans, see Sherring (1872:23)—and Sāryūpari, who do not dine together in the *maṭha*-s. *Daṇḍī maṭha*-s also maintain certain rules about the succession of the *gaddī*. At the Machlibandar *maṭha*, only a Sāryūpari/Sarjuparia (one of the five main divisions of Kānyakubj Brahmans) can accede, whereas the *daṇḍī maṭha* at Pushkar only appoints Kānyakubj ascetics.

as the ‘true *saṃnyāsī-s*’.⁶⁴ *Daṇḍī-s* take initiation from a guru from a *daṇḍī maṭha*, while *paramahaṃsa-s* usually take initiation from a Mahāmaṇḍāleśvara of an *akhārā*. Common to both the monastic and *nāgā* traditions are a shared understanding of the founding and organising of the sect. Further, at times of initiation the two traditions are united. The two traditions are not entirely distinct, though they are distinguished by their institutional independence and their different roles in India’s political and religious history.

Daṇḍī maṭha-s are nominally affiliated to one of the four (or five) main *maṭha-s* (known as *pīṭha-s*) supposedly established by Śaṅkarācārya. Although *daṇḍī-s* generally acknowledge the affiliation of their *maṭha* to a *pīṭha* with some pride, apart from branch-*maṭha-s* of the main *pīṭha-s*, *daṇḍī maṭha-s* function independently, with no connection to the *pīṭha* to which they may be nominally affiliated.⁶⁵ The greatest concentration of *daṇḍī-s* is to be found in Banaras where they have many *maṭha-s*,⁶⁶ and where between approximately twenty-five and fifty percent of all *daṇḍī-s* are to be found (Sawyer 1993:159), forming approximately one fifth of the ascetic population.⁶⁷ At the Māgh

⁶⁴ I have even heard *daṇḍī-s* remark that “we are not Daśanāmīs”, emphasizing their non-identification with the *akhārā-s*.

⁶⁵ The *daṇḍī-s* whom I have interviewed regard the southern *pīṭha* of Śṛṅgeri as genuine and do not recognise the Kāñcīpuram *pīṭha*.

⁶⁶ Sinha and Saraswati (1978:68–72) report 37 *daṇḍī maṭha-s* in nine of the districts of Banaras, 23 affiliated to the Śāradā *pīṭha*, of Dvārakā, and 14 to the Śṛṅgerī *pīṭha*. Surprisingly, none of the Banaras *daṇḍī maṭha-s* are associated with the Govardhan *pīṭha* of Purī or with the Jyotīr *pīṭha* of Jyośimath. According to the scheme presented in the normative texts of the Daśanāmīs, the *Mathāmnāya*, *Mahānuśasanam* etc., the *maṭha-s* of Banaras should be under the jurisdiction of the Jyotīr *pīṭha* of Jyośimath. Four of the *maṭha-s* claim to have been established before the fifteenth century, whereas 27 were most probably built between 1800 and 1968. Only three *daṇḍī maṭha-s* have been built since Independence, whereas the number of *paramahaṃsa maṭha-s* has significantly increased. Sinha and Saraswati calculate a total resident ascetic population (in distinction from the numerous permanently wandering ascetics) for Banaras as 1,284 (providing a ratio of 1 ascetic for every 250 people in Banaras), of whom *śaiva saṃnyāsī-s* constitute 48.8%. *Daṇḍī-s*, numbering 239, form approximately one fifth of the ascetic population. According to Tripathi (1978:67), in Banaras there are twenty-eight *maṭha-s* managed by *daṇḍī-s* and fifteen managed by *paramahaṃsa-s*. The two groups are said not to be on good terms and do not take meals together.

⁶⁷ Sawyer (1993:163), notes that *maṭha-s* continually change, sometimes expanding and becoming more prominent—with new branches being established—under a dynamic head; or alternatively, rapidly declining after the demise of an influential leader. Many of the *maṭha-s* included in Appendix 2 of Sinha and Saraswati’s book

Melā⁶⁸ in Allahabad in 2002, around seventy *daṇḍī maṭha*-s were camped, the largest camp being that of the Machlībandar (‘fish-monkey’) Maṭh which was represented by the six *maṭha*-s it owns in Banaras, where it has its headquarters.⁶⁹

Daṇḍī-s have usually been householders before becoming *saṃnyāsī*-s, and on initiation to the order—but before the final rite of *saṃnyāsa*—they are given one of four *brahmacārī* names; either Svarūp, Prakāśa, Ānanda or Caitanya. The name given usually depends on which of the four main *pīṭha*-s the *maṭha*—via which the candidate was initiated—is nominally affiliated to. *Daṇḍī*-s will have been initiated by a *daṇḍī* guru, usually a Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara, but in rare cases directly by a Śaṅkarācārya at one of the four important *pīṭha*-s.

1.4 Paramahaṃsa

Like all Daśanāmīs, *paramahaṃsa*-s⁷⁰ acknowledge that Śaṅkara founded four *pīṭha*-s, yet, similarly to the *daṇḍī*-s, their affiliation to a *pīṭha* has virtually no practical relevance. However, their affiliation to an *akhārā* is significant,⁷¹ as it derives either from their own *saṃnyāsa* initiation—performed by a Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara of an *akhārā*—or from a historical connection, via the *paramparā* of their guru, whose own guru or guru’s guru may have been in an *akhārā*. *Paramahaṃsa*-s generally reside in *maṭha*-s that have little connection or no connection with the life of the *akhārā*, and apart from some

no longer exist, while new institutions have arisen since the time of their study. Sawyer (1993:171) maintains that the largest *daṇḍī maṭha* in Banaras is the Mumukṣu Bhavan, established in 1929 by Svāmī Ghanaśyāmānanda. In response to various enquiries, I was informed, albeit unreliably, that there are perhaps 10,000 to 15,000 *daṇḍī-saṃnyāsī*-s in India today.

⁶⁸ For details of both the Māgh Melā and Kumbh Melā, see Appendix 3.

⁶⁹ The name ‘Machlībandar’ derives from a story about the land which is the headquarters of the *maṭha* in Nagva, Banaras. (At one time it was a jungle, with monkeys and fish-ponds.) The *maṭha* has a total of fifteen properties, six in Banaras, and others at Haridvār, Sītāpur, Citrakūt, Dādri (Haryana), Karnal (Haryana) Kurukṣetra and Kānpur. The current chief guru is Kailāśa Bhusār Āśrama.

⁷⁰ In a number of classical texts, *paramahaṃsa* is a term also used, in an idealised sense, to refer to the highest category of renouncer (see Ch. 3.4).

⁷¹ Sinha and Saraswati found that the 296 *paramahaṃsa*-s of Banaras are affiliated to three *akhārā*-s, the Jūnā, Nirañjanī and Nirvāṇī (or Mahānirvāṇī), over 50% belonging to the Nirvāṇī *akhārā*.

few *paramahaṃsa*-s who may participate in the life of an *akhārā* with a view to becoming *nāgā*—which requires a further initiatory rite—the inclusion of *paramahaṃsa*-s in the ‘military wing’ of the Daśanāmīs simply stems from their initiation from an *akhārā*. Although not usually involved, *paramahaṃsa*-s may actively participate in the life of the *akhārā* on certain occasions, such as during *bhaṇḍārā*-s (communal feasts with the distribution of alms), which may be for a single *akhārā* or for several together. They take place on particular holy days and when an ascetic succeeds to the *gaddī* of the *maṭha*, during which rite the successor is presented with a scarf (*cādar*) by the *sādhu*-s present.

The *paramahaṃsa*-s have the greatest number of ascetics and *maṭha*-s in Banaras, the *maṭha*-s comprising one fifth of all the *maṭha*-s there (Sinha and Saraswati 1978:72–81).⁷² Seven of the *paramahaṃsa maṭha*-s admit women *sādhu*-s (also known as *avadhūtīn*),⁷³ two of which are exclusively female, five being mixed male and female. All the *mā*-s are reported to come from Bengal and Nepal. The author’s field-work has established that some also come from the Kumaun area of Uttaranchal. In contrast to the *daṇḍī*-s of Banaras, who run only one educational institution, the Dharma Saṅgha Śikṣā Maṇḍala, which is in decline, the *paramahaṃsa*-s run five Sanskrit *pāṭhaśālā*-s.⁷⁴ The significance of the prestigious role, financial viability and expansive programme of *paramahaṃsa* educational institutions in the context of recent Daśanāmī history can be understood against the background of the militant history of the *akhārā*-s, and the curtailment of their activities. It seems that some individuals who had been actively involved in the mercenary activities of the *akhārā*-s had accumulated considerable

⁷² There are fifty-seven *paramahaṃsa maṭha*-s, none of them established before the fifteenth century, over 82% appearing between 1800 and 1968, and thirty-nine instituted since independence. Of all the various ascetic institutions of Banaras (see Appendix 1), the *paramahaṃsa* is the fastest growing, a new *maṭha* being founded, on average, every two years.

⁷³ This term is sometimes used derogatorily, as an *avadhūtīn* is traditionally the female partner of a Tantric practitioner.

⁷⁴ The oldest and most efficient is the Saṃnyāsī Saṃskṛta Mahāvīdyālaya, run by the Aparnāth *maṭha* and established in 1906 by Svāmī Gobindānandajī Maṇḍaleśvara. The students who have passed through this institution include not only *saṃnyāsī*-s but also students from the Sikh-derived Udāsin and Nirmala orders. Many of the *saṃnyāsī*-s have become eminent Maṇḍaleśvaras. Sinha and Saraswati (1978:78) note that in 1957, when the institution celebrated its Golden Jubilee, it emerged that practically all the Maṇḍaleśvaras of that time had been its students.

wealth, which was then channelled into land and property. Around the beginning of the twentieth century educational institutions were first established, as part of a process of reforming the general ethos of the *paramahansa*-s and the *akhārā*-s, particularly in the Gangetic heartland of their activities. At that time, some of the *paramahansa*-s were well-known as businessmen and landlords (see Ch. 7).

The inheritance of a *maṭha*, which is invariably attached to a temple, is usually decided by the reigning *mahant*, his decision committed in writing or announced in the witness of others. If the *mahant* dies suddenly, the issue may be settled by the mutual consent of the disciples. However, Sinha and Saraswati (1978:74ff.) comment that practically every *maṭha* in Banaras, of whatever denomination, has been involved in legal disputes at one time or another over property.⁷⁵ They also note that *mahant*-s often have histories of affiliations and initiations into more than one *akhārā*,⁷⁶ sometimes as a consequence of internal disagreements. Kane (HDŚ, Vol. 2:972–973) also records several of the numerous legal disputes that have engaged *saṁnyāsī*-s over the centuries.⁷⁷ Regarding the trusteeship of *maṭha*-s and the required comportment of the *mahant*, there is now a code for religiously endowed properties, enshrined in the *Madras Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment Act* of 1959.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ See Katju (1961:233–245) for a lively account of his professional involvement as a lawyer with several cases involving property disputes between *maṭha*-s and *mahant*-s.

⁷⁶ Confirmed by the author.

⁷⁷ Derrett (1974:67) also comments on the frequency with which disputes over the property of *maṭha*-s end up in court. Kane (HDŚ, Vol. 2:910–911) cites the remark of Sir T. Strange (*Hindu Law*, Vol. 1, 1839:32) that “Hindu law is meagre in its provisions relating to religious endowments”, observing that in modern times however, courts of India have laid down that an idol is a juridical person capable of holding property, and that an idol or a *maṭha* is in the trusteeship of the manager of the temple or of the *mahant*. Taylor (2001:50) remarks that legal cases, known as ‘debutter’ cases, concerning the *devatā* (the technical owner of the temple or property) and the *śebait* (usually a priest, standing as the surrogate legal owner on the divinity’s behalf) were extremely frequent at the beginning of the twentieth century in the civil litigation before the Calcutta High Court.

⁷⁸ Mahant-ship and the *maṭha* are not alienable or partible, but the *mahant* may be removed on the following grounds: 1. Being of unsound mind; 2. Suffering from a mental or physical defect that renders him unfit to be a trustee; 3. Having ceased to profess the Hindu religion; 4. Being convicted of an offence of moral turpitude; 5. Breaching the trust bestowed upon him in respect of any of the properties under that trust; 6. Misappropriating or wasting funds on purposes or properties unconnected with the institution; 7. Diverting funds intended for the benefit of the institution; 6.

1.5 ‘Paramahaṃsa’ and ‘Daśanāmī’ as categories

A tripartite division amongst the Daśanāmīs has been discussed. However, it needs to be considered that in some instances there are branches of *saṃnyāsī*-s and Daśanāmīs that are but tangentially connected with the core Daśanāmī tradition. By way of illustration, there are other *maṭha*-s in Banaras founded in the name of well-known *paramahaṃsa*-s, notably Tailaṅga Svāmī and Harihar Bābā, but disciples of those orders are not recognised as either Daśanāmīs or as *paramahaṃsa*-s. Similarly, the final initiation—leading to his *nirvikalpa-samādhi*—of the famous Bengali Tantric, Gadādhara Caṭṭopādhyāya (1836–1886), who was given the name Rāmakṛṣṇa Paramahaṃsa, was performed by Toṭa Purī, who, it is believed, belonged to the Mahānirvāṇī *akhārā*. However, the order of *saṃnyāsī*-s founded by Rāmakṛṣṇa’s chief disciple, Svāmī Vivekānanda, has no sectarian connection to the Daśanāmīs.⁷⁹ On this point, there is some need to examine briefly the notion of ‘sectarian connection’ and by implication the categories of ‘Daśanāmī’ and ‘*paramahaṃsa*’.

In terms of self-identification, it is primarily the *paramparā*, the *guru-śiṣya* relationship—the ‘vertical’ order—that is paramount within the Indian tradition in general, and the renunciatory environment in particular. An initiate may be vague or unclear as to what the identificatory parameters of his or her sect, or branch of a sect, may be, while certain about their *guru-paramparā*. As an example, we might consider the Daśanāmī *saṃnyāsī*-s of the Haṇḍiyā Bābā Yogālaya.⁸⁰ When asked about which kind of *sādhu* they are, they will usually say “Daśanāmī” or “*saṃnyāsī*”, invariably qualifying this statement with the remark that they are devotees of Haṇḍiyā⁸¹ Bābā,

Conducting an immoral life or behaving in a manner likely to bring his office into contempt; 8. Persistent and wilful default in discharging his duties or performing his functions under the act or any other law (Singh 1998:90–91).

⁷⁹ Although Vivekānanda publicly identified himself as a monk of the “oldest order of *saṃnyāsī*-s...founded by Śaṅkara”, there is no record of Vivekānanda ever formally taking *saṃnyāsa*. Further, he initiated all his *gurubhātī*-s himself (in January 1887), with no links to religious structures or authorities of any sort, telling them that they were neither householders, nor exactly *saṃnyāsī*-s, but “quite a new type” (Michelis 2004:79, 108, 112).

⁸⁰ At Trivenī Bandh, Allahabad.

⁸¹ *Haṇḍiyā* means ‘small clay pot’, which Haṇḍiyā Bābā always carried and in which he collected alms. By all accounts he was a great *yogī* who lived simply for

who died in 1954.⁸² Further, some *sādhu*-s, but not all, informed me that they were “[a member of] the Jūnā *akhārā*”. The current disciples of Haṇḍiyā Bābā took direct initiation into *saṃnyāsa* from their guru, Biṣṇudevānand, who in turn was initiated by Haṇḍiyā Bābā. It seems most probable, though I was unable to establish this, that Yogānandsarasvatī (the guru of the Mahārāja of Darbhāṅga) was initiated into the Jūnā *akhārā*, and hence the current identification with the Jūnā *akhārā*, even though the current disciples of Haṇḍiyā Bābā have not been initiated by, nor do they have anything to do with, the Jūnā *akhārā*. Thus, in terms of their own self-identification, the *saṃnyāsī*-s will say that they are Daśanāmī and, perhaps, Jūnā *akhārā*, as their lineage traces back through the Jūnā *akhārā*. However, the disciples of Haṇḍiyā Bābā were not initiated via an *akhārā* or a *daṇḍī maṭha*, nor are they Daśanāmī *daṇḍī*-s, *paramahansa*-s or *nāgā*-s, criteria outsiders may use for identifying Daśanāmī *saṃnyāsī*-s. Yet the disciples’ claim to being Daśanāmī is, in their view, legitimised through lineage.

Another example, of which there are many, of a *saṃnyāsī* lineage which traces its ancestry to Śaṅkarācārya, and which might be similarly described as Daśanāmī, is the lineage of the Kailās Āśram, founded in 1880 at Muni-kī-Reti, Rṣikeś. The current lineage derives from Svāmī Dhanrāj Giri, who was born in 1871 (Tulī 2001:5). The resident Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara performs traditional Brahmanical rites of initiation for the disciples, who are usually Sanskrit students. After the first initiation, as Brahmācārī, they keep the top-knot, wear the sacred thread and do *jaḥa*. In the second initiation they perform the *virajā-havan* and have their top-knot removed; they are now unquestionably *saṃnyāsī*-s, and many have one of the ‘ten names’.⁸³

around fifty years near Triveṇī Bandh, feeding people when he could and teaching *haṭha-yoga* techniques for curing the sick. For an account of his life and legacy, see Bishnudevānand (1977).

⁸² His *samādhi* was erected in that year, around which an *āśrama* has been constructed. The resident *saṃnyāsī*-s of the *āśrama* perform daily observances and meditation at the *samādhi*. Haṇḍiyā Bābā learned *yoga* from Yogānandsarasvatī, who was guru to the Mahārāja of Darbhāṅga, Bihar, and had four disciples: Biṣṇudevānandsarasvatī, Bhagvatānandsarasvatī, Sahajānandsarasvatī and Punyānandsarasvatī. Biṣṇudevānandsarasvatī is said to have initiated twenty-five men, five of whom were his main disciples. Two of those, Sadānand and Śāntānand, manage the property on the Triveṇī Bandh, In Daraganj, Allahabad. (Two other properties, one nearby and one in the Banda District of Uttar Pradesh, are affiliated.)

⁸³ For information on the traditions of the Kailās Āśram, see Vidyānand Giri (1993).

Sarkar (1958:94) mentions several Daśanāmī institutions, including the Gītā Mandir, established at Ahmadabad, Baṛaudā and other cities by Svāmī Vidyānanda, who was a *nāgā* of the Nirvāṇī *akhārā*,⁸⁴ a *maṭha* at Amṛtsār, founded by Svāmī Kṛṣṇānanda, and a *maṭha* founded at Kaṅkhal by Svāmī Bhagavatānanda, who joins the *nāgā*-s of the Nirvāṇī *akhārā* at Kumbh Melās. The main connections that tie all these institutions together are linkages of *guru-paramparā*-s at times of initiation, initiates of one institution frequently being initiated by a guru from another institution.

1.6 Nāgā

During the first stage of initiation, Daśanāmīs are usually given one of the ‘ten names’.⁸⁵ *Paramahaṃsa*-s may then take a further initiation to become a *nāgā* of an *akhārā*. *Akhārā* is a technical name for the institutions governing the *nāgā*-s, and also has the sense of ‘wrestling ring’ and ‘military formation’, where *nāgā*-s train for fighting. These arenas are separate from the large network of traditional wrestling *akhārā*-s which are training institutions with their own history, gurus and organisation.⁸⁶ A distinguishing feature of life in several of the *nāgā* *akhārā*-s, notably the Jūnā *akhārā*, is the consumption of very large quantities of cannabis, either smoked with tobacco in a *cilam* (‘clay pipe’), or eaten or drunk in the form of *bhāṅg*, a preparation of the leaves of the plant.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ The organisation has a press, Gītā Dharma Press, at Banaras.

⁸⁵ However, an exception are Daśanāmīs from the Agnī *akhārā*, (one of the seven Daśanāmī *akhārā*-s), who do not ever take one of the ‘ten names’. Similarly to the *daṇḍī*-s, they are given one of the four *brahmacārī* names (Svarūp, Prakāśa, Ānanda or Caitanya), depending on nominal *pīṭha* affiliation.

⁸⁶ See Alter (1992) for an account of Indian wrestling. There are around 150 *akhārā*-s in Banaras, and around 20 to 30 in surrounding areas. The larger *akhārā*-s have 50 to 60 members, most wrestlers being relatively low-caste. *Akhārā*-s specialise in different techniques, such as weights, clubs or maces. The wrestlers’ patron deity is Hanumān.

⁸⁷ The cannabis is smoked either in the form of dried buds of the female plant (*gāñjā*), which is grown in many regions of the subcontinent, or in the form of a resin (*caras*), rubbed by hand from the buds of the female plant. *Caras* is made almost exclusively in the Indian and Nepalese Himalayas. The term *hashish* (for cannabis) is used, traditionally, only by Muslims, and refers to a different preparation of the resin of the plant, which is manufactured with the use of sieves. *Nāgā*-s typically

At Kumbh Melās, Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras and usually one or more of the reigning Śaṅkarācāryas preside over *saṃnyāsa* initiations at large formal ceremonies. However, many Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras are not affiliated to the seven *akhārā*-s of the Daśanāmī order. Most are the heads of *āśrama*-s located in north India.⁸⁸ Around two hundred Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras attended the 2001 Kumbh Melā but only four or five dozen are affiliated to the Daśanāmī *akhārā*-s. Several informants maintained that there were more than thirty Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras affiliated to the Mahānirvāṇī *akhārā*, the largest number for any of the *akhārā*-s. Those Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras who are affiliated to the *akhārā*-s, and those who specifically preside over initiations in the role of *ācārya-guru*,⁸⁹ have very little to do with the activities or organisation of the *akhārā*-s, only being consulted in extreme or unusual circumstances. Many, however, will have spent time as a *sādhu* in an *akhārā* before becoming established as a Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara in charge of an institution.

Traditionally, *nāgā* initiation was three years (but sometimes between two and twelve years) after the *saṃnyāsa* initiation. After *saṃnyāsa* but before being *nāgā*, a *saṃnyāsī* within an *akhārā* is known as a *vastradhārī* ('wearer of cloth'). This is in distinction from the *nāgā*-s who are traditionally naked, only covered with ash from the *dhūnī*.⁹⁰ These days, however, most wear loin-cloths in public, and many wear cloth of the traditional *saṃnyāsī* orange, or sometimes black.

begin smoking heavily at 4.00 or 5.00 a.m. After noon, they usually rest for few hours, resuming smoking in the late afternoon, until evening or the early hours of the morning. Usually, they do not smoke for a couple of hours after eating.

⁸⁸ A survey of most of the camps of the Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras at the Allahabad Kumbh Melā in 2001 revealed that their main *āśrama*-s are most commonly situated in Delhi, Haridvār, Kaṅkhal, Rṣikeś, Banaras, Allahabad, Ujjain and Citrakūt.

⁸⁹ In most Sanskrit colleges there are five grades: Entrance; First; Intermediate; Śāstrī; Ācārya. The title of the Ācārya Guru derives from his Sanskrit qualification.

⁹⁰ The 'holy ash' worn by *nāgā*-s is known as *vibhūti* (also meaning 'majesty', 'dignity' or 'superhuman power'), or *bhabhūt*, or *bhasm(a)*. Besides its religious associations, ash protects against the cold and wards off insects. Although *nāgā*-s may use ash straight from a *dhūnī* in which no 'unclean' wood (such as bamboo, which causes itching) has been burnt, 'pure' *bhasm* is made from the faeces of cows grazing in the forest. The dried cow-pats are burned, and the ash is mixed with water and filtered through cloth. The water and fine-ash mixture is then left to stand for the night, after which the water is decanted. The remaining, soggy ash is shaped into balls or lumps, which are placed in a pit walled with other cow-pats, and burned again. The resultant ash is a fine, whitish powder.

The *vibhūti* from their *dhūmī*-s is one of the most common offerings to visiting devotees or pilgrims, who generally believe in its magical and restorative properties. These days, *nāgā* initiation usually occurs a day or two after the *saṃnyāsa* initiation. It is performed, usually at a Kumbh Melā, by a *mahant* belonging to the *akhārā* to which the *nāgā* will be affiliated. *Nāgā*-s train, to a limited extent, in weapons, fighting and wrestling⁹¹ in an *akhārā*. The occasion of the Kumbh Melā is the preeminent event in the calendar of the Daśanāmīs, particularly for the *akhārā*-s, when initiations and important meetings take place and decisions relating to the activities of the *akhārā* are made. During a crisis, such as when a *mahant* dies, the members of the *akhārā* will meet and attempt to settle any dispute, which is frequent, over succession or acquisition of the *maṭha* he previously occupied.

In Banaras, Sinha and Saraswati (1978:82) survey a total of twenty-four *nāgā* centres (*akhārā*-s),⁹² which are found to house ninety-one ascetics, who are members of one of the seven major *akhārā*-s. The *akhārā*-s with the largest membership are the Jūnā and Nīrvāṇī with membership of thirty-three and nineteen respectively. These are followed by the Ānanda (fourteen), Agni (ten), Āvāhan (six), Nirañjanī (five), Aṭal (two) and, curiously, Gūdaṛa (two).⁹³ A total of six female *nāgā*-s are reported, three belonging to the Jūnā *akhārā*⁹⁴ and three belonging to the Ānanda *akhārā*.⁹⁵ Five of the female *nāgā*-s (or *avad-*

⁹¹ Martial training also has a long history in Kerala. The art of *kalari-payattu* was first systematised by Brahmans and *ksatriya*-s around the eleventh century, during a period of wars between the Ceras, Cōḷas and Paṇḍyas. The *kalari* (practice arena) is presided over by between seven and twenty-seven deities, including one or more forms of the goddess (usually either Bhadrakālī or Bhagavatī), Śiva-Śakti combined, Gaṇapatī, past gurus who go back to Paraśurāma and Droṇa, Hanumān, Ayyappan, and local heroes or ancestors (Zarrilli 1998:67–78).

⁹² Fourteen were founded between 1800 and 1968, five trace their origin to the sixteenth or seventeenth century. Five claim to have been founded between the ninth and eleventh centuries, though these early dates seem highly improbable (see Ch. 7).

⁹³ The Gūdaṛa *akhārā* is recorded as having two male ascetics. The mention of this *akhārā* is anomalous as I have found no record of it either in other published sources or during interviews conducted in the field. It is not currently a recognised Daśanāmī *akhārā*. Its identity is analysed in the following chapter.

⁹⁴ A woman *nāgā* (originally of French descent) of the Jūnā *akhārā*, named Santos Giri, has run an *āśrama* near Porbandar (Gujarat) for many years. She was initiated by a Śaṅkarācārya and is well known in the area. I have not visited her.

⁹⁵ Female membership of the Ānanda *akhārā* is not in evidence currently. Contemporary female *nāgā*-s belong exclusively to the Jūnā *akhārā*.

hūtin-s) are reported to have come from Nepal and one from Bengal. All were aged over thirty-five, and in the *akhārā-s* of Banaras they were residing with the males.⁹⁶

The *akhārā-s* are organised according to what is called the *pañcāyatī* system, meaning that the organisation is run by elected representatives. One may see at the gateway of all *akhārā-s* throughout India the prefix ‘*Śrī pañc ... akhārā*’. Although Sinha and Saraswati (1978:196) acknowledge that succession to the leadership of the *akhārā* is through lineage—being in accordance with the mutual *marhī* (lineage)⁹⁷ of the guru and successor—they also make a substantial claim about the democratic nature of the *akhārā-s*, stating that in this organisation no decision, great or small, may be taken by a single person of whatever rank, age or personal achievement. As an example, a letter addressed to the *thānāpati*⁹⁸ is opened only in the presence of two other ascetics.

According to Sadānanda Giri (1976:27), in the *akhārā-s* the relationship between *nāgā-s* and their gurus is described as the relationship of *siddha-sādhaka*. He claims that it differs somewhat from the *guru-celā* relationship found in some other sects, whereby the disciple is exclusively devoted to the guru, also claiming that in the Daśanāmī *akhārā-s* no one is formally a disciple of anyone else. *Daṇḍī-s*, who are outside the *akhārā*, and those of the Agni *akhārā* (one of the seven *akhārā-s*), specifically maintain the *guru-celā* relationship, and the usual hierarchy of guru and disciple. In the other *akhārā-s*, however, the initiating *saṃnyāsī* does not, in the technical terminology employed by the *akhārā-s*, become the guru of the initiate, the term ‘*guru*’ being reserved for the presiding deity of the *akhārā*. A *nāgā* is usually attached to a senior ascetic who becomes his *sādhaka-guru*. The *siddha-sādhaka* relationship means that the disciple serves a *siddha-guru*, supplying water, sweeping, offering *pūjā* and so on. In return, the *siddha-guru* looks after the well-being of the aspirant.

Notwithstanding the sometimes fierce independence of the *nāgā-s*, in practice, besides the unique arrangement amongst ascetic organisa-

⁹⁶ Sinha and Saraswati report, somewhat confusingly, that one *akhārā* is occupied exclusively by female *nāgā-s*, but supply no further information. It is most probable that females referred to are those in the female branch of the Jūnā *akhārā*.

⁹⁷ *Marhī* is a technical term for a subdivision within the *akhārā* (see Ch. 2.2).

⁹⁸ One of the more important officials within the *akhārā* with a responsibility, amongst others, for the welfare of the tutelary deity of the *akhārā* (see below).

tions for the democratic election of *mahant*-s and other officials—which takes place during Kumbh Melā,⁹⁹ and which is a distinguishing feature of *nāgā* social life—the important social structures within the *akhārā*-s are hierarchical.¹⁰⁰ While *paramahansa*-s and junior *nāgā*-s may serve other *nāgā samnyāsī*-s or *mahant*-s, and this relationship may not be on a unique basis as in some renunciate sects, all *paramahansa*-s and *nāgā*-s have their own gurus to whom they afford the highest respect. It is not the case that no one is the guru of anyone else, even though the arrangements and hierarchy of service within the Daśanāmī order may differ somewhat from other orders. In practice, the *samnyāsī* usually has five gurus, to whom he usually refers as ‘guru’, including a *digambara-guru* if he is a *nāgā*. (A *nāgā* is also referred to as *digambara*.)¹⁰¹ The highest respect to a human guru is accorded to someone who is sometimes known as the *samnyāsī*-’s *siddha-guru*, whom he may encounter at any point along the renunciate path. Although several commentators have been cited who claim that the *akhārā*-s function, essentially, in a non-hierarchical way, it is evident that clear hierarchies of both spiritual and practical authority operate between *nāgā*-s and within the *akhārā*-s.

In general, *nāgā*-s do not beg for alms. While some are actively engaged in various forms of minor business, such as selling herbal medicines or religious articles such as *rudrākṣa* seeds, some few others have semi-clandestine businesses. However, it should be emphasised that business is pursued by but a small percentage of *nāgā*-s and that stipends are paid to all *nāgā*-s, usually by the *thānāpati* of the *nāgā*-’s *akhārā*. As a consequence of a combination of mercenary, banking, smuggling and other mercantile activity—which is outlined in Chapter

⁹⁹ Witnessed by the author at the 2001 Kumbh Melā.

¹⁰⁰ Dazey (1987:557; 1990:309) also endorses Sinha and Saraswati’s suggestion that relationships within the *akhārā*-s are democratic and non-hierarchical, noting that the *nāgā*-s are *guru-bhai*-s (‘brothers’) under a guru, but the real guru of the *akhārā* is the presiding deity of the *akhārā*. However, Dazey (1987:542–544) also maintains that “the practice of maintaining a sacred *dhūnī* fire (for cooking and oblations) is unique to the *nāgā*-s among the Daśanāmī renunciants”: the “formless guru” of the *akhārā* is said to be the *dhūnī*. While it is true that the *dhūnī* is generally regarded as holy, and prayers made to it, one only has to spend a short time in any *akhārā* to see both the clear hierarchical ordering amongst *nāgā*-s and *mahant*-s and also the enormous respect accorded to the human gurus within the *akhārā*.

¹⁰¹ *Digambara* (lit. ‘sky-clad’) meaning ‘naked’ (as does *nāgā*), is an epithet of Śiva and also the name of one of the two main branches of Jainism (see Dundas 2002).

7—the *saṃnyāsī akhārā*-s had, by the middle of the nineteenth century, accumulated extensive properties and large sums of money. Many princely states, such as Kacch, Jodhpur, Bāṛaudā, Indore and Gvalior used to pay money to the *akhārā*-s for services rendered in protecting local interests in conflict with external aggressors. Substantial income is still generated these days from the land held by the *akhārā*-s, the structures of which are the main focus of the following chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

AKHĀḌĀ-S AND DAŚANĀMĪ FUNCTIONARIES

2.1 *The akhārā-s*

While Daśanāmī *daṇḍī-s* are affiliated to their own monastic *maṭha-s*, the other wing of the Daśanāmīs (comprising *paramahaṃsa-s* and *nāgā-s*) are affiliated to one of the seven extant Daśanāmī *akhārā-s*. In this chapter, the overall hierarchy of the Daśanāmī *akhārā-s* will be considered, and some brief comparisons with *akhārā-s* of other orders will also be noted. It is apparent that the Daśanāmī *akhārā-s* have a radically different background to that of the monastic tradition, illustrated in their mercenary activities and inter-sectarian conflicts during the previous four centuries.¹

Most *akhārā* members are *nāgā*, the formation and functioning of the *akhārā-s* being fully evident at Kumbh Melās.² At the Allahabad Kumbh Melā, 2001, a total of thirteen *akhārā-s* were represented. These are the extant *akhārā-s* of the subcontinent.³ Seven of these are the *śaiva* Daśanāmī *akhārā-s*, namely the Nirañjanī, Jūnā, Mahānirvāṇī, Ānanda, Āvāhan, Aṭal and Agni.⁴ Besides these, there

¹ See Ch. 7.

² The Kumbh Melā, the largest festival on earth, is attended by the majority of *sādhu-s* of all orders. While there is evidence—for the last 1500 years—of the periodic gathering of ascetics at what have become the four sites of the Kumbh Melā (Haridvār, Ujjain, Allahabad and Nāsik), it seems that the linking of the four sites (as sites of the Kumbh Melā), and the supporting mythology and astrology, is probably not more than around 130 years old. See Bonazzoli (1977); Bhattacharya (1977); Dubey (1988); and, particularly, Maclean (2001; 2003). Appendix 3 of this book reviews the work of these and other scholars.

³ Sarkar (1958:107) cites a report by Mr. T. Benson on the Kumbh Mela of 1882. He describes six “sects” of *akhārā-s* that were present: 1. Nirvāṇī *nāgā gosain-s*; 2. Nirañjanī, associated with the Jūnā; 3. Three sects of Vairāgī; 4. Choṭā Udāsin; 5. Baṛā Udāsin, with the Bandhua (?) *akhārā*. 6. Nirmala, with the Vṛndāvanī (?).

⁴ Members of some of the *akhārā-s* may sometimes be identified by hairstyle, the Nirañjanī tying their *jaṭā* (dreadlocks) in the middle, the Jūnā on the left, and the Nirvāṇī on the right.

are three *vaiṣṇava anī*-s:⁵ the Digambara, Nirvāṇī⁶ and Nirmohi, all of which are of the Rāmānandī order.⁷ (Rāmānandī *tyāgī*-s⁸ are also

⁵ In *vaiṣṇava* terminology the equivalent of a Daśanāmī *akhārā* is referred to as *anī* ('army corps'), *akhārā* referring to a sub-division of an *anī*.

⁶ This *akhārā* should not be confused with the Mahānirvāṇī Daśanāmī *akhārā* which is also sometimes referred to as the Nirvāṇī *akhārā*.

⁷ The Rāmānandī *sampradāya* is constituted of both lay and *sādhu* communities, and is one of the four current *vaiṣṇava sampradāya*-s (*catuḥ sampradāya*), a classification of four *vaiṣṇava* orders that has changed twice during the last four centuries. Since 1938, when the Rāmānandīs split from the Rāmānujas, the four *vaiṣṇava sampradāya*-s have been constituted as follows (confirmed during fieldwork in 2001).

- 1) Śrī (or Rāmānuja or Nāthamuni) / Caudah [=14] Bhāi Mahā-Tyāgī.
- 2) Rāmānandī (or Dakor).
- 3) Harbyāsī (or Nimbārka/Sanakādī) / Bārah [=12] Bhāi Daṇḍiya.
- 4) Śyāmānandī (or Gauḍīya/Madhva) / Terah [=13] Bhāi Tyāgī.

The current formation of the *catuḥ-sampradāya*-s does not correspond to the formation to be found in the important Rāmānandī hagiographical text, *Bhaktamāla*, by Nābhādāsa (Nābhā-jī), written at the behest of Agra Dāsa (disciple of Payahārī Kṛṣṇa Dāsa, who was a disciple of Rāmānanda) in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. According to Pollet (1963:11), this was between 1595 and 1624; according to Varma (1977:5), 1585; according to Snell (1991:12), possibly before 1585. In the *Bhaktamāla* (v. 28, 1.1–5), the four *sampradāya*-s are attributed to Rāmānuja, Viṣṇusvāmī, Nimbāditya and Madhvācārya. Instead of the Rāmānandī *sampradāya*, the Viṣṇusvāmī is listed as one of the four *sampradāya*-s (see Pollet 1963:74, 168); it is now defunct. The Viṣṇusvāmīs (Rudra *sampradāya*) were almost entirely absorbed into the newer Vallabhacārī order (Gokulāstha *sampradāya*). Van der Veer's (1998:110) account of the current relationship between the 'Tyāgīs', 'Mahātyāgīs' and the Terah/Bārah Bhāīs is slightly inaccurate, as it is based on earlier accounts of the *catuḥ sampradāya*-s as found in the *Bhaktamāla*. A link between the Gauḍīya lineage of Caitanya (1486–1533) and the Madhva *sampradāya* seems to have been established only in the eighteenth century, by Bāladeva Vidyabhuṣana (Dimock 1963:106). A total of eight sects (of followers Rāmānuja, Haridāsa, Madhva, Nimbārka, Viṣṇusvāmī, Rāmānanda, Vallabha and Caitanya) were absorbed into the scheme of the *catuḥ-sampradāya* in different stages. For an overview of the *catuḥ-sampradāya*-s see Clémentin-Ojha (1992). For an interpretation of the conflict between the Rāmānandīs and the Rāmānujīs, which first began in 1918 and led to the most recent reclassification of the *catuḥ sampradāya*, see Pinch (1998).

The *catuḥ sampradāya*-s were organised into systems of *dvāra*-s, *anī*-s and *akhārā*-s under the leadership of Bābā Abhay Rām Dās in 1720, according to Sharma (1998:128–135). However, Thiel-Horstmann (unpublished paper cited by van der Veer 1988:136) believes the organisation took place in two steps during four successive conferences, in Vṇdāvan (c.1713), Brahmāpūri (Jaipur) (c.1726), Jaipur (1734), and Galta (east of Jaipur) (1756). It was Bālānand who probably organised the army of *nāgā*-s (*rāmḍāl*) for service to Madho Singh, regent of Jaipur. The 52 *dvāra*-s ('door'/'gate') or *gaddī*-s—which are essentially lineages—are assigned to places throughout India and mirror not only the 52 *maḥī*-s of the Daśanāmī *akhārā*-s (see Ch. 2.2), but also the 52 phonemes of the Sanskrit alphabet, the 52 *śākta-pīṭha*-s, and the legendary 52 clans of *kṣatriya*-s of Maharashtra. "52 *varṇa*-s and 18 *jāti*-s"

referred to as Bairāgī or Vairāgī). The other three (of the thirteen) extant *akhārā*-s are affiliated to the Sikh tradition. Two of these are Udāsin *akhārā*-s, the Baṛā (large) Udāsin (or Baṛāpañcāyatī Udāsin) and the Choṭā (small) Udāsin (or Nayāpañcāyatī Udāsin). The other Sikh-affiliated *akhārā* is the Nirmala *akhārā*. Both the Udāsin *akhārā*-s and the Nirmala *akhārā* are sects which have historical connections with the Sikh movement but which nowadays function as independent organisations.⁹ Besides the thirteen,¹⁰ previously militant, *akhārā*-s so

was a standard expression for describing the entire class structure of Maharashtra in the late eighteenth century; see Wagle (1997:143).

The four *sampradāya*-s each comprise several of the 52 *dvāra*-s: Rāmānandī (36); Nimbārki (10); Madhva (3); Viṣṇuvāmī (3). This constitutes one of the three levels of organisation of the *vaiṣṇava* orders. Another level of organisation is the system of *anī*-s and *akhārā*-s (which does not directly correspond to the *akhārā*-s of the Daśanāmīs). The three *anī*-s of the Rāmānandī *sampradāya* are subdivided into eight *akhārā*-s: Nirmohī (3); Digambar (2); Nirvāṇī (3). The eight *akhārā*-s are further sub-divided into eighteen sections. The Dādū *panth* also has an *akhārā* (see Thiel-Horstmann 1991) which joins the Nirmohī *anī* for bathing at Kumbh Melā. The *catuḥ-sampradāya*-s, which meet at the Kumbh Melā, have an administrative body, the Akhil Bhāratī Khālsā, which oversees 412 sub-branches known as *khālsā*-s, a system not more than 150 years old. This is a third level of organisation.

⁸ Rāmānandī *tyāgī*-s have a lifestyle and appearance almost identical to that of Daśanāmī *nāgā*-s: see van der Veer (1987:688). While the *tyāgī*-s are Rāmānandī ascetics, the *nāgā*-s are soldiers who carry weapons and are given money by *tyāgī mahant*-s at *melā*-s to protect the order. Technically, only the *nāgā*-s are said to be in the *akhārā*. Unlike the *tyāgī*-s, Rāmānandī *nāgā*-s wear stitched cloth and do not wear *jaṭā*. A Rāmānandī disciple wishing to enter an *akhārā* has to pass through seven levels before he becomes a *vaiṣṇava nāgā*, who is known as *nāgā-atīt*: 1. *yātrī*, collects neem-sticks for his superiors, and wanders alone or with the Jamāt; 2. *chorā*, serves, draws water and makes leaf-plates; 3. *bandagīdar*, looks after food stores, serves food and cleans *nāgā-atīt*-s' utensils; 4. *huṛdaṅg*, cooks, offers food to the deity, calls "Harihar" (hence *huṛdaṅg* meaning 'commotion' or 'uproar'), carries the insignia and flag of the *akhārā*, masters weapons; 5. *mureṭhiya*, worships deities, supervises *sevak*-s, calls "jay" (a sequence of calls uttered before undertaking any work), and is experienced in the use of weapons; 6. *nāgā*, administers the *akhārā*, worships the deity, protects the *sampradāya*-s' property, leads the Jamāt, and prepares for the Kumbh Melā; 7. *atīt*, decides important issues for the order and guides *nāgā*-s. It takes twelve years to become *nāgā*, after which he may vote in the *akhārā*, as a member of the *pañc* (see Sharma 1998:128–135). *Nāgā*-s are organised in four divisions (*selī*), according to where they were initiated, the divisions being: Haridvārī (at Haridvār), Ujjayinīya (at Ujjain), Sāgarīya (at Gaṅgā Sāgar, near Calcutta), and Basantīya (other places) (van der Veer 1998:139).

⁹ The Udāsin (Udāsīn/Udāsī) and Nirmala *akhārā*-s revere the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh text that occupies a central place in all *gurdvāra*-s. The tutelary deity of both Udāsin *akhārā*-s is Candra Bhagvān (believed to be an incarnation of Śiva), who was Śrī Cand, the eldest of the two sons of Guru Nānak (1469–1539). Upon Nānak's demise, the leadership of the Sikhs passed to Guru Aṅgad, and not

far mentioned, the Nāths are another sect which had political and military liaisons with various *akhārā*-s in different periods. The Nāths, however, camp at a distance from the other *akhārā*-s at Kumbh Melās, and bathe later than the other ‘orthodox’ *akhārā*-s.¹¹ Despite the

to his son. According to Udāsīn tradition (Singh (1951:59–64), Śrī Cand was initiated by Nānak and founded the Udāsīns. Although Śrī Cand is not recognised as a guru within the Sikh *guru-paramparā*, neither is he rejected, and links remained strong between the communities. However, there is other historical evidence (Pinch 1996:36) that Śrī Cand and his followers were expelled from the Sikh community in the sixteenth century. Śrī Cand lived past the age of a hundred, up to the time of Guru Hargobind (1595–1644), the sixth guru of the Sikh tradition. This means that the Udāsīn order was founded, according to the traditional account, between—the limits—the early part of the sixteenth century and the first decades of the seventeenth century. The *gaddī* passed from Śrī Cand to the son of Hargobind, Bābā Gurdita (a householder and soldier), who had four preaching disciples (*masand*) who founded four *dhūnī*-s (*dhūān*) in 1636, which are the four divisions of the Baṛā (‘large’) Udāsīn *akhārā*. They are: 1. Balu Hasna; 2. Phul Sahib (or Mīān Sahib); 3. Almast; 4. Bhagat Bhagvān (or Gonda). According to one account (Singh 1951:64), Mīān Sahib and Bhagat Bhagvān (=Bhagat Gir, a *saṃnyāsī*) did not found *dhūān*-s, but missionary centres, known as *bhākṣī*-s.

The Choṭā (‘small’) Udāsīn *akhārā* was founded by Bhāi Pheru, supposedly with the permission of Guru Gobind Singh (1666–1708), who is also believed to have founded the Nirmala *akhārā* (Ahuja 1994). However, Oberoi (1997:124–127) questions the antiquity of the Nirmalas, observing that references to them in Sikh literature are scarce in the early eighteenth century but abundant at the end of that century. Between the 1790s and 1840s, the Udāsīn and Nirmala orders received extensive state patronage, and the number of their establishments increased five-fold.

¹⁰ An article appeared in an Allahabad newspaper (*Dainik Jāgran*, Ilāhābād, 12 January 2001, p. 3) announcing the coming into being of the Akhaṇḍ *akhārā*, a new *akhārā* instituted by Svāmī Paramānand, who, along with ten others, was made ‘Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara’ (Ācārya Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara Yugpuruṣ Śrī Svāmī Paramānand Jī Mahārāj). The *svāmī*, who has published several books, has an ever expanding *āśrama* (Akhaṇḍ Param Dham) on the outskirts of Haridvār, and is quite well known internationally. He addressed the United Nations assembly in New York on 28th August 2000, a lecture published as *Transformation of Religion Based Conflicts into World Peace: Identification of Dharma and its Utility*. Whether the *akhārā* attracts many *saṃnyāsī*-s remains to be seen.

¹¹ The Nāths (or Nāth-Siddhas), also known as *yogī*-s, were supposedly organised by Gorakhnāth, most probably in the thirteenth century (see White 1996:93–100). They are *haṭha-yogī*-s, renowned as wonder-workers. As power-brokers and mercenaries, they played a significant role in political and military intrigues during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, particularly in Rajasthan. For accounts of the Nāths, see Briggs (1982); Gold and Gold (1984); Gold (1996; 1999); White (1996; 2001). For resumé of the doctrine of the Nāth-Siddhas, see Ramana Sastri (1956:300–308); Bannerjea (1983; 1988); Vilāsnāth (1998). See also Chapter 7. For the marginal status of the Nāths in relationship to other more ‘orthodox’ orders of ascetics, see Gupta (2001); White (1996). See Vilāsnāth (1998) for Nāth *paramparā*-s and mantras. See *Kalyān (Tūthānik)* (1997:580–586) for Nāth holy places.

military background of all the *akhārā*-s, these days ‘dharmic’ activity is generally emphasised by their main spokesmen, which includes the founding of many educational institutions with traditional Sanskrit and Vedic studies.¹²

The Daśanāmī *akhārā*-s are currently constituted as follows:

AKHĀDĀ-S,¹³ supposed founding dates ¹⁴(Vikram Saṃvat – V. S.)¹⁵ and **Tutulary Deities**

1. **Nirañjanī**, 960 V. S. [1904 CE]¹⁶ (**Kārttikeya**), founded in

¹² See, for example, Purī (2001:198–210) on educational programmes fostered by the Mahānirvāṇī *akhārā*.

¹³ The author visited the headquarters of all the Daśanāmī *akhārā*-s in Allahabad and Banaras for inquiries (during January and February 2002), and other branches in Haridvār, Oṃkāreśvar, Jvālāmukhī and Jūnāgarh. The information concerning the regional branches of the *akhārā*-s is based partly on fieldwork, with some additional points on the supposed founding places and branches provided by Sinha and Saraswati (1978:85). The information on the regional branches of the *akhārā*-s relates to the most important branches. There are also many small *matha*-s or temples owned by the *akhārā*-s that may be administered by a single functionary of an *akhārā*, which are not mentioned. From a number of quite unsatisfactory enquiries, an approximate estimate of the number of initiates is also given. There are also a few Daśanāmī institutions in Kathmandu, the main one being the Śaṅkarācārya Maṭha in Deopatan, founded by Rāma Giri in 1877. See Michaels (1994:172–173) for further details.

¹⁴ Dates according to Sarkar (1958:82–90).

¹⁵ To convert traditional (Vikram Saṃvat) dates (as contained in manuscripts) to Roman dates: for the first nine and a half months of a Vikram year, subtract 57 years; for the remaining two and half months, subtract 58.

¹⁶ Sarkar’s scheme combines traditional dates, and in the case of some *akhārā*-s, the addition of 1,000 years, indicated in the square brackets. Sarkar believes that the Portuguese system of reckoning, which adds 1,000 years to traditional dates, had not been taken into account by the bards. However, the reckoning is inconsistent: adding 1,000 years to the supposed founding date of the Nirañjanī *akhārā*, given as 960 V. S., would, according to Sarkar’s calculation, be 1903 CE, yet the presence of the Nirañjanī *akhārā* was reported at the Kumbh Melā of 1840 by a Protestant missionary (Sinha and Saraswati 1978:86). For founding dates, see also Sadānanda Giri (1976:22); Tripathi (1978:70); Sinha and Saraswati (1978:85); Dazey (1987): their repetitions are in several instances erroneous or different, adding unreliability to an account that was already declaredly unreliable. According to the Hindi newspaper, *Āj* (*Mahākumbh Viśeṣāṅk*, 14 January 2001), the founding dates (CE) of the *akhārā*-s are: Āvāhan, 547, by Miṣṭ Giri and Dīnānāth Giri; Aṭal, 647, by Vankhaṇḍbhārati, Sāgarbhārati and Śivnārāyaṇbhārati; Nirvāṇī, 649; Ānand, 855, by Kethā Giri and Rāmeśvar Giri; Nirañjanī, 904, by Maunī Siṃh and Sarajūnāth Puruṣottam Giri; Jūnā, 1060, by Mohkām Giri, Sundar Giri and Maunī Digambar; Agni, 1149 [no founder mentioned]. Keemattam (1997:83) cites

- Māndavī (Kachh, Gujarat), Head Office in Prayāg (Dārāgañj), affiliated to Ānanda, contains perhaps 3,000 *saṃnyāsī*-s and 500 *nāgā*-s. Branches in Nāsik, Oṃkāreśvar (Madhya Pradesh), Haridvār, Ujjain, Udaipur, Jvālāmukhī (Himachal Pradesh), Kāśī.¹⁷
2. **Jūnā**, 1202 V. S. (**Dattātreya** [previously **Bhairava**]), founded at Karṇ Prayāg (Uttaranchal), affiliated to Āvāhan, Head Office in Kāśī (Hanumān Ghāt), containing perhaps 4,000 to 5,000 *saṃnyāsī*-s, mostly *nāgā*-s. Branches in Nāsik, Ujjain, Oṃkāreśvar, Jūnāgarh (Gujarat), Haridvār, Rāmeśvaram, Prayāg, Śrīnagar (Kashmir), Sri Lanka,¹⁸ Kathmandu (Nepal).
 3. **Mahānirvānī**,¹⁹ 805 V. S. [1749 CE] (**Kapil Muni**), founded at Garhkuṇḍa (Palāmāu District, Bihar),²⁰ affiliated to Aṭal, Head Office in Prayāg (Dārāgañj)
 4. **Ānanda**, 912 V. S. (**Sūrya**), founded at Berār, Head Office in Kāśī (Maṅikarṇika Ghāt),²¹ contains several hundred *saṃnyāsī*-s, with perhaps 500 to 600 *nāgā*-s. Branches in Tryambakeśvar (near Nāsik, Maharashtra), Pūṇe, Sātārā (Maharashtra), Bareilī (Uttar Pradesh), Rāmpur (Uttar Pradesh), Gvalior, Mirzapur (near Banaras), Betul (Madhya Pradesh), Barabaṅki (near Lucknow).
 5. **Āvāhan**, 603 V. S. [1547 CE] (**Siddh Gaṇeśa**),²² Head Office in Kāśī (Daśāśvamedha Ghāt), containing several thousand *saṃnyāsī*-s, mostly *nāgā*. Branches in Bhuj (Kacch, Gujarat), Bodh Gayā (Bihar), Jvālāmukhī, Haridvār.²³
 6. **Aṭal**, 703 V. S. [1646 CE] (**Ādi Gaṇeśa**), founded at Gondvānā,

dates from *Pāvan Tūrtha Hṛīkeś* by Vamśidhar Pokhriyal (Rṣikeś: Śrī Bhāratmandir Prakāśan 1986:35): Jūnā, 1202; Āvāhan, 1547; Aṭal, 1646; Mahānirvānī, 1749; Ānanda, 1856; Nirañjanī, 1904.

¹⁷ Kāśī designates the Old City, around which the larger town of Banaras (Varanasi) has developed.

¹⁸ No specific place is mentioned.

¹⁹ The *akhārā* is usually referred to as the Mahānirvānī to distinguish it from the *vaiṣṇava* Nirvānī *akhārā* which is one of the three *nāgā* *akhārā*-s of the Rāmānandī order.

²⁰ Other sources give the founding place of the *akhārā* as Baijnāth, Bihar.

²¹ While the Kāśī branch is officially the headquarters of the Ānanda *akhārā*, the branch at Bareilī (U.P.) is more frequented and active. At the time of the author's visit to the Kāśī branch there was only one resident *sādhu*.

²² It is unclear where this *akhārā* is supposed to have been founded.

²³ Sinha and Saraswati add to this list, "sundry centres in South India", without being specific.

Head Office in Kāśī (Katuapura). Branches in Tryambakeśvar, Baraudā, Ujjain and Haridvār.

Smallest of the *akhārā*-s with less than 1,000 *saṃnyāsī*-s.

7. **Agni**, 1426 V. S.²⁴ (**Gāyatrī**), Head Office in Kāśī (Rāj Ghāt). Branches in Jūnāgarh, Bareilī, Ahmadābād, Jhānsī, Haridvār, Samastūpur (Bihar), Bhopal, Indore, Ujjain, Jāmnagar (Gujarat) and Tryambakeśvar, containing 1,000 to 2,000 *saṃnyāsī*-s.

The *nāgā*-s of each Daśanāmī *akhārā* revere the *bhālā* (a fifteen to twenty-foot-long javelin), which is engraved with the signs of the respective deities of the *akhārā*-s and carried at the front of the arrival and bathing processions (*syāhi*) at the Kumbh Melās by the chief *mahant* or by *nāgā*-s. The *bhālā* is usually kept in the headquarters of the *akhārā* it represents, but during Melās it is planted in the ground near the temporary shrine for the tutelary deity, at the centre of the *akhārā*-s' camping area.²⁵ During processions, the current chief *mahant* of the *akhārā* is followed by other *mahant*-s, old *nāgā*-s²⁶ and recent *nāgā* initiates (*tāng tode*),²⁷ in that order.

The Daśanāmī *akhārā*-s have particular ties with each other, though they are not historically invariable.²⁸ The leading *akhārā*-s, in terms of members and property, are the Nirañjanī and Jūnā, the Jūnā being

²⁴ This date is supplied by Sadānanda Giri (1976:42) with no reference, and maintained by several *saṃnyāsī*-s in the *akhārā*.

²⁵ Each Daśanāmī *akhārā* has traditionally made use of a ball of ash, known as a *golā*. This ball was formerly sent to kings or military chiefs as test of political allegiance. If the ashes were smeared on the forehead, in the way that *sādhu*-s do, then the recipient was regarded as friendly, but a refusal to do so was a sign of enmity. The shape of a *golā* is round for the Nirañjanī, *liṅga*-shaped for the Jūnā, four-cornered for the Nirvāṇī, and octagonal for the Aṭal. Many of the sources, previously referred to for information on the Daśanāmīs, record this historical tradition. Purī (2001:137) provides mantras for the *golā*. However, from various inquiries made by this author, it seems that the custom is not current and but vaguely understood by contemporary Daśanāmī *saṃnyāsī*-s.

²⁶ *Nāgā*-s initiated at Ujjain are known as *khūnī* ('killer') *nāgā*-s, those initiated at Haridvār as *barjūnī* ('icy') *nāgā*-s, and those initiated at Prayāga as *rājārājesvarī* ('lord of the king of kings') *nāgā*-s.

²⁷ See Ch. 3.3 for an explanation of this term.

²⁸ Sinha and Saraswatī (1978:84) note that after the 1954 Kumbh Melā the Jūnā and Nirañjanī came closer together. Relations between the Nirvāṇī and Aṭal are said to have become somewhat distant owing to a dispute concerning the selection of a female Maṇḍalesvara. The current ties between *akhārā*-s are: Āvāhan and Jūnā; Ānand and Nirañjanī; Aṭal and (Mahā) Nirvāṇī. The Agni *akhārā* always functions independently.

the oldest and having the largest number of *nāgā*-s. The other two *akhārā*-s that have a high percentage of *nāgā*-s are the Nirañjanī and the Mahānirvāṇī. The seventh *akhārā*, the Agni *akhārā*, is supposed to have been founded in 1368 CE and has fifteen branches. Like the other *akhārā*-s, it is nominally *śaiva* in orientation. All members are life-long celibates and refer to themselves as *brahmacārī*, distinguishing themselves, by that name, from the other *akhārā*-s. (*Daṇḍī*-s also refer to themselves as *brahmacārī* to distinguish themselves from other Daśanāmī *saṃnyāsī*-s.) Being known as *brahmacārī*-s means, also, that members of the Agni *akhārā* come, at least theoretically, from a Brahman caste. Unlike the other *akhārā*-s, which are comprised largely of *nāgā*-s, none of the members of the Agni *akhārā* are *nāgā*. The Agni *akhārā* is not connected to the *maṅghī*²⁹ network of the other *akhārā*-s and only attained equal status with the other *saṃnyāsī* *akhārā*-s in 1971 when, during the Ādhā Kumbh Melā at Prayāg, Brahmacārī Prakāśānanda was installed as the Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara of the *akhārā*. There are currently three Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras affiliated to the Agni *akhārā*, the *ācārya-guru* residing in Amarkaṅṭak (Madhya Pradesh).³⁰ As previously noted, unlike in the other *akhārā*-s, a guru will take only one *celā*, in the manner common to many other renunciate lineages. *Saṃnyāsī*-s of the Agni *akhārā* do not take one of the usual Daśanāmī ‘ten names’, instead taking one of the names of what they describe as *brahmacārī gotra*-s, namely Ānanda, Caitan, Svarūp or Prakāśa.

According to Sarkar (1958:82), the earliest available information concerning the formation of the Daśanāmī *akhārā*-s comes from an oral tradition that can be dated to around 1750, and derives from Rajendra Giri who became famous in the affairs of the Delhi Sultanate (see Ch. 7.4). All the *akhārā*-s have a hereditary bard (*bhāt*) who can recite the oral history of the *akhārā*. Sarkar inspected a manuscript in the possession of the *bhāt* of the Nirvāṇī *akhārā*, detailing the foundation of the *akhārā*-s, the succession of pontiffs (*mahant*-s) and the battles that the *akhārā*-s fought. He estimated that the manuscript could not have been much more than fifty years old, and while admitting that

²⁹ See following section.

³⁰ The Agni *akhārā* is nominally under the jurisdiction of the Dvārakā *pīṭha*, and traces its origin to the four sons of Brahmā: Sanaka, Sanat Kumāra, Sanandana and Sanātana, dividing its members (theoretically) between three areas: Narmadākhaṇḍī (Narmadā), Uttarākhaṇḍī (northern), and Naiṣṭhika (‘faithful’). Some *daṇḍī-saṃnyāsī*-s reported to the author that the Agni *akhārā* functions as the *akhārā* for the *daṇḍī*-s. However, this is denied by the *saṃnyāsī*-s of the Agni *akhārā*.

the information is unreliable, gives the dates for the foundation of the *akhārā*-s as detailed above. Sarkar (1958:83) further cautions that the record (*pothā*) is from but one *akhārā* and that other *akhārā*-s may possess quite different records.

Notwithstanding Sarkar's caution, his publication (1958:82–85) of the putative dates of the founding of the *akhārā*-s (as above) has entered many accounts, albeit inaccurately. This is no doubt largely due to the fact that Sarkar's account stands, still today, as virtually the only published account to be based on any kind of written record.³¹ While it is probable that ascetic lineages do indeed go back to the seventh century or beyond, firm evidence for the founding of *akhārā*-s, and their identity with lineages organised by Śaṅkara, cannot be found before the sixteenth century.³² Concerning the question of when orders of fighting *saṃnyāsī*-s may have been organised, it seems most probable that between the late sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, a variety of political factors—that are explored in Chapter 7—led to the formation of various *akhārā*-s of fighting ascetics, including the Udāsin, Nirmala, Dādū, Bairāgī (Rāmānandī) and Daśanāmī orders, notwithstanding the latter's claims to greater antiquity. It is suggested that during this period when the *akhārā*-s formed, the Daśanāmīs also formed their own distinct (and orthodox) identity, comprising ten lineages from quite disparate backgrounds, one group comprising lineages from the monastic tradition, and the other group comprising lineages with a Nāth or 'heterodox' background. Beginning in the latter part of the sixteenth century, for the first time there are recorded conflicts between the *akhārā*-s, most frequently between

³¹ Purī (2001:83–90), a *mahant* of the Mahānirvāṇī *akhārā*, also gives the founding dates of the *akhārā*-s, citing evidence from hand-written *pothā*-s. He claims that the first *akhārā* to be founded was the Āvāhan, in 603 *vikram* (V. S.), the other *akhārā*-s subsequently. His information on the dating and some other details concerning places is almost identical to that provided by Sarkar. (Purī's dating reflects his belief that Śaṅkara was born in 44 BCE.) However, having provided precise dates for the founding of the *akhārā*-s and a list of the founding *saṃnyāsī*-s, he remarks (p. 89) that some people are doubtful about the founding dates. But, he maintains, it is certain that the Mahānirvāṇī *akhārā* was established by the sixteenth century, even though according to his earlier account it was founded in 805 V. S. by eight *mahāpuruṣa*-s connected with the Aṭal *akhārā*. In evidence, he cites a battle in Bihar in 1664 CE between Aurangzeb and the Mahānirvāṇī *akhārā*, who had come from Banaras.

³² Intriguingly, all the *akhārā*-s possess voluminous written records, mostly concerning financial transactions recorded on *parcā* (birch-bark), which are not available for inspection even to relatively high-ranking officials within the *akhārā*.

Daśanāmī-*saṃnyāsī*-s and *bairāgī*-s³³ over bathing priorities at *melā*-s and rights to collect taxes from pilgrims.

Perhaps the earliest record of a fight between identifiable *akhāyā*-s is that of Abu-l-Faḏl, who records (1972:422–424) how, on one occasion, during the latter part of the sixteenth century, emperor Akbar was camped at Thānesar (Sthāṇvīśvara), near Kurukṣetra, at the time of the *melā* there.³⁴ A fight ensued between the Purī and Kur (or Gur, Giri?) *saṃnyāsī*-s over occupation of an area by the lake, particularly suitable for the collection of alms from pilgrims. The Purīs, believing that they had been wrongfully usurped by the Kurs, approached Akbar for assistance. Akbar’s solicitations to the parties were to no effect. As the Purīs were few in number, Akbar enlisted the assistance of some other tribes³⁵ on behalf of the Purīs who routed the Kurs, slaying their leader (*pīr*), Ānanda Kur. The combatants numbered around one thousand, and the dead around twenty (Smith 1966:57). Akbar was, apparently, delighted by the sport.

In the *Dabistān* (*Dabistān* 1843, Vol. 2:196–197), a battle that took place at Haridvār in 1640 between Bairāgīs (also referred to as ‘Mundīs’) and ‘Sanyāsīs’ is described. According to the account, the *saṃnyāsī*-s were victorious and killed a great number of Mundīs. The Mundīs threw away the rosaries of *tulsī* beads and “hung on their perforated ears the rings of the Jogīs, in order to be taken for these sectaries”. The author of the *Dabistān* (*Dabistān* 1843, Vol. 2:231) also refers to a battle between ‘Sanyāsīs’ and ‘Sōfīs’, the former being victorious.³⁶

³³ A conflict between *saṃnyāsī*-s and Sūfīs is also recorded (see *Dabistān* 1843, Vol. 2:231).

³⁴ The same incident is referred to slightly differently by Al-Badāoni (1986, Vol. 2:94–95), who describes the two parties of combatants as “Jogīs” and “Sannyāsīs”, who are said to be “in the habit of fighting there in their bigotry”. At the emperor’s command, a number of soldiers smeared their bodies with ashes and fought on the side of the “Sannyāsīs” (numbering around 300), against the “Jogīs” (numbering more than 500). Many were slain on both sides, but the *saṃnyāsī*-s were victorious. Akbar’s son Jahāngir is also said to have witnessed a battle between Udāsīn and Vairāgī *sādhu*-s over bathing at the *melā* (Purī 2001:181).

³⁵ These tribes are recorded as the Petamcahā (unknown to commentators) and the Cīrūs, a wild tribe from Mirzapur.

³⁶ The *saṃnyāsī*-s had assembled at a Hindu pilgrimage site (unspecified), when an army of naked Jelalis and Madāris (sects of Sūfīs) arrived, bringing a cow that they wished to slaughter. To avert the slaughter, the *saṃnyāsī*-s bought the cow. However, the Sūfīs brought a second cow, which was also purchased. A third cow was brought, and killed, engendering a battle in which 700 Sūfīs died. The boys

In 1760 *bairāgī*-s and *saṃnyāsī*-s fought pitched battles in Haridvār over bathing precedence, with 1,800 dead, the *saṃnyāsī*-s again being victorious (Russell 1916, Vol. 3:152; Nevill 1909a:254). In that year the British took control of the Haridvār area, and the *Bairāgīs* were then reportedly banned from the Haridvār *melā* for forty years (Lochtefeld 1994:597). The dominance of the *śaiva gosain*-s in the area around Haridvār may have been partly due to the stationing in 1752 of the *gosain* Rajendra Giri, a powerful military commander,³⁷ as commander of forces (*faujdar*) at Saharanpur, under the Mughal emperor Ahmad Śāh. The dominance of the *śaiva gosain*-s at Haridvār, in trade, policing and taxation, appears to have continued largely unchallenged until the end of the eighteenth century.

In April 1796 an English officer, Captain Thomas Hardwicke, accompanied by Dr. Hunter, visited the Haridvār Melā on the way to Śrīnagar (Hardwicke 1801:309–347). They attended Makar Saṅkrānti, which fell on April 8th that year. Pilgrims had come from as far as Kābul, Bhutān and Kashmir. The “Goosseys” (also referred to as “Mehunts”, “Fakeers” and “Sannyassees”) had set themselves up as the police for the *melā*, meeting daily to hear grievances and adjudicate, and collecting levies on cattle, merchandise and pilgrims at the bathing places, taxes that would normally have gone to the Marāṭhas who were governing the region at that time. Wielding swords, they had effectively silenced all opposition to their regime, including that of the rival *bairāgī*-s. On the last day of the *melā*, April 10th, between 12,000 and 14,000 Sikh horsemen arrived and planted their flag near the river. The *gosain*-s took down the flag and plundered the Sikh party. The Sikhs sent a lawyer to the *mahant*-s, protesting their right to bathe and seeking the return of their looted property. The property was returned but the Sikhs attacked the ascetics at the bathing places, including the *bairāgī*-s, *saṃnyāsī*-s and *nāgā*-s. Panic ensued, in which several drowned. The Sikhs lost twenty men but killed 500.³⁸

According to a copper-plate inscription in the possession of Mahant

amongst the ‘fanatics’ were taken prisoner and educated “in their own religion” by the *saṃnyāsī*-s.

³⁷ See Chapter 7.4.

³⁸ Pinch has commented that at this time the Sikhs were on the verge of statehood in nearby Punjab, under Ranjit Singh. They may well have been exercising territorial muscle at Haridvār on this occasion.

Rādhāmohandāsī of Nāsik (Ghurye 1964:177), a great massacre of *bairāgī*-s by *śaiva saṃnyāsī*-s took place at the Siṃhāṣṭa Melā at Nāsik in 1690. Both sects were bathing at the same place, Cakratīrtha, and subsequently an arrangement was made whereby at the *melā* of 1702, the two orders bathed at different places—the Śaṃnyāsīs at Tryambaka Kuśavarta and the *bairāgī*-s at Rāmakuṇḍa—an arrangement that still continues. This incident, if true, may have been an important impetus for the organisation of the *bairāgī*-s' *akhārā*-s.

At the Siṃhāṣṭa Melā at Ujjain in 1789 a dispute between *saṃnyāsī*-s and *bairāgī*-s led to intense fighting. The Peśvā eventually ruled that the two orders should bathe at separate places (Burghart 1983:374). However, at the *melā* in 1826, another battle ensued between the two sects. The *bairāgī*-s, assisted by the Marāṭhas, slaughtered many of the *saṃnyāsī*-s and plundered their temples and monasteries in the vicinity of the city. Mindful of potentially bloody consequences, the British made elaborate arrangements for policing the Ujjain Melā of 1850, which included the positioning of heavy guns along the procession route, and the deployment of two companies of the Gwalior Infantry under Captain Macpherson. The more powerful *bairāgī*-s were separated from the *saṃnyāsī*-s, who were instructed to bathe earlier than the *bairāgī*-s, and in a separate area. One hundred Brahmans were stationed (as 'human shields') between the two parties to assist with the bathing arrangements, which passed off without significant incident.

It appears that the order of bathing for the *akhārā*-s was fixed first in Haridvār, and then subsequently in Allahabad in 1870 (Maclean 2003:888). Eventually, an agreement was signed with the British in 1906 (Nandan 2002:58), which is still adhered to.³⁹ While there are records—particularly in the eighteenth century—of conflicts at Haridvār, Ujjain and Nāsik, there is no record in any account of any significant confrontation at Allahabad. Given the strategic importance of the Allahabad fort—adjacent to the *saigam*—which was first garrisoned by British troops in 1765,⁴⁰ if there had been

³⁹ See Rai (1993:25–26); Sarkar (1958:99).

⁴⁰ The fort was built by Akbar in 1584 CE. In 1765 CE, as part of the Treaty of Allahabad (between the East India Company, Shuja-ud-Daula and emperor Śāh Alām), the fort was occupied by British troops to protect the emperor. After its cession by Sādat Ali to the British in February 1798, the fort became, briefly, in 1832, the capital of the North-West Provinces (Maclean 2001:142–144).

any serious conflict there, it would no doubt have been recorded in a British report. Maclean (2003:895–896) suggests that the reason for the absence of conflict at Allahabad may have been that the Haridvār *melā* was a larger commercial market than Allahabad for trader-*sādhu*-s, and that dominance of trade and taxation by one sect or another led to bathing privileges.⁴¹ By contrast, Allahabad was a smaller commercial fair, and it was the *navāb*-s and then the British, and not *sādhu*-s, who taxed pilgrims. In 1938, the Uttar Pradesh State Legislature gave legal sanction for government participation in funding and overseeing the two Kumbh Melās in the state, at Prayāg and Haridvār.⁴² After Indian Independence, the U.P. government developed more permanent rules for the financial support and administration of both the Kumbh and Ādhā Kumbh Melās (Lamb 1999:196).

Despite control over bathing priorities, there are still occasions of disturbance. Low (1906:193–210), visiting the Kumbh Melā at Prayāga in 1906, records that the most turbulent of the attending sects and *akhārā*-s are the Bairāgīs, who on this occasion caused a riot, to quell which the police called out the army. More recently, at Haridvār, in 1998, rioting ensued amongst the Daśanāmīs over bathing priorities.

Besides the seven Daśanāmī *akhārā*-s mentioned above, some commentators discuss other *akhārā*-s, none of which are now recognised

⁴¹ Lochtefeld (1994:596–597) suggests that changes in trading routes led to the growing importance of the major annual fair at Haridvār (which was also the largest horse market in India). The fair coincided with the bathing festival and it seems probable that control over trade and the market-place influenced status and bathing priority.

⁴² Mela Act 1938; Mela Rules 1940 (Nandan 2002:12). At Kumbh Melās, a total of six processions are allowed (two for Daśanāmīs), the *akhārā*-s to follow at a hundred yards distance. The order of bathing is currently as follows:

At Prayāga and Ujjain:

first,	Mahānirvāṇī with Aṭal
second,	Nirañjanī with Āvahan, Jūnā with Ānanda
third,	Nirmohī, Digambara and Nirvāṇī (the three Rāmānandī/Bairāgī <i>akhārā</i> -s)
fourth,	Choṭā Udāsin
fifth,	Baṛā Udāsin
sixth,	Nirmala

At Haridvār and Nāsik:

first,	Jūnā, Nirañjanī, Ānand and Āvahan
second,	Mahānirvāṇī and Aṭal
third, fourth, fifth and sixth,	as above

amongst Daśanāmīs. These *akhārā*-s have been either confused with another branch of the Daśanāmīs, are now defunct, or are what seem to have been branches of Nāths. Ghurye (1964:106–108) states that besides the usual six *akhārā*-s, there are four other *akhārā*-s: the Agan, Alakhiya,⁴³ Sūkhaṛa and Gūdaṛa *akhārā*-s, all of which are said to be attached to the Jūnā *akhārā*. He also considers it is possible that three ‘*akhārā*-s’, the Sūkhaṛa, Ūkhaṛa and another so-called *akhārā*-s, the Rūkhaṛa, mentioned by Wilson (1861:148–149)—who also mentions the Bhukaṛa and Kukaṛa *akhārā*-s but gives no details—are perhaps all to be considered as just one *akhārā*, the Sūkhaṛa, which seems to have been an order of Nāths.⁴⁴ Sinha and Saraswati (1987:82–83) also include in the list of Daśanāmī *akhārā*-s the Gūdaṛa *akhārā*, said to have been founded in Kāśī in 1617, on the evidence of an inscription. This brings Sinha and Saraswati’s total number of Daśanāmī *akhārā*-s to eight.⁴⁵ However, the Gūdaṛa *akhārā* also appears to have been a sect of Nāths.⁴⁶

⁴³ The Agan *akhārā* (recognised by Ghurye as a cognate of the Sanskrit term *agni*) is said not to be connected with “proper” Daśanāmīs or *nāgā*-s. Even though the Agni *akhārā* did not gain full status as an *akhārā* until 1971, it seems highly unlikely that the Agni sub-branch did not consider themselves as Daśanāmīs at the time Ghurye was writing, in the early nineteen-fifties. (Sinha and Saraswati (1978:86) note that the Agni *akhārā* was built in Banaras in 1957.) Ghurye admits puzzlement over the Alakhiya *akhārā*, noting that they beg for alms and carry long tongs. By way of clarification: the Alakhiyas may be seen at any large assembly of *akhārā*-s. They usually wear hats embellished with peacock feathers and have rope coiled around their waist over a tunic. They are often married and might be considered as a sub-sect of the Daśanāmīs. A particular role they have is to sing and drum at *melā*-s, sometimes proceeding from one *dhūnī* to the next, collecting flour and money for the *akhārā* in skull-shaped coconuts (*kapard*), singing on such themes as *saṃnyāsī* life, God, and the delights of cannabis intoxication.

⁴⁴ Grierson (1916:866–867) also discusses the Rūkhaṛa, Sūkhaṛa and Ūkhaṛa divisions, believing them to be branches of the Kānphaṭa order of *yogī*-s (Nāths or Nāth-Siddhas).

⁴⁵ They add that the Gūdaṛa and Agni *akhārā*-s are not considered as having the same status as the other six *akhārā*-s, and that they perform “certain functions” for the other *akhārā*-s. The Gūdaṛa *akhārā* is stated to perform mortuary rites for the other *akhārā*-s. Enquiries at and near the address supplied by Sinha and Saraswati (1978:248), at Pitambarpura, Kāśī, failed to establish their previous existence there.

⁴⁶ Wilson (1861:148–149) and Briggs (1938:10–11) state that the Gūdaṛas wear the earrings or a piece of wood passed through the lobe of the ear, as worn by the Kānphaṭas. Briggs adds that in one ear they may also wear a flat copper plate with the imprint of Gorakhnāth. They carry a small metal pan in which they burn scented wood. This is carried when begging. They are said to belong to the

Several scholars have suggested that some of the *nāgā* lineages of the *akhārā*-s may have derived from Nāth, Siddha or similarly Tantric-influenced orders.⁴⁷ Sinha and Saraswati (1978:92) discuss the possibility of Nāth antecedents,⁴⁸ and note that at the *samādhi* of Bhartṛhari, in the fort at Chunar, Nāths and *saṃnyāsī*-s from the Jūnā *akhārā* take turns officiating as priests and *mahant*-s. They mention the common worship of both Bhairava and Dattātreyā by the Nāths and the Jūnā *akhārā* (who previously worshipped Bhairava, but now Dattātreyā), the use of and reverence for the *dhūnī* (sacred fire) by both *nāgā*-s and Nāths, the common but not universal use of earrings, and the fact that many names that occur in the list of *maṛhī*-s contain the ending ‘nāth’ (see Appendix 4). While it seems probable that Nāths and the Daśanāmī lineages of the *akhārā*-s had some kind of common ancestry, it should, however, be cautioned that reverence for the *dhūnī* is not exclusive to the two orders. However, it will be argued that the structure of the Daśanāmīs, in the form into which it evolved in the last few hundred years, is partially a consequence of the integration of quite radical ascetic lineages within the order, many of which could have had common ancestry in Nāth or ‘Tantric’ lineages. It could be that the adoption of Dattātreyā to supplant the previous tutelary deity, Bhairava,⁴⁹ represented the integration of radical ascetic lineages within a newly constituted and orthodox Daśanāmī order.

Aughar sect of Śaivites founded by a Daśanāmī named Brahmaḡiri, through the favour of Gorakhnāth.

⁴⁷ Dazey (1990:303), for example, comments that the *nāgā*-s were most likely a separate sect of *śaiva* ascetics who were converted to *advaita* philosophy and incorporated into the Daśanāmī fold early in the mediaeval period. However, he does not expand on this point.

⁴⁸ See also Dazey (1990:305–306); Rigopoulos (1998:97). Visuvalingam (1989:159, 213 fn. 15) incorrectly attributes the view to Lorenzen (1972:46) that the Daśanāmīs may have been Kāpālikas converted by Śaṅkara. Lorenzen casts doubt on that claim, first made by Ghurye (1964:104), particularly on the issue of the putative transition from the Kāpālika faith (*sic.*) to Vedānta. There are also connections between the Daśanāmīs and the Udāsins, the latter also having historical associations with the Nāths. All three sects worship the *dhūnī*, and adhere to *advaita* philosophy. There is also a tradition that a Daśanāmī *saṃnyāsī*, Bhakta Giri, was the first to take initiation from Śrī Cand, the founder of the Udāsin *panth* (Sinha and Saraswati 1978:138).

⁴⁹ Most commentators agree on the change of tutelary deity, but I have been unable to establish exactly when that took place.

2.2 Maṛhī-s and dāvā-s

Six of the seven Daśanāmī *akhārā*-s (excluding the Agni *akhārā*) are essentially the main organisational bodies for the Daśanāmī *nāgā*-s, and comprise a network of a total of fifty-two *maṛhī*-s (a ‘small hut’ or ‘temple’ in Hindi), which function as lineages within the Daśanāmī *akhārā*-s. There is some inconsistency in the available literature concerning the identity of individual *maṛhī*-s and their significance.⁵⁰ *Daṇḍī*-s, being outside the *akhārā* system in terms of allegiance and organisation, do not recognise the *maṛhī* classification. As mentioned previously, within the overall Daśanāmī structure there are essentially two main lineage traditions which, as we will see, come together during initiation procedures. One set of lineage traditions, comprising the *nāgā*-s, many of the *paramahaṃsa*-s and associated *saṃnyāsī*-s, is constituted within the *maṛhī*-s of the *akhārā*. The other set of lineages is represented in the monastic traditions of the *daṇḍī*-s. The lineages of the *akhārā*-s are also known as *nād vaṃś* (‘sound’ lineage), as it is the *mantra-guru* who initiates the *saṃnyāsī* into the *akhārā*.⁵¹ The other lineage is known as the *virajā vaṃś*. The *virajā-homa*—which is examined in Chapter 3.3—is an essential feature of Daśanāmī initiations, performed by an *ācārya-guru* who is a representative of the monastic tradition.

The term *maṛhī* may have derived from the term *maṭha*,⁵² and it has been suggested by some commentators that there were fifty-two principal *maṭha*-s before the six *nāgā* *akhārā*-s were formed. Purī (2001:58) claims that the fifty-two (or fifty-one) *maṛhī*-s are based on fifty-two centres (*kendra*) that were adjacent to the fifty-two *śākta-pīṭha*-s,⁵³ but that precise information connecting the *pīṭha*-s to the *maṛhī*-s is not available. He also comments that in colloquial language, a *śākta-pīṭha* is referred to as *devī kī maṛhī* (*maṛhī* of the *devī*). While acknowledging the Vedānta philosophy of Śaṅkara, Purī also maintains that Śaṅkara worshipped *Śrī-vidyā* (Tantra), and wrote related works. These days also, particular *saṃnyāsī*-s are said to “worship

⁵⁰ See Appendix 4 for lists of *maṛhī*-s and *dāvā*-s.

⁵¹ See Ch. 3.2.

⁵² Ghurye (1964:106) maintains that *maṛhī* is a vernacular diminutive of *maṭha*.

⁵³ For overviews of *Śakti-pīṭha*-s, see Sirkar (1973); *Tattvāloka* (1994); *Kalyāṇ (Tīrthāṅk)* (1997:515–527).

the *devī*’, in other words, engage in some kind of Tantric practice.⁵⁴ The fifty-two *maṛhī*-s are further divided into either four or eight divisions (*dāvā*),⁵⁵ each of which has several *mahant*-s. *Dāvā* means ‘claim’ and derives from voting procedures within the *akhārā* whereby *maṛhī*-s within a *dāvā* have equal voting rights during the process of electing officials and *mahant*-s within the *akhārā*. This takes place at Kumbh Melās, for all *akhārā*-s, every three or six years, when all official positions within the *akhārā* are subject to election. This is the only time when the *dāvā*-s have a practical significance.

Nāgā-s and the other *saṃnyāsī*-s of the *akhārā* trace their lineage through the *mahant*-s of the *dāvā*-s, each of whom belongs to a particular *maṛhī*. Unlike the complete account of fifty-two distinct *maṛhī*-s and eight *dāvā*-s presented by several commentators, not all *maṛhī*-s are currently represented at Kumbh Melās. Whereas the *maṛhī*-s represent ‘real’ lineages of gurus and disciples, the *dāvā*-s are units of administration that function at Kumbh Melās for voting purposes. The *maṛhī*-s are lineages of gurus, *mahant*-s and *sādhu*-s who, through association and initiation, transmit doctrines, practices and esoteric knowledge. Lineages of such a kind in the Indian tradition are generally notoriously complex given not only the problems inherent in hagiography but also the manifold tendencies of lineages both to subdivide and also, in some cases, to amalgamate. A guru might have several disciples, one or several of whom may form a sub-lineage, with perhaps the same name, say Giri or Purī, and to a greater or lesser extent be affiliated with other sub-branches within the family to which an initiating guru may have belonged. Every non-*danḍī* Daśanāmī *maṭha* is headed by a *mahant* whose lineage will be traced, at least theoretically, to a *maṛhī*.⁵⁶ The *maṛhī*-s are usually referred

⁵⁴ In a recent personal communication, this was confirmed by a westerner who was initiated into the Jūnā *akhārā* in March 2001. His *nāgā* guru and associates perform Tantric rites at their Himalayan *āśrama*.

⁵⁵ See Appendix 4.

⁵⁶ However, Purī (who is affiliated with the Mahānirvāṇī *akhārā*) also accounts (2001:58–59) for all the ‘ten names’ within the *maṛhī* scheme, despite the fact that the specifically *danḍī* lineages, namely Tīrtha, Āśrama and Sarasvatī (and half of the Bhāratīs) are usually not classified within the *maṛhī* system, as the *danḍī* tradition is distinct. According to Purī:

1. Tīrthas merged with two *maṛhī*-s of the Giris.
2. Āśramas merged with two *maṛhī*-s of the Giris. Thus, the original twenty-three *maṛhī*-s of Giris were augmented by four *maṛhī*-s, comprising Tīrthas and Āśramas, giving rise to the twenty-seven *maṛhī*-s of Giris.

to by number, thus, for example, as the fourth or thirteenth *maṛhī*. Initiates know from the number which *maṛhī* and hence lineage is being referred to.⁵⁷

It can be seen at a Kumbh Melā how the arrangement of the *maṛhī*-s and *dāvā*-s is represented spatially. (It has been described to the author as representing a *yantra*.) When camping at the Kumbh Melā, there are four ropes attached to the roof of the small, temporary temple housing the *mūrti* of the *akhārā*. The ropes lead in the four cardinal directions, each divided sector (*dāvā*) representing groupings of the various *maṛhī*-s. Representatives of the *maṛhī*-s are

3. Arānyas merged with four *maṛhī*-s of the Purīs. Thus, the original twelve *maṛhī*-s of Purīs were augmented by four *maṛhī*-s of Purīs.

4. Parvatas, Sāgaras and Sarasvatīs have no *maṛhī*-s.

⁵⁷ The fifty-one (or fifty-two) *maṛhī*-s currently are constituted as follows:

Twenty-seven of the *maṛhī*-s are Giri; in one group are thirteen *maṛhī*-s (Meghnāth-*panthī*); and in another group, fourteen *maṛhī*-s (Āpārṇāth-*panthī*). One other *maṛhī* attached to the Giris is known as the *choṭā maṛhī*. (The activities of the members of this *maṛhī* are not regarded entirely favourably by other Daśanāmī-Saṁnyāsīs. Anecdotaly described as the *nāgā* ‘mafia’, they often reside near railway stations, are said to be armed and to have an extensive information network.)

Sixteen of the *maṛhī*-s are Purīs.

Four of the *maṛhī*-s are Bhārātīs

Four of the *maṛhī*-s are Vanas.

One *maṛhī* is Lāmā.

The Lāmā *maṛhī* mentioned in the lists does not figure in the contemporary constitution of active Daśanāmī lineages. However, one explanation (Lāl Purī 2001:58, 73) is that the Lāmā *maṛhī* was instituted in Tibet by one Ved Giri, whose guru is believed by some *saṁnyāsī*-s to have been Padmasambhava (=Kamal Giri: as in Sanskrit, *kamala* and *padma* both mean ‘lotus’). According to tradition, Padmasambhava—the famous Tantric *yogī* and *siddha*—was initiated into Buddhist *Cakra-Yoga* by a *dākinī*, came to Tibet in the eighth century at the invitation of King Khri-Strong-Ides-brtsan in order to assist the establishment of the first Buddhist monastery and to suppress local deities, and was the putative transmitter of the *Bardo Thödol*. During the twelfth century there appeared the first signs of an order identifying itself with the first diffusion of Buddhism, calling itself the rNying-ma Order, the ‘old order’, and retrospectively claiming the *siddha* Padmasambhava as its founder (see Govinda 1960:190; Skilton 1997:188). As a *siddha*—who have a collective religious heritage spanning Nāth, Mahānubhāva, Buddhist and Tantric traditions—it is not inconceivable that a lineage of ‘Nāths’ deriving from Padmasambhava became the Lāmā *maṛhī*, though Padmasambhava is hagiographically ubiquitous.

The division of the *maṛhī*-s (as above) is accepted, with minor differences, by most commentators. However, there is a minor disagreement between Purī (2001) and some informants, the latter maintaining that it is the Sarasvatīs who constitute one of the *cār maṛhī*-s (the other being the Bhārātī), while according to Purī, the two *cār maṛhī*-s constitute the Bhārātīs and Vanas.

put forward during election to offices within the *akhārā*. At Kumbh Melās, the *dhūnī*-s of the *sādhū*-s are arranged in lines, all *dhūnī*-s being positioned in one or another of the four (or sometimes eight) sections (*dāvā*) of camping area of an *akhārā*. (The *dhūnī*-s are also referred to as *maṛhī*-s.) *Sādhū*-s belonging to a particular *maṛhī* will be camped in an area alongside *sādhū*-s from that *maṛhī* or a related *maṛhī*. The related *maṛhī*-s constitute a particular *dāvā* or section of the *akhārā*.⁵⁸

Initiates in particular *maṛhī*-s may be grouped together as a *panthī* (meaning: ‘follower or master of a particular sect’). Thus, for example, amongst the *maṛhī*-s of the Giris there are two subdivisions, known as the Meghnāth *panthī* and the Āpārṇāth *panthī*. Initiates of *maṛhī* number four and *maṛhī* number ten belong to the Āpārṇāth *panthī*, whereas the *maṛhī*-s of the Giris, which are grouped under the Rāmdattī and Riddhināthī *dāvā*-s, are included within the Meghnāth *panthī*. In essence, the *panthī*-s are simply another indication of historical lineage.⁵⁹

Purī (2001:58–59) maintains that the *maṛhī*-s were instituted “some

⁵⁸ At Kumbh Melās the camping arrangements for the Jūnā *akhārā* are as follows: members of the sixteen lineages (*solah maṛhī*) of Purī’s camp to the right of the entrance to the camp, in the north-east quarter; members of fourteen of the lineages of Giris (*caudah maṛhī*) camp in the north-western quarter; members of thirteen lineages (*terah maṛhī*) of the Giris camp in the south-west quarter; members of the four Bhārati and Sarasvati lineages (*cār maṛhī*) camp to the left of the camp entrance, in the south-east quarter. Camped separately are the *choṭā maṛhī*.

The four *mahant*-s of the the Jūnā *akhārā* camp at the four corners around the centrally located *aṣṭadhātu-mūrti* (image made from eight metals) of Dattātreya, the tutelary deity of the *akhārā*. In the central area around the shrine, the weapons and strong-box of the *akhārā* are kept. The four sacred javelins (*bhālā*) of the *akhārā*-s are planted here: the *Dattaprakāśa Bhālā* from Ujjain; *Sūryaprakāśa Bhālā* from Prayāg; *Candraprakāśa Bhālā* from Nāsik; and the *Bhairōṃprakāśa Bhālā* from Haridvār. According to tradition, there are also four *dhūnī*-s: *Dattamukhī*, Ujjain; *Sūryamukhī*, Prayāg; *Gopāl*, Nāsik; and *Ajayanegh*, Haridvār (see *Daś Nām Vaṃś Vṛkṣ*).

⁵⁹ 90% of a settled caste of *saṃnyāsī*-s (all Giris) living to the east of Kathmandu, in Kattike (see Bouillier 1976; 1979) belong to what they describe as the “Aparṇāth *thar*” (Bouillier 1979:106), which is clearly a legacy of the Āpārṇāth *panthī*. In their community *thar* functions essentially as a marker of exogamous lineage, which is, naturally, particularly important for marriages. While 75% of their marriages are with those from the other *thar* to be found in Kattike, the Aṅkhārī, Bouillier (1979:179) remarks that, although her list was not complete, she was informed of five functioning *thar*-s, the Durgānāthī, Riddhināthī, Aparṇāthī, Aṅkhārī and Bodhla. With the exception of the Aṅkhārī, the other four *thar*-s feature (see Appendix 4) in the conventional classification of the *maṛhī*-s of the Giris.

generations” after Śaṅkara, but observes that there is disagreement about when that was. He believes that *maṛhī-s* were organised by the disciples of the four main disciples of Śaṅkara, the earliest being the Giri *maṛhī-s* that were instituted in the tenth century CE, followed in the next couple of centuries by the other *maṛhī-s*. According to Purī, an important figure in the early organisation of the *maṛhī-s* is Vaikuṅṭha Purī, said to have been alive between 968 and 988 CE. Purī’s information derives from two written records, thought to be around four hundred years old. An extensive account is also provided (pp. 61–85) of the dozens of lineages deriving from the four main disciples, who are attached to one of the four *āmnāya-s* (connected to the four *pīṭha-s*). This information is said to be derived from a *pothī* that is 250 to 300 years old, in the possession of the *bhāṭ* of the *akhārā*.

However, despite Purī’s claims regarding the antiquity of the *maṛhī-s* and the *akhārā-s*, there is no real evidence that can be adduced that dates back more than three or four hundred years. The lineages (*maṛhī-s*) of the *akhārā-s* may in some instances have had a geographical connection—such as, for example Giris, Purīs, Bhāratīs and Bans⁶⁰ (Vanas)—but these lineages appear to have been subsequently projected back through a *paraṃparā* originating with Śaṅkara and his four disciples.

2.3 *Functionaries within the Śrī Pañc Daśanāmī akhārā organisation*

Having examined the the overall structure of the *akhārā-s* and their lineages, in this and the two following sections the general hierarchies and bodies of authority within the Daśanāmī order will be considered.

The most important body within the organisation of the Daśanāmī

⁶⁰ Sadānanda Giri (1976:36) notes that the titles ‘Giri’, ‘Purī’, ‘Bhāratī’ and ‘Vana’ are found in the modern lists of both the ‘ten names’ and the *maṛhī-s*. From this he infers that these four ‘groups’ of *saṃnyāsī-s* helped to create the *nāgā* organisations, most probably in the Mughal period, as forces to counter Muslim aggression. Vanas, Araṇyas, Parvatas and Sāgaras “roamed alone” and did not initiate disciples, and hence these names have become rare, while the Giris, Purīs and Bhāratīs increased their numbers through initiation.

akhārā-s is the Śrī Pañc⁶¹ which consists of a group of *nāgā*-s and usually four or sometimes eight *mahant*-s (see below) from the *akhārā*. ‘Śrī Pañc’ is also a formal appellation preceding the name of the *akhārā* and may be seen on the proscenium-style arch at the entrance to an *akhārā*. Representatives to the Śrī Pañc are elected from all the groups of *maṛhī*-s within either four or eight of the *dāvā*-s, depending on the constitution of the *akhārā*, and as we have seen, only theoretically represent all fifty-two *maṛhī*-s. Some of the *maṛhī*-s are these days effectively defunct and most *akhārā*-s are divided into four *dāvā*-s, the exception being the Mahānirvāṇī, which is divided into eight *dāvā*-s. The author’s inquiries during fieldwork indicated that despite the fact that the constitution and decision-making processes within the *akhārā*-s are somewhat more anarchic than some of the commentaries might indicate, a hierarchy of authority within the *akhārā*-s is universally recognised.

The Śrī Pañc has been compared to the parliament of the *akhārā*-s. It gives the orders for initiating *nāgā*-s at Kumbh Melās and settles disputes between *maṭha*-s and individual *nāgā*-s. During Kumbh Melās the assembly of *nāgā*-s is known as the Śambhu Pañc, which, ultimately, has the highest authority within the *akhārā*. However, it is only operational (as the Śambhu Pañc) for the duration of the Kumbh Melās. During the time between Kumbh Melās it is the Śrī Pañc that has the highest authority regarding administrative affairs, even though the members may be travelling. The Śrī Pañc has its own flag, deity and insignia but members do not usually own any significant personal property or have any permanent habitation. However, some members of the Śrī Pañc, particularly *mahant*-s, may own properties, such as *maṭha*-s or *āśrama*-s, which may be a part of an extensive landholding. In some *akhārā*-s the Śrī Pañc may itself, as a body, own land and properties.

All seven Daśanāmī *akhārā*-s have their own Śrī Pañc, to which officials are usually elected every six years, during either a half or a full Kumbh Melā. All *akhārā*-s follow this practice. The election is based on representatives selected from the *dāvā*-s. The number of posts within each *akhārā* varies according to the size of the *akhārā*, in terms of the number of properties it owns and the number of current initiates, but the positions are hierarchical. The highest position in

⁶¹ The *akhārā*-s spell ‘pañc’ with a short ‘a’.

an *akhārā* is held by a single *sabhāpati* (the ‘president’ or ‘chairman’), who presides over all the activities of all regional branches of the *akhārā*. Under him, in order of hierarchical descent, are: *śrī-mahant-s* and *mahant-s*; their assistants (*kārbārī-s* or *adhikārī-s*); *thānāpati-s* who manage the *akhārā-s* properties (the temples and *maṭha-s*); secretaries;⁶² *pūjārī-s*; *koṭvāl-s* who are armed guards who also circulate information about the election of *mahant-s* and *kārbārī-s* at Kumbh Melās, and *koṭhārī-s* (or *bhandārī-s*), who manage the daily supplies, such as food items, needed by the *akhārā*. In the larger *akhārā-s*, notably the Jūnā and Mahānirvānī, two other officers, known as *dhūnīvālā-s*, may be elected to the Śrī Pañc. The *dhūnīvālā* circulates decisions reached collectively by the Śrī Pañc to the Jamāt, Jamāt being the name for a group of travelling Daśanāmīs who do not live in an *akhārā*.⁶³

In normal circumstances, any *maṭha* is presided over by a *mahant*, who is the spiritual head of the institution, succession typically passing to a disciple of that guru. While the *mahant* rules over the *maṭha* by legal right (*hak*), the *śrī-mahant* is elected, and rules by consensus. *Mahant-s* and *śrī-mahant-s* may both sit side by side on the *gaddī*, but it is the *mahant* of the *maṭha* who usually has a more permanent position. The *kārbārī* oversees daily practical affairs of an *akhārā* or *maṭha* for the *mahant*, and will be in charge should the *mahant* be away.

The Śrī Pañc elects a number of *thānāpati-s* (‘landlords’) who man-

⁶² All my informants used the English word ‘secretary’ to refer to this post, rather than the Hindi term, *saciv*, a term common in bureaucratic circles.

⁶³ There are a number of direct parallels between the organisational structures of the Daśanāmī and *vaiṣṇava* Rāmānandī (Bairāgī) orders, one being the 52 *madhī-s* of the Daśanāmīs and the 52 *dvāra-s* of the Rāmānandīs. Another is the *pañc-samskāra* initiation (see Ch. 3.2). There is also a very similar hierarchy of functionaries within both orders (see Burghart 1976:63–72; Sharma 1998:94–95). At the top of the hierarchy of a typical, large Rāmānandī *chāvni* (‘temporary lodging’ or ‘troop cantonment’, equivalent to an *akhārā*) is the *mahant*, followed by two *adhikārī-s* (who administer the functioning of the organisation); one *koṭhārī* (storekeeper); five *pūjārī-s*; three *vyās-s* (specialists in three different *Rāmāyaṇa-s*); one *koṭvāl*; two *prasādī-s*; three *jal-bhārī-s* (assistants); and twenty-five *bhandārī-s* (cooks). The officers of a Bairāgī *maṅḍal* (a regionally organised unit) are: *śrī-mahant*, *adhikārī*, *rasoīyā*, *jalbhārī* and *koṭvāl*. Bairāgīs are members of a *maṅḍal* by virtue of their *kuṭī* (*āsrama/sthān*) being in that area.

The hierarchical order within the Nirmala *akhārā* is also similar (see Oberoi 1997:125, who cites Mahant Dial Singh, *Nirmala Panth Darśan*, Amritsar, 1952:323–337): “the akhara needs to maintain a touring unit and this shall be always made up of a maximum of 50 and a minimum of 20 Nirmalas. Such a unit will always have the following officiants: a head Mahant [a post below that of the Śrī Mahant], a Granthī, a Pūjārī, a Paṅḍit or Gianī, a Koṭhārī, two Kārbārīs, and a Śrī Bhaṅḍārī”.

age the *akhārā*-s' properties. They should be *nāgā*-s or retired *mahant*-s and are usually older ascetics. A *thānāpati* may be in a position inferior to one he previously occupied. The collective ownership and management of property by up to eight *thānāpati*-s, who also have a limited period in that role, is to prevent dissent over the management and ownership of property.⁶⁴ The Śrī Pañc, being the highest collective body of authority within the *akhārā*, has, theoretically, the right to dismiss the *thānāpati* managing the affairs of the properties of the *akhārā*. Depending on the size and occupancy of any of the properties administered by an *akhārā*, there will be a corresponding number of *thānāpati*-s, secretaries and other officials. For example, in 1996 the Mahānirvāṇī *akhārā* was administering twenty-six properties (Purī 2001:151–153),⁶⁵ the main *maṭha* at Allahabad having eight *śrī-mahant*-s, eight *kārbār*-s, three secretaries and three *thānāpati*-s. At Kañkhal, Haridvār, there are two secretaries and five *thānāpati*-s. A typical small *maṭha*, such as at Jvālāmukhī, has a single *thānāpati*.⁶⁶

The Jamāt, also referred to as the Jhuṇḍī ('small flock or swarm' in Hindi) or Jhuṇḍī Pañc, is elected by the Śrī Pañc and travels for most of the year, except for the four months of the rainy season, carrying its own flag, deity and insignia, which are borrowed from the Śrī Pañc. The Śrī Pañc also selects someone from the Jamāt to be a *mahant* within the Jamāt, the selected *mahant* being directly under the authority of a *śrī-mahant* of the *akhārā*. The travelling Jamāt may consist of ex-*mahant*-s, *nāgā*-s and *vastradhārī*-s (i.e. *paramahaṃsa*-s), all of whom may have joined willingly or been sent travelling by the *akhārā*. Members of the travelling Jamāt may stay somewhere and establish a new *maṭha* which will recruit new members to the order and send them to the *akhārā* for training. Within the *akhārā*,

⁶⁴ However, according to Sadānanda Giri (1976:32) the *thānāpati* traditionally occupied his office for life, having received a letter with the seal of the *akhārā*.

⁶⁵ At Dārāgañj (Allahabad), Banaras (two properties), Kañkhal (Haridvār), Omkāreśvar, Ujjain. In Maharashtra: at Nāgpur, Akolā, Lāregānv (Vardhā), Parbhanī (two properties), and Tryambakeśvar (Nāsik); and at Jvālāmukhī (H.P.), Nīlkañṭh, Rṣikeś, Karnāli (Baṛaudā), Kurukṣetra (five properties), Dehra Dūn (U.P.), Śrīnāthjī (Baliyā, U.P.), and Udaypur (Rajasthan).

⁶⁶ At the time of research (2001–2002), the Jūnā *akhārā* at Banaras had: 1 *sabhāpati*; 2 *śrī-mahant*-s; 2 *kārbār*-s; 2 secretaries; 4 *thānāpati*-s; 4 *koṭvāl*-s; 2 *pūjārī*-s; 1 *koṭhārī*. The Aṭal *akhārā* at Banaras: 1 *sabhāpati*, who is also *śrī-mahant* as well as secretary; 1 *mahant*; 1 *koṭvāl* who is also *thānāpati*; 1 *koṭhārī*. The Āvāhan *akhārā* at Banaras: 1 *sabhāpati*; 1 secretary; 1 *śrī-mahant*. Agni *akhārā* at Banaras; 1 *sabhāpati*; 1 secretary; 1 *thānāpati*, who is also *koṭvāl*; 1 *śrī-mahant*; 1 *pūjārī*; 1 *koṭhārī*; 1 *bhaṇḍārī*.

the Jamāt is the second highest authority after the Śambhu Pañc.⁶⁷ It is under the Śambhu Pañc during the Kumbh Melā, and under the Śrī Pañc at other times. Overseeing the activities of all thirteen *akhārā*-s (including the seven Daśanāmī *akhārā*-s) is a body known as the Akhil Bhāratīya Akhārā Pariṣad,⁶⁸ based in Haridvār, which meets to decide various practical and policy issues.⁶⁹

2.4 Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras

Affiliated to the *akhārā*-s are one or several Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras ('Lords of the area').⁷⁰ The author was informed by a variety of *sādhu*-s, officials and Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras, that presently the *akhārā*-s with the largest number of affiliated Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras are the Mahānirvāṇī and Nirañjanī, with up to thirty affiliated Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras.⁷¹ While many Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras are affiliated to the various *akhārā*-s, usually only one—or, occasionally, up to four—is directly involved with an *akhārā* in his role as *ācārya-guru* (or *ācārya-mahāmaṇḍaleśvara*) for the *akhārā*, presiding over a part of the *saṃnyāsa* rite. Only the *ācārya-mahāmaṇḍaleśvara*-s may give *dīkṣā*, which is the only time when they usually come into contact with the *akhārā*. Even though Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras may indicate an affiliation with a particular

⁶⁷ Sadānanda Giri (1976:27) remarks that: "When a disciple first comes into the Akhārā, he is sent out with the 'Jamāt' group, to roam about, see the country [and] to gain experience. In this way his good qualities are developed and he becomes fit to lead a life in the community. Eventually such people become the heads of the Akhārās. Sometimes after training they become head of the Āśrama of the *Siddha-Guru*. From many places the Akhārās recruit wayward boys. In this respect they have reshaped the life of many unruly boys, and saved them from becoming thieves and dacoits. When these boys come into the Akhārā they are made into good *saṃnyāsins* by rigorous training."

⁶⁸ Each *akhārā* controls an average of a hundred religious bodies, such as *maṭha*-s, temples and *āśrama*-s (Jaffrelot 1996:471).

⁶⁹ One decision taken quite recently was that the *akhārā*-s should not become involved in any overt or covert 'religious' activity (Dutt 2001). Whether this decision has any binding effect remains, however, to be seen.

⁷⁰ Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras usually have lengthy titles, a typical example being, 'Śrīmat paramahaṃsa parivrājakācārya brahmaniṣṭha ananta śrī vibhūṣita śrī annapūrṇa pīṭhādhiśvara mahāmaṇḍaleśvara śrī svāmī viśveśvarānanda giri jī mahārāja vedāntācārya'.

⁷¹ Sinha and Saraswati (1978:98) list eight Maṇḍaleśvaras, including one Ācārya Maṇḍaleśvara, for the Mahānirvāṇī *akhārā*, whereas Purī (2001:136–137) lists twenty-nine Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras affiliated to that *akhārā*.

akhārā, sometimes indicated on the sign over the gateway to the camp or *āśrama*, in most instances the title is essentially honorary, as, at some time in the past, the Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara's *maṭha* will have broken away from the *akhārā*. Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras often own large *āśrama*-s and deliver public lectures on Vedānta and related religious topics to large audiences, particularly in the rainy season. Many of them have the office bestowed upon them during a ceremony at a Kumbh Melā.⁷² The Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras are the heads of a hierarchy within the monastic tradition, which is essentially independent of the hierarchies that operate within the *akhārā*-s, except at times of initiation.⁷³

Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras have essentially replaced the former pre-eminence of the *ācārya*-s. H. H. Wilson, writing in 1861, makes no mention of them in the Daśanāmī order, and Sadānanda Giri (1976:50–53) concludes that their office has only developed in the last sixty years or so. He remarks that there used to be only three *ācārya-guru*-s, of the Nirañjanī, Jūnā and [Mahā-] Nirvāṇī *akhārā*-s, and that the *ācārya-guru*-s used to accompany the *akhārā*-s for the baths at the Kumbh Melās. (The Ānanda, Āvāhan and Aṭal *akhārā*-s, the three smaller *akhārā*-s, still accompany the three larger *akhārā*-s to the baths.) Although these days each *akhārā* has its own affiliated *ācārya-guru*, this has not always been so. Purī (2001:133) remarks that the Aṭal and Mahānirvāṇī *akhārā* used to share an *ācārya-guru*, but that since 1922 the Aṭal *akhārā* created an independent *ācārya-guru*. Purī provides a *paramparā* for the Mahānirvāṇī *akhārā* of twelve Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras (as *ācārya-guru*-s), which, realistically, would perhaps go back around 150 years. Mīśra (*Amit Kātrekhā* 2001:103) maintains that it was during the period when the Jyotir *pīṭha* was

⁷² The *ācārya-guru* (who is a Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara) of each *akhārā* is often a resident of a particular *maṭha*. Thus, for example, Sinha and Saraswati (1978:98), discussing the residences of the Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras of Banaras, note that the Ācārya-Maṇḍaleśvaras of the Mahānirvāṇī *akhārā* always reside in the Govinda *maṭha*, those of the Nirañjanī in the Durbeśvara *maṭha*, and those of the Jūnā *akhārā* in the Mr̥tyuñjāya *maṭha*.

⁷³ To give one example, the current Ācārya Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara of the Jūnā *akhārā* is Svāmī Avadheśānanda Giri, who was elected at the 1998 Haridvār Kumbh Melā. Svāmījī started and heads an organisation called Prabhu Premī Saṅgh, the headquarters being in Kaṅkhal, Haridvār. It has twenty-eight *āśrama*-s throughout north India, and is dedicated not only to spiritual uplift but also to the education and feeding of the poor and destitute (see www.prabhuprem.org.in). Svāmījī has written around a dozen books and lectures frequently.

moved to Dholka in Gujarat that a decision was made by the Dholka *ācārya* that each *akhārā* should have its own *ācārya mahāmaṇḍaleśvara*. It is uncertain when the Dholka *pīṭha* was first established (certainly after 1776), but the Jyotir *pīṭha* was reestablished in 1941, which means—if Miśra is correct—that the arrangement whereby each *akhārā* has its own *ācārya-mahāmaṇḍaleśvara* came into existence before 1941.⁷⁴

The title of ‘Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara’ clearly derives from the feudal role performed by rulers in the process of state formation during the early mediaeval period.⁷⁵ The institution of the Vijayanagara Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara is evident in the parallel role of the Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras of the Daśanāmī order, whereby these heads of monastic *maṭha*-s are nominally under the instruction and command of the main *maṭha*-s controlled by the reigning Śāṅkarācāryas. It seems that from hundreds of years before the time of Śāṅkara (eighth century CE), until the last century or so, it was *pariṣad*-s of learned Brahmins who adjudicated on doubtful points of religious conduct, and prescribed appropriate penances (Kane HDŚ, Vol. 2:971–974). Only rarely were heads of *maṭha*-s asked to decide. During the time of Marāṭhā domination, the king or minister consulted the Brahmins in holy places such as Paithan, Nāsik and Karad on religious matters and only rarely consulted the heads of *maṭha*-s. This arrangement prevailed until the time of the British, and it was

⁷⁴ Sinha and Saraswati’s account (1978:96) of an anecdote related to them by an informant from the Jūnā *akhārā* may throw some light on this issue. According to their informant, around a century ago *nāgā*-s used to give the highest honour to *daṇḍī*-s, whom they regarded as their gurus. At that time, the *daṇḍī*-s used to initiate the *paramahaṃsa*-s and *nāgā*-s into *saṃnyāsa*. The *nāgā*-s used to carry the palanquin of the Śāṅkarācārya, who is considered to be the spiritual head of the Daśanāmī *saṃnyāsi*-s. However, a dispute arose when the *daṇḍī*-s, who are Brahmin *brahmacārī*-s, cast doubt on the purity of the *paramahaṃsa*-s and *nāgā*-s. Henceforth, the *daṇḍī*-s refused to initiate the *paramahaṃsa*-s and *nāgā*-s into *saṃnyāsa*. As a consequence, the institution of *ācārya-guru* arose, whereby a Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara was a monastic tradition, and who may also be a *daṇḍī*, will initiate *paramahaṃsa*-s and *nāgā*-s at a Kumbh Melā.

⁷⁵ For example, from an inscription of 1356 (*Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. X, Kolar, no. 222), we learn that Kumāra Kampana, one of the early rulers of the Vijayanagara empire, and the first son of Bukka I, was appointed by his father as the Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara of the Mulbāgal region, entrusted with the task of extending Vijayanagara rule in the Tamil country. Most of the Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras were members of the royal family in the early period of Vijayanagara rule. By the time of Harihara II, local tax collection systems of the village assemblies were bypassed and replaced by directly appointed Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras and other such officials. See Krishnaswami (1964:7, 103ff.) for further details.

only at approximately the beginning of the nineteenth century that *mahant*-s and such authorities as the Śaṅkarācāryas—who occupied, for example, the *gaddī*-s of the Śaṅkeśvara *maṭha* at Karavīra in Maharashtra⁷⁶—have claimed almost exclusive jurisdiction in such matters. The adoption of the title of ‘Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara’ and an extended juridical role of the religious office would seem to indicate a kind of reformation or reorganisation of the order as it currently exists.

2.5 Śaṅkarācāryas

While authority is hierarchical within individual *maṭha*-s and *akhārā*-s, at the apex of the Daśanāmī structure are the Śaṅkarācāryas. Śaṅkarācāryas are also referred to as *jagadguru* (‘world guru’), a title reserved for someone with supreme spiritual authority. They reside at the *maṭha*-s supposedly founded by Śaṅkarācārya.⁷⁷ The landholdings and estates of the larger *maṭha*-s, particularly those of Dvārakā, Kāñcīpuram and Śṛṅgerī are extensive.⁷⁸ The estates also include an increasing number of educational institutions and hospitals. Besides their religious and administrative duties—which include participating in initiation rituals at Kumbh Melās—the Śaṅkarācāryas also adjudicate on matters of *Dharmasāstra*. Besides the government court system, parallel systems of social justice function in many regions of India.⁷⁹ In south India, the local caste council (*kattemane*), usually with five members, decides many issues, while others are decided

⁷⁶ See Ch. 4.4, on Daśanāmī *pīṭha*-s and *maṭha*-s.

⁷⁷ For a brief biography and an account of the the coronation/consecration (*paṭṭabhīṣeka*) of Bhāratūṛtha, installed as Śaṅkarācārya of Śṛṅgerī in 1989 (inheriting the *gaddī* from Vidyāṛtha, who had occupied it since 1954), see Yocum (1996).

⁷⁸ See Venkataraman (1959:132–166) for details of the landholdings, shrines, temples and revenue of the Śṛṅgerī Saṁsthānam (‘institution’). Revenue derives from around fifty villages in surrounding districts. Net revenue in 1959 was 33,000 Rs. The *saṁsthānam* also owns around fifty buildings, temples and shrines throughout India. The *jāgīr* (land donated by a ruler) enjoyed by the *pīṭha* for 600 years was abolished in 1950 by the Inām Abolition Act and became a *tālukā*, with a *tahsildār* as the civil administrator (Gnanambal 1973:8). The wealth of the Kāñcīpuram *maṭha*, which controls several schools, colleges, hospitals and other organisations, was estimated in 2004 at between Rs. 5,000 and 10,000 crore (1.1–2.2 billion U.S. dollars) (www.hinduismtoday.com/hpi/2004/11/17.shml).

⁷⁹ See Lariviere (1993).

by Śāṅkarācāryas. Gnanambal (1973) provides extensive documentation of numerous cases decided by the pontiffs of seven south Indian *maṭha*-s, including the Kumbhakonam and Śṛṅgerī *maṭha*-s (also known as *pīṭha*-s).⁸⁰ For settling disputes or grievances the *jagadguru* is assisted by a number of teachers well-versed in the *Dharmaśāstra*-s. Cases typically involve marriage, adultery and sexual offences, religious rites and caste practice, anti-social acts, change of occupation, caste pollution, interpreting *śāstra*-s, caste, initiation and personal affairs. Complaints from individuals are usually first taken to the local *pañcāyat*, and a report elicited, before the case is presented to a *maṭha*. Branch *maṭha*-s of the Śāṅkara *pīṭha*-s have *mudrādhikārī*-s who refer cases to the *dharmādhikārī* (supervisor), someone who belongs to one of the Śāṅkarite *pīṭha*-s and decides on matters of caste, moral conduct and ritual obligation. Many of the cases are also considered by the Śāṅkarācārya. Although complaints are brought to the *pīṭha* and adjudicated, the *pīṭha*-s never actively pursue cases in the role of prosecutor. The punishment dispensed in cases which are adjudicated is seldom harsh, typically involving a small fine, forms of social exclusion or purification and expiation ceremonies. Only rarely, usually in cases of sexual misconduct, is someone excluded from the community. The *pīṭha*-s have considerable authority, particularly among some sections of Brahmans.

In this chapter, the structure, organisation and hierarchies within the *akhārā*-s have been examined. As noted in the previous chapter (1.6), several commentators⁸¹ claim that the *akhārā*-s are in some respects democratic and non-hierarchical. However, it is evident from our consideration of the organisation of the *akhārā*-s that the *akhārā*-s are essentially hierarchical in terms of authority and decision-making. Conflicts between the *akhārā*-s were referred to, illustrating the radically different character of the militant wing of the Daśanāmī from that of the monastic tradition. Yet it remains to be explained how the Śāṅkarācāryas—the preeminent heads of the Daśanāmī monastic tradition—are integrated within a structure that incorporates the militant *akhārā*-s. This is illustrated in initiation procedures, the main topic of the next chapter.

⁸⁰ Some Daśanāmī *maṭha*-s are also known as *pīṭha*-s: see Ch. 4.4.

⁸¹ See, for example, Sadānanda Giri (1976:27); Sinha and Saraswati (1978:196); Dazey (1987:557; 1990:309).

CHAPTER THREE

RENUNCIATION, RULES FOR ASCETICS, AND INITIATION

In this chapter, the procedures of renunciation are considered. A brief comparison between the earliest texts that provide details of renunciation procedures and a recent account of these rites illustrates the remarkable continuity in *saṃnyāsa* rites for around two millennia. However, several points that are not apparent in the ancient accounts are revealed in the details provided for contemporary procedures. Firstly, at least one officiating guru is required to perform the rite of renunciation for the candidate. In a modern anthropological context, such facilitation not only liberates the renunciate from a prior social identity, but, as indicated in the Introduction to this dissertation, the same *saṃnyāsa* rite also simultaneously initiates the renunciate *into* the renunciate lineage of the initiating guru: the *saṃnyāsa* rite has two aspects, constituting both a renunciation of one social order, and an initiation into another social order, that of a renunciate sect. Another key component of this chapter is the illustration of how the militant wing of the Daśanāmī order is ideologically linked to the monastic wing, via the auspices and participation of a high executive of the monastic wing (frequently a Śaṅkarācārya) in the initiation of *paramahaṃsa*-s and potential *nāgā*-s during the *saṃnyāsa* rite.

3.1. *Renunciation procedures*

The earliest extant account of Brahmanical injunctions for the renunciate and renunciation procedures is to be found in the *Dharmasūtra* of Baudhāyana (2.17–18),¹ the earliest portions of which may be dated from around the beginning of the third to the middle of the second century BCE. There seem, however, to have been a significant number of later interpolations in the text, most probably

¹ Kane (HDŚ, Vol. 2: 953).

including the section on renunciatory rites.² It is in the *Dharmasūtra* of Baudhāyana that the term *saṃnyāsa* first appears in *dharma* literature. Other extant *Dharmasūtra* texts³ also deal at some length with the life of the renunciate; those of Gautama (3.11–25), Āpastamba (2.21.1–17) and Vasiṣṭha (10.1–31).⁴ These writers frequently quote from unnamed sources (Olivelle 1977:21 fn. 4).⁵

According to Baudhāyana (2.17.1–7),⁶ renunciation may be performed by a widower or by someone who has settled his children in their respective duties. It is also prescribed for people over seventy years of age or for a forest hermit who has retired from ritual activities.⁷ During the procedure,⁸ the candidate internalises the *sāvitrī*

² See Olivelle (1999:xxx-xxxiii). Kane (HDS, Vol. 1:52) tentatively dates Baudhāyana to 600–300 BCE.

³ For the translation of the *Dharmasūtra*-s, see Olivelle (1999).

⁴ Rules for ‘fourth-*āśrama*’ *yati*-s (or *parivrajaka*-s or *saṃnyāsi*-s) also appear in various *Purāna*-s. See, for example, *Kūrma Purāna* (II.28); *Nārada Purāna* (I.27.92–106; II.43.123–127).

⁵ Kane (HDS Vol.1:989-1158) lists over eighty works dealing exclusively with renunciation. Unfortunately, most still remain in manuscript form and little work has been done on editing the texts. Until Olivelle’s (1977–1978) editing of Vāsudevāśrama’s *Yatidharmaprakāśa*, a text dated to between, most probably, 1675 and 1800, the only other mediaeval treatises on renunciation to have been published were Viśveśvarasarasvatī’s *Yatidharmasaṅgraha* and Vidyāraṇya’s *Jīvanmuktiviveka*.

⁶ The candidate first has his head, beard and body shaved and his nails clipped. Then, taking a triple-staff, sling, water-strainer, water-pot and bowl, he goes to the boundary of the village, eats a light meal of ghee, milk and curds, and then fasts. He then recites and internalises the *sāvitrī mantra* several times, in different ways. Before sunset he performs his daily fire sacrifice with offerings of ghee, and spends the night awake. In the last portion of the night he gets up and performs last daily fire sacrifice, making an offering to the Fire common to all men with an oblation prepared in twelve potsherd. He throws into the offertorial fire the vessels used in the daily sacrifice that are not made of of clay or stone (i.e. wood), and into the household fire he throws the two fire-drills. He deposits the sacred fires in himself, breathing in the smell of each fire three times, saying: “With that body of yours worthy of sacrifice, O Fire...” Then, standing within the sacrificial area, he recites, three times softly and three times aloud, the *praiśa mantra* (see below). Filling his cupped hands with water, he pours it out, saying: “I give safety to all creatures!” He takes the staff, sling, water-pot and bowl, reciting appropriate ritual formulae. Taking the aforementioned mendicant’s possessions, he goes to a water place, bathes and sips water, reciting mantras (the *Surabhimatī*, *Ablīṅga*, *Vāruṇī*, *Hiraṇyavarṇa* and *Pāvamānī* verses). Entering the water, he controls his breath sixteen times while reciting the *Aghamarṣaṇa* hymn; comes out of the water; squeezes the water from his clothes; wears another clean garment; and sips water. Then, taking the water strainer, he recites other mantras: to the elements, the sun, the ancestors and himself; he should then recite the *sāvitrī mantra*, up to an unlimited number of times.

⁷ Also, it is meant for Śālīnas and Yāyāvaras who are childless. These are people

mantra,⁹ deposits the sacred fires in himself,¹⁰ and utters the *praiṣa mantra*:¹¹ “I have renounced! I have renounced! I have renounced!” A significant omission in Baudhāyana’s account is the absence of reference to anyone who assists, supervises or instigates the *saṃnyāsa* rites: a guru is not mentioned. The candidate of Baudhāyana’s text would need to have knowledge of the procedures of renunciation for it to be performed. This aspect is crucial, as it is initiation by a guru (who has a lineage), through the performance of correct rites, that validates *saṃnyāsa*.

The earliest known Brahmanical text devoted specifically to renunciation is the *Yatidharmasamuccaya* of Yādava Prakāśa,¹² written in

who were originally two types of Vedic sacrificer. The former maintained a stable residence, whereas the latter were given to wandering. Together they constitute a category of Vedic sacrificer who is distinguished from the ordinary householder (see Olivelle 1993:162).

⁸ A slightly different version of the initiatory rite is given in the *Vaikhānasa Smārtasūtra*, and reference is made to several of its elements in the *Manu Smṛti* (6.38), *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* (3.56) and *Viṣṇu Smṛti* (96.1) (see Olivelle 1977:37). It is also described in most *Saṃnyāsa Upaniṣad*-s (see Olivelle 1992) and is substantially similar to accounts found in later, mediaeval texts on renunciation.

⁹ RV III.62.10, also known as ‘entry into *sāvitrī*’ or the *gāyatrī mantra*: “Om Earth! I enter Sāvitrī; that excellent [glory] of Sāvitr. Om Atmosphere! I enter Sāvitrī; the glory of god we meditate. Om Sky! I enter Sāvitrī; that he may stimulate our prayers” (tr. Olivelle 1999:204). This mantra is the most sacred mantra of the Brahmanical tradition. It is imparted at initiation (*upanayana*) when the youth becomes a twice-born and a full participant in the religious life of the Brahmanical community. See Sharma (1988) for the religious use and symbolism of the *gāyatrī mantra* in contemporary Hinduism.

¹⁰ One of the central motifs within the complex of ideas concerning renunciation in the Brahmanical world is that the external fires become internalised, as the renouncer’s breath. In most sources the internalised fires are identified with the breath or with the five breaths, but in the *Āruṇi Upaniṣad* (2) the external fires are deposited in the stomach and the *gāyatrī mantra* in the fire of speech. The internalisation of the fires is accompanied by the relinquishing of ritual paraphernalia into the fire or water.

¹¹ The *praiṣa* is the technical term for the mantra, ‘I have renounced’ and constitutes an essential feature of the renunciatory rite. Olivelle translates it as ‘Call’. *Praiṣa* is a technical term in Vedic ritual vocabulary, and within that context it refers to the formulae used by Adhvaryu priests to perform specific procedures. It is unclear why this formula was given that technical appellation (Olivelle 1992:95; 1995:67 fn. 26).

¹² According to tradition, Yādava Prakāśa was the *advaita*-Vedāntin teacher of Rāmānuja, whom he had plotted to kill after Rāmānuja’s challenge to his own *advaita* philosophical view. Yādava Prakāśa subsequently converted to Rāmānuja’s more devotional *viśiṣṭādvaita* (qualified non-dualism) philosophy and became his disciple. Rāmānuja was the founder of the first orthodox *vaiṣṇava* order of ascetics, known

the twelfth century.¹³ While it is evident that Brahmanical texts on renunciation are generally of *vaiṣṇava* persuasion, more than other mediaeval works on asceticism, the *Yatidharmasamuccaya* integrates ascetic life into the ritual life of the Brahmanical *vaiṣṇava* tradition (Olivelle 1995:17).¹⁴ *Yādava Prakāśa* (4.1-49) details the rites of renunciation, primarily according to Śaunaka.¹⁵ As a preliminary practice before initiation, the so-called *kṛcchra*¹⁶ (arduous) penances are to be performed (4.2), followed by *śrāddha* oblations (4.2, 4, 26).¹⁷ A crucial feature of *saṃnyāsa* is that, unlike the ordinary people, the dead *saṃnyāsi* does not become a ghost but is united immediately with the ancestral spirits. The *śrāddha*-s usually performed for a dead person in a ghostly state (*ekoddiṣṭaśrāddha*), and the customary rite of offering *piṇḍa* a year after the death of a relative (to six generations

as the Śrī *sampradāya*, one of the four extant *vaiṣṇava sampradāya*-s. It is also believed that Rāmānuja climbed the *gopuram* of the Viṣṇu temple in Goṣṭipūra, and shouted out, for all to hear, including *śūdra*-s, the secret eight-syllable *saṃnyāsi* mantra he had just received from Goṣṭipurna (Ramakrishnanada 1959:151–155).

¹³ See Olivelle (1995). See Olivelle (1976–1977; 1986–1987) for other mediaeval texts on renunciation, several of which refer to a work called *Brahmānandī*—a lost work—which seems to have been a basic text (Olivelle 1976:25).

¹⁴ There are numerous references throughout the text to Viṣṇu, his emblem, offerings to him, and to the renouncer as Viṣṇu: 2.51, 65; 3.6, 10, 53; 4.28, 35; 5.23–24, 32–33, 76–81, 91–142, 260, 293; 6.64, 68, 81, 203–204, 223, 229–314; 7.65–66, 89, 100, 108; 9.25, 45–58; 10.11; 11.28.

¹⁵ He also cites eight other authorities: Baudhāyana, Vasiṣṭha, Kātyāyana, Jambūgī, Kapila, Jābāli, Aṅgīras and Likhita.

¹⁶ Four *kṛcchra* penances constitute what is technically known as a *prājāpatya* penance, which consists of taking one meal a day for six days—a morning meal for the first three days and an evening meal the second—eating what is received unasked during the next three days, and fasting during the last three. A single *kṛcchra* penance—also called *pādakṛcchra* (‘quarter penance’) at *Yājñavalkya Dharmaśāstra* 3.3.18—is to perform the same four austerities for only one day each (Olivelle 1995:60). In *Gautama Dharmaśāstra* (26) three kinds of *kṛcchra* penances are described, involving progressive restrictions on eating over twelve days, finally only drinking water. The following chapter (27) describes the *cāndrāyaṇa* (‘lunar’) penance, whereby a lunar month of dietary control is observed, progressively decreasing and increasing food intake. The sequential rules of the *kṛcchra* also apply to this penance.

¹⁷ First to the gods, second to the seers, third to the divine beings, fourth to male ancestors, fifth to female ancestors, sixth to human beings, seventh to the elements, and eighth to the self. Kane (HDS Vol. 2:932), commenting on the *Narasimha Purāṇa*, remarks that the eight *śrāddha*-s are: *daiva* (to Vasus, Rudras, Ādityas); *ārṣa* (to the ten sages, including Marīci and others); *divya* (to Hiraṇyagarbha and Vairāja); *manuṣya* (to Sanaka, Sanandana and five others); *bhautika* (to five *bhūta*-s, *prthvī*, etc.); *pañcika* (to Kavyavād fire [?], Soma, Aryaman, *pitṛ*-s called Agnivāta etc.); *māṭṛśrāddha* (to ten *māṭṛ*-s, such as Gaurī, Padmā); *ātmaśrāddha* (to *paramātmān*).

of ancestors), do not need to be performed for the *saṃnyāsī* who has performed his own *śrāddha*.¹⁸ The *sāvitrī mantra* is then internalised, followed by a night's vigil. After bathing at first light, the candidate performs the morning fire sacrifice, reciting the Great Utterances¹⁹ and the hymn, "Swift runs the river of delight..." (RV IX.58). He should feed some Brahmans and make oblations to the fire, saying: "To the in-breath, svāhā! To the out-breath, svāhā! To the dif-fused breath, svāhā! To the top-breath, svāhā! To the middle-breath, svāhā!" After this he recites the *Puruṣa-sūkta* (RV X.90), offering a piece of firewood, ghee and porridge to the fire at each verse. He then makes further oblations to Agni Sviṣṭakṛt (the aspect of the fire-god that 'makes a sacrifice properly offered'), makes presents to his teacher (of a cow, a bowl of ghee or anything else) and recites verses from the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* (II.18.1) and the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* (II.5.8.8), depositing the fires in himself. He should then stand before the fire or in water and recite the *praiṣa mantra* three times softly, three times in a medium voice, and three times in a loud voice.²⁰

One of the most detailed accounts of initiatory procedures is contained in Vāsudevāśrama's *Yatidharmaprakāśa*,²¹ a *vaiṣṇava* orientated *advaita* work of the late seventeenth or eighteenth century,²² which

¹⁸ Technically, the *śrāddha* rites, wherein gods and ancestors are invoked, are essentially a component of, or supplement to, what might be translated as full funeral rites, known as *antyeṣṭi* (see Parry 1982:84; Prasad 1995).

¹⁹ There are either three or seven Great Utterances (*vyāhṛti*), denoting 'worlds': *bhūh*, *bhuvaḥ*, *svaḥ*, with the addition of *mahar*, *janas*, *tapas*, *satya* (see Olivelle 1995:63 fn. 13).

²⁰ Yādava Prakāśa also includes injunctions (4.40-48) for those who wish to renounce in the face of imminent death or mortal danger. If the man is able, he may perform the proper procedure, otherwise he may simply recite orally the *praiṣa mantra*. If he is unable to do that he should just mentally abandon attachments.

²¹ Vāsudevāśrama was acquainted with fifteen works dealing with *dharma*, four of them particularly with renunciation: Vidyāraṇya's *Jīvanmuktiviveka*, *Yatidharma-samuccaya* and *Praṇavamīmāṃsā* (c.1360), and Viśveśvarasarasvatī's *Yatidharmasamgraha* (early sixteenth century), also known as the *Yatidharmasamuccaya*. Besides the latter works and Vijñāneśvara's work on *dharma*, *Mitākṣarā* (1100–1120), Vāsudevāśrama was most influenced by the *advaitin* philosopher Madhusūdanasarasvatī, the pupil of Viśveśvarasarasvatī: he cites his *Siddhāntabindu* (46.12–14). Vāsudevāśrama also cites or refers to the works of Śaṅkara (8th cent.), Sureśvara (8th cent.), Prakāśātman (c. 975), Vācaspatimiśra (c.980), Sarvajñātman (c.1027), Vidyāraṇya (c.1340–1386), Madhusūdanasarasvatī (1540–1647), Narasiṃhāśrama (mid-16th century), Rāmatīrtha (mid-16th century) and Raṅgojī Bhaṭṭa (c.1575) (Olivelle 1977:28).

²² In the final section (73) of his treatise, Vāsudevāśrama describes himself as a *Paramahaṃsa* renouncer, the pupil of Śrī Govindāśrama, who was the pupil of Śrī Rāmakṣṇāśrama.

contains one of the first textual references to the ‘ten names’ (66.14–15) of the Daśanāmīs. Following Baudhāyana (II.17.11), Vāsudevāśrama maintains²³ (3) that five items are obligatory for the renouncer (8.25): either a single or a triple-staff, a braided string to loop around the mouth of a water pot to carry it, a water strainer, a water-pot and a begging-bowl. The triple staff was usually the kind carried by *vaiṣṇava* renunciates, and the single kind by *śaiva* renunciates. During Daśanāmī renunciation procedures the *saṃnyāsī* is given a loincloth, and a single staff, which is abandoned shortly if the *saṃnyāsī* is affiliated to an *akhārā* but is maintained by *daṇḍī*-s. In his commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (III.5.1),²⁴ Śaṅkara maintains that a renouncer should give up all rites and ritual instruments, such as fire, top-knot and sacrificial cord, a position maintained by later *advaitin*-s. One may easily distinguish Daśanāmī from other *sādhu*-s (notably *vaiṣṇava*) by the absence of the top-knot, which is removed

²³ According to Vāsudevāśrama, renunciation procedures are as follows (see Olivelle (1976; 1977) for the full text; see Olivelle (1977:38) for this resumé). To renounce, he: **1.** Performs one penance if he belongs to an *āśrama* and four if he does not (6.1-19; 21.2). **2.** Performs eight *śrāddha*-s (nine at 21.3) according to the rules of *vyddhiśrāddha* (7.1-61; 21.3-35). **3.** Gathers the articles needed by a renouncer (8.24-27). **4.** Declares his intention to renounce. Three rites follow immediately thereafter: worship of Gaṇapati, proclamation of an auspicious day, and worship of the divine mothers (21.37-38). **5.** Shaves his beard and head (except the top-knot), pares his nails and bathes (9.10; 21.39-41). **6.** Kindles the sacred fires and offers the sacrifice to Brahman (21.41-44). **7.** Performs the entry into Sāvitrī (8.28-29; 9.1-23; 21.49-56). **8.** Performs the *brahmānvādhāna* and declares his intention to fast (10.1-4; 21.57-64). **9.** Offers the evening sacrifice (11.1; 21.67). **10.** Keeps awake and fasts during the night before renunciation (11.1-8). **11.** Bathes in the morning, performs the *sandhyā* worship and offers the fire sacrifice (12.1-5; 21.72-74). **12.** Offers a sacrifice to Prajāpati or Agni Vaiśvānara (12.6-27; 21.76-77). **13.** Gives away all his possessions to the priest (12.11-12). **14.** Deposits the fires in his self and discards the sacrificial utensils (12.29-35; 13.1-18; 21.72-74). **15.** Makes a *caru* oblation to Puruṣa (13.27-33; 21.82-86). (A *caru* oblation is an offering of boiled rice with milk or butter. This is performed by someone with one fire, while someone with three fires offers an *iṣṭi*, constituting a burnt offering of rice or barley. It is an oblation customarily associated with the worship of ancestors, frequently mentioned in inscriptions.) **16.** Offers the *virajā* oblation (an optional rite, 14.1-47). **17.** Proclaims the *praīṣa* (16.1-27; 21.91-114) in the following manner: (i) takes leave of his relatives; (ii) leaves home and goes to a lake; (iii) declares his intention to renounce; (iv) makes an offering of water; (v) discards the sacrificial thread; (vi) plucks the hair of the top-knot; (vii) declares the *praīṣa*; (viii) gives the gift of safety to all creatures. **18.** Either commits suicide (17.1-32; 21.115), or **19.** Takes possession of the articles needed by the renouncer (18.1-13; 21.116-128). **20.** Places himself under the guidance of a guru (19.1-53; 21.129-160).

²⁴ Trans. by Mādhavānanda (1965:474–491).

during initiation. Vāsudevāśrama makes several references to shaving the head (5), some non-specific (8.3; 9.10), and another (21.39) clearly stating that the top-knot should be retained. However, during the subsequent procedures for renunciation, the renouncer discards one by one the symbols of his ritual life: the *sāvitrī* formula and the sacred fires (which are internalised), sacrificial utensils, sacred thread and top-knot.

The abandoning of all emblems and rites became one of the points of contention during the mediaeval period between adherents of the *advaita* philosophy of Śaṅkara, and those of the *viśiṣṭādvaita* philosophy of Rāmānuja, who believed that, at least, the sacrificial cord should be maintained. One of the issues underpinning this debate is the *viśiṣṭādvaita* contention that knowledge alone cannot cause liberation and that action, particularly religious ritual action, should accompany the quest for knowledge. This is in contrast to the *advaita* position that all action should be abandoned and that knowledge alone brings liberation. Unlike many other commentators on renunciation, the *advaitin* Vāsudevāśrama was not biased in a sectarian way.²⁵ He does not adjudicate—as had become customary in *advaita* orders—over the relative superiority of either *advaitin*-s (as the carriers of the single staff), or members of one of the *vaiṣṇava* ascetic orders (who traditionally carry the triple staff). The type of staff carried had become a self-conscious, emblematic, sectarian distinction.²⁶

The final sacrifice a renunciate will make is performed during the

²⁵ Vāsudevāśrama states that, according to one opinion (64.5-30), the renouncer worships Kṛṣṇa, Vyāsa, Śaṅkara, his gurus, Gaṇapati, Kṣetrapāla, Durgā, Sarasvatī, the guardian deities of the quarters, Brahmā and Rudra. However, others maintain that only Viṣṇu in the form of the *sālagrāma* is worshipped (64.1-35).

²⁶ Olivelle (1993:172; 1995:132) has remarked on the significance of the types of staffs carried by ascetics in relation to sectarian hierarchies. In a *vaiṣṇava* text, the *Sanatkumāra-saṃhitā* (5.34–38), the *advaita* Haṃsa and Paramahaṃsa ascetics are described as carrying a single staff, whereas the ‘higher’ classes of *vaiṣṇava* ascetics, the Bhagavān and the Prabhu, carry the triple staff. *Vaiṣṇava* orientated texts make frequent derogatory remarks against the *śaiva advaita* ascetics who carry the single staff, and not the triple staff (see, for example, *Yatidharmasamuccaya* 7.71). Śrī-Vaiṣṇava ascetics, who carried triple staffs, often accused the *advaitin*-s of being Buddhists pretending to follow the Brahmanical law. However, most *Samnyāsa Upaniṣad*-s and mediaeval legal texts consider the carrying of either the single or the triple staff as a feature of the four-fold classification of renouncers and not as sectarian badges (Olivelle 1986:43). There is an ‘ideal’ classification of four kinds of renouncer (*kuṇḍīcaka*, *bahūdaka*, *haṃsa*, *paramahaṃsa*) to be found in many texts, which concerns their different emblems and lifestyles. For further details, see Ch. 3.4.

saṃnyāsa rite. Vāsudevāśrama states (12.6-7; 21.76) that the sacrifice may be to either Agni Vaiśvānara or Prajāpati, reflecting the divergent views on which deity should be the recipient of the offering.²⁷ During Daśanāmī initiation rites, the final sacrifice is to Prajāpati.²⁸ The renouncer should then perform the *caru* oblation to Puruṣa (15) and, optionally, a *virajā* oblation (16), and should declare the *praiṣa* (17). (All three rites are central to Daśanāmī procedures and the performance of the *virajā-homa* is crucial.) The renouncer may then commit ritual suicide (18) or exercise the option of not doing so. The renouncer should take a few steps towards the north until called back by his teacher. The journey to ‘the north’ is symbolic of the Great Journey to the Himalayas,²⁹ undertaken without food or water, until the traveller died.³⁰

²⁷ Baudhāyana (II.17.23) states that the sacrifice should be to Agni, but the *Samnyāsa Upaniṣad*-s contain contrasting opinions. The *Jābāla Upaniṣad* (4) states that though some perform a sacrifice to Prajāpati, one should not do so, rather the sacrifice should be to Agni. However, the *Nāradaṭṭaparivṛjaka Upaniṣad* (138) maintains that the sacrifice should be to Prajāpati, and the *Kaṭhaśruti Upaniṣad* (38) that there should be oblations to Agni Vaiśvānara, Prajāpati and to Viṣṇu (see *Samnyāsa Upaniṣad*-s, trans. Olivelle 1992). Both Manu (6.38) and the *Viṣṇu Smṛti* (96.1) (see Jolly 1991) state that the final sacrifice should be to Prajāpati. The *Kūrma Purāṇa* (II.28.4) states that it can be either to Agni or Prajāpati. Yādava Prakāśa (4.31) cites Jāmadagnya, who states that the renouncer should perform a sacrifice to Prajāpati at which he gives all his possessions as a sacrificial gift to the priests and deposits the fires in himself. Apart from the inclusion of Prajāpati within a mantra stated by Śaunaka, as a feature of the *saṃnyāsa* rite (4.12), Yādava Prakāśa only once mentions a sacrifice to Prajāpati.

²⁸ Concerning the ambivalence of commentators regarding the deity to be the object of the final oblation, we might consider a feature of the Vedic *agnicayana* ceremony. Contrasting the generally iconic Hindu religious environment with the generally aniconic Vedic religious environment, Malamoud (1998:212) remarks that the aniconism of the *Veda* is not absolute. He discusses several instances, one of them during the *agnicayana* ceremony (the ‘piling of the fire-altar’), when a golden statuette is placed at the base of the brick structure. This statuette is an image of the sacrificer and also of the two divinities Agni and Prajāpati, with whom the sacrificer is secondarily identified. Agni and Prajāpati are furthermore identified with one another within the ceremony itself. The identity of the two deities is frequently alluded to in many Brahmanical texts. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* the identity of the two is continually reaffirmed. The traditional, partial identity of the two deities might to some extent explain the ambivalence of commentators on renunciation in respect of the deity to whom the recipient makes the final oblation.

²⁹ As in the final two books of the *Mahābhārata*.

³⁰ On ritual suicide and the rite of renunciation, see Olivelle (1978).

3.2 *Current initiation procedures: pañc-guru-saṃskār*

Among the more comprehensive published accounts of formal Daśanāmī initiation procedures are those of Sarkar (1958:63–81), Sadānanda Giri (1976:26–31) and Tripathi (1978:7–11).³¹ However, their accounts do not illustrate the two-stage process of initiation.³² All candidates first approach a *mahant* of an *āśrama* or a *maṭha*, having demonstrated a sincere desire to renounce and honour a guru. The first stage of initiation for entrants into non-*daṇḍī* institutions is known as the *pañc-guru-saṃskār* (“five guru ceremony”),³³ while the first stage in *daṇḍī* initiations is to become a *brahmacārī*, acquiring one of the four *daṇḍī* surnames,³⁴ Ānanda, Caitanya, Prakāśa or Svarūpa, depending on the organisational affiliation of the *maṭha* from which the candidate is taking initiation.³⁵ A *brahmacārī* generally serves fully initiated *saṃnyāsī*-s, as, theoretically, a *daṇḍī* is not supposed to touch fire or metal. The second stage—for all—is the *saṃnyāsa* initiation, known as *vidyā-saṃskār* or *virajā-havan* (or *homa*).

During the *pañc-guru-saṃskār* the candidate acquires, besides his main guru, four other gurus, from either the *daṇḍī maṭha*, or from

³¹ See also Ghurye (1964:105); Sinha and Saraswati (1978:65); and earlier ethnographers, such as Rose (1914, Vol. 3:348–355) and Anantakrishna Iyer (1930–1931). Sarkar (1958:66) refers to two texts as sources for his information, the *Sannyas-grahan-paddhātī* of Paramahaṃsa Gopālānand (Banaras 1941)—which I have been unable to locate—and the *Yatidharmasaṃgraha* of Viśveśvarasarasvatī (Anand Ashram Press, 1909), who was the teacher of the *advaitin* Madhusūdanasarasvatī (1540–1647). The text of the *Yatidharmasaṃgraha* (also known as the *Yatidharmasamuccaya*) is often in whole or in part contained in manuscripts entitled *Viśveśvara Smṛti*. A work entitled *Pañcamāśrama-vidhāna* is a work based on or contained in the *Viśveśvara Smṛti*, a title of numerous similar but not identical texts (Olivelle 1986:21).

³² Sadānanda Giri and Tripathi were both initiated into the Daśanāmīs, as a *paramahaṃsa* and *daṇḍī* respectively. Tripathi describes most of the procedures outlined in the following section. His top-knot and sacred thread were removed by his preceptor, the top-knot being thrown into the Ganges, and the sacred thread tied to the *daṇḍa*. The climax of his initiation ceremony was when the preceptor whispered the *praīsa* (or Śiva) *mantra* into his ear.

³³ Some *daṇḍī* institutions, such as the Machlibandar Maṭha (one of the larger *daṇḍī* institutions, with headquarters in Banaras) also perform the preliminary *pañc-guru-saṃskār* initiation, some time before the *virajā-homa*.

³⁴ Amongst the *daṇḍī*-s, the guru’s name is referred to as *prem-path*, and the *śiṣya*-’s as *yog-path*.

³⁵ The *brahmacārī*-s I interviewed from the Machlibandar Maṭha of Banaras all took the *brahmacārī* name Svarūpa, owing to the *maṭha*-’s theoretical affiliation to the Śārada *pīṭha* in Dvārakā.

the *akhārā*. The *pañc-guru-saṁskār* may take place at any time, the *saṁnyāsa* rite—freeing the candidate from all previous social ties—being usually performed at the following Kumbh Melā. *Akhārā*-s recruit initiates from amongst those who have been accepted by a *maṭha* or recommended by an individual or by the Jamāt. *Akhārā*-s also admit those who are disciples of others outside their order, and individuals who are not *saṁnyāsi*-s but who have served under a *nāgā* unconnected with the *akhārā*. The *nāgā* may then send a potential recruit directly to the *akhārā*. Initiation into the Daśanāmīs may also, in some rare instances, be directly at one of the main Śaṅkarite *maṭha*-s,³⁶ for disciples directly under one of the four (or five) reigning Śaṅkarācāryas. Some kind of initiation by a Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara or Daśanāmī *sādhu* may also be given quite freely to aspirants such as roving and inquisitive foreigners.³⁷ However, although a new name, mantra and meditation techniques may be given, Daśanāmīs emphasise the importance of the performance of the *virājā-homa* (see below), incumbent on all genuine *daṇḍī*-s, *paramahaṁsa*-s and *nāgā*-s, before one is truly a *saṁnyāsi*.³⁸

The following details of current initiation procedures are as performed by candidates taking initiation into the Jūnā *akhārā*. First, the keeper of the *akhārā* records, the *kārbārī*, duly records the name of the candidate, whose guru is so and so, and that he has paid his dues (frequently fifty-one rupees) to a particular *madhi* of the Śrī Pañcnām Jūnā *Akhārā* for the maintenance of the *chayī* ('mobile shrine') of Guru Dattātreyā. The date is recorded according to the

³⁶ Sawai (1992:155) observes that at the time of his research at the Śrīgerī *maṭha*, in 1984: "There are in Śrīgerī currently only three *saṁnyāsins* including the senior Jagadguru (*mahāsaṁnidhānam* in Sanskrit and Dodda Gurugaḷa "old teacher" in Kannaḍa). This small number seems to imply that a life of *saṁnyāsa* is perceived by most *smārtas* as too arduous to attempt...[At] Śrīgerī, the Jagadguru is very reticent in permitting aspirants to enter *saṁnyāsa*." It should be noted that *daṇḍī*-s initiated into *saṁnyāsa* directly by a Śaṅkarācārya at the main Śaṅkara *pīṭha*-s constitute a very small percentage of Daśanāmīs, and that there are many dozens of other *daṇḍī maṭha*-s in north India. The vast majority of Daśanāmī *saṁnyāsi*-s, comprising *paramahaṁsa*-s, *daṇḍī*-s and *āśrama*-s scattered throughout north India.

³⁷ My wife and I were 'initiated' into *saṁnyāsa* by a Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara at the Kumbh Melā around fifteen minutes after meeting him.

³⁸ Sadānanda Giri (1976:69) mentions a judgment of the Court of the District Judge at Hooghly in West Bengal, in 1937 (Order No. 147, 27: 8), that no person is a *saṁnyāsi* unless he has performed the *virājā-homa*.

Hindu calendar. Candidates, usually as a group, present themselves on the appointed day, already shaven, except for the top-knot. A *paṇḍit*, the guru and the initiate will sit in a triangle in front of the *dhūmī*. Uttering “Svāhā”, oblations of water and flower petals are made, after which the candidate drinks *pañcagavya*, a mixture of cow’s milk, curd, ghee, urine and faeces. The candidate is then presented with a bundle, containing a coconut, loin-cloth (*langoṭī*), sacred thread (*janeū*) and *rudrākṣa* necklace, wrapped in an ochre cloth (*bhagvā*) which he places at the feet of the guru. Technically, the initiating guru is not considered to be the candidate’s ‘real’ guru, as the initiating guru is merely the witness guru, *sākṣī-guru*, to the event of the candidate becoming a disciple of Dattātreya, the Lord of Yogīs.

Besides the initiating guru (the *mantra-guru*), who is effectively the main guru, there are four other gurus from the same *akhārā* present, who, with appropriate mantras, will present the candidate with, respectively, holy ash (*vibhūti*), loin-cloth (*langoṭī*), a necklace of beads (*rudrākṣa*) and sacred thread (*janeū*).³⁹ These five gurus constitute the so-called *pañc-guru*-s that the candidates acquire on their first initiation, known as the *mantra-guru*, *rudrākṣa-guru* etc. Under the *bhagvā*, held aloft by other *sādhu*-s, the candidate’s top-knot is cut and the *guru-mantra* is whispered three times into the candidate’s ear by the *mantra-guru*, ending: “*Namaḥ parvatī pate, hara hara Mahādeva*”. He is given a new name, ending in one of the ten Daśanāmī names.⁴⁰

The candidate then bathes, smears his body with holy ash, and is given a loin-cloth, *rudrākṣa* and sacred thread. He is finally wrapped in the *bhagvā* and places a monetary offering (*dakṣiṇā*) at the guru’s feet. He then performs what is known as *omkar*-s to the five gurus,

³⁹ Purī (2001:160–167) provides the mantras used in the Mahānirvāṇī *akhārā* for the following: cutting the *coṭī* (top-knot); mantra ‘blown’ into the ear; *bhagvā*; guru; ‘laying’ of the *gerū* (ochre colour) on cloth; *vibhūti*; Vedic mantra for wearing *bhasm* (‘ash’); applying *candan* (‘sandalwood’) paste; *rudrākṣa*; *langoṭī*; *prthvī* (‘earth’); *jal* (‘water’); *Gāyatrī*; going in the direction of ‘the field’; purification of the water vessel (*kamaṇḍal*); the tent; tooth-brushing; bringing the *dhūmī* to ‘consciousness’; *digambar* (*nāgā*) initiation; *jaṭā*; *golā* (‘ball of ash’); *samādhi*.

⁴⁰ This ceremony is referred to in the Brahmanical texts on renunciation as the *yogaṣaṭṭa*, wherein the candidate receives a new name and recites the fifteenth to the thirty-third verses of the eleventh chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā*. See *Yatidharmaprakāśa* 66. 1–24, ‘The Procedure of (Conferring) the Meditation Shawl’, where one of the first textual references to the ‘Ten Names’ occurs.

a cycle of five rounds of a mantra,⁴¹ to each guru, presenting each with *dakṣiṇā* of one rupee. The *oṃkar* is to be subsequently performed twice a day, morning and evening, the recitation accompanied by a rite involving the touching of thumbs and fingers. The coconut is then cracked open, the amount of water inside indicating the capacities of the novice *sādhu*. The coconut water is mixed with raw sugar (*guḍ*) and made into cakes. The guru feeds the *śiṣya* and the *śiṣya* feeds the guru, and the guru asks three times, “Which is sweeter, *guru* or *guḍ*?”, to which the *śiṣya* replies, “*Guru*”. A metal plate is then lifted over the *śiṣya*’s head and the guru announces to the three worlds that the candidate has become a *celā* (*śiṣya*). Such kinds of announcement within the *akhārā* are known as *pukār* (‘call’), a public statement that carries far more weight within what is essentially an oral tradition than in religious culture that is more textually based. Pieces of coconut and *guḍ* are then distributed to all *sādhu*-s present, the Brahmans performing the *havan*, and the fire-places (*dhūnī*) of the *akhārā*. This concludes the first stage of *saṃnyāsa*, during which the *saṃnyāsī* acquires five gurus, including the *mantra-guru*, and is nominally affiliated to the *akhārā*. He is now called a *mahāpuruṣa* or a *vastradhārī*.⁴² The *sādhu*-’s full initiation into the *akhārā* takes place in the third and final stage of initiation, when the *saṃnyāsī* may become a *nāgā*.

⁴¹ “*Oṃ Guru-jī, Oṃ Dev-jī, Oṃ Datt-jī, Oṃ Svāmī-jī, Oṃ Ālakh-jī, Oṃ Namō Nārāyaṇ*”.

⁴² Initiation into the Rāmānandī order entails similar procedures (see Sharma 1998:62–68). The *vaiṣṇava pañc-saṃskār* consists of: 1. *tap-saṃskār*; being adorned by heated brands with the emblems of Nārāyaṇa, the *cakra* (to the right arm) and *śaṅkha* (to the left arm); 2. *punḍra-saṃskār*; applying a *tilak* of white clay to the forehead, arm, chest and stomach; 3. *mālā* or *kanthī-saṃskār*; receiving a necklace of *tulsī* beads; 4. *nām-saṃskār*: receiving the name Dās, together with the name of Viṣṇu for the current month; 5. *mantra-saṃskār*, receiving the *kharaśar* mantra from the guru, whispered thrice into his ear, while he is under a cloth. If, after a six-month trial, the disciple’s conduct has been satisfactory, then he is presented with: 1. a cloth to cover his head; 2. two loin-cloths; 3. a cloth (*acal*) to cover the loin-cloth; 4. *kamaṇḍal*. The Śrī-Vaiṣṇava *saṃnyāsī*-s, founded by Rāmānuja, are invariably Brahmans and former householders. *Saṃnyāsa* rites are almost the same as those performed by the Daśanāmīs (see below). Amongst scriptures recited is the *Viṣṇu-sahasranāma* (see Lester 1992:78). Following the *ātma-srāddha*, *āśrama-svikāra* (the acceptance of the fourth *āśrama*) begins with the *praiṣa mantra*.

3.3 *Current procedures: virajā-havan / -homa (vidyā-saṃskār) and nāgā initiations*

The second initiation, the *virajā-havan* (the ‘rite of the hero’) or *vidyā-saṃskār*, is nearly always performed at Kumbh Melās. This is the main *saṃnyāsa* rite, which contains most of the features detailed in the texts that were examined in the first part of this chapter concerning ancient renunciation procedures. It is uniquely this rite that authenticates the *saṃnyāsī*-s condition of renunciation (as a ‘genuine’ *sādhu*), whether as a *danḍī* or a *paramahaṃsa*.

While the major part of this rite is performed by a Brahman *paṇḍit*, some parts are performed by the *ācārya-guru* (a Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara), who will represent either a *danḍī* lineage (initiating *danḍī*-s)⁴³ or an *akhārā*⁴⁴ (being elected by the *nāgā*-s of the *akhārā*). For *danḍī*-s, the *ācārya-guru* may be the same person who performs both the preliminary *brahmacārī* rite and the final *saṃnyāsa* rite. The *ācārya-guru* is also a representative of a reigning Śāṅkarācārya, who also usually presides over major initiation ceremonies at the Kumbh Melās. For some days, many hundreds of *sādhu*-s will have had a restricted, *phalāhār*, diet, which is essentially a diet of milk with some fruit, and will have been repeating the *gāyatrī* mantra. They line up near a river or *saṅgam* at dawn, bringing their *parcā*, a piece of dried silver-birch bark, on which is written their *saṃnyāsi* details and that their dues have been paid to the *akhārā*. *Koṭvāl*-s police the assembly. The candidates have their head (except for the top-knot), moustache, beard, armpits and pubic region shaved (*pañca bhadra*), and are given a sacred-thread, a *kulhar* (a small clay pot representing a *kamaṇḍal*), and a *danḍa*,⁴⁵ an

⁴³ Sadānanda Giri (1976:64–71) remarks that for *danḍī* initiations, the number of candidates should equal the number of words in the *praiśa-mantra*, so that during initiation each candidate utters in turn one word of the mantra.

⁴⁴ To give an example, *paramahaṃsa* Svāmī Gopālānanda of the Dakṣiṇamūrti Maṭh of Banaras was initiated by a Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara from the Mahānirvāṇī *akhārā*. However, he explained (conversation, on 8 February 2002) that initiations in their order are usually performed by a Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara from the Nirañjanī *akhārā*.

⁴⁵ *Danḍa*-s may be given to the candidates. Otherwise, two days before the ceremony, they go as a group to the jungle, cut their own *danḍa*-s and collect the firewood (*samidhī*) that will be used in the *virajā-homa*. A Brahman should have a *danḍa* of *palāśa* wood (flame of the forest, *butea frondosa*), whereas *kṣatriya*-s and *vaiśya*-s should have *bilva* (Bengal quince, *aegle marmelos*) (Sadānanda Giri 1976:65).

ancient symbol of not only asceticism, but also royal power.⁴⁶ *Daṇḍa*-s are only used by *brahmacārīn*-s, so all candidates become nominal *brahmacārīn*-s before initiation. The *ācārya-guru* informs the candidates that this is their last opportunity to return to their homes and families, should they wish to do so. Each candidate briefly discards his cloth and walks naked a few steps to the north before being called back by the *ācārya-guru*. (This symbolic walk was discussed previously in the context of the *saṃnyāsī*-’s potential suicide.)

At sunset the candidates return to the *akhāṛā*, which has four funeral fires burning at each corner. Around the fires, the *virajā-havan* (or *homa*)⁴⁷ will be conducted, for which the candidates are given some of the requisite materials (which include mustard and sesame seeds, the oblation of the *virajā-havan*). While a Brahman *paṇḍit* performs the *havan*, the *ācārya-guru* goes around whispering one of the four *mahāvākya*-s (depending on lineage) into the candidates’ ears. Recitation of the *Puruṣa-sūkta* is also an important element of the ritual.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ *Daṇḍa* also means punishment. For an analysis of the symbolic value of *daṇḍa* in both political and religious domains, see Glucklich (1988).

⁴⁷ Sarkar (1958:67–73) and Kane (HDŚ Vol. 2:959-960) describe the lengthy *virajā-homa* ceremony, involving a total of forty oblations, of fuel-sticks (the *samidh* collected by the candidate), boiled rice and ghee. There is a discussion of the *virajā-homa* in the *Taittirīya-āraṇyaka* (1.51-52; 2), wherein the best means to attain self-knowledge is *saṃnyāsa*. (Kane’s account appears to derive from a mediaeval work, *Dharmasindhu*.) First, the sixteen verses of the *Puruṣa-sūkta* (RV X.90) are chanted, oblations being performed at the end of each verse. As in many Brahmanical cosmogonic schemes, a classification of 3 + 1 elements is apparent in the *Puruṣa-sūkta*, whereby three parts of the whole are ‘visible’ and one is ‘invisible’. The visible part of *Puruṣa* includes the four *varṇa*-s produced from the dismembered ‘cosmic man’ (see Malamoud 1998:111). The recitation of the *Puruṣa-sūkta* is followed by the reciting of the formulae, after oblations, of the *virajā-homa*, such as: “May my five *prāṇa*-s be purified, may I be light, free from *rājas* and from evil, *svāhā*. This is for *prāṇa* and the rest, it is not mine”. The formulae speak of the purification of all the parts of the body, the five elements and their corresponding *guṇa*-s, *puruṣa*, the five *kośa*-s (sheaths), the mind, speech and the *ātman*, and pay homage to the *Veda*-s. The sacrificer then bows to Agni, Prajāpati, Ātma, Paramātma and Jñānātma, after which the *Puruṣa-sūkta* is again recited. Recitations follow, of various verses and mantras from the *Upaniṣad*-s and the first sentences of the four *Veda*-s. Oblations to Agni Sviṣṭakṛt follow, and the candidate burns his wooden utensils in the household fire, donates his metal vessels to his guru, and deposits the fire in himself, reciting thrice “*ayam te yonih*” and “*ya te agne yajñīyā*”, taking in the warmth of the fire.

⁴⁸ Besides its occurrence in the *Atharva Veda* (19.6), the *Puruṣa-sūkta* is also recited for obtaining a son, for purificatory baths, for the purification of sins, and during *śrāddha* rites for the deceased (Gonda 1970:27–32). According to some sources, after death the soul assumes what is known as an *ātivāhika śarīra*, which consists of

With the assistance of the *paṇḍit*, the candidates perform their own funeral rites (*śrāddha*), holding the stem of the sacred *dūrṅā* grass. While chanting the prescribed Vedic mantras the candidates perform the eight kinds of *śrāddha* (noted previously) and *tarpaṇa*, wherein water is released to the ground from cupped hands, as an offering to all the gods. They also offer *piṇḍā* to the gods and ancestors, in the form of (usually) forty-eight balls of wheat flour. There is now no responsibility for anyone after the *saṃnyāsī* dies.

After a night of chanting and initiation, following the performance of the *virajā-havan*, the *saṃnyāsī* goes to the river with the *ācārya-guru*, where he bathes, breaks his *daṇḍa*, discards his sacred thread, which is thrown into the river, and calls on the Sun and Moon, Wind and Fire, Earth and Sky, Heart and Mind, the morning and evening Twilights, and all the gods to witness his resolution to become a *saṃnyāsī*. This is followed by the recitation, usually performed in waist-deep water, of the *gāyatrī mantra*, which is henceforth internalised. The *praiṣa mantra* is also recited—modulated in three different pitches—after which the initiate faces the east, performs an oblation to the water and asks that all creatures be free of fear of him. He gives blessings to his sons and relatives, telling them that he belongs to no one and no one belongs to him. He takes vows of *ahiṃsā*, truthfulness, not stealing, continence, liberality, non-anger, waiting upon the guru, avoidance of carelessness, cleanliness and purity in food habits.⁴⁹ He then covers his body with ashes and returns to the *akhārā*. He is instructed on doing good for society and receives a loin-cloth (*kaupīnā*)

only three (fire, wind and space) of the five elements. If the appropriate rites are performed, the *śarīra* of three elements may pass over the space between death and the formation of a new gross body in the following incarnation. The recitation of the *Puruṣa-sūkta* enables the reconstitution of a new body. For bathing and death-rites, the *Puruṣa-sūkta* was used to renew the person concerned, underlined in the case of bathing by an obligatory change of clothes. Gonda (1970:27) remarks that “throughout the ages this text was, in religious practice not only an account of the creation but also an instrument of rising above one’s present state of existence. By identifying oneself with the mythical Puruṣa and by ritually repeating the mythical event and so reactivating its inherent power for the benefit of oneself and with a view to one’s own reintegration one believed oneself to achieve one’s own ‘rebirth’”. Gonda also notes (1970:32) that the content of the *Puruṣa-sūkta* became one of the foundations of *vaiṣṇava* philosophy, besides often being quoted by the *śaiva* tradition.

⁴⁹ See fn. 57 for summaries of rules for *saṃnyāsī*-s by Oman (1903:155); Rose (1914, Vol. 3:360); Sadānanda Giri (1976:25); Purī (2001).

and water pot (*kamaṇḍal*). The *ācārya-guru* then cuts the top-knot (*śikhā*) on behalf of candidate's guru, and *abhiṣeka* is performed with a conch-shell over the initiate's head. The candidate touches a *daṇḍa*, which is held by the *ācārya-guru*, who pronounces a mantra meaning that the *daṇḍa* is renounced. Henceforth, the *saṃnyāsī* accepts the *daṇḍa* of knowledge. After this ritual the candidate is instructed in the *om*, *praiṣa* and *paramahaṃsa* mantras and the significance of the *mahāvākya*-s by the *ācārya-guru*, to whom presents are given.

We have so far been detailing initiation rites of *paramahaṃsa*-s (and potential *nāgā*-s), who are initiated by an *akhārā* (in this case the Jūnā *akhārā*), and who only hold a *daṇḍa* for a portion of the renunciatory rite, after which it is renounced. However, *daṇḍī*-s, who are Brahmans initiated by a representative of a *daṇḍī maṭha*, keep the *daṇḍa*. It is referred to as *Brahm-svarūp*, and is made from bamboo and not the other kinds of wood, mentioned above, used in the *saṃnyāsa* rite.⁵⁰ As previously mentioned, a sacred thread and an axe-head are attached to the *daṇḍa*, which is covered with a cloth. The sacred thread is carried, albeit concealed, as an indication of Brahman status. The receipt of the *daṇḍa* from the guru is one of the central features of the traditional Brahmanical rites of initiation into the renunciatory state, as described in many mediaeval texts on renunciation. The Brahmanical rite of renunciation consists of two major parts, the first being renunciation proper, in which the candidate abandons family, possessions, fire and other symbols of his former life. The second part is modelled after Vedic initiation (*upanayana*),⁵¹ with some

⁵⁰ At no time should the *daṇḍa* come into contact with anything impure. Once initiated into *saṃnyāsa* the *daṇḍa* should never be further away from its holder than the distance a calf would wander from its mother, who will remain within hearing distance should the calf cry. A typical bamboo stick has knots at regular intervals and *daṇḍī*-s are given one of five sizes of *daṇḍa*, depending on their height. The tallest *saṃnyāsī*-s are given *daṇḍa*-s with fourteen knots (known as *Anant*), and successively shorter *saṃnyāsī*-s with, respectively, twelve knots (*Gopāl*), ten knots (*Vāsudev*), eight knots (*Nārāyaṇ*), and six knots (*Sudarśan*). (Interviews were conducted with numerous *daṇḍī*-s, mostly of the Machlībandar Maṭha, at the Māgh Melā, in January and February, 2002.)

⁵¹ *Upanayana* is the traditional rite of passage for a Brahman or other twice-born male, into the twice-born (*dvija*) society of those who are entitled to perform sacrifices. Before *upanayana*, the boy is, technically, a *śūdra* (*Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra* II.6), until he attains twice-born status. The Brahman householder in particular is required to perform sacrifices: *nitya* ('permanent' rites, such as the *agnihotra* and *sandhyā* worship), *naimittika* ('occasional' rites, performed at child-birth, *jātakarma*, and death, *antyeṣṭī*) and *kāmya* ('supererogatory' rites, such as to obtain a male child or at the time of a

significant differences (Olivelle 1986:37),⁵² and has the form of an initiatory rite (*dīkṣā*) in which the guru plays a central role, ritually handing the new renouncer his staff: the candidate is initiated *into* a renunciatory tradition.⁵³

Current practice, which clearly reflects ancient tradition, is that during initiations at the Kumbh Melā all initiates are furnished with a staff (*daṇḍa*) and sacred thread, which confers temporary status on them as Brahmans,⁵⁴ whether or not they actually were previously Brahmans by caste. The *daṇḍa* also confers the status of *brahmacārīn* upon the candidate, symbolising his nominal allegiance to the monastic institutions. Gurus from *daṇḍī* institutions present candidates with *daṇḍa*-s to keep permanently, in continuation of the Brahmanical *advaita* tradition whereby *saṃnyāsī*-s carry a *daṇḍa* to indicate both their sectarian affiliation and their renunciatory condition. However, at the completion of initiatory rites, non-*daṇḍī saṃnyāsī*-s (i.e. *paramahaṃsa*-s) discard the staff and sacred thread—the markers of Brahman status—which they have carried and worn for the period immediately prior to initiation, as a sign that they have entered

pilgrimage to a holy place). *Upanayana* is traditionally performed in the eighth year for a Brahman, the eleventh year for a *kṣatriya*, and the twelfth year for a *vaiśya*, though texts vary on the timing. See Prasad (1997) for further details.

⁵² There are distinct parallels and homologies between the life of the boy *brahmacārīn*, before *upanayana*, and the *saṃnyāsīn*: the *brahmacārīn* studies away from the parental home, serving a guru. As a formal preparation for the life of a householder (*gṛhastha*), the *brahmacārīn*—like a *saṃnyāsī*—remains celibate, undergoes various austerities, begs for food and sleeps on the floor (*Dharmasūtra*-s of Āpastamba 1.2.18–41, 1.31–45; Baudhāyana 1.3.7–47; Vasiṣṭha 11.49–79). During the *upanayana* the *brahmacārīn* has his head shaved, leaving the topknot (a ceremony variously known as *muṇḍana*, *cūḍākarāṇa* or *caula*), and was traditionally presented with a girdle (*mekhalā*), sacred thread, deerskin and *daṇḍa*. The Brahman's *daṇḍa* should be of *bilva* or *palāśa* wood, and should be as long as to reach the end of his hair, the *kṣatriya*-s of *vaṭa* or *khadira*, to reach the forehead, and a *vaiśya*-s of *pilu* or *udumbara*, to reach the tip of his nose (Kaelber 1981; Prasad 1997:117).

⁵³ See also Kaelber (1989:121): “Whereas the Sannyāsa Upaniṣads often state that the *saṃnyāsīn* gives up his sacrificial cord, girdle, antelope skin, and upper garment, the *Vaikhānasasmārta Sūtra* makes it clear that the *saṃnyāsīn* receives these things anew at his initiation in *exactly* the way prescribed at the *Upanayana*. The instructions given for the reception of the initiate by his new teacher (!), including the recitation of the *Sāvitrī* (*Sāvitrīpraveśana*), are virtually identical in each case. As part of the initiation the *saṃnyāsīn* has his hair, beard, and nails cut, receives a new name, swears obedience to his teacher, and takes a vow of truthfulness and ‘noninjury’ (*ahiṃsā*), just as the *brahmacārīn* had done before him, and like the *brahmacārīn*, the ascetic now begins a long period of training”.

⁵⁴ See also Crooke (1896, Vol. 2:471).

the *saṃnyāsī* life and permanently renounced caste. The mandatory carrying of a staff for initiation purposes may perhaps indicate that in order to obviate potential complaints from genuine Brahman-caste initiates about the admission of non-Brahmans, all candidates temporarily become Brahmans (holding a staff), but then renounce 'Brahman' status during initiation.

For those who wish, there is a third stage of initiation to become a *nāgā*, which may take place at any age. This initiation was traditionally performed several years after *saṃnyāsa*—younger aspirants usually waiting longer for initiation than older men—but these days *nāgā* initiation usually takes place a day or two after the *vidyā-saṃskār* initiation. According to my informants *nāgā* initiations may, in some rare instances, occur directly, without prior *saṃnyāsa* initiation. A *saṃnyāsī* wishing to take *nāgā* initiation first approaches a *śrī-mahant* (a leading *mahant*) who will question him as to whether he really wants to become a *nāgā*. Some days before the bathing procession (*syāhi/julūs*) of the Kumbh Melā, the *koṭvāl* goes to the eight divisions of his *akhārā* and announces that each division may send those wishing to become *nāgā*-s. The names of candidates are then recorded by the *kārbārī*. *Nāgā* Initiations take place at night, at 3.00 a.m. or 4.00 a.m. at Kumbh Melās and Ādhā (half) Kumbh Melās. At the appointed time the *saṃnyāsī* stands next to the *kīrti-stambha*, a tall 'triumphal' column in the *āsrama*, accompanied by four *śrī-mahant*-s and one *ācārya-guru* who will give him a mantra. A *mahant* will then pull the penis thrice, breaking the membrane beneath the skin, an operation known as *ṭang toḍe* (literally, 'broken leg').⁵⁵ The *saṃnyāsī* is hence fully initiated into the *akhārā* as a *nāgā*, and attached to a *nāgā* renunciate lineage.⁵⁶

Whether initiated as *daṇḍī*, *paramahaṃsa* or *nāgā*, the *saṃnyāsī* is

⁵⁵ From different interviews, Sadānanda Giri (1976:29–30) maintains that the method of initiating new *nāgā*-s is different in each *akhārā*. He also observes that formerly *ṭang toḍe* was performed but that nowadays there is "only a slight pull of the penis". It seems that formerly some initiates had the penis broken (*ṭang toḍe*) before *saṃnyāsa*, but never performed the *virājā homa* to become *nāgā saṃnyāsī*-s, remaining 'ṭang toḍe' all their lives.

⁵⁶ According to several *nāgā* informants I have interviewed, in the past the process may have involved the guru breaking the muscle of the erect penis with three sharp movements in different directions, rendering the initiate permanently impotent. However, these days the process involves the breaking of the membrane that attaches the foreskin to the penis.

henceforth a member of a distinct religious community, to a considerable extent bound by often unspoken but mutually recognised rules of behaviour appropriate to their status within their branch of the order,⁵⁷ a position also often influenced by previous caste. However, in the classical textual tradition may be found injunctions for the ‘ideal’ kinds ascetic. Although the images of the kind of lifestyle presented in these texts have been very influential on general understanding of the renunciate, they seem to bear little correspondence to contemporary or historical reality.

⁵⁷ Oman (1903:155) cites the ‘rules’, which he had gathered from a member of the order, as follows: (six prohibitions) 1. do not sleep on a couch, under any circumstances; 2. do not wear white clothes; 3. do not speak to or even think about women; 4. do not sleep during the daytime; 5. do not at any time ride on a horse or other animal, or in any vehicle whatsoever. 6. do not allow your mind to be agitated in any way; (six commandments) 1. leave your abode only for the sake of begging necessary food; 2. say your prayers every day; 3. bathe every day; 4. contemplate daily the likeness or image of Siva; 5. practice purity and cleanliness; 6. perform the formal worship of the gods.

An account of the rules for *saṃnyāsī*-s to obey is cited by Rose (1914:360), from P. Hari Kaul’s *Census Report*, §148. He should: 1. wear one cloth around his waist and one over his shoulder (he should beg like this); 2. only eat one meal in twenty-four hours; 3. live outside; 4. beg from seven, and not more than seven, houses (except in the case of the *kufīcaka*); 5. not stay in one place more than a few days (except the *kufīcaka*); 6. sleep on the ground; 7. not salute, or speak well or ill of anyone; 8. bow only to *saṃnyāsī*-s of higher status or longer standing; 9. only wear the salmon-coloured cloth.

Sadānanda Giri (1976:25) gives ‘six commandments’ to be obeyed by *nāgā-saṃnyāsī*-s: 1. accept that all property belongs to the community; 2. abstain from all narcotics; 3. do not go to other *akhārā*-s; 4. do not quarrel with your comrades; 5. obey your superior officer; 6. use whatever belongs to the community, but do not steal or keep anything for yourself.

Purī (2001:149) provides rules and prohibitions (paraphrased below from the Hindi text) for *mahant*-s and *thānāpati*-s of the Mahānirvāṇī *akhārā*. They will lose their power and office should they: 1. misuse or destroy any of the moveable or unmoveable property of the *akhārā*, or use such for the benefit of any other than the *akhārā*; 2. incur debt for the *akhārā* through overspending; 3. keep a wife or woman; 4. have any independent business or occupation; 5. make a disciple (i.e. independently), or introduce anyone as a member of this organisation; 6. become a follower of any other *dharma* or *sampradāya*; 7. bring harm or loss to any main office or branch (of this institution). In a following section, Purī states some miscellaneous rules concerning the recording of the names of *mahant*-s and *thānāpati*-s at the headquarters at Allahabad, and their duties in the *akhārā*.

3.4 *Rules for renunciates*

The earliest substantial Brahmanical accounts of rules for the renunciate to obey are to be found in the *Dharmasūtra*-s, rules that are repeated, often in modified form, in many of the *Dharmasāstra*-s,⁵⁸ the *Samnyāsa Upaniṣad*-s⁵⁹ and mediaeval texts on renunciation, which frequently cite the *Samnyāsa Upaniṣad*-s as authoritative. According to Baudhāyana (2.17.42—2.18.27),⁶⁰ the renunciate should only drink water from a well that has been filtered through his water strainer. He should not wear white clothes and should carry the single or triple staff. He should maintain the vows of not injuring living beings, speaking the truth, not stealing, celibacy, and renunciation. The secondary vows are not giving way to anger, obedience to the teacher, not being careless, purification, and purity of food habits. He should beg from Śālīnas and Yāyāvaras, and after returning and washing his hands and feet he should offer his food to the sun, reciting appropriate formulae.⁶¹ In the *Samnyāsa Upaniṣad*-s the way of life of the wandering ascetic is discussed in many passages. In general the renunciate lives far from his native home, outside the village and its associations with ritual life. Apart from the four months of the rainy season, he wanders without fire or home, living in the wilderness, accepting indiscriminately whatever food is given. The ideal method of begging is to imitate the bee (*madhukara*), begging

⁵⁸ See Dutta (1987 [1906]): *Yājñavalkya-saṃhitā* (Vol. 1:56–66); *Hārīta-saṃhitā* (Vol. 1, ch. 6:1–23); *Uśanā-saṃhitā* (Vol. 1:1.29–31). The *Śaṅkha-saṃhitā* (Vol. 3:7.1–32) also mentions three of the limbs of classical yoga; *dhāraṇā*, *pratyāhāra* and *dhyāna*. The overall cosmology centres on Viṣṇu (or Vāsudeva), the all pervading.

⁵⁹ See Olivelle (1992). Most of the *Samnyāsa Upaniṣad*-s date from between the first few centuries CE and around the twelfth century, some from the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries (Olivelle (1993:8–11).

⁶⁰ Similar prescriptions are given by Āpastamba (2.21.7–2.23.2) and Gautama (3.11–3.35). Vasiṣṭha (9.1–10.29) adds that the ascetic should not display the emblems of the renouncer (staff, begging bowl, water strainer etc.). He should not beg through the means of astrology, interpreting omens or the signs of the body, or participate in debates. He may, however, live homeless and resolute in a village. He may also act as if mad. This is also recommended for the Pāsupatas (see Kauṇḍinya's comm., tr. Haripada Chakraborty, in *Pāsupata Sūtra* 1.8, 2.3, 3.12–14). The renunciate may feign madness and attempt to attract censure, courting dishonour and insult, so that he may not be attached to the pride ensuing from praise (see also Ingalls 1962).

⁶¹ For a review of rules and vows for Brahmanical ascetics (based primarily on the *Dharmasūtra*-s and *Manu Smṛti*) see Shiraishi (1996:27–135).

a little food from many houses. Another method is to undertake the ‘python vow’ (*ajagaravrata*), waiting for food to come. The highest types of renunciators forego their begging bowls and eat directly from their hands (*pāṇipātrin*), or the ground (*udarapātrin*) as would an animal.

Four kinds of ascetics (*kuṭīcaka/kuṭīcara*, *bahūdaka*, *haṃsa*, *paramahaṃsa*) are explained in many texts, arranged—with minor modifications and inconsistencies—in a hierarchy of ‘detachment’.⁶² They are to be found in the *Mahābhārata* (XIII.129.29),⁶³ *Viṣṇu Smṛti* (4.11),⁶⁴ *Skanda Purāṇa*, *Samnyāsa Upaniṣad*-s⁶⁵ and many of the mediaeval texts on renunciation.⁶⁶ This four-fold classification is also referred to by

⁶² 1. *Kuṭīcaka*: lives in a hut (*kuṭī*), wears saffron-coloured clothes, has a triple staff (*tridaṇḍa*) and wears the sacred thread. He should stay with his son and depend on him for his living.

2. *Bahūdaka*: should renounce his relatives, have a *tridaṇḍa*, wear the sacred thread, recite the *gāyatrī mantra*, wear saffron-coloured clothes, and beg for food at seven houses of sage-like Brahmins (or other well conducted men), avoiding flesh, salt and stale food.

3. *Haṃsa*: should be versed in Vedānta and have the pursuit of knowledge as his aim. He should stay in one place and live on charity. He may carry a single staff and a water-pot and wear the sacred thread. He should stay not more than one night in a village and not more than five nights in a town when begging for alms, otherwise he should subsist on cow-urine and cow-dung, or fast for a month.

4. *Paramahaṃsa*: has attained knowledge and regards all as the Self. He either wears one piece of cloth or goes naked, and begs and eats with his hands only. He lives in an uninhabited house, a burial ground or under a tree. He may carry a single staff but abandons the top-knot, sacred thread and permanent rites.

⁶³ *Kuṭīcara*, *kṛtodaka*, *haṃsa*, *paramahaṃsa*.

⁶⁴ See Jolly (1991).

⁶⁵ See *Āśrama Upaniṣad* (the earliest of the *Samnyāsa Upaniṣad*-s, dated to around the third century CE) and *Bhikṣuka Upaniṣad*. In the *Nārada-parivṛājaka Upaniṣad* (vv. 174-175) several classificatory schemes are provided, including a six-fold scheme that includes the *turyātīta* and *avadhūta*, which, as Olivelle notes (1992:99), cannot be easily distinguished from one another. Both these kinds of renunciators are considered to be liberated beings and not subject to any kind of rule or prohibition. The other four classes of ascetics are also distinguished by the goals to which they aspire: *kuṭīcaka*-s to the atmospheric world; *bahūdaka*-s to the heavenly world; *haṃsa*-s to the Penance-world; and *paramahaṃsa*-s to the Truth-world. There is also a discussion (vv. 204–205) of the relative frequency of shaving, eating and bathing, and the application of renunciatory marks of ash and sandal paste, according to the relative grade of the six kinds of renunciators. Lower kinds, the *kuṭīcaka* and *bahūdaka*, shave, bathe and eat more frequently than the higher kinds. The highest kind, the *avadhūta*, obtains his food “like a python”, does not shave nor does he apply any sign or mark.

⁶⁶ See the twelfth-century *Yatidharmasamuccaya* (5.7); the *Pārāśaramādhavīya* and *Jīvamuktiviveka* attributed to Vidyāraṇya; and the seventeenth-century *Yatidharmaṅprakāśa*

modern commentators on the Daśanāmī tradition.⁶⁷ The four kinds of renouncer are graded in respect of the degree of their renunciation, the *Paramahaṃsa*-s being the highest,⁶⁸ a distinctive feature of many classifications of ascetics being the importance attached to eating habits. The *paramahaṃsa* stage is sometimes referred to as the fifth *āśrama* or as beyond the *āśrama*-s. As a classificatory term for renunciates, it was frequently used by Śāṅkara, who did not use the other terms for ascetics just referred to. In his commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (III.5.1.49) he distinguishes the renunciation associated with the classical fourth *āśrama* from the higher type of renunciation wherein all emblems of the renouncer are abandoned, a condition he associates with the *paramahaṃsa* (as explained, a term that has a specific sense in the Daśanāmī social context). Śāṅkara was also referred to as a *paramahaṃsa* by his hagiographers, as a sign of respect for the highest type of renouncer.

Within the four-fold classification given above, it may be seen that the two lower classes of ascetics carry the triple staff, whereas the higher classes carry either a single staff or none at all. (This is according to the *advaita* tradition, whereby the ‘lower’ *viśiṣṭādvaita* adherents carry the triple staff.) The *paramahaṃsa* discards the top-knot and the sacrificial string, the preeminent marks or signs of Brahman status. Even though, theoretically, renunciation should be of the former life, including caste, in some passages in the *advaita*-orientated *Samnyāsa Upaniṣad*-s it is explained that the top-knot and sacrificial thread were in fact retained despite renunciation, albeit symbolically.⁶⁹

(4.1–113) by Vāsudevāśrama. Vāsudevāśrama cites several sources on classes of renunciates, including Vidyāraṇya’s *Jñānmuktiviveka*, the *Skanda Purāṇa* and the *Yatidharmasamuccaya*. Kane (HDS Vol. 2:939) notes that the four kinds of ascetics to be found in the *Mahābhārata*, *Sūta-saṃhitā* (*Mānuyogakhaṇḍa* ch. 6), *Bhikṣuka Upaniṣad* and *Vaiṣṇānasa-dharmasūtra* (8.9) are not consistently categorised, and that the categorisation in the latter text is probably the oldest.

⁶⁷ See, for example, Purī (2001:32–33).

⁶⁸ The *Paramahaṃsa Upaniṣad* describes (vv. 1–4) the way of the *paramahaṃsa yogin*-s, the highest class of ascetics, as extremely rare. “If there is one such person, he alone abides in the eternally pure Being, and he alone is a man of the *Veda*-s”. He has renounced not only family, topknot and sacred string, but all rites and possessions: he goes entirely naked. “He is not attached anywhere either to the pleasant or the unpleasant”. The *Jābāla Upaniṣad* (v. 6) adds that they “keep their conduct concealed, and... although they are sane, behave like madmen”.

⁶⁹ Thus, for example, in the *Nārada-parivṛājaka Upaniṣad* (vv. 152–153), in response to the question as to how a man can be a Brahman when he has no sacrificial

Commenting on the different and conflicting classifications of renouncers to be found in the *Samnyāsa Upaniṣad*-s, Olivelle (1992:100) remarks that, “[they] point to the original variety of ascetic lifestyles that...were conflated into the single institution of *saṃnyāsa* by Brāhmaṇic theology”. However, the Brahmanical concept of *saṃnyāsa*—to enter a non-ritual state—is evidently but an ideal abstracted from a society with not only many kinds of ascetics, but also, as noted in the Introduction, many kinds of sects of ascetic renunciates that have existed at least since the time of the production of Brahmanical texts which detail the *saṃnyāsa* rite.

The rites of renunciation, detailed above, clearly indicate the process whereby the lineages of the *daṇḍī maṭha*-s and the *akhārā*-s are integrated. The *saṃnyāsī* has theoretically severed all ties to his previous social world, is nominally—but only nominally—beyond caste, and has become affiliated either to a *daṇḍī* lineage, or to a Daśanāmī *akhārā* (through his five gurus), in either case affiliated to the monastic tradition represented by the *ācārya*-s and the Śaṅkarācāryas. The substance of the *saṃnyāsī*-’s new identity is embodied in both the legend of Śaṅkara and what he represents, and in the structure of the Daśanāmī order as presented in the *Maṭhāmnāya*-s, short texts that are analysed in the next chapter.

string, it is explained that the sacrificial (or triple) string resides in the heart; that the renouncer’s string is worn as the supreme and imperishable Brahman; that knowledge is their top-knot; that the top-knot and sacrificial string consist of knowledge; and so forth.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE INTEGRATION OF VARIOUS LINEAGES: THE *MATHĀMNĀYA*-S

In the previous chapters the structure of the Daśanāmī organisation was examined largely from an anthropological perspective, in terms of branches, divisions, initiations and hierarchies. It was also shown in the previous chapter how the two main wings of the order are integrated at times of the *saṃnyāsa* rite. In this chapter, we will be examining the Daśanāmīs from a different perspective of integration; from that of the normative account of the tradition, in terms of its own history, which is predominantly constituted in terms of lineages. The central focus will be on the *Mathāmnāya*-s, texts that contain the details of Daśanāmī lineages and of the *pīṭha*-s supposedly founded by Śaṅkara. The information in these texts provides an overview of the Daśanāmī order, integrating the diverse lineages and providing all Daśanāmīs with a commonly understood identity and a concise framework for their traditional religious history. The disparities between the sect's own traditional history, particularly regarding the *pīṭha*-s, and historical evidence in the form of texts and inscriptions, will also be assessed. A brief, preliminary discussion of Śaṅkara's authentic works and his probable date will be undertaken in the following section, as both issues bear directly on the history of the Daśanāmīs.

4.1 Śaṅkara's authorship of texts, and his date

Śaṅkara is supposed to have organised the Daśanāmīs, and is sometimes attributed with the authorship of one or another of the *Mathāmnāya*-s, short Sanskrit texts that present an overview of the order, its ten lineages and its *pīṭha*-s. These texts will be analysed in the following section. The issue of the genuine works of Śaṅkara has attracted considerable scholarly inquiry. The longest list I have so far seen of works attributed to Śaṅkara is that contained in the Appendix of Piantelli (1974:i–xiii), which lists 433 works, 187 of which, it is indicated, are accepted as genuine by the tradition, including the

Mathāmnāyādivicāra/Saptamaṭhāmnāyādivicāra.¹ The *Mathāmnāyasetu* is included in the list as a text not accepted as genuine by the tradition, and the *Mahānuśāsanam* is not mentioned.

The sheer volume of texts produced in a short life (of thirty-two years, according to tradition), the poor or different style of writing in some texts, philosophical inconsistencies in others, references to doctrines or schools that may be dated post-Śaṅkara, and devotional hymns, are amongst the considerations leading most scholars who have looked into the issue to doubt Śaṅkara's authorship of a large number of texts attributed to him.² There remains considerable doubt, however, about some of the criteria, however good,³ used to establish the validity of works, the genies of interpolation and alteration hovering ever close to many conclusions. Nevertheless, evidence derived from Śaṅkara's hagiographies, examined in the following chapter, makes it highly improbable that Śaṅkara wrote the *Mathāmnāya*-s.

The issue is further complicated by the fact that numerous *ācārya*-s of both the official (four or five) and other *advaita maṭha*-s have been called Śaṅkara, as have other writers who have no connection to the *advaita* tradition at all. Rukmani (1998:264) points out that Śaṅkara is a very common name in Kerala, and that Śaṅkara (the author of the *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya*) had contemporaries named Śaṅkara, one being the author of the play, *Āścaryacūḍāmaṇi*, another being the Śaṅkara (or Śaṅkaranārāyaṇa) who wrote the *Śaṅkaranārāyaṇam*. Another Śaṅkarācārya was the author of the *Tārāhasyavivṛttikā* (Hacker 1995:43), and Rukmani notes yet another, Śaṅkarapūjyapādayati, who was the author of the *Bhaṭṭikavyavyākhyā*. However, terms such as *pūjyapāda* and *bhagavatpāda* are often used as terms of respect for a guru; they are not exclusively reserved for the author of the *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya*. To Śaṅkarācārya is also attributed the *Prapañcasāra*, an early digest (10th–11th century?) of Tantric texts (Pal 1981:2).

What may indisputably count as Śaṅkara's genuine works⁴ are those

¹ I have not seen this text, or seen any other reference to it.

² See, for example, Potter (1981:14–15).

³ See Pande (1994:99–129).

⁴ First published in 1947, Paul Hacker's criteria (1995:41–56) towards establishing the genuine works of Śaṅkara have been influential on subsequent discussion. Mayeda (1992), who is influenced by Hacker in many respects, is another commentator frequently cited by others. Belvalkar (1929:209–240) also made a systematic

commented on by Śaṅkara's direct disciples,⁵ namely the *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya* (BSB)—universally recognised as Śaṅkara's quintessential work—on which Padmapāda wrote the *Pañcapādikā*, and Śaṅkara's *bhāṣya*-s on two *Upaniṣad*-s, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and the *Taittirīya*, on both of which Sureśvara wrote *vārtika*-s. Sureśvara also quotes the *Upadeśasāhasrī* in his *Naiṣkarmyasiddhi*. Beyond these four works, many have given rise to discussions of authenticity.

Belvalkar (1929:215–231) comments on a total of fifty-seven texts, noting the existence of around 400 works attributed to Śaṅkara.⁶ Using several criteria, he concludes that eleven commentaries (including those on the *Bhagavadgītā*, *Brahmasūtra*-s and nine *Upaniṣad*-s), eight *stotra*-s, and three *prakaraṇagrantha*-s can confidently be ascribed to Śaṅkara. A few other works may be those of Śaṅkara, while 358 other works must be considered as non-genuine.

One of Hacker's criteria (1995:41–56) for attempting to establish authenticity is the name attributed to the author of the texts. Twenty-one texts examined are attributed to Śaṅkarācārya, Śaṅkara-Bhagavatpāda or Śaṅkara-Bhagavatpūjyapāda; fifteen are texts men-

and influential study of the issue. His conclusions, and those of Hacker, Mayeda and others, are further analysed by Pande (1994:100–130), who is more open to the inclusion of a greater number of works.

⁵ For the authentic works of the disciples, see Potter (1981, Vol. 3:18–19); Mayeda (1992:5); Hacker (1995:58). Padmapāda's *Pañcapādikā* is probably his only genuine work, commented on by Prakāśātman (mid tenth century) in the *Pañcapādikāvivaraṇa*. Two works are attributed to Toṭaka, the *Śrutisārasamuddharaṇa* and a short text, *Toṭāṣṭaka* (see S. Rajagopala Sastri 1968:63). Hirst (2005:11) mentions the striking similarities between the thought of Toṭaka and his teacher, Śaṅkara. To Hastāmalaka is attributed the short work *Hastāmalakaślokāḥ* (probably spurious). Also attributed to Sureśvara (besides *Naiṣkarmyasiddhi*) is the *Mānasollāsa*, a commentary on the *Dakṣiṇāmūrti-stotra* attributed to Śaṅkara. The authenticity of both these works has been questioned (Potter 1981, Vol. 3:550–551). Alston (1980a, Vol. 1:13) notes that the *Mānasollāsa* contains no eulogy to Śaṅkara, which would render the work unique, should it be included alongside the genuine works of Sureśvara. While the influence of Toṭaka and Hastāmalaka on *Advaita Vedānta* has been negligible, Padmapāda founded one of the two main post-Śaṅkara schools of *Advaita Vedānta*, the *Vivaraṇa* ('uncovering') school. This was later overshadowed by the *Bhāmāṭī* school. The main point of difference between the two schools is that according to the *Vivaraṇa* view, the *jīva* is a nescient reflection of *Brahman*, whereas according to the *Bhāmāṭī* view the *jīva* is *Brahman*, as defined or limited by nescience (*avidyā*).

⁶ Included in Aufrecht's *Catalogus Catalogorum*; the Triennial Reports and the Descriptive Catalogues of the Government Oriental Library, Madras, and the collected editions of the *ācārya*-s major, minor and miscellaneous works, published in Mysore, Śrīraṅgam, Pūṇe and elsewhere.

tioned more than once as the work of Śaṅkara; and eight are attributed to Śaṅkarācārya and Śaṅkarabhagavat. Of the texts examined, only the *bhāṣya-s* of three *prasthāna-s* (the early *Upaniṣad-s*, *Bhagavadgītā* and *Brahmasūtra-s*), as well as the *Gauḍapādīya-bhāṣya*, are attributed to Śaṅkara-Bhagavat in the utilized material, as are the *Upadeśasāhasrī* and *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*. The other texts have the other names in the colophon and make virtually no reference to Govinda (Śaṅkara's teacher), who is always mentioned as a teacher in the texts attributed to the Bhagavat. Such was the extent of the identification of Śaṅkara with the name 'Bhagavat', that Appaya Dīkṣitā, commenting on the commentaries of four prominent philosophers in the latter half of the sixteenth century in his *Catur-mata-leśa-saṃgraha*, refers to Ānandatīrtha (Madhva), Rāmānuja, Śrīkaṇṭha and Bhagavatpāda (Suryanarayana Sastri 1930:28), it being commonly understood that the last name refers to Śaṅkara. Hacker also considers the terminology used in the various texts. Having surveyed other scholarly arguments concerning authorship, he concludes that, while there may be other genuine works of Śaṅkara, those mentioned above are provisionally entitled to be called genuine, while, above all, the *bhāṣya-s* on the *prasthānatrayī* can claim to be Śaṅkara's genuine productions. While this restricted list is accepted by most scholars, Ingalls (1952:7) and Comans (1996:xv–xvi) have argued against Śaṅkara's authorship of the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*.⁷

Using the *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya* as a yardstick for genuine works, Mayeda (1992:6) believes Śaṅkara's commentaries on the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, *Chāndogya*, *Aitareya*, *Taittirīya*, *Īśā*, *Kaṭha*, *Muṇḍaka*, *Praśna* and *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad-s* are most probably genuine, as are the commentaries on the *Gauḍapāda-kārikā*, and the *Adhyātmapaṭala* of the *Āpastamba-dharmasūtra*.⁸ While the *Upadeśasāhasrī* is certainly genu-

⁷ Alston (2000:108) also does not accept Śaṅkara's authorship of either the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* or *Ātmabodha*.

⁸ Śaṅkara is also attributed with the authorship of a number of independent texts (*prakaraṇa grantha-s*); Sundareshan (2002) has argued that, besides the *Upadeśasāhasrī*, at least one of these texts, the *Pañcikaraṇa*, is most probably genuine, as is a commentary on it, the *Praṇavārttika* by Sureśvara. Belvalkar also believes the *Pañcikaraṇa* should also be attributed to Śaṅkara, although he acknowledges that there is nothing in the text to warrant its ascription to him. The *vārttika* on the text, supposedly by Sureśvara, is redolent of Tantra and, according to Potter (1981:318), is extremely suspect.

ine, the commentary on the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* may be spurious.⁹ Although Hacker,¹⁰ Nakamura and Mayeda believe the *Yogasūtra-bhāṣya-vivaraṇa* may be genuine,¹¹ Rukmani's (1998) examination of the work leads one to conclude that this is highly improbable.¹²

Śaṅkara's date has been the subject of numerous discussions and monographs, and is significant in the context of the hagiographies and the history of the *maṭha*-s and their *guru-paramparā*-s, which will be examined in following sections. Currently, the most commonly accepted date for Śaṅkara is 788 to 820 CE, first (?) proposed by C. P. Tiele in 1877.¹³ However, the date of the fifth century BCE proposed by Narayana Sastry in his *Age of Śaṅkara*—first published in 1916—received widespread endorsement by the monastic tradition, represented by the *pīṭha*-s, most of which currently have *guru-paramparā*-s which go back to the earlier date. However, we will see that some *guru-paramparā*-s appear to have been altered in the twentieth century to accord with a later date.

Some of the more useful evidence concerning Śaṅkara's date may be summarised. Throughout the discussion it needs to be borne in mind that a disciple is not necessarily younger than a teacher, nor

⁹ Mayeda's detailed and subsequently influential analyses of texts, which owes much to Hacker's previous work (see Hacker 1995), particularly concerning Śaṅkara's use of specific terms—such as *avidyā*, *māyā*, *nāmarūpa* and *īśvara*—concluded that several of the important works attributed to Śaṅkara are genuine: *Bhagavadgītā-bhāṣya* (1965a); *Upadeśasāhasrī* (1965b); *Keṇa Upaniṣad-bhāṣya*—there are two commentaries on the *Keṇa Upaniṣad*, the *Padabhāṣya* and *Vākya-bhāṣya*, both of which Mayeda believes to be genuine—(1967–1968a); and *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* and *Gauḍapādīya-bhāṣya*, which are related texts (1967–1968b). Hirst (2005:21) also maintains the authenticity of the *Gauḍapāda-kārikā* and the *Upadeśasāhasrī*. Wilke (1995:328–330) provides an overview of the conclusions of Hacker, Mayeda and others on this topic.

¹⁰ On the basis of the signature 'Bhagavadpāda'.

¹¹ Leggett, who translates and comments on this work, also accepts it as genuine (1992:1–6). The text certainly existed in the fourteenth century. See also Halbfass (1983:Appendix), whose analysis renders Śaṅkara's authorship improbable though not impossible.

¹² The position of the current Śaṅkarācāryas on Śaṅkara's genuine works is that a wider body of texts should be included, including the Tantric *Saundaryalaharī* (see Candrasekarendra Sarasvatī 2001).

¹³ *Outlines of the History of Ancient Religions* (see Kunjunni Raja 1960:129). This was on the basis of Yajñeśvara's *Āryavidyā-sudhākara* and Bhaṭṭa Nīlakaṇṭha's *Śaṅkara-mandāra-saurabha*, which refer to Śaṅkara being born in the village of Kālaṭi in Kerala in the year 3889 of the Kālī period (=845 Vikram, =788 CE). However, these texts cannot be dated earlier than the sixteenth century (Pande 1994:45). Pathak (1882:174–175) also argues for this date, but also based on a dubious manuscript.

does a disciple necessarily write after the death of a teacher. Śaṅkara could have had disciples who were older than him, or disciples could have written works prior to further literary activity of their teacher. However, given the textual evidence for the provision of a rough chronology, we may be reasonably sure of Śaṅkara's date within certain parameters.

According to tradition, Śaṅkara's *paramaguru* (preceptor's preceptor) was Gauḍapāda, who may be dated to not later than 500–570 CE.¹⁴ Śaṅkara quotes from the *Gauḍapāda/Gauḍapādīya (Māṇḍūkya)-kārikā*¹⁵ (III.2; III.38) in his *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya* (2.15), but does not give a name here or in any other of his works (Lindtner 1985:275; Kunjunni Raja 1991:108). Śaṅkara's *bhāṣya* on the *Gauḍapāda-kārikā* (GK) is accepted by most scholars as one of Śaṅkara's genuine works, but Lindtner (1985) has argued that the author of this work fails to comprehend an important philosophical point made by Gauḍapāda.¹⁶ Śaṅkara's understanding of Gauḍapāda is so widely off the mark in several places that Lindtner believes (p. 277) that “apart from other considerations, [it is] almost inconceivable that the author of the *Bhāṣya*, as tradition would have us believe, should have been a direct pupil of a direct pupil of the author of the GK.”¹⁷

The evidence indicates that Śaṅkara post-dates Bhartṛhari (c.425–450),¹⁸ Dignāga (c.480–540)¹⁹ and Dharmakīrti (c.530–600²⁰ or 634–

¹⁴ Three Buddhist scholars (Bhavya, Śāntarakṣita and his disciple Kamalaśīla) quote from Gauḍapāda's *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā* (Kunjunni Raja 1960:131; 1991:107). Bhavya quotes him in his *Madhyama-hṛdaya-kārikā* (8.13), but Lindtner (1992:61) believes it probable that Bhavya knew but sections 1–3 of *Gauḍapādīya-kārikā*. A date for Bhavya of approximately 500 to 570 is generally accepted (Nakamura 1983:81–85; Kunjunni Raja 1991:107; Qvarnström 1999:176). Nakamura's dates for Śāntarakṣita (680 to 740) and Kamalaśīla (700 to 750) have been challenged (Thrasher 1979:138). Kunjunni Raja (1960:139; 1991:113) dates both Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla forty-five years later: Śāntarakṣita wrote his *Tattva-saṃgraha* before he left for Tibet (around 763), and Kamalaśīla arrived in Tibet in 792, and died there shortly after 794. See also Ruegg (2000:12).

¹⁵ Also known as *Āgama-śāstra*.

¹⁶ This concerns Gauḍapāda's use of the term *ajāti-samatā*—one of Gauḍapāda's ‘fingerprint’ terms—which Śaṅkara understood differently to the sense intended by Gauḍapāda.

¹⁷ Hirst (2005:198, fn. 28) also comments that Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara may have lived several generations apart.

¹⁸ See Aklujkar (1994:21): Śaṅkara criticises Bhartṛhari's *sphoṭa* doctrine. It is known from Puṅyarāja's commentary on the *Vākyapādīya* (II.486) that one of Bhartṛhari's teachers was Vasurāta, who was a younger contemporary of Vasu-

673²¹). In his *Upadeśasāhasrī* (18.141–142), Śaṅkara quotes two verses²² from Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttika* (2.354).²³ Sureśvara, Śaṅkara's main pupil, also cites one of these same verses from Dharmakīrti in his *magnum opus*, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-bhāṣya-vārttika* (4.3.476),²⁴ and also names him (4.3.753).²⁵ According to Śaṅkara's hagiographical tradition, the philosophers Kumārila and Maṇḍanamīśra (Śaṅkara's chief adversary) were Śaṅkara's contemporaries. However, it seems probable that Śaṅkara slightly post-dates Kumārila,²⁶ who may

bandhu, who was a teacher of Dignāga. Vasubandhu lived in the first half of the fifth century (Kunjunni Raja 1960:133).

¹⁹ See Qvarnström (1999:178). Dignāga, in his *Pramāṇasamuccaya* (V), quotes two verses from Bhartṛhari's *Vyākhyādīya* (II.155, 158) (Lindtner 1994:200). Śaṅkara (BSB 2.2.28) quotes from Dignāga (*Ālambanaparīkṣā*, v. 6). This verse is also quoted by Kamalaśīla in his *Pañjika*, as that of Dignāga (Kunjunni Raja (1991:106).

²⁰ See Lindtner (1992:56–59): Bhavya (c.500–570) and Dharmapāla (c.530–561)—who Bhavya knew—quote Dharmakīrti. See also Qvarnström (1999:178).

²¹ Tārānātha, in his *History of Buddhism*, states that Dharmakīrti was alive during the period of King Sroṅ-btsan-sgam-po (617–651). The Chinese pilgrim I-tsing (634–713) also mentions Dharmakīrti as Kumārila's contemporary (Pathak 1892a, Art. VIII:90; Belvalkar 1929:211). This evidence has been cited to date Dharmakīrti to 634–673 (Nakamura 1983:76–77). Kunjunni Raja (1960:135) dates him to the early seventh century.

²² Dignāga's main work, the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, was reworked by Dharmakīrti in his *Pramāṇavārttika*. When, in the BSB, Śaṅkara is attacking Vijñānavāda Buddhists, the ideas attacked—if terminology is taken into consideration—appear almost certainly to be those of Dharmakīrti (Nakamura 1983:76). There has been an attempt made by Sankaranarayanan (1995b) to suggest that some of the quotations of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti used by Śaṅkara—which have been cited above as evidence for Śaṅkara's date—are in fact from an earlier period. This would permit an earlier date for Śaṅkara, of earlier than 500 CE. However, as Kunjunni Raja (1995) observes, the arguments are weak.

²³ A third verse (18.143), often cited in philosophical works, also appears to be a quotation of Dharmakīrti (Nakamura 1983:76).

²⁴ This particular verse, beginning *abhinno 'pi hi buddhyātma...*, is particularly famous and is quoted in numerous philosophical works, including Kumārila's *Śloka-vārttika* and Mādhava's *Sarva-darśana-saṃgraha* (2.206–207).

²⁵ See Pathak (1892a, Art. VIII); Belvalkar (1929:211); Umesh (1981:100); Nakamura (1983:76).

²⁶ Kumārila refers several times to Dignāga (Umesh 1981:35). Kumārila and Dharmakīrti were probably contemporaries (Lindtner 1992:56–57), as maintained by the Buddhist tradition. Dharmakīrti appears to criticise Kumārila's *Śloka-vārttika*, while Kumārila, in his *Bṛhatīkā*, seems to be objecting to statements in Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttika* (Kunjunni Raja 1991:109; Taber 1992:180). At the beginning of his *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad-bhāṣya*, Śaṅkara appears to be attacking the views expressed in Kumārila's *Śloka-vārttika*. This is corroborated by a remark by Sureśvara in his *Vārttika* on Śaṅkara's commentary (Belvalkar 1929:209; Kunjunni Raja 1960:137; Halbfass 1983:iv). In the *Śloka-vārttika* Kumārila frequently criticises the Jaina phi-

have written his *Byhaṭṭikā* between 630 and 640, in his old age,²⁷ but Śaṅkara may have been a contemporary of Maṇḍanamiśra,²⁸ whose literary activity was probably in the second half of the seventh century (Thrasher 1979:137–139).²⁹ In conclusion, while Śaṅkara's floruit may have been around 700 CE³⁰—around a century before the widely accepted date of 788–820—he cannot have lived much later than the beginning of the ninth century.³¹

losopher Akalaṅka, who most probably lived after the seventh century (Pathak 1892b, Art. XVI:221–223). According to one tradition, Akalaṅka was contemporary of the Rāṣṭrakūta emperor, Sāhasatuṅga Dantidurga, who is mentioned in a grant dated 753 CE (*śaka* 675) (Belvalkar 1929:210). If the tradition were true, then the date of Kumārila would have to be moved to the first half of the eighth century. However, Akalaṅka's dates are controversial.

²⁷ Concerning an upper limit for Kumārila: firstly, his *Śloka-vārttika* is quoted in the *Tattva-saṃgraha* of Śāntarakṣita (c.680–740) (Nakamura 1983:84–85). Secondly, Maheśvara, in his commentary on the *Nirukta*, quotes from the *Śloka-vārttika*. Maheśvara was a contemporary of Harisvāmin, who wrote a commentary on the *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa* in 638 CE (Kunjuni Raja 1991:110). So Kumārila's date cannot be much later than middle of the seventh century. (See also Halbfass 1988:183.) It also seems that Śaṅkara (in his *Taittirīya-bhāṣya*) was attacking the views of Kumārila (Pathak 1892b, Art. XVI:217).

²⁸ In his *Sphoṭa-siddhi*, Maṇḍanamiśra quotes from Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇa-vārttika*. He also quotes fifteen times from Kumārila's *Śloka-vārttika*, and once from his *Tantra-vārttika*. However, neither Maṇḍanamiśra nor Śaṅkara refer to one another, even though both held remarkably similar philosophical positions (Thrasher 1979:118–120). Maṇḍana almost certainly makes references to Śaṅkara's BSB, and appears to have had the text before him when he wrote the *Brahma-siddhi*, one of his later works (Kuppuswami Sastri 1937:xlv–xlvi, lviii; Kunjuni Raja 1960:143; Thrasher 1979:122–129). Sureśvara, Śaṅkara's chief disciple, also knew Maṇḍanamiśra's work, criticising him and reproducing his material with only slight rewording. Maṇḍanamiśra is not named by Sureśvara, but his opponent is almost certainly Maṇḍanamiśra, as Sureśvara in his *Naiṣkārmya-siddhi* paraphrases or quotes from Maṇḍanamiśra's *Brahma-siddhi*. It is possible that Maṇḍanamiśra read Śaṅkara (who died aged 32 according to tradition), but that a response to their differences was made by Sureśvara (Thrasher 1979:131–137). It is suggested (see Ch. 5.3) that the extreme rivalry between Śaṅkara and Maṇḍanamiśra, as depicted in the hagiographies of Śaṅkara, may have been primarily due to their different religious persuasions rather than philosophical views.

²⁹ Umbeka is not mentioned in the *Tattva-saṃgraha* of Śāntarakṣita (680–740 or 725–785), but is mentioned by his disciple Kamalaśīla (700–750 or 745–795) in his *Pañjikā*. Umbeka, whose literary activity may have been between 760 and 790, comments on the Maṇḍanamiśra's *Bhāvanā-viveka* (Thrasher 1979:138–139).

³⁰ This date was argued for by Nakamura (1983:57–89).

³¹ Jināsena quotes Vidyānanda—another Jaina—in his *Ādipurāṇa*, his final work, which was written around 838. Vidyānanda, in his *Aṣṭasāṭī*, quotes from Sureśvara's *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-bhāṣya-vārttika* (Pathak 1892b, Art. XVI:224–229; Belvalkar 1929:214). At the end of Vācaspatimiśra's *Nyāya-sūcinibandha*, it is stated that it was written in

At first glance, there would seem to be some slight evidence for the currently accepted date for Śaṅkara (788–820 CE), in that when Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla are discussing *Upaniṣada-vāda*, in the eighth century, they make no reference to Śaṅkara (Qvarnström 1999:176). Further, the great Śvetāmbara Jaina scholar and doxographer Haribhadrasūri (c.730–770 CE),³² although quoting Bhartṛhari, Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, also makes no reference to Śaṅkara (Umesh 1981:ii).³³ Nakamura (1962:187ff.) comments that although, beginning around 600, *advaita/vedānta* is recognised as a distinct doctrine by Jaina philosophers,³⁴ who attacked particular *advaita*-related theories, Vedānta as a school of philosophy was not significant. He notes that Haribhadrasūri, in his *Ṣaḍdarśanasamuccaya*, refers to the teachings of the ‘six schools’ (Buddhism, Nyāya, Sāṃkhya, Jainism, Vaiśeṣika and Mīmāṃsā) and also Lokāyata in an appendix, but does not refer to Vedānta at all.³⁵ Nakamura (1992:192) maintains that from the tenth century onwards, however, Vedānta began to become increasingly significant as a system, and that the philosophy recognised by Jaina philosophers was that of Śaṅkara.³⁶ However, although Śaṅkara later came to be considered as not only the pre-eminent *advaitin*, but as perhaps the pre-eminent philosopher of India, it seems that for several centuries post-Śaṅkara, it was Maṇḍanamiśra—who knew the philosophy of Śaṅkara, and who was

841 CE (*saṃvat* 898), which is quite reliable (Nakamura 1983:65–66). Kunjunni Raja (1960:143–144) notes Hacker’s suggestion that the date should be taken as *saka* 898 (equivalent to 976 CE), but disagrees with the later date. In the *Bhāmāṭī* (1.3.17), a commentary on the BSB, Vācaspatimiśra criticises the views of Padmapāda, referring several times to his *Pañcapādikā* (Belvalkar 1929:214; Kunjunni Raja 1960:145).

³² See Chapple (1993:1–2) for Haribhadra’s date.

³³ Vetter (1979:11), following Kunjunni Raja (1960), also remarks that Śaṅkara was not referred to by Śāntarakṣita, Kamalaśīla or Haribhadrasūri.

³⁴ By, for example, Samantabhadra (c.600) and his commentator Akalaṅka (c.700–770), Mallavādin (8th century), and Śīlāṅka (latter half of 9th century). See also Ghokale (1958; 1961–1962; 1972), who discusses and translates chapters III and VIII of Bhavya’s *Madhyamakahrdaya*, which deal with Vedānta as known to Bhavya in the sixth century.

³⁵ Nakamura (1962:192) also notes that Siddharṣi, in a work composed in 906, refers to a total of twelve systems, but not Vedānta.

³⁶ Nakamura (1992:192–193) cites the *Yaśastilaka* of the Digambara scholar Somadeva, composed in 959, which refers to Vedānta and the doctrine of the Brahman-*advaitin*-s. Nakamura maintains that “This is conspicuously the Advaita theory of the Śaṅkara school”. However, Śaṅkara is not referred to explicitly. Unfortunately, I have not been able to see this text in order to ascertain what I suspect: that Śaṅkara may not have been known by Somadeva.

roughly his contemporary—who was considered the main exponent of *advaita* by later *advaitin*-s, and not Śaṅkara (Vetter 1979:11; Wilke 1995:336). Vācaspatimiśra (9th century), author of the influential *Bhāmātī*, a commentary on Śaṅkara's *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya*, relies for his interpretation of Śaṅkara on the doctrines in the *Brahmasiddhi* of Maṇḍanamiśra (Subramanya Sastri 1937:vi).³⁷ Maṇḍanamiśra was also accepted as an authority by other important later *advaitin*-s such as Prakāśātman (10th century), Ānandabodha (c.12th century), and Citsukha (c.13th century) (Isayeva 1993:66–67). Nor does any Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosopher of the ninth and tenth centuries refer to Śaṅkara,³⁸ even though they make occasional references to Maṇḍanamiśra.

Qvarnström (1999:176) also remarks that it was not until the tenth century that Vedānta gained general recognition in Jaina and Buddhist literature as a distinct philosophical system, and suggests that this is possibly on account of Śaṅkara being from the south and not the north where Jaina and Buddhist systems were flourishing. However, although Jainism and Buddhism were in decline in the south by the time of Śaṅkara, in some centres,³⁹ particularly Kāñcīpuram—which had previously been a stronghold of both religions—Jainism⁴⁰ and Buddhism were still influential for several hundred years after the time of Śaṅkara.⁴¹ Yet there seems to have been little contemporary

³⁷ Subramahmanya Sastri (1935:vi) also asserts that Rāmānuja (1017–1137), in his quintessential work, *Śrī Bhāṣya*, only quotes Maṇḍanamiśra as the *advaita* prototype. However, it is evident that Rāmānuja also refers to Śaṅkara and his arguments: as *draviḍa bhāṣyakāra* (p. 119); as *bhāṣyakāra* (p. 120, p. 144); and as the incarnation, Śaṅkara (p. 111). (References are to the Karmarkar edition, 1959–1964.)

³⁸ See Potter (1981, Vol. 3:23 fn. 25; 1977, Vol. 1:15, 485, 604). For example, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika Śrīdhara (*fl.* 991) and Aparākadeva (*fl.* 1125) notice Maṇḍana's arguments but not Śaṅkara's.

³⁹ Such as Koṅkanapura.

⁴⁰ According to one tradition, it was the famous Jaina, Akalaṅka—and not Śaṅkara—who defeated Buddhists in Kāñcīpuram. A village in the suburbs of Kāñcī(puram) is still known by the name 'Jaina Kāñcī'. Many Jaina centres (that appear to have been weaving centres) were subsequently converted into Kālāmukha *śaiva* centres. Jainism began to acquire more influence than Buddhism in Kāñcīpuram around the seventh century, and in other parts of Tamil Nadu during the latter part of the first millennium (Desai 1957:25–96; Champakalakshmi 1996:397–398).

⁴¹ Buddhaghōṣa (fifth century) and other Buddhists propagated their doctrine from the *vihāra*-s of Kāñcī. Dignāga (c.480–540) was born in a suburb of Kāñcī (later going north to study logic under Vasubandhu in Nalanda). Dharmapāla (530–561) was also a native of Kāñcī. Bhavya (500–570) also lived in south India,

awareness of him by any philosophical tradition. If the earlier date proposed for Śaṅkara is accepted (flourishing around the beginning of the eighth century), then the only conclusion to be drawn is that Śaṅkara must have remained relatively unknown for several centuries after his demise, perhaps until his promotion by *advaita maṭha*-s, which were first founded in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

4.2 Organisational structure of the Daśanāmīs, according to the Maṭhāmnāyastotra, Śrī Maṭhāmnāyasetu and other texts

The normative account of the Daśanāmīs is embedded in a few short Sanskrit texts, known variously as (*Śrī*) *Maṭhāmnāya*, *Maṭhāmnāyastotra*, *Maṭhāmnāyasetu* and *Maṭhetivṛtta*, which detail the four *āmnāya*-s, all supposedly but improbably written by Śaṅkarācārya. The *Maṭhāmnāyaśāsanam* (or *Mahānuśāsanam*), frequently appended to the *Maṭhāmnāya*-s, is a text primarily explaining the *dharma* and entitlement of the four designated *ācārya*-s to individual jurisdiction in their four respective regions: the *gaddī* is to be passed on only to the virtuous and learned *sannyāsī*. One aspect of this text is as a legitimization of the four *pīṭha*-s, to the exclusion of other claims.

Āmnāya means: a sacred tradition; that which is to be remembered or studied or learnt by heart; a *Veda* (or *Veda*-s in the aggregate); or received doctrine. The term also has a particular significance in the context of the dissemination of Tantric texts during the early mediæval period. Similar to the Tantric tradition, which has western, eastern, northern and southern *āmnāya*-s,⁴² pertaining to the four Daśanāmī *pīṭha*-s—supposedly founded by Śaṅkarācārya—are four *āmnāya*-s, at the western, eastern, northern, and southern borders of India. The four *āmnāya*-s of the *maṭha*-s are said to be “revealed” (in all texts) in a sequence, such that the first is the western *āmnāya*,

as did Dharmakīrti who lived in the kingdom of Cūḍāmaṇi. Around 640, Hüang Tsang reports more than a hundred Buddhist monasteries in Kāñcī, with more than 10,000 Sthavīra monks (Watters, 1905, Vol. 2: 226). Buddhism was still a living religion in Kāñcīpuram in the twelfth century, surviving there into the sixteenth century (Mahalingam 1969:125; Chaudhury 1969:234–235; Subramanyam 1975:23–24).

⁴² For a survey of the four main Tantric *pīṭha*-s, see Sircar (1973:11–24). For a resumé of the Tantric *āmnāya*-s, see Goudriaan (1979: 41–46; 1981:17–20); Sanderson (1988:149–158). For an overview of *Śakti-pīṭha*-s, see *Tattoāloka* (1994); *Kalyāṇ (Tīrthāṅik)* (1997:515–527).

the Śārādā *maṭha* (at Dvārakā); the second is the eastern *āmnāya*, the Govardhan *maṭha* (at Purī); the third is the northern *āmnāya*, the Jyotir *maṭha* (at Jyośimath); and the fourth is the southern *āmnāya*, the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha*.⁴³ It can be seen from the scheme below that each of the ‘ten names’ of the Daśanāmīs are nominally affiliated to one or another of the four main *maṭha*-s, also known as *pīṭha*-s. There is, however, an ongoing dispute concerning the location of the ‘genuine’ southern *pīṭha*: whether it should be located at Śṛṅgerī or at Kāñcīpuram.

The information in the *Mathāmnāya*-s, presented below, is known quite well by most initiates, and is repeated, with some minor differences, in virtually every commentary on the Daśanāmīs that has been published in the previous 150 years.⁴⁴ I will be suggesting that this account is probably fictitious in several respects. However, regardless of the authenticity of the *Mathāmnāya*-s, the importance of these texts may be gauged not only from the intrinsic value of constituting a formal identity for various lineages of ascetics as an organised sect with a founder, but also from the fact that they have on several occasions been used as formal evidence in Court cases concerning property, trusteeship and succession.⁴⁵

⁴³ There has been some discussion in orthodox Hindu circles concerning why the southern *pīṭha* is located inland, and not at a coastal extremity, such as Rāmeśvaram. See, for example, Ramesan (1968).

⁴⁴ There are differences to be found in some of the earlier ethnographies. Crooke’s account (1896 Vol. 4:273) relies on the *Panjab Census Report (3)* of Maclagan, who remarked (1891:112) that he had before him eight lists of the “ten names”, from different parts of the Province (Punjab). Only Giri, Purī, Araṇya and Bhāratī were common to all lists. The names are associated with one or another of Śaṅkara’s four disciples, namely Tarnaka, Prithodar (or Prithivi), Sarūpa and Padman. (These names of *ācārya*-s are not exactly those of the disciples of Śaṅkara in the standard hagiographies.) Maclagan reports that according to some accounts the distribution of *saṃnyāsī*-s per *maṭha* is as follows: Jyotir (Giri, Purī, Bhāratī); Śṛṅgerī (Vana, Araṇya, Tīrtha); Naraṅgīnī (Parvata, Āśrama); Brahmācārī (Sarasvatī, Daṇḍī). Rose’s account (1914:353) presents four different lists, one of which (‘List A’) distributes the names as below, with the exception of the absence of the Sarasvatī *pāda*. Rose’s ‘List B’ distributes the *pāda*-s quite differently. Rose’s two other lists of ‘ten names’ both list eleven names. Included in those lists are the Jattī, Sukar, Rukar, Daṇḍī and Surastī, names which do not appear in ‘modern standard lists’. It is just possible that Maclagan and Rose’s ethnographies reveal that the standard account of the ten names as found in the *Mathāmnāya*-s (see below) had not yet become universally standard; or they could have been badly informed.

⁴⁵ See Mishra (2001:vii–xiv) for some of the legal judgments that have derived from the *Mathāmnāya*-s.

During the first initiation into the Daśanāmīs, the *pañc-guru-saṃskār*, the initiate is instructed on his lineage, lifestyle, *gotra*, *pīṭha* and so on, according to which of the ten names he receives. This information—in particular, the initiate’s own *mathāmnāya*—is to be remembered as a form of formal identification, and is circulated among Daśanāmī initiates in the form of Hindi texts, including the *Daś nām vaṃś vṛkṣ* and *Stotra-puṣpañjalī* (see Haridvār Giri, n.d.). In contrast, the contemporary structure of the Daśanāmīs, in terms of its various branches and sub-branches, is ill understood by most initiated *saṃnyāsī*-s, who rarely have any knowledge of any branch of the order other than their own. The understanding of what Daśanāmī means lies, for all practical purposes, in a body of texts that has become a vital means for presenting an overview of the order, both from emic and etic perspectives.

The *Daś nām vaṃś vṛkṣ* describes the cosmic evolution from “the void”, through various gods and *ṛṣi*-s, to Śaṅkara and his four disciples, who head the four *Mathāmnāya*-s. Additional information in this text includes the constitution of the *maṛhī*-s, the four *ācārya*-s of the four *yuga*-s,⁴⁶ the four ceremonial javelins (*bhālā*-s),⁴⁷ and the four *dhūnī*-s.⁴⁸ The ten names⁴⁹ are assigned to one of four strings (*tanī*-s): Uttar (north), of the Girīs; Purv (east), of the Vanas and Araṇyas; Dakṣiṇ (south), of the Purīs; Paścim (west), of the Tīrthas and Āśramas.⁵⁰

The texts of the various *Mathāmnāya*-s are available in Sanskrit catalogues, in several Hindi publications, and in three English publications.⁵¹ Apart from minor differences, the only essential dis-

⁴⁶ *Satyug*, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva; *Dvāparyug*, Vyāsa, Śukdeva; *Tretāyug*, Śiva, Śakti, Parāśara; *Kālyug*, Gauḍa, Govindācārya.

⁴⁷ Dattaparakāśa (at Ujjain); Sūryaparakāśa (at Prayāg); Candraparakāśa (at Nāsik); and the Bhairavaparakāśa (at Haridvār).

⁴⁸ Dattamukhī (at Ujjain); Sūryamukhī (at Prayāg); Ajayamedha (at Haridvār); and the Gopāla (at Nāsik).

⁴⁹ According to another undated Hindi paper circulated amongst some Daśanāmīs: Purī represents the top of the head; Bhāratī, the forehead; Sarasvatī, the tongue; Vana and Araṇya, the back; Sāgara, the stomach; Giri, the arms; Parvata, the legs; Tīrtha and Āśrama, the feet.

⁵⁰ I cannot be sure, but I believe these are the strings that divide the area containing the ceremonial *dhūnī*-s at *melā*-s, such that the different lineages are stationed in their respective quarters.

⁵¹ *Mathāmnāya*-s, or substantial extracts from them, are contained in the following Hindi publications: Śarma (1963:642–652); Upādhyāy (1967:601–617); Vidyānand Giri (1993:60–65); Mīśra (1996:33–57); Sadānand Brahmācārī (2001:24–26); Purī (2001:44–48); Haridvār Giri (n.d.:66–69). The *Mathāmnāyopaniṣad* is published in

parity between the different versions of the texts concerns a few of the deities, and the appointment of Śaṅkara's disciples to the respective *gaddī-s*: It will be suggested that it is most probable that normative texts, in the form of *Mathāmnāya-s* (or something with a similar name) which continue to be disseminated by the main Śaṅkara *pīṭha-s*, are most probably not more than about four or five hundred years old.

The scheme below is based on the *Mathāmnāya-setu*, published by Parameshwar Nath Mishra (2001:1–57),⁵² and some details that conflict with this text are indicated.⁵³

Un-Published Upaniṣads (ed. Kunhan Raja 1933:48–49). Antarkar (2001:72) refers to versions I have not seen: *Mathāmnāya-stotram* and *Mathāmnāya-setu* (ed. Bodas), Śrīraṅgam: Vāṇi Vilās Press (1954–1958; 1975). Three English publications contain *Mathāmnāya-s*: Aiyer and Sastri (1962:49–57, 102, 110), Chakraborty (1973:180–181), which contains short sections; and Mishra (2001:1–52), which contains an appendix (Appendix 2:59–61) that compares the verses of three published versions of *Mathāmnāya-s*, those of Sarma (1963), Upādhyāy (1967), and Kāmeśvar Nāth Miśra (1996). See the Bibliography for further details of these publications.

⁵² This text, together with the *Mahānuśāsanam* and *Śeṣāmnāya* (and translations) are contained in Appendix 2. Mishra's text is almost identical to that published by Kāmeśvar Nāth Miśra (1996), and very similar to other versions of this text, including the *Mathāmnāya-setu* published by Śarma (1963:642–652), but for a different verse order in some passages. Śarma's text of the *Mathāmnāya-stotra* (another text containing virtually the same information) is from the Śrīṅgerī *pīṭha*, obtained in the form of a very old handwritten copy from the Śrī Kāmarūpa *maṭha* of Banaras. Śarma (1963:647) states that the *Mathāmnāya-stotra-s* he had collected from other *maṭha-s*, at Navadvīpa, Kāśī, Kāmarūpa, Lahore, Pūṇe and Mirzapur, are similar. The texts of the *Mathāmnāya-setu* and the *Mahānuśāsanam* are differently ordered in some passages in some versions of the texts, different versions also omitting or adding the occasional verse.

⁵³ Entries with a single asterisk (*) indicate differences contained in the versions of the (Śrī) *Mathāmnāya-setu* and *Mathāmnāya-stotra* published by Śarma (1963:642–652). Brahmācarī (2001:22–24) provides the Śāradā *pīṭha āmnāya*, which is identical to Miśra (1996). At variance with Mishra (2001): Vidyānand Giri *(1993:63–66); Upādhyāy *(1967:601–617); Purī *(2001:44–48); Kunhan Raja *(1933:48–49). The information in the *Daś nām vaṃś vṛkṣ* is almost identical to the *Mathāmnāya-setu* of Mishra, with the exception that the deities of the Jyotir *maṭha* are called Sūrya-Nārāyaṇa and Puṇyagiri; and both Hastāmalaka and Pṛthvidharācārya are assigned to Śrīṅgerī. The *sthān* of Jyotir is called Rddhināth, and the *iṣṭdev* of Jyotir is Dattātreya (no other *āmnāya* in this text has an *iṣṭdev*). The Śrīṅgerī *maṭha* has (inexplicably) the *gaddī* of Anusūyā (*sic.*).

Maṭha (Western kṣetra)	Śāradā-pīṭha (also named Kālikā) Dvārakā (Arabian Coast, Gujarat)
Jurisdiction (maṇḍala)	Sindhu, Sauvīra, ⁵⁴ Saurāṣṭra, ⁵⁵ Mahārāṣṭra
Orders (padāni)	Tīrtha, Āśrama
Deities	(m) Siddeśvara (f) Bhadrakālī
Tīrtha / Kṣetra	(r) ⁵⁶ Gomatī, Dvārakā (Gaṅgā-Gomatī)*****
Veda	Sāma
Mahāvākya ⁵⁷	tat tvam asi ⁵⁸ (you are that)
Gotra	Avigata
Brahmacārī name	Svarūpa
Sampradāya	Kīṭavāra
Appointed pontiff	Viśvarūpa (Padmapāda)* **** (Hastāmalaka)***
Maṭha (Eastern kṣetra)	Govardhan-pīṭha Jagannāth (Purī, East Coast, Orissa)
Jurisdiction (maṇḍala)	Aṅga, ⁵⁹ Vaṅga, ⁶⁰ Kaliṅga, ⁶¹ Magadha, ⁶² Utkala, ⁶³ Barbarā (?) ⁶⁴
Orders (padāni)	Araṇya, Vana
Deities	(m) Jagannāth (f) Vimalā (Vṛṣalā)*
Tīrtha / Kṣetra	Mahodadhi (sea)/Puruṣottama.
Veda	Ṛg
Mahāvākha	prajñānaṃ brahma ⁶⁵ (knowledge is brahma)
Gotra	Kaśyapa
Brahmacārī name	Prakāśa
Sampradāya	Bhogavāra
Appointed pontiff	Padmapāda (Hastāmalaka) ****
Maṭha	Jyotir-pīṭha (also named Badarīkā , or Śrī)

⁵⁴ The area adjacent to the Indus river.

⁵⁵ The area around Surāt.

⁵⁶ (r) = river.

⁵⁷ An aphorism (great saying) from the Upaniṣads.

⁵⁸ *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (6.8.7); attached to *Sāma Veda*.

⁵⁹ The country around Bhagalpur, in Bihar.

⁶⁰ West Bengal.

⁶¹ Orissa.

⁶² West-central Bihar

⁶³ Orissa.

⁶⁴ The barbarian region (?).

⁶⁵ *Aitareya Upaniṣad* (3.5.3); attached to *Ṛg Veda*.

(Northern kṣetra)	Badarīkāśrama (Jyośimath, Uttaranchal, Himalayas)
Jurisdiction (<i>maṇḍala</i>)	Kuru-pāñcāla, ⁶⁶ Kaśmīra, Kamboja ⁶⁷
Orders (<i>padāni</i>)	Giri, Parvata, Sāgara
Deities	(m) Badarīkā (Nārāyaṇa)* **** (f) Pūrṇagirī (Puṇyagiri) ****
Tīrtha / Kṣetra	(r) Alakanandā / Badarīkāśrama
Veda	Atharva
Mahāvākya	ayamātmā brahma ⁶⁸ (the self is brahma)
Gotra	Bhṛgu
Brahmacārī name	Ānanda
Sampradāya	Ānandavāra
Appointed pontiff	Toṭaka (Troṭaka)
Maṭha	Śṛṅgerī-pīṭha (also named Śāradā)
(Southern kṣetra)	Śṛṅgerī (Western Ghāṭs, Karnataka)
Jurisdiction (<i>maṇḍala</i>)	Āndhra, Draviḍa, ⁶⁹ Karṇāṭa, ⁷⁰ Kerala
Orders (<i>padāni</i>)	Sarasvatī, Bhāratī, Purī
Deities	(m) Ādi Varāha (f) Kāmākṣī (Śāradā)* ****
Tīrtha / Kṣetra	(r) Tuṅgabhadra, Rāmeśvaram
Veda	Yajur
Mahāvākya	ahaṃ brahmāsmi ⁷¹ (I am brahma)
Gotra	Bhūrbhuva
Brahmacārī name	Caitanya
Sampradāya	Bhūrivāra
Appointed pontiff	Hastāmalaka (Sureśvara)* *** **** (Pṛthvīdhara) ⁷² ** *****

4.3 Gotra, sampradāya, Brahmacārī name, Veda and mahāvākya

In the *Mathāmnāya*-s we find an assignment of the four disciples of Śaṅkara to the four *pīṭha*-s, each with its own Vedic school; and the ten names distributed in four groups, each with its own Brahmani-

⁶⁶ Western Gangetic plain.

⁶⁷ Eastern Afghanistan.

⁶⁸ *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* (4.2); attached to *Atharva Veda*.

⁶⁹ Tamil Nadu.

⁷⁰ Karnataka.

⁷¹ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (1.4.10); attached to *Śukla* (white) *Yajur Veda*.

⁷² Pṛthvīdhara is identified with Sureśvara by Purī (and some other commentators), while Śarma identifies Pṛthvīdhara with Hastāmalaka.

cal *gotra*, *sampradāya* and Brahmacārī name. As can be seen, the two points of disagreement between the *Mathāmnāya*-s concern the deities (at three of the *pīṭha*-s) and the appointment of Śaṅkara's disciples. The *Mathāmnāya*-s only agree on the appointment of Toṭaka to the Jyotir *pīṭha*.

Gotra denotes an ancient Vedic clan or lineage, the *gotra*-s supposedly originating with the seven mythological *ṛṣi*-s.⁷³ The *gotra*-s were most probably distinguished originally on the basis of different Vedic rites performed.⁷⁴ There are scores of Brahmanical *gotra*-s, pertaining to the ten major divisions (and their sub-divisions) of Brahmins. There are also twenty-five other Brahmanical clans, including the Kashmiri, Nepali and Mālvā Brahmins, and other groups, all with various *gotra*-s. Four groups of *gotra*-s are traditionally assigned to one or another of the four *Veda*-s,⁷⁵ this arrangement also being reflected in the correspondence (albeit inaccurate) in the *Mathāmnāya*-s of four *gotra*-s to four *Veda*-s. Mediaeval *āgama* texts of Śaiva-Siddhānta reveal that traditional initiation into Śaivism also entails the acquisition of the *gotra/gocara* of the initiating guru (Brunner 1964:458).

As can be seen from the table giving the structure of the Daśanāmīs, the four *pīṭha*-s are represented by four Brahmanical *gotra*-s (lineages); Avigata, Kaśyapa, Bṛḡu and Bhūrbhava. Kaśyapa appears in the first fully formulated lists of the seven *ṛṣi*-s, in the *Dharmasūtra*-s (Mitchener 1982:30),⁷⁶ while the Kaśyapa *gotra* is traditionally in the group of

⁷³ In Mahāyāna Buddhism, the term *gotra*—as with so many other terms originally employed in a Vedic context—has, besides its sense as a spiritual lineage, a technical philosophical meaning, designating both a soteriological principle and an aspect of awakening. For further details, see Ruegg (1969).

⁷⁴ One of the original senses of *gotra*, as used in the *Rg Veda*, was of a 'cowstall' (Kane 1935:10). For Jainas, *gotra* had the sense of 'family', while in some Mahāyāna texts *gotra* meant 'spiritual class'. By the early centuries BCE, *gotra* had come to designate not only descendants of a common ancestor, but sometimes a family, an exogamous unit or social status generally. The so-called *pravara* recitation by Brahmins, which accompanies daily *sandhyā* worship, is a recitation of a list of usually three ancestors, who were among the seven primordial *ṛṣi*-s, and whose names constitute *gotra*-s. A *gotra* is the lineage of the family, thus confirming from which families a potential wife would be acceptable, as marriage cannot be made with a partner from within the same *gotra*. A man is in one of eighteen *gotra*-s, and must marry into one of the other seventeen, a system which has survived to the present day (Brough 1953:2–10; Kane HDS Vol. 2:479–497).

⁷⁵ See Sherring (Vol.1, 1872:6–113) for a detailed account of the *gotra*-s, and (p. 8) their affiliation to the *Veda*. See also Kamath (1986:83) on particular *gotra*-s.

⁷⁶ Agastya is to be found occasionally in the *Dharmasūtra*-s as an eighth *ṛṣi*.

gotra-s that follow the *Sāma Veda* (Sherring 1872:8). This is inconsistent with the scheme of the *Maṭhāmnāya*-s, whereby the Kaśyapa *gotra* is assigned to the Govardhan *pīṭha*, which follows the *Rg Veda*. Bhṛḡu appears as an eighth *ṛṣi* in a second list of *ṛṣi*-s, which came to take textual preference over the first list, notably in most of the lists to be found in the *Purāṇa*-s (Mitchener 1982:30). In the Brahmanical tradition the Bhṛḡu *gotra* is amongst the *gotra*-s that follow the *Rg Veda*. Again, this is inconsistent with the *Maṭhāmnāya*-s, wherein the Bhṛḡu *gotra* is affiliated to the Jyotir *pīṭha*, which follows the *Atharva Veda*. The other two *gotra*-s, Bhūrbhava and Avigata, do not appear in known list of *gotra*-s,⁷⁷ but no one has so far been able to provide a satisfactory explanation for them. *Gotra* and the other elements of the *Maṭhāmnāya*-s, which initiates are supposed to learn, are essentially esoteric verbal markers of the initiate's identity and lineage within the Daśanāmīs, used for mutual identity and detecting imposters: a kind of *saṃnyāsī pravara*.

The origin of the four *sampradāya* names, Ānandavara, Bhūrivāra, Bhogavara and Kīṭavara, that are given in the texts cited, similarly defies adequate explanation. Most commentators follow Ghurye (1964:86) in explaining, somewhat vaguely, the *sampradāya* in terms of life-style.⁷⁸ However, in Daśanāmī practice, the *sampradāya* names, as with the *gotra*-s, simply confirm to which of the four groups of lineages the initiate belongs, and do not signify a different life-style. The *sampradāya* names are used by Daśanāmīs as an identificatory title, such as, for example, *Mahant Lāl Purī*, Bhūrivāra.⁷⁹ (It can be seen, according to the *Maṭhāmnāya*-s, that Bhūrivāra indicates

⁷⁷ See Ghurye (1964:85–87); Dazey (1990:288). This author has also failed to find any references to these *gotra*-s in published works.

⁷⁸ Thus, according to Ghurye, the Ānandavāra is happy (*ānanda*) with whatever food he gets without begging, or because his happiness is not derived from worldly pleasures. The Bhūrivāra (*bhūrī* meaning 'very much') is explained as renouncing wealth and living on vegetation in the jungles. The Bhogavara (*bhoga* meaning 'enjoyment' or 'pleasure') are supposedly indifferent to worldly pleasures. Lastly, the Kīṭavara (*kīṭa* meaning 'insect' or 'worm') is supposed either to eat as little as an insect, or to have developed a high level of compassion, not even troubling insects. See also Rose (1914:357): 1. Bhog-bār, who are indifferent to all earthly things, save those necessary to sustain life; 2. Khet-bār, who attempt to eat only a small quantity of food; 3. Ānand-bār, who are averse to begging and live on spontaneous alms; 4. Bhūr-bār, who live on forest products and pounded grasses and ashes. 5. Kanśī-bār, who have no desire and live on air and water, in continual beatitude.

⁷⁹ Of the Mahānirvāṇī *akhārā* at Kaṅkhal (see Bibliography).

a Purī, Bhārātī or Sarasvatī; Ānandavār indicates a Giri, Parvata or Sāgara; etc.) When a candidate is initiated into *saṃnyāsa* by the *ācārya-guru*, a *mahāvākya* from one of four *Upaniṣad*-s—attached to its respective *Veda*—is given, the *mahāvākya* being the liberating mantra of the lineage. However, the distribution in the *Mathāmnāya*-s of the four *Veda*-s to the four cardinal directions is not corroborated in other Brahmanical sources.⁸⁰

The four Brahmacārī names given, Ānanda, Caitanya, Prakāśa and Svarūpa, are the names given to *brahmacārī*-s who have passed their first stage of initiation to become *daṇḍī*-s. They will subsequently undergo the *virajā-homa* to become *daṇḍī-saṃnyāsī*-s. The four Brahmacārī names theoretically correspond to their affiliation to a particular *pīṭha*. As previously noted, this is determined by the affiliation of the particular *maṭha* via which the candidate is initiated, to either the western, eastern northern or southern *pīṭha*.

4.4 *The pīṭha-s and guru-paramparā-s*

In this and the following sections, the claims by various *maṭha*-s to have been founded by Śaṅkara will be surveyed, and it will become apparent that there is no substantive evidence to connect Śaṅkara with the early history of any of the *maṭha*-s supposedly founded by him. Even in the nineteenth century the claims of the ‘official’ four *maṭha*-s to be the only legitimate ones were far from universally established. Over the previous few hundred years, several other *advaita maṭha*-s have also claimed legitimacy, many of the disputes being settled by royal decree or by a court case. The ‘legitimacy’ issue stems primarily from the claims of various Śaṅkarācāryas to be the sole representative in their area for the title of *jagadguru*, entitled to travel in palanquin (*addā-pālakī*)⁸¹ and be accorded due

⁸⁰ However, Mishra (2001:2) cites the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (3.12.37), stating that the *Rg*, *Sāma*, *Atharva* and *Yajur Veda*-s are “expressed” from, respectively, the eastern, western, northern and southern mouths of Brahmā. However, this verse from the text of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* states that: “Beginning from the front face of Brahmā, gradually the four Vedas—*Rg*, *Yajur*, *Sāma* and *Atharva*—became manifest” (trans. Prabhupada): *ṛg-yajuḥ-sāmātharvākyān vedān pūrvādibhir mukhaiḥ (śāstram iṅyām stuti-stomaṃ prāyaścittam) vyadhāt kramāt*. There is no mention of directions.

⁸¹ This mode of transport, usually reserved for kings, may involve the palanquin being carried ‘sideways’ to hold up (*addā*) other traffic.

honours, and to have the ‘foremost’ right to collect tithes or donations (*agrasaṃbhāvanā*) from adherents or disciples in the *kṣetra* supposedly under their jurisdiction. Evidence from the *Mathāmnāya*-s have been central to several court cases, as have passages in the hagiographies of Śaṅkara, particularly those referring to his last days and final *samādhi*.⁸² Claims and counter-claims by rival *matha*-s also frequently involve the assertion by one of the parties that parts of a particular text not agreeing with their claim have been tampered with.

It can be seen from the variant schemes of the *Mathāmnāya*-s (as shown above) that there is inconsistency concerning the appointments to the four *pīṭha*-s, depending on which text is referred to.⁸³ The identity of Sureśvara, who is claimed by the Śṛṅgerī, Dvārakā and Kāñcī *matha*-s (see below), is also disputed.⁸⁴ Most of the *matha*-s that will be

⁸² Amongst the hagiographies, the Kāñcī *matha* relies most on the evidence of the AŚV (see Ch. 5.1), where Śaṅkara is said to have passed away at Kāñcī. (This text is rejected as inauthentic by Śṛṅgerī.) In their support, the Kāñcī *matha* also cite evidence for this from the *Śivarahasya* and the *Mārkaṇḍeya-saṃhitā*, the authority of which is disputed by Śṛṅgerī.

⁸³ Rose (1914:353) records two (variant) versions of the appointments to the *matha*-s. Chakraborti (1973:181) also remarks on the disagreement amongst scholars over the appointments to the *matha*-s, one issue being whether it was Hastāmalaka or Padmapāda who was the first appointed pontiff of the Purī *matha*. The Śṛṅgerī tradition, according with the *Mathāmnāya-stotra*, maintains that the first pontiff of Dvārakā was Padmapāda.

⁸⁴ Sureśvara is identified by the monastic tradition as Maṇḍanamiśra (see Pande 1994:281–283). Relatively large parts of all the hagiographies of Śaṅkara are dedicated to the debate between Śaṅkara and either Maṇḍanamiśra—the famous Mīmāṃsaka and author of the *Brahmasiddhī*, who is portrayed as a disciple of another great Mīmāṃsaka, Kumārila—or Viśvarūpa. In the *Śaṅkara-dig-vijaya* (10.103–107) (see Ch. 5.1), after his conversion by Śaṅkara, Maṇḍanamiśra (a *grhastha*) acquired the name Sureśvara (as a *saṃnyāsīn*). The ŚDV also refers to Maṇḍanamiśra as Viśvarūpa. The identification of Maṇḍanamiśra and Sureśvara is also made by Anantānandagiri, in the *Śaṅkaravijaya* (sec. 55), and by Cidvilāsa in the *Śaṅkaravijaya* (18.44–45). However, in other hagiographies of Śaṅkara (Vyāsācāla’s *Śaṅkaravijaya* (6.5.36); Govindanātha’s *Śaṅkarācāryacarita* (6.1); Lakṣmaṇa Śāstrī’s *Guruvamśa-kāvyā* (2.143), Śaṅkara’s opponent is identified as a disciple of Kumārila called Viśvarūpa; and Maṇḍanamiśra is a different person. Many scholars have argued, on philosophical grounds, against the possibility of Maṇḍanamiśra being Sureśvara: see Dasgupta (Vol. 2, 1975:82–87); Hiriyanna (1923; 1924); Bhattacharyya (1931:301–308); Kuppaswami Sastri (1981:27–50); Alston (1980a, Vol.1:50–51). Sastri (1961:281–291) believes that the two could be the same: Maṇḍana could have changed his views. However, in perhaps the most extensive and detailed treatment of the topic, Kuppaswami Sastri (1937: xxiv–lvii) not only illustrates the philosophical differences between the two authors, but points to a long line of Vedāntins—including Vācaspatiśra, Vimuktātman, Prakāśātman, Ānandabodha, Prakāṭhāthakāra, Citsukha, Amalānanda, Ānandagiri,

referred to in this section claim to have been founded by Śaṅkara, and have *paramparā*-s of *ācārya*-s going back to between the eight century CE and the sixth century BCE. However, 44 BCE is taken as the date of the birth of Śaṅkara by several authorities, including, until recently, the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha*. The later date of Śaṅkara (788 to 720 CE) accepted by many contemporary scholars was challenged by Narayana Sastry (1971 [1916]), who proposed an earlier date of 509 BCE for the birth of Śaṅkara. This proposal for an earlier date was accepted by many Indian scholars, some of whom⁸⁵ still maintain it, despite many objections raised by various scholars.

I suspect that the views of Narayana Sastry (and hence later scholars) may have been substantially impelled by the considerable space devoted to the date of Śaṅkara in *The Theosophist* during the 1890s. Articles on the date of Śaṅkarācārya appeared in Volumes I, IV, XI, XIV and XVI of *The Theosophist*,⁸⁶ volumes XIV and XVI containing the *guru-paramparā*-s of the Śṛṅgerī and Dvārakā *maṭha*-s respectively, the Śṛṅgerī list recording the birth of Śaṅkara in 43 BCE, the Dvārakā list giving the birth-date of Śaṅkara in 2631 *yudhiṣṭhira śaka* (509 BCE). Scholarly opinions on the date of Śaṅkara seem to have influenced the construction of *guru-paramparā*-s, and some of them, such as that of Śṛṅgerī, appear to have been altered during the previous century to accord with the later date (788–820 CE) for Śaṅkara (Antarkar 2001:45), as previously the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha* had had a *guru-paramparā* that accorded 800 years for the life of Sureśvara.

Vidyāraṇya, Madhusūdanasarasvatī, and Brahmānandasarasvatī—and philosophers of other schools, whose works illustrate their understanding that Maṇḍanamīśra and Sureśvara were different people, with different views on particular philosophical points. Indeed, Sureśvara, in his *Vārttika* and *Naiṣkārmyasiddhi*, sneers at some of the views of Maṇḍana (p. xxx). The main division in *advaita*, between the *Bhāmatī* and *Vivaraṇa* schools (concerning whether the locus of nescience resides in *jīva* or *brahman*) goes back to Maṇḍanamīśra and Sureśvara. However, in some works (see p. xxv), for example Vidyāraṇya's *Vivaraṇa-prameya-saṅgraha* (p. 92), a passage from Sureśvara's *Vārttika* (4.8) is attributed to Viśvarūpācārya (Dasgupta, p. 83), lending some credence to their identification in the *Maṭhāmnāya*-s. Also, in none of Maṇḍanamīśra's works, or in the philosophical works of other authors, is Maṇḍanamīśra mentioned as a disciple of either Kumārila or Śaṅkara.

⁸⁵ See, for example, Aiyer and Sastri (1962) and Kuppuswami (2001), who argue for a birth-date of 509 BCE.

⁸⁶ The dates argued for the time of Śaṅkara were: 8th cent. CE (K. T. Telang, Vol. I:71, 89, 203); 510 BCE (Subha Rao, Vol. IV:295, 304–310); 5th cent CE (Bhāshyācārya, Vol. XI:98, 182, 263–271); 43 BCE (Gopalacharlu, Vol. XIV: 253–256); 509 BCE (Govind-dāsa, Vol. XVI:163–168).

Perhaps the earliest list of *ācārya*-s for the Śṛṅgerī *pīṭha* is that contained in the *Śrī-puruṣottama-bhāratī-carita*, composed by Viṣṇu in the late fifteenth century (Shastry 1982:7).⁸⁷ It provides a brief account of the *ācārya*-s from Vidyāśaṅkara (on the *gaddī* from 1228–1333) to Candrasēkharabhāratī II (1454–1464). In one of the hagiographies of Śaṅkara, Lakṣmaṇa-Śāstrī's *Guruvaṃśa-kāvya*, written in 1740, is also to be found a list of *ācārya*-s for the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha*. Antarkar (2001:40) believes that this is possibly the earliest full list of *ācārya*-s of the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha*. This work was instigated by the then reigning *ācārya*, Saccidānandabhāratī II (1705–1741). Probably the earliest widely disseminated list of the Śṛṅgerī *ācārya*-s was that published by Gopalacharlu in *The Theosophist* in 1893, which was based on a text published twenty years previously by Kṛṣṇarāja Wodeyar of Mysore. This *guru-paramparā* gives the date of Śaṅkara's birth as 43 BCE, his accession to the Śṛṅgerī *gaddī* as 34 BCE, and his death as 11 BCE. He is followed by Viśvarūpācārya and thirty-one other gurus, up to Saccidānanda Śivābhinava Narasiṃhabhāratī, who acceded in 1817. A similar but not identical list was subsequently published as an appendix to the Tamil translation of the ŚDV, under the order of Narasiṃhabhāratī VIII, after his demise in 1879.⁸⁸ Up to 1989 there were 34 or 35 *ācārya*-s in the six lists that Antarkar (2001) inspected.⁸⁹ However, it seems that Śaṅkara could not have lived earlier than the seventh century CE,⁹⁰ rendering spurious all of the *guru-paramparā*-s that go back to BCE.⁹¹

⁸⁷ I am doubtful about this early date, as it is based on the report of Venkatarāman (1959:ix), some of whose proposed dates for the *ācārya*-s of Śṛṅgerī lack sufficient historical support.

⁸⁸ It was also published in Telugu, by Vavilla Rāmasvāmī in 1885 CE.

⁸⁹ Many of the pontiffs of the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha* have been from the Mūlakaṇadu branch of Telugu-speaking Brahmans of Tamil Nadu (Gnanambal 1973:5).

⁹⁰ As discussed in Section 1 of this chapter.

⁹¹ Sastry and Kumaraswami (1971:201–206), supporters of the Kāñcī *maṭha*, comment that lists of Śṛṅgerī *ācārya*-s are not consistent. A list of thirty *ācārya*-s was published in 1854 by His Highness Śrī Kṛṣṇarāja Wodeyar, in which Pṛthivīdhāra is Śaṅkara's immediate successor at Śṛṅgerī. In some later manuscripts Viśvarūpa is introduced in place of Pṛthivīdhāra, but none of them mention the name of Sureśvara, as found in the list prepared by Narasiṃhabhāratī VIII. In the list of Śṛṅgerī *ācārya*-s published by Aiyer and Sastri (1962:164), Śaṅkara is recorded as ascending the *gaddī* in 18 BCE, and passing away in 12 BCE. Sureśvara follows him, ascending the *gaddī* in 12 BCE, and passing away in 773 CE; a 'miraculous' reign of 785 years. Sastry and Kumaraswamy maintain that Sureśvara was not introduced to the Śṛṅgerī *guru-paramparā* until after 1856. They believe (1971:194–201) that

The other three *maṭha*-s (of the ‘official’ four) have a list of between 60 to 144 *ācārya*-s in their *guru-paramparā*-s,⁹² widely disparate numbers of *ācārya*-s for institutions that were supposed to have been founded within a few years of each other. To date, the Dvārakā *maṭha* has a list of 77 names, going back to Śaṅkara, born in 491 BCE, the seventy-seventh *ācārya* being Abhinava Saccidānanda, installed in 1960 (Mīśra, *Maṭhāmnāya Setu* 2001:26). This *guru-paramparā*, minus the *ācārya*-s of the twentieth century, is given in the *Vimarśa*⁹³ (pp. 25–28) said to have been written by the *ācārya* Śrī Rājarājeśvara Śaṅkarāśrama Svāmī, the seventy-third pontiff of Dvārakā, in 1896 (Mīśra, *Maṭhāmnāya Setu* 2001:35; Umesh 1981:169), and published in 1955 (Antarkar 2001:40).⁹⁴

In several sources, the so-called copper-plate of King Sudhanvā is mentioned.⁹⁵ The inscription (last line) is dated *asvin śukla 15, yudhiṣṭhira śaka 2663*—corresponding to 476 BCE—and has been cited

Śaṅkara was born in 509 BCE, and was the first Śaṅkarācārya of Kāñcī, passing away in 477 BCE. The second *ācārya* to occupy the *gaddī* was Sureśvara (477–407 BCE), followed by sixty-five other *ācārya*-s (eight of whom were called Śaṅkara), up to Candrasekharendrasarasvatī, who ascended the *gaddī* in 1907 CE. The thirty-seventh was Abhinava Śaṅkara, born in Cidambaram, who was on the Kāñcī *gaddī* from 801 to 839 CE. The proponents of the earlier date for Śaṅkara maintain that it is this Abhinava Śaṅkara who is being confused with Ādi Śaṅkara, the *bhāṣyakāra*.

⁹² See Aiyer and Sastri (1962:167–181) for the *ācārya*-s in the *guru-paramparā*-s of four *maṭha*-s: 35 for (Tuṅga) Śṛṅgerī; 68 for Kuḍalī; 79 for Dvārakā; 144 for Jagannāth. These lists seem to be based on a Marāṭhī work by Mahadev Rajaram Bodas, *Śaṅkarācārya va tyāncā sampradāya*, Pūṇe, 1923 (Lütt 1978:412 fn. 2). See also Shastry (1982: Appendix III) for the (36) *pīṭhādhipati*-s of Śṛṅgerī *jagadguru*-s who go back to Ādi Śaṅkara (788–820 CE), who is followed by Sureśvara. Dates only start with Vidyāśaṅkaratīrtha (on the *gaddī* from 1228–1333 CE); see Sadānand Brahmācārī (2000:29–34) for the (78) *jagadguru*-s of Dvārakā, also going back to Sureśvara, who supposedly occupied the *gaddī* from 447 BCE. According to this *guru-paramparā*, Sureśvara is followed by Citsukhācārya (from 423 BCE). However, Citsukha may be dated to the latter half of the twelfth century, as he comments on the *Nyāya-makaranda* of Ānandabodha Bhaṭṭarakācārya, who appears to have lived in the latter half of the eleventh and first half of the twelfth century (see Dasgupta 1975, Vol. 2:49; Satchidanandendra Sarasvatī 1989:908–943). However, it was long ago suggested (Govinda-Dāsa 1894:166) that the Citsukhācārya of the Dvārakā *guru-paramparā* is different from the more recent Citsuka.

⁹³ I have not seen this work.

⁹⁴ The Dvārakā *guru-paramparā* is also published in Govinda-Dāsa (*Theosophist*, Vol. XVI, 1894:164–168); Bāldev Upādhyāy (1967); *Yatisandhyāsamuccaya* (pub. by Dvārakā-*pīṭha*, 1967).

⁹⁵ For the Sanskrit text and translation, see Mishra (*Mathāmnāya Setu* 2001:62–65).

on several occasions⁹⁶ in support of the claims to antiquity of both the Dvārakā *pīṭha* and Śaṅkara (who is supposed to have been a contemporary of Sudhanvā), and to authenticate the claim that Śaṅkara founded four *matha*-s in the four quarters of India.⁹⁷ Sudhanvā (as a king of Kerala) also appears (four times) in the *Śaṅkara-dig-vijaya* (ŚDV)⁹⁸ and the *Mathāmnāya*-s.⁹⁹ Umesh (1981:176–177) is, in my view, rightly suspicious of the authenticity of this inscription: the copper-plate was not available from the Dvārakā *pīṭha* for his inspection, despite his numerous requests; the Sanskrit is not ancient, as would have been used in the fifth century BCE; and the signature of Sudhanvā as *sarvabhauma* ('Lord of the entire earth')¹⁰⁰ is odd,

⁹⁶ *Vimarsā* p. 2 (see Umesh 1981:169); Mishra (*Mathāmnāya Setu* 2001:xvii).

⁹⁷ Installing: (1.1) Padmapāda (alias Sanandana) at Bhogvardhana (Jagannāth); (1.17) Toṭaka (alias Pratardana) at Jyotir (Badarī); (1.23–27) Viśvarūpa (alias Sureśvara) at Śārādā (Dvārakā); and (1.18–19) Pṛthvīdhāra (alias Hastāmalaka) at Śṛṅg-ṛṣī (Śṛṅgerī). Sureśvara is deputed by Śaṅkara to be the arbiter of important decisions (1.32–33). Śaṅkara is also said to have installed Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the renovated temple of Trailokya Sundar in Dvārakā, which is particularly renowned for heresies (1.23–26).

⁹⁸ See Māhava-Vidyāraṇya (1986). The first appearance (1.60–98) is when Sudhanvā (an incarnation of Indra) is saved from the perils of Buddhism by the miracles of Kumārila-Bhaṭṭa (an incarnation of Skanda): he accepts the *Veda* and expels the Sugata Buddhists. This incident seems to be partly based on an account found in the *Keralopāthi* (the earliest traditional account of Kerala), according to which two of the twenty-five Perumals who administered Kerala (Palli Bana Perumal and Cheraman Perumal) embraced Buddhism, Palli Bana Perumal (c.305–317 CE) ordering the Brahmans throughout Malanāḍu to also embrace Buddhism. The Brahmans, with the help of a saint named Jaṅgaman and six *śāstrī*-s defeated the Buddhists in debate, resulting in their expulsion by the king, who then abdicated in great remorse. Cheraman may have been born, and died, a *śaiva*, though supporting Palli Bana Perumal's conversion to Buddhism (Chaudhury 1969:233). In the second incident (5.10–30), Sudhanvā's attempts to entice Śaṅkara to his palace are rebuffed. He is finally granted the boon of a son after reciting three self-penned dramas. Sudhanvā appears (14.166–175) when Śaṅkara visits Kerala; and when Śaṅkara commences his *digvijaya*, he is accompanied by many disciples and Sudhanvā, who here makes his fourth appearance (15.1–29). During his encounter with Krakaca and his ferocious Kāpālīka entourage, the king fought with bow and arrow on behalf of Śaṅkara, who reduced them to ashes with a mystic syllable.

⁹⁹ Discussing the various characteristics (*lakṣaṇa*) needed by a wandering mendicant (*parivrajaka*) to assume authority at either of the four separate *pīṭha*-s (Dvārakā, Jyotira, Śṛṅgerī and Govardhana), the *Mahānuśāsanam*, v. 53 (Mishra, vv. 53 and 55 [=Sarma 1963:649, *Mathāmnāyasetu*, vv. 32 and 33; see Appendix 2]) states that he should have the capacity for exertion of Sudhanvā for *dharma*, serving gods and kings. The tradition of *dharma* (v. 55) should be protected eternally by Sudhanvā and other rulers.

¹⁰⁰ See also Mīśra (*Āmiṭ Kātrekhā* 2001:21–23) for a discussion of the term *sarvabhauma*.

as it is to Śaṅkara that the plate is addressed as a eulogy. Sanskrit first came to be used in inscriptions only in the first century BCE (Salomon 1998:86), the earliest extant examples of copper plate inscriptions—used primarily to record land grants—dating to around the middle of the fourth century CE (the earliest examples being in Prakrit, issued by the Pallava and Śālaṅkāyana dynasties in south India), though they appear to have been manufactured from the first or second century CE (Salomon 1998:114). Further, the form of copper plate inscriptions is fairly standardised, and in no respect similar to the copper plate inscription of Sudhanvā. The historical existence of Sudhanvā as a king of Kerala seems doubtful as I have been unable to find any reference to him in other sources,¹⁰¹ and the copper-plate inscription seems to be entirely spurious, manufactured to add credence to the legitimacy of Dvārakā and the other three *pīṭha*-s.¹⁰²

4.4.1 *Kāñcīpuram*

There is an ongoing dispute concerning whether Śaṅkara founded either four *maṭha*-s, as per the *Maṭhāmnāya*-s, or five *maṭha*-s, including Kāñcīpuram (known as the Kāmakoṭī *pīṭha*). This *maṭha* is nevertheless fully recognised in most orthodox circles.¹⁰³ Both Śṛṅgerī and

¹⁰¹ Intriguingly, Rāja Sudhanvā also features in the semi-mythological history of Nepal (see Wright 1877:83, who edited a translation of the Buddhist recension of the *Vaṃśāvalī*, ‘The Genealogical History of Nepal’): the Tretā Yuga is said to have ended in Sudhanvā’s reign; he built a new palace in a town called Sānkāsyā-nagarī that he founded; and was put to death, for reasons unknown, at Janakpur by Rāja Janaka, the father of Sītā.

¹⁰² Sureśvara’s reputation amongst Śaṅkara’s hagiographers is such that his appropriation to a particular place seems to be a probable (though admittedly unreliable) indicator of the source of a hagiographic or eulogistic text. The Dvārakā *guru-paramparā* begins in 509 BCE, and the copper-plate also records dates in the fifth century BCE. I would even hazard a guess that the inscription may have been fabricated around the time of the previously mentioned disputes over the legitimacy of *pīṭha*-s in Gujarat during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Curiously, the inscription does not mention Kerala, where, according to the ŚDV, Sudhanvā was a king.

¹⁰³ Published in *Kalyāṇ (Tīrthāṅk)* (1997:547–548), a conservative publication, is a list of twenty *jaḡadguru śaṅkarācārya pīṭha*-s and *upapīṭha*-s, which states that the five main *pīṭha*-s “established by Śaṅkara” are: Jyotiṛ *pīṭha*, Govardhan *pīṭha*, Śāradā *pīṭha*, Śṛṅgerī *pīṭha*, Kāmakoṭī *pīṭha*. There are seven “branches or *upamaṭha* of the Śṛṅgerī *pīṭha*”: Kuṇḍī (=Kuḍalī), Śivagaṅgā, Āvanī, Virūpākṣa, Puṣpagiri, Saṅkeśva/Karavīr, Rāmcandrāpur (Hosangar *tālukā*, Mysore District); and eight *maṭha*-s in

Kāñcīpūram claim legitimacy as the authentic southern *pīṭha*, and a substantial volume of polemical publications from both sides have issued in the last century, the foremost contributors being, on the Śṛṅgerī side, Śarma (1963); and on the Kāñcī side, Kuppaswami (1972; 2001)¹⁰⁴ and Narayana Sastry (1971 [1916]), who published the first work in English in support of the Kāñcī claim. Recently, Antarkar (2001) has responded to numerous points raised by Śarma, Aiyer and Sastry, and Venkataraman, objecting to the legitimacy of the Kāñcī *maṭha*. Śarma claims, contrary to significant epigraphic evidence, that the Kāñcī *maṭha* only came into existence in the early nineteenth century. The *Puṇyaślokamañjarī* (PŚM), one of the three hagiographies of Śaṅkara accepted as genuine by the Kāñcī *maṭha*,¹⁰⁵ contains a *guru-ḥaramparā* for the Kāñcī *pīṭha*, going back to Śaṅkara's founding of the *maṭha* and ascension of the *gaddī* in 480 BCE;¹⁰⁶ he is followed by Sureśvara who was on the *gaddī* from

the Karnataka area: Hariharpur (near Śṛṅgerī), Bhandigeḍi (Uḍupi *tālukā*), Yaḍnūrī (Kāsargodu *tālukā*), Kodaṇḍāśram (Tumkūr *tālukā*, Mysore District), Svarṇavallī (Śirsī *tālukā*), Nelamāvu (Uttar Kanāra *tālukā*), Yoganarsimh Svāmi (Holenarasipur, Mysore District), Bālakuduru (Uḍupī *tālukā*).

Another list of twenty *maṭha-s* is cited by Anantanandendra Sarasvati (1968:388) from a work that I have not seen, by Mahāvidvān Venkaṭācala Śarma. These *maṭha-s* are described as *Śaṅkarācāryādividyā-dharma-pīṭhādhipa-paramparāgata-maṭhaḥ*: Sumeru, Paramātmā, Sumeru (at Kāśī), Hayvaka, Koppala, Śrī-Sailam, Rāmeśvaram, Ghanagiri, Honnahalli, Kaivalyapura, Mūlabagalu, Sirali, Ḡṛdhrapura, Narasimhavādi, Molavana, Paitana, Kāśī, Tīrtharājapura, Gaṅgotrī, Tīrthahalli.

There is also a reference to a Śaṅkara *maṭha* at Gaṅgotrī in *The Light of Asia* (1894:331). My suspicion is that this may be to a now practically derelict *maṭha* at Ukhimaṭha (near Gaṅgotrī), which I visited in 1985. This appears also be the *maṭha* referred to by Ghosh (1930:12)—who cites Sister Nivedita's *Northern Tirthas*—which was originally granted to the “Kedarnāth order of Śaṅkarācārya” for (presumably) military *gosain-s* in the service of the kings of Gaṛhṇvāl. The *mahant* was said to be the 125th in succession.

¹⁰⁴ Kuppaswami responds, in large measure, to the arguments presented by R. Krishnaswamy Aiyer and K. R. Venkataraman in *The Truth about the Kumbhakonam mutt*, [Publisher and place not identified]:1965. (I have not been able to see this work.) Bader (2000:291) lists thirteen polemical works arising from disputes between the *maṭha-s*, including those by Śarma (1963), and Aiyer and Venkataraman (1965).

¹⁰⁵ The others are Anantānandagiri's *Śaṅkaravijaya* (see following section) and the *Guru-ratna-mālā*.

¹⁰⁶ Antarkar (2001:38) and Veezhinathan (see Sarvajñātman 1972:1) also refer to the *Jaḡadguru-ratna-mālastava* (*Guru-ratna-mālā/mālikā* [GRM]), which contains a list of 57 *ācārya-s* for the Kāmakoṭī *pīṭha*. The work is attributed by the Kāñcī *maṭha* to Sadāśivabrahmendra, who was co-student with Ātmabodhendra (1586–1638), both being disciples of Paramahansa Śivendra (1539–1586), *ācārya* no. 57. It appears that

477 to 407 BCE.¹⁰⁷ The *guru-paramparā* is said by the Kāñcī to have been prepared by Sarvajñasadābodha, the fifty-sixth *ācārya*, on the *gaddī* from 1512 to 1539. Later additions to the *paramparā* were added by several subsequent *ācārya*-s, the current reigning *ācārya* being Jayendrasarasvatī, the sixty-ninth. However, the credibility of the *guru-paramparā* pertaining to the period prior to the sixteenth century is doubtful.

The earliest record of an *advaita maṭha* at Kāñcī is a copper-plate epigraph, dated to 1291/2 CE,¹⁰⁸ that records the grant of a village called Ambikāpuram (near Kāñcī) to Śrī Śaṅkarārya (also referred to as Śaṅkara-yogin), by Vijayagaṇḍagopāla, a Telugū Coḷā ruler. The inscription mentions *pūjā* to Candramaulīśvara and *advaita upadeśa*. It has been claimed, by some Kāñcī supporters, that the inscription is referring to a Śaṅkarācārya, and provides evidence of a *maṭha* founded by him.¹⁰⁹ However, firstly, it is clear that the reference cannot be to Ādi Śaṅkara, as no one suggests that Śaṅkara lived at such a late date. Secondly, the name in the inscription is Śaṅkarāya and not Śaṅkarācārya.

A Tamil inscription in the Śiva temple at Ambikāpuram, dated 1516 CE (*śaka* 1436), is signed by Candraśekharasarasvatī of the Kāñcī *maṭha*, and refers to a village granted to the *maṭha*, confirming the aforementioned grant of 1291/2 CE by Vijayagaṇḍagopāla (Mahalingam 1940:324; Antarkar 2001:112-115). The next record providing information about the pontiffs of Kāñcī is a grant of a village named Kṛṣṇarāyapuram, made in 1521 CE (*śaka* 1444) by Kṛṣṇadevarāya of Vijayanagara, to Candracūḍasarasvatī, disciple of Mahādevasarasvatī.¹¹⁰ In 1527 CE (*śaka* 1450) Kṛṣṇadevarāya made a further grant, of the village named Udayambākam, to Sadāśi-

a commentary on the GRM, the *Suśamā*, and the PŚM (part 1)—part 2 was written at a later date—were both written by Ātmabodha. The *Suśamā* contains references to the *Bṛhat-Śaṅkaravijaya* of Citsukha, and the *Prācīna-Śaṅkaravijaya* (Pande 1994:21), the two lost hagiographies of Śaṅkara discussed by Bader (see Ch. 5).

¹⁰⁷ See Sastry and Kumaraswamy (1971:194–197) for the *guru-paramparā*.

¹⁰⁸ *Epigraphia Indica* (EI) XIII, pp. 122–132; 194–198.

¹⁰⁹ See, for example, Kuppaswami (1991:xxix–xxx), who assigns this inscription, *contra* EI, to 1111 CE.

¹¹⁰ In another grant, of 1506 CE (*śaka* 1429), Mahādevasarasvatī is mentioned as a disciple of Sadāśivasarasvatī (EI XIII, p. 122), while Sadāśivasarasvatī is a disciple of Candraśekharasarasvatī, ‘Candraśekhara’ and ‘Candracūḍā’ being homonyms (EI XIV, p. 169).

vasarasvatī, disciple of Candraśekharaśarasvatī, wherein Sadāśiva is described as Śiva incarnate, besmeared with holy ash, and wearing *rudrākṣa mālā* (EI XIV:168–175).¹¹¹ While there are several consistent records concerning the names of the early pontiffs of the Kāñcī *maṭha*, the name Śaṅkarācārya first appears in epigraphs at Kāñcī in 1686 CE. The four other *maṭha*-s consistently deny the authenticity of the Kāñcī *maṭha*, yet the *maṭha* currently enjoys equal status with the *maṭha*-s at Dvārakā and Śṛṅgerī, the three *maṭha*-s being singled out by the Hindu Religious Endowments Commission in 1960–1962 as being among the few Hindu institutions which have remained true to the aims with which they were established (Bader 2000:304). Several of the Śaṅkarācāryas of those institutions have been, and continue to be, held in very high regard.

Regarding the polemical arguments against Kāñcī, one strand of Śarma's multi-faceted argument is the absence of any reference to Kāñcī in the *Maṭhāmnāya*-s. However, the Kāñcī *maṭha* currently denies the authenticity of the *Maṭhāmnāya*-s, believing that they post-date Vidyāraṇya and were not written by Śaṅkara.¹¹² This is the view of most scholars who have examined the *Maṭhāmnāya*-s. However, at the end of the nineteenth century,¹¹³ in response to objections by critics that Kāñcī was not mentioned in the *Maṭhāmnāya*-s, some supporters of Kāñcī either found or produced a *Maṭhāmnāya-setu* that included Kāñcī, as the *madhyāmnāya* or *mūlāmnāya*, and constituting the fifth *āmnāya*.¹¹⁴ However, the production of this *āmnāya* appears to have detracted from the Kāñcī claim, rather than substantiating it as intended. Critics of the Kāñcī claim, notably Śarma (1963:312 ff.),

¹¹¹ See also EI XIII, p. 122.

¹¹² The official position of the Kāñcīpuram *pīṭha* is that the *Maṭhāmnāyas* are historically unreliable, were not written by Śaṅkara, and came into existence after the time of Vidyāraṇya. However a *Maṭhāmnāya-setu* that records five *maṭha*-s exists (see below), Kāñcī being the *mūlāmnāya*, presided over by Śaṅkara himself, the others by his disciples. (I have not been able to see this text.)

¹¹³ Śarma (1963:316–336) refers to a *maṭhāmnāya* published by the Kumbhakoṇam *maṭha* in 1894.

¹¹⁴ Details from this *āmnāya* are to be found in Śarma (1963: 'kha'), who refers to this *āmnāya* also as the *mūlāmnāya*, *ūrdvāmnāya* and *mukhyāmnāya*: *Maṭha*, Śāradā; *Āśrama*, Indrasarasvatī; *Pīṭha*, Kāmakoti; *Brahmacārya*, Satyabrahmacārī; *Veda*, Ṛg; *Mahāvākya*, Aum Tatsat; *Sampradāya*, Mithyāvāra; *Ācārya*, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya. Details provided by Aiyer and Sastri (1962:98) are as per Śarma, but also included are: *Kṣetra*, Satyavrata Kāñcī; *Devatā*, Ekamranātha/Kāmakoti or Kāmākṣī; *Tīrtha*, Kampa Saras.

have devoted a substantial effort to pointing out the inconsistencies contained in the Kāñcī *Maṭhāmnāya*. For around 120 years, since the controversy first began to generate considerable heat,¹¹⁵ the claim of the Kāñcī *maṭha* is that Śaṅkara founded five *maṭha*-s, with himself as the first *ācārya* at Kāñcī, and his four disciples at the other places recorded in the *Maṭhāmnāya*-s. The main substance of the Śṛṅgerī claim is that the Kāñcī *maṭha* is a branch *maṭha*—of which there are several—of the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha*.

One of the issues that has complicated the argument is the shifting of the Kāñcī *maṭha* to Kumbhakonam, which took place certainly prior to 1763 (Antarkar 2001:139), most probably in 1743 (Srinivasan 1979:246).¹¹⁶ From epigraphic evidence, it appears that the Kāmakoṭī *pīṭha* was located in the Viṣṇukāñcī part of Kāñcīpuram at least until 1686.¹¹⁷ Owing to Muslim raids, the *maṭha* was then temporarily shifted to Tanjore, at the invitation of the *rāja*, Pratapa Siṃha, who built a new *maṭha* and had a golden image of Kāmākṣī *devī* installed. The *maṭha* was then shifted to Kumbhakonam (Gnanambal 1973:10),¹¹⁸ which may have been the site of a Śaṅkara *maṭha* since the thirteenth century (Champalakshmi 1996:344).¹¹⁹ Endowments

¹¹⁵ In 1886, a forum of scholars and pandits met at a *vyavasthā* ('organisation/ruling') held at Banaras and decided that only four *maṭha*-s were legitimate. Their decision was based primarily on the ŚDV and *Maṭhāmnāya*-s (Antarkar 2001:135–137). Ironically, it coincided with a tour of the north by Mahādevasarasvatī, the 63rd *ācārya* Kumbhakonam *maṭha*. However, the purpose of the *vyavasthā* was to discredit the claim of one Sadānandatūrtha Svāmī that Śaṅkara founded a fifth *maṭha* at Mūlabāgala in Dvārakā (see below).

¹¹⁶ Śastry and Kumaraswamy (1971:202) believe the *maṭha* moved to Kumbhakonam in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Srinivasan (1979:273 fn. 160) refers to a [unidentifiable] copper-plate inscription from the Kāmākṣī temple at Kāñcī that refers to Mahādevndrasarasvatī (1703–1746), a pupil of Candrasekharasarasvatī of the Śaṅkarācārya *maṭha* at Kāñcī. The inscription mentions the renovation of the temple by Candrasekharendrasarasvatī, the pontiff of Kāmakoṭīpīṭham, who came to Kāñcī from Kumbhakonam for that purpose in 1840.

¹¹⁷ The *vaiṣṇava* Śāraṅgapāṇi temple of Kumbhakonam was renovated in the early Vijayanagara period, beginning in 1385, when the name Kumbhakonam was first used. A *vaiṣṇava* *maṭha* was first attached to the temple in the period of Raghunātha Nāyaka, in the seventeenth century, since when it has served as an important pontifical seat of south Indian Vaiṣṇavism (Champakalakshmi 1996:344).

¹¹⁸ Gnanambal cites T. A. Gopinath Rao, *Copper Plate Inscriptions Belonging to the Sankaracharya of the Kamakoti Pith* (Madras: Law Printing Press, 1916:2–3).

¹¹⁹ A Telugu Cōḍa Copper plate grant of the period of Vijayagaṇḍagopāla (thirteenth century) records provisions made for its maintenance (*Epigraphia Indica*, XIII, A-62:194ff).

were made to the Kumbhakonam *maṭha* by the provision of the late Vijayanagara ruler Veṅkaṭa V in *śaka* 1632 (1710 CE). The main *maṭha* returned to the Śivakāñcī part of Kāñcīpuram in the early nineteenth century, the Kumbhakonam *maṭha* now being a branch *maṭha* of Kāñcīpuram.¹²⁰

4.4.2 Śṛṅgerī and other southern *maṭha*-s

While there is an on-going dispute between the Śṛṅgerī and Kāñcīpūram *pīṭha*-s as to which *pīṭha* was founded by Śaṅkara as the southern *pīṭha*,¹²¹ at least six other *maṭha*-s have claimed legitimacy in the south (see Antarkar 2001:51–69): the *maṭha*-s at Āvaṇi, Puṣpagiri, Virūpākṣa,¹²² Śaṅkeśvara, Tuṅga Śṛṅgerī and Kuḍalī (or

¹²⁰ Both the Kumbhakonam (‘junior’) and Kāñcī (‘senior’) *maṭha*-s have a traditional entitlement (known as *merai*) to 1/96th part of the land-tax payable to Government, a tradition ratified in the High Court of Madras in 1917 by Sir John Wallis and Justice Mr. Ayling (Antarkar 2001:121). In 1894 the Collector of Tanjore recommended that 6743 Rs. be paid as *merai* to the Kāñcī *maṭha* (Anantanandendra Sarasvati 1968:379).

¹²¹ A dispute between the Kāñcī Kāmakoṭi and Śṛṅgerī *maṭha*-s led to two court cases, in 1844 and 1848. This concerned the authority to carry out the repair of the ear-ornaments (*taṭaṅka-pratiṣṭhā*) of the Goddess Akhilāṅdeśvarī in the Tiruvanaikoil temple at Jambukeśvaram, and the entitlement to exclusive jurisdiction over certain spiritual affairs of the area, in this case in district of Tirichinopoly. (Incidentally, the *maṭha* attached to this temple also claims to be the first and foremost of the *maṭha*-s established by Śaṅkara; see Antarkar 2001:95). The cases were decided in favour of the Kāñcī *maṭha*, and the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha* failed to prove its case for its jurisdiction over religious matters in the south. A similar dispute over the consecration of the earrings again took place in 1908, with the same outcome, the Kāñcī *maṭha* finally performing the consecration. There were several other disputes between the two *maṭha*-s (Bader 2000:290–291 fn 138; Antarkar 2001:94–101). More recently, in 1984, one K. Rajendran brought a case at the High Court of Madras (Bader 2000:303), claiming that the incumbents of the Kāñcīpuram *maṭha* are not Jagad-guru-Śaṅkarācāryas. Rajendran cited the *Mathāmnāya*-s, and called attention to the three branches of the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha* in Tamil Nadu. He objected to the control of the Kāñcī *maṭha* over the Kāmākṣī-amman temple, and to the participation of the Chief Minister and the Minister for Religious and Charitable Endowments in a conference partly organised by the Kāñcī *maṭha*. The court rejected the suit, and, similar to the ruling in the case brought before the Bombay High Court in 1908, maintained that it was not the duty of the government to declare who is or who is not a Śaṅkarācārya.

¹²² Both the Puṣpagiri *maṭha* (Cuddapah *tālukā*, Cuddapah District, Karnataka) and Virūpākṣa *maṭha* (Hospet *tālukā*, Bellary District, Karnataka) have their own *Mathāmnāya*-s (Antarkar 2001:80). For the *Mathāmnāya-stotra* of the Puṣpagiri *maṭha*, see Anantanandendra Sarasvati (1968:386–387). It seems possible that the Puṣpagiri *maṭha* was originally one of four Śaiva-Siddhānta *maṭha*-s known to have been very

Kūḍalī). While the Kuḍalī *maṭha* (at the confluence of the Tuṅgā and Bhadrā rivers in Shimoga District, Karnataka) may date from the twelfth century, and Tuṅga Śṛṅgerī (in Chikkamagalur District, Karnataka) from the fourteenth century,¹²³ the others date from a later period.

The Tuṅga Śṛṅgerī *maṭha* and Kuḍalī *maṭha* (whose current jurisdiction is in north-west Karnataka and southern Maharashtra; see Anantanandendra Sarasvati 1968:363 fn. 11) have both made competing claims for legitimacy, arguing that the other *maṭha* is a subsidiary.¹²⁴ Of the two, the currently recognised Śaṅkarācārya occupies the *gaddī* of Tuṅga Śṛṅgerī.¹²⁵ However, it seems that previously the Kuḍalī *maṭha* enjoyed supremacy.¹²⁶ In 1580, during the reign of Kṛṣṇappa Nāyaka of Keladi (1520–1609), an order was passed prohibiting the *ācārya* of the Tuṅga Śṛṅgerī *maṭha* from going out on *digvijaya*. During the reign of the 52nd *ācārya* of Kuḍalī, around 1723, the *ācārya*-s of Kuḍalī, Śaṅkeśvara and Tuṅga Śṛṅgerī *maṭha*-s met at Sātārā (Maharashtra) during the reign of Sahu—the successor of Śivājī—to decide which of the *ācārya*-s should be entitled to *agra-pūjā* ('first/foremost' *pūjā*). It was decided in favour of the *ācārya* of the Kuḍalī *maṭha*. Under the order of Basavappa Nāyaka II—during the reign Narasiṃhabhārati, the 53rd *ācārya* of Kuḍalī (1727–1751)—the *ācārya* of Tuṅga Śṛṅgerī was restrained from going on *digvijaya*; and again in 1806, this time under the order of Puṛṇayya, the famous minister of Hyder Āli and Tipu Sultan. Another restraining order was also issued in 1820. In 1811, Kṛṣṇarājendra III of Mysore permit-

influential in the development of temple culture in the Cōḷa period (c.1000–1200) (see Ch. 6.2), given that another *maṭha*, at Tiruvānaikkāval, seems to have once been a Śaiva-Siddhānta *maṭha* that was converted at an indeterminable time, after 1200, to an *advaita* Śaṅkara *maṭha* (see *Annual Reports on Indian Epigraphy* 1986:103, no. 538, para. 53, 28th July 1909).

¹²³ From inscriptional evidence, it appears that the Kuḍalī *maṭha* received grants from 1155, while the Tuṅga Śṛṅgerī *maṭha* received grants only after 1345 or 1350 (Antarkar 2001:55–67).

¹²⁴ There is a story to be found in several sources that while the *ācārya* of the Kuḍalī *maṭha*, Narasiṃhabhārati, was away on an extended tour, around 1570, the *gaddī* was usurped by the Tuṅga Śṛṅgerī *maṭha*. This, however, contradicts the account (and the *guru-paramparā* of Tuṅga Śṛṅgerī), that Narasiṃhabhārati was initially the incumbent of Tuṅga Śṛṅgerī (see Antarkar 2001:57–59).

¹²⁵ The founding of the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha*, and its association with Śaṅkara, are discussed in the following chapter.

¹²⁶ Ayer and Sastri (1962:88–92); Anantanandendra Sarasvati (1968:383); Antarkar (2001:59–61).

ted Narasiṃhabhārātī¹²⁷ (1820–1856) of Kuḍalī to go on *digvijaya* in palanquin and with full honours, having recognised him as *jagadguru*. When, in 1836, the incumbent of Kuḍalī, the 59th *ācārya*, also wanted to go on *digvijaya*, the Tuṅga Śṛṅgerī *ācārya* objected and took the Kuḍalī *ācārya* to court in Mysore to prevent it; the resultant ruling was in favour of Tuṅga Śṛṅgerī, but on Appeal (no. 22 of 1847) the ruling was overturned, in favour of the Kuḍalī *ācārya*, ratified by Sir Mark Cubbon in 1849. Up until the middle the nineteenth century, all of the several court rulings in disputes between the Kuḍalī and Śṛṅgerī *maṭha*-s issued in favour of the Kuḍalī *maṭha*.

Although currently the Śaṅkarācārya of the Tuṅga Śṛṅgerī *maṭha* is recognised as the 'legitimate' Śaṅkarācārya, and not that of Kuḍalī, it seems that it was only in the middle of the twentieth century that the Tuṅga Śṛṅgerī *maṭha* started pushing the claim that theirs was the *Dakṣiṇāmnāya maṭha*, or one founded by Śaṅkara for the southern region. Records appear to have been altered to this effect (Antarkar 2001:81).

It is not only the Kāñcī, Kuḍalī and Śṛṅgerī *maṭha*-s that have enjoyed dominance as the southern *maṭha*. The Śivagaṅgā *maṭha* was established at the request of Rāja Wodeyar, the then ruler of Mysore, in 1615 at Śivagaṅgā¹²⁸ by an ascetic, Śaṅkarabhārātī,¹²⁹ who was ordained by Abhinava Narasiṃhabhārātī V of the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha* (Row 1914:57ff.). The spiritual jurisdiction of the *maṭha* has periodically extended over most of the territory of modern Karnataka. Between 1727 and 1846 the *maṭha* rose to prominence, so much so that the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha* was overshadowed by the influence of the Śivagaṅgā *maṭha*. During this period, *rāhdarī*-s ('passports') were issued by several local rulers and officials, permitting the *jagadguru*-s of Śivagaṅgā to travel in the region and collect religious donations, and a number of villages were granted to the *maṭha*. However, Narasiṃhabhārātī VIII, who was on the *gaddī* as the *pīṭhādhipati* of (Tuṅga) Śṛṅgerī

¹²⁷ Another *ācārya* of the same name.

¹²⁸ According to Row (1914:24) the two main temples at the site (Svarṇadevī/Honnadevī and Gaṅgādharasvāmī) were first established in the reign of Viṣṇuvaradhana (1104–1141). The site, which is thirty-four miles north-west of Bangalore, features a prominent hill where pilgrims assemble at Makarasankranti to witness several pot-loads of 'Gaṅgā-water' issuing from the earth.

¹²⁹ For a list of the Śaṅkarācāryas on the *gaddī* at Śivagaṅgā from 1615 to 1914, see Row (1914:Appendix 1).

from 1817 to 1879, revived the fortunes of Śṛṅgerī (Venkataraman 1959:84–95; Antarkar 2001:85–92), ‘rediscovering’ Kālaṭi (Śaṅkara’s birthplace), instituting Śaṅkara *jayanī* celebrations all over India, and arranging for the publication of a comprehensive collection of Śaṅkara’s works. He also instituted meetings of various ‘legitimate’ Śaṅkarācāryas and objected to travel on palanquin (*aḍḍā-pālakī*) and the receiving of presents by the ‘illegitimate’ *ācārya*-s of the Śivagaṅgā *maṭha*. To settle the dispute, the Mahārāja of Mysore passed an order (10th June 1831) that both *maṭha*-s should enjoy equal privileges (Row 1914:69). However, the aim of the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha*—which was ultimately successful—was to absorb the Śivagaṅgā *maṭha*-’s jurisdiction into its own and to treat the Śivagaṅgā *svāmī* as a ‘disciple’, giving him a small allowance (Row 1914:75). At times, the Śivagaṅgā, Āvaṇi and (Tuṅga) Śṛṅgerī *maṭha*-s have sent payments to the Kuḍālī *maṭha*, which is evidence of their status as subsidiary *maṭha*-s in previous centuries. However, as observed previously, it was the (Tuṅga) Śṛṅgerī *maṭha* that subsequently gained preeminence, gaining control of the Śivagaṅgā *maṭha*, and persuading the government to deny it certain privileges, such as the suspension of *rāhdarī*-s.¹³⁰

The Āvaṇi *maṭha* was founded by Abhinava Narasiṃhabhārātī V, of the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha*, who, according to the Śṛṅgerī *guru-paramparā*, ascended the Śṛṅgerī *gaddī* in 1576, his demise being in 1599 (Aiyer and Sastri 1962:165). The earliest record for the Āvaṇi *maṭha* is a grant by Śrī Raṅga III, dated 1645 (Venkataraman 1959:60),¹³¹ subsequent grants being made by the Mughal administrators of Bijapur (Karnataka). According to the occupants of the Āvaṇi *maṭha* (Anantanandendra Sarasvati 1968:384–385), the *maṭha* was established

¹³⁰ The vigorous assertion of power and privileges for the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha* by Narasiṃhabhārātī VIII also led to several court cases against the Kumbhakonam *maṭha*, where the Kāñcī *maṭha* was stationed during most of the nineteenth century (see Antarkar 2001:88ff.). In 1829, two hundred residents of Madurai had an order (*nibandhanapatrikā*) issued, stating their allegiance to the Kumbhakonam *maṭha*. The Śṛṅgerī *ācārya* got a similar order issued in his favour. However, in 1837, when Narasiṃhabhārātī wished to attend the Mahāmāgham festival in Kumbhakonam, he was prevented by a government order from going by palanquin through the street of Kumbhakonam housing the Kumbhakonam and other *maṭha*-s; he was obliged to pass via another route. The *ācārya* went to Trichiripalli in 1838 and attempted to get donations (*agrasaṃbhānavanā*) from the residents of some villages in the district. Upset, the villagers approached the District Collector, who passed an order preventing the Śṛṅgerī *ācārya* from doing so.

¹³¹ *Epigraphia Camataka*, X, Mulbagal, 60.

after Narasiṃhabhārātī returned to Śṛṅgerī from a long tour in the north, to find that someone else had been installed on the Śṛṅgerī *gaddī*. Rather than dispute, he set up at the Kuḍalī *maṭha*. When Narasiṃhabhārātī went on tour again, he left a disciple on the Kuḍalī *gaddī*, to avoid being usurped again. On this tour he established a *maṭha* in Kolar district that was subsequently moved to Avanti (also in the Kolar district), and which became known as the Āvaṇi *maṭha*. Although the Āvaṇi *maṭha* is currently recognised as a branch of the Tuṅga Śṛṅgerī *maṭha*,¹³² in the eighteenth century the *agrasaṃbhāvanā* collected by the *ācārya*, who was on tour in the Kāveri area, went to the Kāñcī *maṭha*, as the Kāveri area lay within the Kāñcī jurisdiction. However, correspondence from the early eighteenth century¹³³ reveals that at that time both the Āvaṇi and Śivagaṅgā (see below) *maṭha*-s were paying tribute annually to the Kuḍalī *maṭha* (Anantanandendra Sarasvati 1968:384–385), indicating that it was either Kuḍalī or Kāñcī that was then considered the preeminent *maṭha*.

The Virūpākṣa *maṭha* is another *advaita maṭha* that has been involved in legal disputes concerning its right to exert spiritual sovereignty over the area under its jurisdiction, and to collect donations. According to local tradition it was founded by the legendary Vidyāraṇya,¹³⁴ its first *ācārya* being appointed in 1382. However, the earliest available inscription is of Kṛṣṇadevarāya, of 1515 (Verghese 1995:116).¹³⁵ In 1863, the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha* filed a suit in the Nizam's High Court, attempting to prevent the Virūpākṣa *maṭha*—which had representatives stationed in Hyderabad and other places—from touring and collecting yearly payments. The court decided against the plaintiff, noting that people were familiar with the Virūpākṣa *maṭha*, and that the Śṛṅgerī *saṃsthāna* ('institution') had not toured for many years. The court ruled that the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha* should give up its claim to regular payments for spiritual authority; and that the Virūpākṣa *maṭha* should continue to impart religious instruction to its disciples and tour the country, and that no one should interfere with that organisation.¹³⁶

¹³² The *ācārya*-s of the Āvaṇi *maṭha* call themselves Āvaṇi Śṛṅgerī *svāmī*-s (Venkataraman 1959:60).

¹³³ Letters written in 1711, 1713, 1714 and 1715.

¹³⁴ See the following chapter.

¹³⁵ Another *smārta advaita maṭha* is located nearby, the Cintāmaṇi *maṭha* at Ānegondi. It is believed that this *maṭha* was founded in the early fourteenth century, and continued to function in post-Vijayanagara times.

¹³⁶ The Kāñcī *maṭha*, and the Virūpākṣa, Āvaṇi, Śivagaṅgā, Haṃpe and Karavīra

In Maharashtra, in the village of Karavīra, is the Karavīra *maṭha*, also known as the Śaṅkeśvara *pīṭha*. The *maṭha* appears first to have been affiliated to Śṛṅgerī, and then to have seceded in the sixteenth century (Lütt 1978:416). It has four branches, at Śaṅkeśvara/Karavīra, Pūṇe, Kolhapur and Sātārā (Anantanandendra Sarasvatī 1968:367). In 1925/26 both the Śaṅkarācārya of Purī (Bhāratīkṛṣṇatūṛtha) and the Śaṅkarācārya of Śaṅkeśvara (Dr. Kurkoti) were actively engaged in the politics of the recently reformed Hindu Mahāsabha, and both were vigorously defending their claim to be Śaṅkarācāryas, through public exposure and political activity. Bhāratīkṛṣṇatūṛtha was attempting to become pontiff of Dvārakā, but did not succeed, instead becoming Śaṅkarācārya of Purī in 1925, at the request of the dying Śaṅkarācārya of Purī, Madhusūdanaṭṛtha (Lütt 1978:415).¹³⁷

According to tradition, Śaṅkara was of the Nambūdiri (Nambūthiri) caste of Kerala. Their manners and customs are recorded in the *Śaṅkara-smṛti* and the *Śaṅkarācāryar*, works reputedly but almost certainly not written by Śaṅkara. According with some of the hagiographic accounts of Śaṅkara's travels (see below), the Nambūdiris claim that Śaṅkara left Kedārnāth, where he had set up a *śivalīṅgam*, and returned to Śṛisailam via Ayodhya, Gayā and Purī. When Śaṅkara reached the south he is said to have established four *maṭha*-s in Trichur (Kerala). Two of these, the Thekkē *maṭham* (Tirukkekkat) and the Natuvil *maṭham* (Nāḍuvile) were functioning at the beginning of the twentieth century, presided over by Nambūdiri *saṃnyāsī*-s, who have, according to them, descended in a regular line of succession from the original heads of the *maṭha*-s (Ananthakrishna Iyer 1912:259).¹³⁸

maṭha-s—the latter now all being branches of the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha*—are all known as Śāradā *maṭha*-s. While there is a reference in some of the *vijaya*-s of Śaṅkara (see below) to Śaṅkara's inauguration of the worship of Śāradā *devī* at Śṛṅgerī, according to the *Maṭhāmnāya*-s it is Dvārakā that is the Śāradā *pīṭha*.

¹³⁷ The Śaṅkarācārya of Śaṅkeśvara/Karavīra, together with the Śaṅkarācāryas of Purī and Dvārakā, attended the Allahabad Kumbh Melā of 1918 to preside over sessions of the All-India Hindu Sabhā (later to become the Hindu Mahāsabha) and the All-India Sanātana Dharma Mahāsammelan. The Śaṅkarācārya of Karavīra was subsequently enrolled into the Hindu Mahāsabha (Jaffrelot 1996:198).

¹³⁸ These *maṭha*-s are said to have been originally situated at Trichur, but subsequently relocated outside town. One of the four *maṭha*-s (I have not been able to determine which) was transformed into a Vedic college for Nambūdiri Brahmans (Anantanandendra Sarasvatī 1968:378).

4.4.3 *Disputes concerning the western pīṭha*

The Mūlabāgala *maṭha* (in Karnataka) and the Durvāspur *maṭha* (in the vicinity of Dvārakā) have both claimed legitimacy, in opposition to the Dvārakā *maṭha*. The claim of the former led to a convocation of pandits at the aforementioned *vyavastha* in Banaras in 1886, which decided against the Mūlabāgala *maṭha*, in favour of Dvārakā. In 1945 Svāmī Śrī Abhinava Saccidānandatīrtha was consecrated as head of the Dvārakā *maṭha*. Prior to this he had been head of the Mūlabāgala *maṭha*, but upon his appointment to Dvārakā the lineage of the Mūlabāgala *maṭha* was merged with that of Dvārakā (*Daśanāmī Sampradāya—The Monastic Tradition* 1999:4).

Bader (2000:299) discusses what he describes as undoubtedly the most significant legal case involving the jurisdiction of the Śāṅkara *maṭha*-s, which came before the High Court of Bombay in 1908.¹³⁹ The Śāṅkarācārya of Dvārakā succeeded, under a first court ruling, in preventing his rival at Dholka in Gujarat from calling himself Śāṅkarācārya, and from soliciting money under that name. In defence, the Dholka *ācārya* had claimed that the Śāṅkarācārya at Badarīnāth had long ago set up *maṭha*-s in Gujarat and elsewhere, having been obliged to quit Badarīnāth owing to disputes there; and that the Dholka *maṭha* is a branch of the Jyotir *maṭha*. An appeal was brought by the Śāṅkarācārya of Dholka, who denied the authenticity of Śāṅkara's authorship of *Mathāmnāya*-s, which the Dvārakā *maṭha* had cited in evidence, reiterating that Dholka was a branch of the Jyotir *maṭha*. The British Judge, Chief Justice Scott, accepted the claim that Śāṅkara established four *maṭha*-s, but observed that *maṭha*-s may decline in prestige, and that new *maṭha*-s are established. He noted that the jurisdiction of the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha* was reported to have been divided into five or six branches in 1835.¹⁴⁰ Justice Scott accepted the defendant's evidence that the Śāṅkarācāryas of Śṛṅgerī, Dvārakā and Purī had received offerings when they were on tour in districts outside their alleged jurisdiction, but allowed the appeal, setting aside the ruling of the lower court. The Dvārakā *pīṭha* was again involved

¹³⁹ *Madhusudan Parvat v. Shree Madhav Teerth*, in the Indian Law Reports, Bombay Series, 33 (1909), pp. 278–293; The Bombay Law Reporter, 11 (1909), pp. 48–68; see Bader (2000:299 fn. 155).

¹⁴⁰ This was on the basis of *Sri Sunkur Swami v. Sidha Lingayah Charanti*; see Bader (2000:301 fn. 159).

in a dispute in 1982, after the demise of the then pontiff Abhinava Saccidānanda-tīrtha, who had appointed Svarūpānandasarasvatī as his successor. However, at that time Svarūpānanda was Śaṅkarācārya of the Jyotir *maṭha*, where he had been installed since 1973 (Jaffrelot 1996:356). This resulted in Svarūpānanda becoming the Śaṅkarācārya of two *maṭha*-s, which was challenged by Mādhavāśrama who wished to occupy the Jyotir *maṭha gaddī* (Sundareshan 2000:4).

4.4.4 *The eastern pīṭha*

Regarding the history of the eastern *pīṭha* in Orissa, little if anything is known of the historical origins. It seems that the oldest *maṭha*-s in the area were Kāpālīka and Pāśupata.¹⁴¹ The Govardhana *maṭha* at Purī has a list of 144 (or 142) *ācārya*-s contained in its *Maṭhāmnāya*, published in Purī as the *Śaṅkarācārya-jagadguru-maṭhāmnāya* by Yogendra Asthavādana Śarma in 1930 (Pande 1994:29). The Govardhan *maṭha* has four other branches in Purī: the Śaṅkarānanda, Śivatīrtha, Gopālātīrtha and Mahiprakāśa *maṭha*-s. The first three *maṭha*-s are presided over by *saṃnyāsī*-s, while the last is a *brahmacārī maṭha*.¹⁴² The only dates known for the pontiffs of the Govardhan *maṭha* are for the last five pontiffs, the first of whom became Head in 1849. In the bald list many names are repeated. One significant difference between appointments at Purī and other *pīṭha*-s is that at Purī the Śaṅkarācāryas are traditionally first householders before assuming office. At the other *pīṭha*-s the Śaṅkarācāryas are generally appointed much younger, from *brahmacārya*. As a consequence, pontiffs at Purī tend to reign for shorter periods, which could account for its longer list of pontiffs (Lütt 1978:412). However, there seems to have been some kind of lapse of authority at Purī, as suggested by a letter from the Śaṅkarācārya of Śṛṅgerī to his colleague at Purī, dated

¹⁴¹ In Bhubaneśvara, the oldest *maṭha* is the Sadavrata *maṭha*, dating from (tentatively) the seventh century. It was originally in the hands of the Pāśupata order, but in 1964 it was administered by Bhāratīs of the Daśanāmī order (Miller and Wertz 1976:13). The second oldest monastery is the Kāpālī *maṭha*, dating (tentatively) from the eighth to sixteenth centuries. This *maṭha* is associated with the Kāpālīkas, a sect closely associated with the Pāśupatas.

¹⁴² The Śaṅkarānanda *maṭha* is the more important of the affiliated *maṭha*-s, supplying the vice-president to an organisation of Brahmans (the Mukti-Maṇḍapa) which oversees sixteen *inām* villages in the Purī *pargana*. The Govardhan *maṭha* supplies the president to this organisation (Anantanandendra Sarasvatī 1968:399).

1862.¹⁴³ The Śaṅkarācārya states that “the Acharyas of the Govardhana and Jyotir Maths degraded themselves to the position of Gosains [presumably married *saṃnyāsī*-s] and thus these two Maths remained without any Acharya although the Govardhana Math was subsequently revived by a Sanyasi from Gougak Nakhil.” Beyond this not much is known, but it appears from East India Company documents that the Purī *maṭha* was (still or again?) in the hands of *saṃnyāsī*-s around 1800 (Lütt 1978:413 fn. 6).

At one time there seems to have been a close association between the Govardhana *maṭha* and the Jagannātha temple, in that the priests of the Jagannātha temple used to receive training in ceremonies and rituals in the Govardhana *maṭha*. A certificate was then issued, which, following the confirmation of the king, permitted the priests to carry out their services. Owing to a dispute arising from the removal and destruction of the idols of Ādi-Śaṅkara and Śiva (or Padmapāda?)¹⁴⁴ from Jagannātha, around 1800, the relationship between the two institutions ended.¹⁴⁵ Prior to 1900 the Śaṅkarācārya of Śringerī was regarded as the preeminent authority regarding the running of the other *maṭha*-s, and the Śaṅkarācārya of Purī did not play an important role in the religious life of India. This changed in the twentieth century, since when the Śaṅkarācāryas of Purī have played a more prominent role in Hindu religious affairs, notably under Bhāratīkṛṣṇatīrtha, who was very active during his period on the *gaddī*, from 1925 to 1960 (Lütt 1978:414–415).¹⁴⁶ Prior to becoming

¹⁴³ *Madhusudan Parvat v. Shri Shankaracarya*, The Indian Law Reports, Bombay Series, 33, p. 289 (see Lütt 1978:412).

¹⁴⁴ During his reign, Gajpati Dibyasimha Deva II (1793–1798) renovated the Jagannātha temple, temporarily removing the *mūrti*-s of Padmapāda and Śaṅkarācārya. They were returned but subsequently destroyed by *vaiṣṇava*-s (Das 1997:109).

¹⁴⁵ Purī has witnessed periodic contests between *vaiṣṇava* and *śaiva* religious and political authorities since the twelfth century, until which time Orissa was *śaiva*, with few *vaiṣṇava* temples. *Śākta* images appear from the eighth century onwards. The rise of *vaiṣṇava* influence began around the time of the construction of the Jagannātha temple, begun in 1136, attributed to the Gaṅga king Anantavarman Coḍagaṅga, who was most probably *śaiva*. The cult of Puruṣottama (later known as Jagannātha) was raised to the status of an imperial cult. Jagannātha at Purī is mentioned by Sāyana (c.1370), indicating its importance. See Dimock (1963:107); Dash (1978); Panigraha (1981:335–352); Upinder Singh (1993:249–259).

¹⁴⁶ In January 1906, at the Allahabad Kumbh Melā, the Śaṅkarācārya of Purī presided over the orthodox organisation, Sanātana Dharma Mahāsabhā; at the inauguration of the All-India Hindu Sabhā at Haridvār, in 1915, the Śaṅkarācārya of Purī acted as one of the three Śaṅkarācārya vice-presidents; three Śaṅkarācāryas—of

Śaṅkarācārya, he was involved in the Hindu Mahāsabhā, after 1923, and ran for presidentship in 1925/26. At the invitation of the Self Realisation Fellowship of Los Angeles, he toured the USA in 1958, becoming the first Śaṅkarācārya to tour outside India.

Bhāratīkṣṇatīrtha died in 1960, having not appointed a successor. The *gaddī* was vacant for four years, eventually being occupied by Nirañjanadevatīrtha, who became infamous as one of the instigators of the agitation against the government's failure to implement a pan-Indian ban on cow-slaughter.¹⁴⁷ Since the early twentieth century, the Śaṅkarācāryas of Purī, Dvārakā and Jyōśiṃaṭh have been mutually supportive during various religious and political protests, their orthodox stance being supported by Hindu organisations such as the Hindu Mahāsabhā and the Jan Saṅgh (Lütt 1978:416–417).¹⁴⁸

Purī, Dvārakā and Śaṅkeśvara/Karavīra—presided, at the Allahabad Kumbh Melā of 1918, over sessions of the All-India Hindu Sabhā (later to become the Hindu Mahāsabhā) and the All-India Sanātana Dharma Mahāsammlan; Bhāratīkṣṇatīrtha was involved in the nationalist movement, having contacts with Aurobindo and Gokhale. He was arrested but acquitted in 1921 after involvement in the famous 'Karachi case', a consequence of the All-India Khilafat Conference held in Karachi in July 1921, when Maulana Muhammed Ali declared it unlawful for any faithful Muslim to serve in, or conscript for, the British army. As Śaṅkarācārya, he was extensively involved, between 1931 and 1933, in opposition to the Untouchability Abolition and Temple Entry Bills. After 1952, Bhāratīkṣṇa spent more time in Nāgpur, founding the *Viśva Punarnirmāṇa Saṅgha* (World Reconstruction Association) there in 1953, and eventually settling there.

¹⁴⁷ On November 6th, 1966, 200,000 people tried to storm parliament, resulting in eight deaths and many injuries. 750 people (including 500 *saṃnyāsī-s*) were arrested. Nirañjanadevatīrtha undertook a 73-day fast in an unsuccessful attempt to change the decision of the government. In 1972, he formed an organisation against family planning, concerned that the proportion of Hindus in the population was decreasing.

¹⁴⁸ In July 2000 a dispute erupted over the *gaddī* of Purī (Banerjee 2000:34). Svāmī Adhokṣajānanda, from Banaras, arrived in Purī, claiming that he was the real Śaṅkarācārya, having been ordained by the previous *ācārya* of Purī, Svāmī Nirañjanadevatīrtha. However, he was arrested and expelled from the town, with widespread support from local dignitaries for the incumbent, Svāmī Nīścalānandasarasvatī. The case is not straightforward, as the incumbent's appointment—finally in 1995—had been surrounded by controversy and had taken several years, an appointment to the *gaddī* needing the recognition of the state's endowment commissioner. One of the objections raised against Nīścalānandasarasvatī's appointment was that a Śaṅkarācārya of Purī should be a Tīrtha, and not a Sarasvatī. In the context of this particular dispute, it is perhaps interesting to note that according to the *Mathāmnāya-s*—used many times in court in legal and jurisdiction disputes by Śaṅkarācāryas of the four main *matha-s*—Tīrthas should belong to the Dvārakā *pīṭha*, and Sarasvatīs to the Śṅgerī *pīṭha*.

4.4.5 *The northern pīṭha*

Little information is available about the Jyotir *maṭha* in the north, for which Antarkar was supplied with a list of 82 *ācārya*-s in 1987 by the then *ācārya*.¹⁴⁹ Miśra (*Amit̐ Kābrekhā*, 2001:102–106), an affiliate of the Dvārakā *pīṭha*, maintains that the Jyotir *pīṭha* was vacant from 1776 to 1941 (165 years),¹⁵⁰ during which time the *gaddī* was removed to Dholka, where it was occupied by a continuous line of Śāṅkarācāryas during the interval. (It will be recalled that the Dholka *gaddī* was the object of a considerable legal dispute.) Pande (1994:29) observes that the tradition of the Jyotir *maṭha* is incomplete and shows interruption in the succession. Of the earliest period, twenty-one names are recounted in verses contained in an Appendix to a manuscript of the *Mantra-rahasya*.¹⁵¹ There is also a list of twenty-one names for the period between 1479 and 1776,¹⁵² then there is a gap until the twentieth century. In 1851/2 there was an earthquake in the area which destroyed the *maṭha* (Mason 1994:17).

During the early part of the twentieth century there were several court cases when various people laid claim to be the Śāṅkarācārya of the Jyotir *maṭha* (Sundaresan 2000:1). However, on May 11th 1941, Brahmānandasarasvatī was installed as pontiff, with the approval of the Śāṅkarācāryas of Śṛṅgerī and Purī, and support from Karpatri of Banaras and the Mahārāja of Darbhāṅga.¹⁵³ His appointment was, however, surrounded by controversy, as was the appointment—after his demise in 1953—of his successor, Śāntānandasarasvatī, who had a rival, Kṛṣṇabodhāśrama. Both were appointed Śāṅkarācārya by the rival factions, resulting in court proceedings, decided in favour of Śāntānanda, who was subsequently succeeded by Viṣṇudevānandasarasvatī in 1981. However, the contro-

¹⁴⁹ The current *ācārya* frequently resides in Allahabad, where the Jyotir *maṭha* has a *pāṭhaśālā*.

¹⁵⁰ According to some records, the Jyotir *maṭha* ceased to function for nearly three centuries, but the current authorities of that institution admit a break of only 165 years (Cenkner 1983:111).

¹⁵¹ Māyādattā Śāstri, *Jyotiṣpīṭha-ṭīkā*, p. 16 (cited by Pande).

¹⁵² Harī Kṛṣṇa Ratūrī, *Garhvāl ka Itihās*, p. 55 (cited by Pande).

¹⁵³ Brahmānandasarasvatī's reputation was enhanced through the influence of his former secretary and disciple, Mahārṣi Maheś Yogī, who, famously, became a guru to the Beatles, Marianne Faithful, Donovan, and other pop-stars from the nineteen-sixties. (For further details of the relationship between the Maharishi—as he became known—and Brahmānanda, see Mason 1994:12–23.)

versy lingered on concerning the rightful successor to the Jyotir *pīṭha*. In 1979 a meeting of the Śaṅkarācāryas of the four *āmnāya maṭha*-s took place at Śṛṅgerī, the first ever such meeting. It was convened by the then Śaṅkarācārya of Śṛṅgerī, Śrī Abhinava Vidyātīrtha, but neither Śāntānanda nor Viṣṇudevānanda were invited. Another court case which began in 1999, at Allahabad, concerning the succession to the Jyotir *maṭha*, was still running in 2000.¹⁵⁴

4.4.6 *The Sumeru pīṭha*

The Sumeru *pīṭha* of Banaras also has a claim to have been founded by Śaṅkara, as the northern *pīṭha*. Several of the publications of the *Mathāmnāya*-s¹⁵⁵ include another (or extra) text (together with the other four *āmnāya*-s and the *Mahānuśāsanam*) that presents—with some minor differences—three more *maṭha*-s and *āmnāya*-s (see Appendix 2),¹⁵⁶ the Sumeru being the fifth.¹⁵⁷ The Sumeru *āmnāya* is as follows (Mishra 2001:48–52, vv. 66–68):¹⁵⁸

Maṭha	Sumeru-pīṭha
(Kailāsa kṣetra)	Kailāsa
Orders (<i>padāni</i>)	Satya (Truth), Jñāna (Knowledge)
Deities	(m) Nirañjana (f) Māyā

¹⁵⁴ For further details of the dispute concerning the *gaddī*, the claim exerted by *svāmī*-s of three separate lineages, political influence, and the subsequent succession, see *Daśanāmī Sampradāya* (1999); Sundaresan (2000); P. N. Miśra [*Amiṭ Kābrekhā*] (2001).

¹⁵⁵ Kunhan Raja (1933:49); Śarma (1963:650–651); Upādhyāy (1967:610–612); Miśra (1996:48–49; 2001:16–52). (Miśra’s text is currently being disseminated by the Dvārakā *pīṭha*.)

¹⁵⁶ The *Seṣāmnāya*-s; called the “Residuary-Shruti Receptacles” (Mishra), and part of the *Mathāmnāyasetu* (Śarma).

¹⁵⁷ The sixth *āmnāya* (Mishra vv. 69–72) is said to be the Self (*ātmanāya*), and *paramātmā* is the ‘great’ *maṭha*. The *sampradāya* is *sattvatośa* (‘goodness-pleasure’), and the *pada* (‘title’, ‘office’) is *yoga*. The *kṣetra* is the ocean; the deities are (m) Paramahansa and (f) Mānāsī Māyā; the *tīrtha* is Tripuṭī (?); the sentences of Vedānta are the instruction; and the *ācārya* is *Cetanāhṛdaya* (‘consciousness-heart’). The seventh *āmnāya* is *Niṣkala*. The *maṭha* is *Sahasvārkadyuti* (‘brilliance of a thousand suns’). The *sampradāya* is *sacchīṣya* (‘the good student’) and the *pada*-s are *Śrī-guru* and *pādukā*-s (a mendicant’s ‘holy’ sandals). The *kṣetra* is *ānubhūti* (‘realisation’), the deities are (m) Viśvarūpa (‘multiform/universal/Viṣṇu’) and (f) Citśakti, and the *ācārya* is Sadguru. The *tīrtha* is hearing the true scriptures.

¹⁵⁸ Further details are included in the text provided by Kunhan Raja (1933: 49)

Tīrtha	Mānasa (rovaram)
Sampradāya	Kāśī
Ācārya	Īśvara

In a previous publication Mīśra (1996:12) claims that, although it is said that there are seven *maṭha*-s, in fact Śaṅkara founded four of them. The existence of the Sumeru *maṭha* is explained as being an allegorical ‘heavenly’ *maṭha*.¹⁵⁹ Upādhyāy (1967:610) similarly explains the fifth *āmnāya*, Sumeru *maṭha*, as an *ūrdhvāmnāya*, stating that the last three *āmnāya*-s have a corporeal form only as knowledge.¹⁶⁰ However, the Sumeru *maṭha* of Banaras still functions—claiming to have been founded by Śaṅkara in 827 CE—and maintains a list (up to 1958) of sixty *mahant*-s who have occupied the *gaddī*, the first being Mahādevānanda-tīrtha.¹⁶¹ (Curiously, all the *mahant*-s but the last, from 1958, are named ‘Tīrtha’.) The *maṭha* is in a district of Banaras named ‘Sumeru’, possibly indicating the antiquity of the *maṭha*, and preserves a pair of wooden sandals (*pādukā*), believed to have been used by Śaṅkara, hence its other name, the ‘Pādukā Maṭha’. It admits only *daṇḍī*-s of the Sarasvatī order, and used to be patronised by the Mahārāja of Banaras.¹⁶² In the *Guruvamśa-kāvya*,

¹⁵⁹ *jaise ‘Sumeru maṭh’ ko ūrdhvāmnāy kahā gayā hai* (Mīśra 1996:12).

¹⁶⁰ *unka śaṅkara keval vijñān hī hai* (Mīśra 1996:12).

¹⁶¹ Sinha and Saraswati (1978:261–262) relate that the *maṭha* was supposedly founded as a branch of the Śārada *pīṭha* by Mahādevānanda-tīrtha, who was a disciple of Padmapādācārya, the latter being one of Śaṅkara’s four chief disciples. The fifty-eighth *mahant*, Nityānanda-tīrtha, although himself a vegetarian, apparently introduced left-handed Tantric practices, including goat sacrifice to Kālī, when he was on the *gaddī* between 1945 and 1950. Ānandabodhāsrama, who occupied the *gaddī* in 1958, banned women from residence in the *maṭha*. From 1758, when the *gaddī* was occupied by Mahādevānanda-tīrtha VI, all *mahant*-s have been of Bengali descent. Several buildings attached to the *maṭha* were sold off by a drunkard, Viśeṣvarānanda-tīrtha, the fifty-third *mahant*, and several bullock-cart loads of manuscripts were sold to Annie Besant. At the time of Sawyer’s (1993) research in Banaras, in 1988, the Śaṅkarācārya of the Sumeru *maṭha* was Svāmī Śaṅkarānanda. This author visited the Sumeru *maṭha* in February 2002. It was in a run-down condition with no resident *sādhu*-s. I was informed by several of the caretakers that the current *mahant* was away somewhere.

¹⁶² There is a copper-plate inscription on the wall of the *maṭha*, written in both Bengali and Devanāgarī Sanskrit. It is dated 1290 *śaka*, and purports to record an *inām*, on behalf of the local *rāja*, for sustaining a temple there, said to have been founded by Ādi Śaṅkarācārya in the eighth century, and inaugurated to Śrī Bhadrakālī. The plate does not appear significantly weathered. A learned colleague of mine, a Bengali Sanskritist, was kind enough to inspect an imprint of the text

written in 1740 (see below), it is stated (3.25) that Śaṅkara established five *maṭha*-s, including one for himself at Banaras. At the Brahmen-dra *maṭha*, at the Śivālaya *ghāṭ* in Banaras, there is an inscription dated 1884 CE (V. S. 1941) revealing a *guru-paramparā* of Śaṅkara (Anantanandendra Sarasvati 1968:379–380). This would seem to indicate that the Banaras *maṭha* was of some considerable importance in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Sinha and Saraswati (1978:60) relate that “some years ago”, Svāmī Maheśvarānanda was designated Śaṅkarācārya of Kāśī by the then Śaṅkarācārya of Jyośimāṭh at a ceremony at the Ādhā-Kumbh at Prayāg. However, Svāmī Ānandabodhāśrama, the *mahant* of the Sumeru *maṭha* at the time of Sinha and Saraswati’s study (1967), did not recognise Svāmī Maheśvarānanda as the Śaṅkarācārya, nor did Maheśvarānanda live at the Sumeru *maṭha*. One of the most important recent pontiffs of the Sumeru *maṭha* was Svāmī Hariharānandasarasvatī (commonly known as ‘Karpatri’), who died in 1982. He has been described as the most influential *danḍī* not only of Banaras but of all India (Sawyer 1993:170), directing the affairs of the Jyotir *pīṭha* even though he was not a Śaṅkarācārya.

Our relatively brief excursion into the histories of various *advaita maṭha*-s has shown that very little reliance, if any, can be placed on the *paramparā*-s of the *maṭha*-s,¹⁶³ or the information in the *Maṭhāmnāya*-s that Śaṅkara founded four *maṭha*-s in four specific places, each *pīṭha* being associated with either two or three of the ten lineages: the status of various *pīṭha*-s was still being contested in the nineteenth century.

and concluded that the language and characters used in the inscription would most probably indicate a date of around the seventeenth century at the earliest for the composition of the text, which appears to have been falsely dated.

¹⁶³ According to the *guru-paramparā* of (Tuṅga) Śṛṅgerī (see Aiyer and Sastri 1962:164–181), none of the first four *ācārya*-s of the Śṛṅgerī after Śaṅkara are named Sarasvatī, Bhāratī or Purī, as they should be according to the *Maṭhāmnāya*; *ācārya*-s nos. 8 to 11, and nos. 35 and 36 are named Tīrtha (located at Dvārakā in the *Maṭhāmnāya*); and *ācārya*-s nos. 5, 6 and 7 are Girī (located at Jyotir *maṭha* in the *Maṭhāmnāya*). There are no Purīs or Sarasvatīs in the list at all. In the Kuḍālī list all the *ācārya*-s are Bhāratīs. Of the seventy-nine *ācārya*-s of Dvārakā (Tīrtha and Āśrama according to the *Maṭhāmnāya*), only six are Tīrtha, one is a Sarasvatī (acc. Śṛṅgerī), thirty-six are Āśrama, while the rest have other names. The 144 *ācārya*-s of the Jagannātha *maṭha* should be called either Vana or Araṇya, according to the *Maṭhāmnāya*, yet none of them have that name. After the eighteenth, all but two are Tīrtha (located at Dvārakā in the *Maṭhāmnāya*) and the first seventeen have other names. (No *guru-paramparā* is provided by Aiyer and Sastri for the Jyotir *maṭha*.)

The epigraphic evidence that has been examined indicates there that were *advaita matha*-s in south India dating from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, notably Tuṅga-Śṛṅgerī, Kuḍalī-Śṛṅgerī and Kāñcīpuram. While the specific sectarian identity of the Kāñcī *matha* referred to in early inscriptions is hard to determine, we will see in Chapter 6.5 that a Śṛṅgerī *matha* was not associated with the name of Śaṅkara at the time of its founding in the fourteenth century. Regarding the current main *matha*-s in the north, at Dvārakā, Purī and Jyośimath, there appears to be no reliable epigraphic or other evidence that is much more than a couple of hundred years old referring to these institutions.

CHAPTER FIVE

ŚAṄKARA'S HAGIOGRAPHIES AND HIS RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION

It was suggested in the previous chapter that the popular notion that Śaṅkara founded four *matha*-s is highly improbable. In this chapter, the hagiographies of Śaṅkara will be surveyed for what they reveal concerning the founding of *matha*-s and other legends central to the traditional life of Śaṅkara. Śaṅkara's religious orientation will also be analysed, and it will be seen that Śaṅkara, despite being projected as an incarnation of Śiva in the hagiographies, was almost certainly a *vaiṣṇava*, as were his immediate disciples. In the final section, the hagiographies of Śaṅkara will be returned to again. They provide further evidence of the improbability that Śaṅkara founded either *matha*-s or an order of ascetics.

5.1 *The hagiographies of Śaṅkara*

Two scholars in particular have made detailed studies of the hagiographies of Śaṅkara, namely Antarkar¹ and Bader (2000).² Around twenty Sanskrit hagiographies of Śaṅkara have so far been uncovered.³ Several hagiographical works have been composed since the late eighteenth century, on the basis of earlier works or tradition,⁴ but vernacular texts do not start appearing until the end

¹ 1960; 1961; 1972; 1997.

² See also Kuppaswami (1972:7–20); Pande (1994:1–39).

³ A few brief references and details of Śaṅkara's life may also be found in the *Śiva-rahasya* (9.16); *Patañjali-carita* (8), composed by Rāmabhadra-Dīkṣita, c.1700; *Mārkaṇḍeya Saṃhitā* (72.7.10,11–18; 73.7.1–2); *Līṅga Purāṇa* (1.40.20–22); *Kūrma Purāṇa* (28.32.35); *Saura Purāṇa*; and *Padma Purāṇa*. Texts of these passages (the last two without references) are included in Pande (1994:36–38). Details of Śaṅkara's life may be found in several other *Purāṇa*-s (see Sankaranarayanan 1995a:5–14, who lists a total of 33 sources, including the hagiographies).

⁴ One of the better known of these is the *Śaṅkara-digvijaya-sāra* of Sadānanda, composed in the late eighteenth century. His son-in-law Dhanapatisūri composed the *Diṅḍima*, dated to 1824, a well-known commentary on the ŚDV. Another such work is the nineteenth-century *Śaṅkara-mandāra-saurabha*, written by Nīlakaṅṭha, for

of the nineteenth century. Bader examines eight of the hagiographies (some other texts, not examined, being largely derivative of one of the eight works considered):⁵ Mādhava's *Śaṅkara-dig-vijaya* (ŚDV), Anantānandagiri's *Śaṅkaravijaya* (AŚV),⁶ Cidvilāsa's *Śaṅkaravijaya-vilāsa* (CŚV), Vyāsācala's *Śaṅkaravijaya* (VŚV), Rājacūḍāmaṇi-Dīkṣita's *Śaṅkarābhyaudaya* (RŚA), Govindanātha's *Śaṅkarācāryacarita* (GŚC), Tirumala-Dīkṣita's *Śaṅkarābhyaudaya* (TŚA), and Lakṣmaṇa-Śāstrī's *Guruvaṃśa-kāvya* (GVK).⁷ All texts are tentatively dated post-fourteenth century, the earliest being the AŚV and the VŚV,⁸ most probably followed by the CŚV and TŚA.⁹ Antarkar (1973:2) places the CŚV

which Ungemach (1992) provides the text and (German) translation.

⁵ Bader (2000:342–350) also discusses two so-called 'lost' hagiographies of Śaṅkara, the *Prācīna-Śaṅkaravijaya* (PrŚV)—attributed by some (see Pande 1994:7) to Ānandagiri (or Ānandajñānam)—and the *Bṛhat-Śaṅkaravijaya* (BṛŚV) attributed to Citsukha. (According to one tradition, Citsukha—also called Viṣṇuśarman—was a direct disciple of Śaṅkara.) T. S. Narayana Sastry (1971 [1916]) was one of the first scholars to call attention to the 'lost' texts. Antarkar (1960; 2001:26) believes in the existence of the BṛŚV, yet has not succeeded in seeing it, despite efforts over the last 35 years; nor has Pande (1994:9). According to two commentaries on the ŚDV—Acyūta's *Advaitarājya-Lakṣmī* (17.16.103), dated to 1798, and the *Dinḍima*—the PrŚV was a source for the ŚDV. However, Bader (2000:342–350) believes the PrŚV to be a summary of the contents of AŚV. Ātmabodha (Ātmabodhendra)'s *Suśamā* (a commentary to the *Guru-ratna-mālīkā* attributed to Sadāśivabrahmendra) also cites the PrŚV and the BṛŚV. According to the concluding stanzas, it was written in 1720 (Pande 1994:7; Antarkar 2001:38). However, it may be older still, as Ātmabodha is dated from 1586 to 1638. No text of the BṛŚV is available, but for a single chapter published by Sastry and Kumaraswamy (1971:272–281). It contains astrological information and faulty Sanskrit that lead both Bader (2000:347 ff.) and Umesh (1981:179–182) to doubt its authenticity. Ungemach (1992:4) notes that material from the PrŚV and BṛŚV is cited in later texts, but also doubts that these two texts existed.

⁶ Antarkar (1961) demonstrates that this Anantānandagiri cannot be identified as Ānandagiri, the Vedāntin, with whom he is sometimes identified.

⁷ There is a complex relationship between the texts: see the table comparing contents (Bader 2000:74–76). The texts fall essentially into two groups, comprising slightly different traditions (Bader 2000:242), Group A comprising the AŚV, CŚV and the GVK, and the other, Group B, comprising the VŚV, RŚA, GŚC and ŚDV. The TŚA stands somewhat alone.

⁸ Some believe the VŚV to have been written by Mahādeva IV (Mahādevendrasarasvatī, also known as Vyāsācala), the 52nd *ācārya* of Kāñcī, from 1498–1507 (Ungemach 1992:4; Pande 1994:20).

⁹ In the colophons of the TŚA, Tirumala-Dīkṣita says that he is devoted to Paramaśivendra. According to the *guru-paramaṅgarā* of the Kāñcī *maṭha*, the fifty-seventh *ācārya* was Paramaśiva II (Paramaśivendrasarasvatī), who reigned from 1539 to 1586, and who was the guru of Sadāśivabrahmendra (Aiyer and Sastri 1962:131). If we accept the admittedly unreliable chronology of the *guru-paramaṅgarā*-s, and if

perhaps before the RŚA (c.1630), and possibly before the TŚA (16th cent.). Bader (2000:24) believes the RŚA and GŚC to have been written around 1650, while the GVK may be dated to 1740, and the ŚDV to between 1650 and 1798 (Sawai 1985; Bader 2000:53–62).

The *Śaṅkara-dig-vijaya* (ŚDV/*Madhāvīya*)¹⁰ of Mādhava¹¹ is by far the most widely distributed of the hagiographies of Śaṅkara, the incumbent Śaṅkarācāryas of the Śṛṅgerī and Dvārakā/Jyotir *maṭha*-s maintaining that this text is the most authoritative account of the *ācārya*-’s life. Since the establishment of its widespread reputation, towards the end of the eighteenth century, subsequent writers largely restate its contents.¹² According to the ŚDV, Śaṅkara had four direct disciples, whom he converted to his philosophy.¹³ There is a reference (10.71) to Śaṅkara’s setting up a temple at Śṛṅgerī and initiating the worship of the *devī* Śāradā, and to his installing certain of his disciples in *āśrama*-s, such as the one at Rṣyaśṛṅga¹⁴ (Śṛṅgerī) for ensuring the greatness of his creed (16.93). He also built a temple to *devī* at Kāñcīpuram, inaugurating worship according to Vedic tradition (15.1–20).¹⁵ However, no mention is made anywhere in the text of their appointments to head the four *maṭha*-s, nor is there

the Paramaśivendras are identical, then the TŚA may be placed in the latter part of the sixteenth century.

¹⁰ For references in this section, see Vidyāraṇya (1915) for the Sanskrit text, and Mādhava-Vidyāraṇya (1986) for the English translation.

¹¹ Even though the colophons at the conclusion of each of the sixteen chapters state that the text was written by Mādhava, the editor of the widely circulated Anandāśrama edition of the ŚDV has changed not only the title of the work (to *Samkṣepa-Śaṅkara-jaya*) but also the author’s name, to Mādhava-Vidyāraṇya. Besides Bader, several other scholars have presented evidence against the possibility of Vidyāraṇya’s authorship: see Sastry and Kumaraswamy (1971:229); Antarkar (1972:1–23); Sawai (1985:454–459).

¹² There are two exceptions (Bader 2000:23): the *Ācārya-digvijaya-campū*, by Vallīśahāya, and the *Bṛhat-Śaṅkaravijaya* by Brahmānandasarasvatī. The former text may be dated to the end of the nineteenth century, while the latter idiosyncratically diverges significantly from the other hagiographic works.

¹³ Śaṅkara’s first disciple was Padmapāda (Sanandana), whom he met in Banaras; followed by Hastāmālaka, who became his disciple in Mūkambikā (Kollūr, Karnataka); Toṭaka (Giri) became his next disciple, in Śṛṅgerī; lastly, Sureśvara, who became his main disciple.

¹⁴ In Hindu mythology, Rṣyaśṛṅga is (in most texts) a single-horned ascetic who is seduced by an enchantress on behalf of Indra, who fears the ascetic’s *tapas* (see Doniger O’Flaherty 1981a:42–54).

¹⁵ This was towards the beginning of his *digvijaya* according to the ŚDV, and at the end of the *digvijaya* according to the AŚV (see below).

any mention of the founding of an order of ascetics, nor the term 'Daśanāmī'. Given the relative lateness of this text, the absence of any reference to the founding of an order of ascetics or four *maṭha*-s is indeed intriguing.

5.2 Śaṅkara's life in the hagiographies

Śaṅkara's own works, previously discussed, provide very little information on the life of the *ācārya*. We know from these that Śaṅkara became a *saṃnyāsī* and that his guru was Govinda, but not much more. According to tradition, Śaṅkara was of the Nambūdiri caste, an orthodox Brahman caste who are the only original Brahmans of Kerala, renowned for their maintenance of Vedic rites which are extinct elsewhere.¹⁶ Sureśvara, in his *Vārttika* (6.22–23) on Śaṅkara's *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya*, tells us that his teacher was a "lordly ascetic who walked with a bamboo staff" and that he was descended from the *ṛṣi* Atri, indicating that Śaṅkara was a Brahman (Alston 1980a, Vol. 1:44). In the *Naiṣkārmyasiddhi* (4.44)¹⁷ Sureśvara refers to Śaṅkara as a *draviḍa*, indicating Śaṅkara's southern origins.¹⁸ However, it is interesting to note that in the works considered genuine, all Śaṅkara's references to places are to those in the north, in the Ganges delta (Alston 1980a, Vol. 1:44). Śaṅkara also refers to the Himalayas,¹⁹ lending some support to the supposition that Śaṅkara wrote and taught in north India. Our only other source of information for the life of Śaṅkara is the hagiographies, which Bader (2000:72) considers it more appropriate to take as the creation of hagiographers rather than as any kind of historical record.

¹⁶ Mayeda (1992:7 fn. 7) notes that insofar as the Nambūdiris adhered to any philosophical system at all, it was to the (Kumārila) Bhāṭṭa school of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, which Śaṅkara attacked in his works (see below). It is suggested that *advaita* philosophy was adopted by the Nambūdiris only after it had become popular in other parts of India.

¹⁷ See Grimes (1992).

¹⁸ This is also indicated by Śaṅkara's practice of writing as performed through incisions into palm-leaf that were later filled with ink. This is the method utilised in south India, whereas in north India, ink was applied at the time of writing, often on birch-bark.

¹⁹ In the BSB (II.3.14; III.1.8. See Śaṅkarācārya 1993:468, 567) Śaṅkara refers to the melting of snow and hail. He refers to a blind man dreaming he has seen a Himalayan peak (*Byhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad-bhāṣya* IV.3.6. See Śaṅkarācārya 1965:605).

Amongst the numerous incidents recorded in the various hagiographies, particular stories are common to all.²⁰ However, since the ŚDV has become the most well-known of the hagiographies, particular incidents contained therein have become standard to the contemporary understanding of Śaṅkara's life, even though they do not occur in the other hagiographies.²¹ All of Śaṅkara's hagiographies agree in describing the *tapas* undertaken in order to have a child by a pious but childless Brahman couple, Śivaguru and his wife, usually referred to by the respectful epithet Ārya or Āryāmbā. In all texts but one, Śaṅkara is born in Kālaṭi,²² a village in the Ernakulam district of Kerala.²³ Śaṅkara is initiated into an *advaita* lineage by his guru, Govinda, that goes back, ultimately, to Vyāsa and Śiva.²⁴ His mission is to restore the true teachings of Vedānta, to

²⁰ See Bader (2000:77–99). Ungemach (1992:11–24) also discusses several of the motifs, similarities, and parallels between events in hagiographies of Śaṅkara and events in: the *Rāmāyaṇa*; legends of the Buddha (in the *Buddhacarita*, *Jātaka* tales, and other sources); the *Basava Purāṇa* (containing stories of Basava, the twelfth-century founder of the Liṅgayat/Vīraśaiva sect); the *Kalpasūtra* (containing stories of Mahāvīra); the *Līlācaritra* (an anecdotal biography of Cakradhar, founder of the Maharashtra Mahānubhāva sect, written between 1272 and 1278); and stories—particularly relating to Śaṅkara's entry into the body of king Amaruka—pertaining to the semi-legendary founders of the Nāth order, Matsyendranāth and Gorakhnāth (c.12th/13th century), found in, for example, the *Goraḅṣa-siddhānta-saṃgraha*. One of the hagiographies of Madhva (see below), the 13th century *Maṇimañjarī*, describes several specific events found in the hagiographies of Śaṅkara, such as Śaṅkara's meeting with Maṇḍanamiśra, and Śaṅkara's burning of his mother's body after her death.

²¹ One prominent example is when Śaṅkara avoids an outcaste in Banaras who is Śiva in disguise, an incident which only occurs in the ŚDV and the TŚA.

²² In the Calcutta edition of the AŚV Śaṅkara is born in Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu, a place more commonly associated with the birth of Patañjali, the author of the *Yogasūtra*, who is an embodiment of the primal serpent, Ādiśeṣa (see Dīkṣhitar 1965:5.2–5.8).

²³ The description of Śaṅkara's birth uses stock images of *kāvya* literature, as found in Aśvaghōṣa's *Buddhacarita* and Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa* (Bader 2000:80). When Śaṅkara was five, Śivaguru was about to perform Śaṅkara's *upanayana*, but died; his mother performed the rite. Against the wishes of his mother, Śaṅkara wanted to leave home and renounce. While bathing in the river, Śaṅkara is seized by a crocodile. Brahmanical tradition permits renunciation in the event of a life-threatening calamity (*āpat-saṃnyāsa*), and Śaṅkara, in the jaws of death, asks his mother permission to renounce, which she, of course, grants, miraculously saving him.

²⁴ Govinda's teacher is Gauḍapāda, the author of the earliest specifically *advaita* commentary available, the *Gauḍapādīya-kārikā* (King 1995:15). In the hagiographies, Gauḍapāda is also linked with another lineage, descending from Patañjali. Although current tradition, taken from the ŚDV, locates Govinda by the Narmadā river, only three texts agree on this, and do not specify the place.

which end he is to write his commentary on the *Brahmasūtra*, which is approved by Vyāsa, who grants him an extension of sixteen years on his life, which was originally destined to finish when he was but sixteen years old.²⁵

Perhaps the most fundamental theme of Śaṅkara's life story is that he is an *avatāra* of Śiva,²⁶ the concept of *avatāra* being common in the traditional biographies of both kings and saints in India. The *avatāra*, Buddha or Tirthaṅkara is the divine descendant, sent to earth to rescue people from heresy, encroaching decadence and chaos, and to reestablish cosmic order.²⁷ Śaṅkara moves freely from the human to the divine plane, experiencing human suffering—notably as a child—and is involved in numerous rational debates, yet he is divinely incarnated and can perform miracles in time and space. The incarnations of Śiva generally reflect the ambivalent and often frightening qualities of Śiva, in contrast to some of the more benign incarnations of Viṣṇu. One important exception is the incarnation of Śiva as Lākuliśa, the preceptor of the Pāśupata order who probably lived in the second century (Chakraborty 1970:8–12),²⁸ and who may possibly have partially inspired Śaṅkara's hagiographers: like Śaṅkara, Lākuliśa also had four pupils, named Kuśika, Garga, Mitra and Kauruśya. The concept of divine presence—and also, by

²⁵ Śaṅkara's life-span is omitted in the CŚV (Bader 2000:85 fn. 25).

²⁶ Sawai (1987) also summarises Śaṅkara's purpose of incarnation, as told in the ŚDV: to halt the conduct of "evil" people, establish Vedic *dharma*, and to guide people to salvation. The *śaiva* mythological frame of the hagiographies of Śaṅkara draws on themes found in the *Purāna-s*. In the AŚV, CŚV and GVK, it is Nārada who is alarmed by the Brahmins' neglect of their duties, their rampant heresies, and the decline of Vedic sects. To save the world from chaos, Śiva agrees to incarnate as Śaṅkara, the son of a pious Brahman woman. In the TŚA, ŚDV and GVK, the story begins with Śiva himself, who is approached for help by the *deva-s*. In the TŚA and ŚDV, not only Śiva incarnates (as Śaṅkara), but Brahmā becomes Maṇḍanamiśra, Sarasvatī his wife, Kumāra is born as Kumārila-Bhaṭṭa (*ācārya*), Nārāyaṇa as Padmapāda, and Vāyu as both Hastāmalaka and Totaka.

²⁷ See Granoff (1984; 1988a; 1988b) and Snell (1994) for excellent studies of the transmission and common motifs in Indian hagiographies. See Schober (1997) for articles on the importance of the hagiography of Buddha for the Buddhist tradition. Even in the earliest stratum of Buddhist texts, the biography of the Buddha is inherent in the teachings transmitted (Reynolds 1997:19–39).

²⁸ The Mathurā pillar inscription of Candragupta II (of Gupta year 61, regnal year 5, =380 CE) mentions a *śaiva* guru who was tenth in succession from Kuśika. This provides an approximate date for Lākuliśa, who is identified with Śiva in the inscription, an identification probably made not much earlier (Stietencron 2001:34 fn. 21).

implication, divine grace—being inherent in outstanding religious leaders was first articulated in the Gupta period. The first historical evidence for an identification of a historical person with a deity—even though such an identification may have been made previously—was that made (posthumously) between Lākuliśa and Śiva²⁹ (Stietencron 2001:22).

It is evident that many of the motifs central to Indian hagiography may also be found in other religious contexts. Heffernan’s remarks concerning Christian saints and their biographies in the Middle Ages are appropriate—in a parallel way—to saintly *saṃnyāsī*-s: that paradigmatic action dominates narrative structure; and that for actions narrated in the lives of the saints to be binding for the community, they had to be *imitatio Christi*. Gregory of Tours (538/9–593/4), one of the most influential early mediaeval sacred hagiographers, believed that the saint, unlike the rest of mankind, lived simultaneously in two worlds, the heavenly and the earthly (Heffernan 1988:6–10). “Sacred biography, although it exalts the individual, does so only having made perfectly clear that the exaltation is the result of Providence. There are no genuinely autonomous acts of heroism in this genre; all actions, whether good or evil, are contingent acts” (Heffernan 1988:64). Such remarks are quite apposite to the *saṃnyāsī*-s being discussed.

A central motif of the hagiographies is Śaṅkara’s all-India tour of victory, his *digvijaya* establishing his supremacy over all rival views.³⁰ Throughout his journey he is victorious over all rival sects

²⁹ Lorenzen (1983), focusing primarily on the ŚDV, has indicated several parallels between the lives of Śaṅkara and Kṛṣṇa, the earliest Indian god to be given a real hagiology. Details of Kṛṣṇa’s life, particularly the birth and infancy, amply fit the ‘standard saga’ of the hero as elaborated by the psychoanalyst Otto Rank in 1914. Two significant differences between the life-story of Śaṅkara and Kṛṣṇa are the lack of conflict with a father figure, such as Kaṃsa, and the absence of abandonment and adoption by other, more humble parents, such as Nanda and Yaśodā. Lorenzen has pointed to the tension in the hagiographies between Śaṅkara, the lone *śaiva saṃnyāsī* renunciate, and the householder *vaiṣṇava* tradition represented by his mother, a staunch *vaiṣṇava*, a tension most famously explored in Dumont’s (1960) structural analysis of Indian society, referred to in the Introduction. Bader (2000:128) acknowledges the tension in the hagiographies between householder and *saṃnyāsī* but disagrees with Lorenzen’s (1983:164) supposition of a *vaiṣṇava* component in the narrative, implied in a comparison of the childhoods of Śaṅkara and Kṛṣṇa; the hagiographies of Śaṅkara are distinctly *śaiva* in orientation.

³⁰ This features in five of the hagiographies (Bader 2000:141–182), the most

and views—the very existence of which indicates the decline of the Vedic tradition—and reestablishes the correct understanding of the sacred texts. Although the hagiographies differ considerably over the places visited,³¹ the end of the debates, and the final event of significance before he dies,³² signals Śaṅkara's ascension to the Throne of Omniscience.³³

Śaṅkarācārya also features in the partly mythological—and not

extensive account being contained in the AŚV, which is associated with the Kāñcī *maṭha*, and is particularly *śaiva* in orientation. The AŚV provides the largest number of identifiable places that Śaṅkara visited, including many pilgrimage places, thirteen places being identified as venues for debates with sectarian foes. However, the ŚDV provides the largest number of places visited, being compiled from several sources. Śaṅkara visits a total of twenty-eight places, scattered throughout India.

³¹ In all seven sources: Badarī, Prayāga, Kāñcī, Rāmeśvaram. In six: Maghada, Gokaṇṇa, Kālaṭi. In five: Kāśmīra, Kāśī, Cidambara, Śrīvali/Śivavihāra. In four: Śrīśaila, Śṛṅgerī, Tirupati, Anantaśayana (Bader 2000:143).

³² The place of Śaṅkara's final disappearance, as recorded in the *vijaya*-s, has been examined by Antarkar (1997), who inspected seventeen works. Amongst the hagiographies that state the place of Śaṅkara's demise (not all do so), the locations are: 1) Vṛṣācala (Trichūr) in Kerala (two works, GŚC, and *Kūṣmāṇḍa Śaṅkara-vijaya* of Puruṣottamabhāratī); 2) Kāñcī (four works: AŚV, BṛŚV, RŚA, (and presumably) *Ācārya-digvijaya-campū* of Vallī-Sahāya; and also in the *Suśamā*); 3) Himalayas, in either Kedārnātha or Kailāsa—and in two accounts via a cave/hermitage of Dattātreya, which could be at Māhūrī in Maharashtra (see Bader 2000:158)—(seven works: ŚDV, CŚV, GVK, *Śaṅkara-digvijaya-sara* of Sadānanda, *Bhagavat-pādābhyudaya* of Kavi Lakṣmaṇa Sūri, and *Śaṅkara-mandāra-saurabha* and *Śaṅkara-daya*, both by Nīlakaṇṭha). Kedārnāth has become the most widely accepted of the places mentioned, owing to the popularity of the ŚDV. However, Antarkar favours Kāñcī, though this is rejected by those who deny the authenticity of the Kāñcī *pīṭha*. The iconographic evidence from Kāñcī (statues of *saṃnyāstī*-s) is relatively modern, and really provides no substantive evidence at all on this issue. Local traditions locate the place of Śaṅkara's death at Kāñcī, Kedārnāth, Śrīnagar (Kashmir), Vṛṣācala and Nirmālā (near Bassein, close to Bombay), all of which contain either shrines or *samādhi*-s for Ādi-Śaṅkara. Gadgil (1895:295) visited the *samādhi* of Śaṅkara at Nirmālā but concludes that the festival there, celebrated around the 13th of the bright half of Kārtika, is for a 'second' Śaṅkara. In our current state of knowledge, the question of where Śaṅkara may have died is still open.

³³ Six of the hagiographies describe Śaṅkara's final ascension to the seat of omniscience (*sarvajña-pīṭha*), while in four of the hagiographies his enthronement is the climax of the narrative: see Bader (2000:96, 177–179). There are various challenges before he ascends, the final one being from Sarasvatī (Maṅḍanamīśra's wife), who (in some versions) questions him as to whether he can be pure, having enjoyed women. In all the hagiographies Śaṅkara takes the body of king Amaruka to make love, to gain knowledge of all *śāstra*-s, including *kāma-śāstra*: see Bader (2000:169–182). Śaṅkara passes the test, and disappears to his abode on mount Kailāsa. This episode may be modelled on a similar story pertaining to Gorakhnāth and Matsyendranāth (see Ungemach 1992:22).

always entirely consistent—*Chronicles (Vaṃśāvatī)* of Nepal, according to which³⁴ he was born to an immaculate Brahman woman in the Deccan during the time of the Nepalese Sūryabamśī dynasty. Having been defeated by Bauddhamārgīs in religious debate in six former incarnations, Śaṅkara went to Nepal to pursue the sixteen remaining learned Bodhisattvas who had fled there in fear of him.³⁵ In Nepal, Śaṅkarācārya found that the four Hindu castes were all Buddhists of one kind or another. The only clever Buddhists he could find invoked Sarasvatī to help them in debate, but Śaṅkara dismissed the goddess and defeated them. Śaṅkara forced some *bhikṣu*-s to marry, prohibited many Buddhist ceremonies, cut the Buddhists' Brahmanical thread, made them shave their top-knots and perform animal sacrifices—contrary to their religion—in order to drive them out of the region. Some Buddhists who refused to accept defeat were put to death, all 84,000 of the extant Buddhist religious texts in Nepal were destroyed, and *śaiva* religion was introduced. Although Śaṅkara had vanquished the Buddhist religion in Nepal, but for a few remaining Bauddhamārgīs, he was obliged to leave some Buddhist priests in temples, as no one else was competent to propitiate the gods. Śaṅkara then returned to the seaside in the south.

In the hagiographies, the *digvijaya*-s depict Śaṅkara as a universal conquerer, frequently referring to him as “the king of ascetics”.³⁶ His quasi-military conquest of the four quarters, and subsequent ascent to the Throne of Omniscience, are evidently modelled on the royal *digvijaya* (‘conquest of the quarters’) undertaken by kings of the early mediaeval period,³⁷ the philosophical and sometimes dangerous battles with sectarian opponents mirroring the earlier royal submission of feudatory regents. This is a theme also to be found in epic/historic

³⁴ See Wright (1877:118–123); Hasrat (1970:38–40).

³⁵ In these accounts, Śaṅkara is also said to have brought the Pañca-Gauḍa and Pañca-Draviḍa Brahmans to Nepal and to have divided the Nepalese people into sixty-four castes (Wright 1877:185–186; Petech 1958:181–183).

³⁶ The role of the ‘big-man’ (*periyar*, *periyavatar*) in south Indian culture has been examined by Mines and Gourishankar (1990), who illustrate the several parallels between kings, sect-leading renunciates (notably the Śaṅkarācārya of Kāñcī), and other community leaders who act as sponsors for worship (as *yajamāna*-s) and exhibit altruistic behaviour in the giving of charity.

³⁷ See Inden (1990:240–260) for a study of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas’ performance of the *digvijaya*.

(*itihāsapurāṇa*), literature.³⁸ It has been suggested (Sax 2000) that the demise of the royal *digvijaya*—due in large part to the dominance of northern Islamic regimes—led to the production of religious *digvijaya*-s, modelled on the royal performance. It is also possible that the early *digvijaya*-s of Śaṅkara were modelled on the already extant *digvijaya*-s of the *vaiṣṇava* dualist, Madhva (1238–1317)³⁹ from Uḍupi, as it is probable that one of the earliest hagiographies of Śaṅkara, Ānantagiri's *Śaṅkaravijaya*, post-dates Madhva.⁴⁰ In Madhva's hagiographies, during his *digvijaya* (similarly to Śaṅkara), Madhva goes first to Śrīgerī, and also goes to Badarīkarāśrama, establishing holy places and fending off threats from Muslims (Sax 2000:48).

Śaṅkara's final ascent of the Throne of Omniscience has a direct parallel in the ancient *rājasūya* rite, the royal consecration cere-

³⁸ In this category of literature, Bader (2000:170) notes Ratnākara's (9th cent.) *Haravijaya*, the story of Śiva's defeat of the demon Andhaka; Vāsudeva's (9th cent.) *Yudhiṣṭhiravijaya*, a retelling of the main events of the *Mahābhārata*; and the (12th cent.) *Prthvīrājavijaya*, dealing with the war and triumph of Prthvīrāja III (which may have directly influenced the VŚV, GŚC, GVK and SDV). A *digvijaya* also features prominently in Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa*.

³⁹ *Maṇimañjarī* and *Sumadhvavijaya*, both by Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita, the son of Trivikrama-panḍita, who was a direct disciple of Madhva.

⁴⁰ Besides the hagiographies of Śaṅkara and Madhva, Sax (2000) also discusses the *digvijaya*-s of Vallabha (1479–1531) and Caitanya (1486–1533). Madhva took *saṁnyāsa* from Acyutaprekṣa, either at the age of nine or eleven/twelve (see Glase-napp 1992:4), and wrote a treatise on renunciation (see Olivelle 1982). Śrī Caitanya Kṛṣṇa was given his name by Keśva Bhāratī, a Daśanāmī, from whom he took *saṁnyāsa* in 1510. The initiation seems to have been largely a formality (he did not add Bhāratī to his name); Caitanya was far more influenced by Īvara Purī of the Madhva sect, whom he had met previously in Gayā in 1508, and who initiated him into the *Daśākṣara Kṛṣṇa mantra*, after which he became an ecstatic devotee of Kṛṣṇa (Kapoor 1994:20–25). Vallabha, besides his other works, wrote a treatise on renunciation, the *Samnyāsavivṛtānaya*, which, according to tradition, was written in Badarīnāth. He took *saṁnyāsa* one month before his death, aged fifty-one. However, his doctrine of renunciation “is tinged by a palpable disinclination for the subject” (Smith 1993:136–137), his view being that the *līlā*-s of the world can be known without it; *bhakti* is contrasted with *saṁnyāsa* (see Horstmann 1997:229–231; Bhatt 1980). Sax states that “It is possible—perhaps even likely—that Śaṅkara's hagiographers, all of whom wrote after the time of Madhva, were in fact emulating historical accounts of actual journeys by the [other] Vaiṣṇavas”. Madhva attacks Śaṅkara's reputation, portraying him as an incarnation of the demon Maṇimat, born to a widow (Bader 2000:37), and the *digvijaya*-s of Śaṅkara may, in part, have been responding to those accounts. However, Vallabha and Caitanya both lived after the time the time of the production of the earlier hagiographies of Śaṅkara. Rather, it seems more probable that later *vaiṣṇava* hagiographies were based on the earlier hagiographies of Śaṅkara and Madhva.

mony for a *kṣatriya* king, which is one of the three large-scale *śrauta* rites, the others being the *asvamedha* and the *vājapeya*. Heesterman's (1957:222–224) study of the *rājasūya* illustrated that it was not a ceremony performed once and for all, but is of the character of a yearly festival (*utsava*), whereby the powers active in the universe are regenerated. The king's unction is preceded by a year long *dīkṣā*, and *dīkṣā*-like observances. Technically, the consecration rite is reserved for *kṣatriya*-s; and Śaṅkara is a Brahman, who, having renounced, is beyond ritual action. Yet four specific elements of the *rājasūya* are reflected in the narrative: the preparatory initiation (*dīkṣā*, received from Govinda); the establishment/conquest of the four quarters (*digvyāsthāpana*);⁴¹ the chariot drive⁴² (also performed by the Śaṅkarācāryas); and the enthronement.⁴³

In the *rājasūya* the king has a particular association with the tiger, upon whose skin he receives the unction,⁴⁴ prior to the *dīkṣā*. Similarly, the *gaddī*-s of the Śaṅkarācārya-s are covered with a tiger skin. It is during the chariot drive that the king engages in a ritual battle with another *kṣatriya*, at whom he shoots his arrows, declaring, “the purpose has been fulfilled”.⁴⁵ The parallel in the hagiographies is the verbal battle with the wealthy ritualist Maṇḍanamiśra,⁴⁶ who is presented to Śaṅkara by his uncle and teacher, Kumārila-Bhaṭṭa (the foremost authority of his time—seventh century—in the Vedic Mīmāṃsā tradition), who self-immolated after meeting Śaṅkara.⁴⁷

⁴¹ See Heesterman (1957:103–105) for how the royal sacrificer mounts the “quarters of space”, taking one step in each of the four directions, and a fifth towards the centre, which is above.

⁴² *Ibid.* (pp. 127–139).

⁴³ *Ibid.* (pp. 140–142).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* (p. 106).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* (p. 129).

⁴⁶ Identified in four of the hagiographies as Viśvarūpa. See Ch. 4.4, fn. 84 of this book for the identity of Viśvarūpa/Sureśvara/Maṇḍanamiśra.

⁴⁷ Kumārila, the ritualist, is portrayed as the man responsible for the defeat of Buddhism and the reestablishment of the Vedic path. To gain inside knowledge of Buddhism, and to defeat them in subsequent debate, he disguised himself as a Buddhist. Realising that he has committed a sin, Kumārila immolates himself on a fire; when Śaṅkara arrives, the fire is already alight. (This incident is depicted on a plaque near the *saṅgam* at Prayāg.) Śaṅkara does not debate with Kumārila, who expresses admiration for Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Brahmasūtra* but declines to write a sub-commentary on it, assigning the task to a disciple. Both Śaṅkara and Kumārila are projected as saviours of orthodoxy in popular tradition; to wit the customary definition of *smārta*: *vyavahāre bhāṭṭaḥ paramārthe śaṅkaraḥ* (Halbfass 1983:101 fn. 21).

The fulfilment of the *rājasūya* is the enthronement of the king, which is accompanied by a game of dice. The king ascends the throne, which is considered to be his birthplace, and is proclaimed *brahman* by each of the four priests who sit around him at the four quarters.⁴⁸

In the ŚDV, the most widely known hagiography, those defeated in debates during the *digvijaya* are described in the fifteenth chapter.⁴⁹ A substantial part of the *digvijaya* is devoted to the conquest of *śaiva*-s of various types, the Kāpālikas being the most horrendous, while the only *vaiṣṇava* opponents are described as wearing the emblems of Viṣṇu, and as recognising five differences.⁵⁰ The philosophical doctrine (*pāñc-bheda*) appears to be that of Madhva.⁵¹ The *vaiṣṇava*-s are dealt with in but three verses, which is significant. Śaṅkara's lack of engagement with any *vaiṣṇava* opponents, of which there were many in Śaṅkara's time, and throughout the period of the composition of the hagiographies, is curious indeed. A possible explanation is that Śaṅkara's hagiographers wished to project him as a *śaiva* (for reasons that will become apparent in the following chapter) who defeated only radical *śaiva*-s and *tantrika*-s, yet did not want to offend *vaiṣṇava*-s, who underpinned the early Vedānta tradition.

5.3 Śaṅkara's religious orientation

Having considered Śaṅkara's life in the hagiographies as an incarnation of Śiva, in this section Śaṅkara's religious orientation will

⁴⁸ Heesterman (1957:140–160).

⁴⁹ First, the liquor drinking Śāktas, in Rāmeśvaram (vv. 1–3). He then worships Lord Rāma (Rāmanātha) and proceeds to Kāñcī where he builds a temple to *Devī*, inaugurating Vedic worship and eradicating every trace of Tantric worship (vv. 4–5). He continues to Andhra, where he worships Veṅkaṭanātha (Viṣṇu), followed by a battle with the *śaiva* Kāpālika, Krakaca, and his followers in Karṇāta (vv. 8–12). He then defeats the *śaiva* dualist, Nīlakaṅṭha, and his disciple, Haradatta, in Gokaṛṇa (vv. 29–72); *vaiṣṇava*-s in Dvārakā (vv. 73–75); the *bhedābheda vedāntin*, Bhaṭṭa Bhāskara, in Ujjain (vv. 76–140); some Jainas among the Bahlikas or Bactrians (vv. 141–155); a Śākta named Abhinavagupta, in Kāmarūpa (most probably confused with the famous Kashmiri Tantric); and finally some unidentifiable philosophers in Bengal (vv. 161–162).

⁵⁰ Between God and *jīva*, between *jīva* and *jīva*, between *jīva* and insentient objects, between God and sentient objects, and between insentient objects themselves

⁵¹ Lorenzen (1983:163) identifies these opponents as Pāñcarātrins. However, this is not stated in the ŚDV. Moreover, while the Pāñcarātrins maintain a five-fold manifestation of Nārāyaṇa—in his *para*, *vyūha*, *vibhava*, *antāryamin* and *arca* forms—(see Bhatt 1968:3), they do not adhere to the doctrine described in the ŚDV.

be analysed, particularly considering the evidence from Śaṅkara's own works. The indications are that he was a *vaiṣṇava* with a religious background that was most probably Pāñcarātra,⁵² a ritual and philosophical system that also significantly informed the religious background of both Rāmānuja and Madhva, two other important early Vedāntins.

It is known that the Pāñcarātrins produced a vast number of texts, their *Tantra-s* (or *Āgama-s*) dating from the fifth century.⁵³ Their influence on some aspects of the Brahmanical tradition has perhaps been heretofore somewhat underestimated.⁵⁴ The attitude of both Śaṅkara and the Śrī-Vaiṣṇavas to the Pāñcarātrins is ambivalent. On the one hand, a long array of Śrīvaiṣṇavas and later Pāñcarātrins have attempted to disprove the charge of heterodoxy made against the Pāñcarātrins. On the other hand, while most of the Pāñcarātrin authors regard Pāñcarātra as being in conformity with the *Veda*, they also regard the *Veda* as either the shoots or the roots of Pāñcarātra (Bhatt 1968:12).

Śaṅkara's opposition to the *vaiṣṇava* Bhāgavatas (Pāñcarātrins) is known from his remarks in the *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya* (2.2.42). As Pāñcarātra claims to be based on an independent, extra-Vedic revelation, it would have been illegitimate and unacceptable from Śaṅkara's perspective. However, Pāñcarātra gets off lightly. His principal objection to Pāñcarātra does not concern their shared common Ultimate, Nārāyaṇa, but concerns an aspect of Pāñcarātra metaphysical doctrine,⁵⁵ the contention being that an individual soul (called Saṃkarṣana) said to be created from the supreme Self (called Vāsudeva) will be impermanent, as it is created. Śaṅkara does not accept this, a component of the Pāñcarātra doctrine of *vyūha-s* (emanations). However, he agrees with the Pāñcarātrins that Nārāyaṇa

⁵² While several scholars have concluded that the origin of the term *pāñcarātra* (lit. 'night of the five') is obscure, Neevel (1977:10) believes that the term probably refers to the dissolution of the five elements in *mokṣa*. For Pāñcarātra doctrine, see Schrader (1916).

⁵³ Schrader (1916:14) estimates that the *saṃhitā* literature of the Pāñcarātras amounted to at least 1.5 million *śloka-s*.

⁵⁴ See Inden (2000:29–98) for a penetrating analysis of the influence of Pāñcarātra on ritual and royal polity in Kashmir in the 7th and 8th centuries.

⁵⁵ Śaṅkara appears to have lived between the times of the composition of the earlier northern Pāñcarātra *saṃhitā-s* and the later southern *saṃhitā-s*: see Schrader (1916:16–17).

is superior to Nature, and is well known to be the supreme Self and the Self of all, dividing Himself into many forms. Śaṅkara also endorses the Bhāgavatas' 'single-pointed' (*ekāntin*) devotion and temple visiting. Śaṅkara (BSB 2.2.42) gives five methods of worshipping the supreme lord, Bhagavat Vāsudeva: (i) *abhigamana*, ritually going to the temple of the deity, with speech, body and mind centred on him; (ii) *upādāna*, collecting materials needed for worship; (iii) *ijyā*, worship; (iv) *svādhyāya*, the muttering of *mantra*; (v) *yoga*, meaning meditation. By worshipping the lord in these ways for a hundred years, the devotee reaches Bhagavat.

Alston (1980a, Vol. 1:10–14) comments on Śaṅkara's connection to the early Pāñcarātrins, pointing out Śaṅkara's reference in the introduction to his *Gītā* commentary to two separate groups of mind-born "sons of Brahmā",⁵⁶ who were projected at the beginning of the world-period (*kalpa*). To them, the Lord, called Nārāyaṇa, communicated a practical knowledge of the two-fold Vedic wisdom. Śaṅkara also quotes frequently from the Nārāyaṇīya section of the *Śānti parvan* of the *Mahābhārata*, which contains (XII.321.27–326.97) the earliest known account of the doctrines of the Pāñcarātrins (Neevel 1977:10); it is of a secret dialogue between Nārāyaṇa and Nārada. In the next section (XII.327ff.), Dvaipāyana praises Pāñcarātra as the greatest *Upaniṣad*.

Śaṅkara could have objected to the Pāñcarātrins on several grounds: the secondary status of the *Veda* in respect of their own texts; the predominance of Tantric elements and associated anti-Brahmanical rites and practices; image worship and the paramoucy of *bhakti* over *mokṣa*; and the admission of women, *śūdra*-s and foreigners within the Bhāgavata fold (see Batt 1963). However, Śaṅkara equates the Supreme of the *Upaniṣad*-s with Nārāyaṇa (BSB 2.2.42), which is the Supreme for the Pāñcarātras. Śaṅkara only rejects one aspect of the *vyūha* doctrine of the Pāñcarātras, and expressly approves a considerable part of their system, which is said to agree with his Vedānta. According to Neevel's analysis (1977:20), Śaṅkara's rejection of Pāñcarātra doctrine is only partial. Śaṅkara admits, in a general sense, that *paramātma* exists in a manifold way as *vyūha*-s ('extensions' of Himself), and that this concept has a Vedic basis (quoting *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 7.26.2). Śaṅkara also says (BSB 2.2.42–44) that the entire

⁵⁶ Also described in the Nārāyaṇīya section of the MBh (XII.327).

universe is a *vyūha* of the Lord, twice referring to a specific aspect of the Pāñcarātra *vyūha* theory, the *ṣaḍ-guṇa-s*.⁵⁷ In his introduction to the *Bhagavadgītā*, Śaṅkara refers to the *ṣaḍ-guṇa-s*—in the same sequence used by Pāñcarātra—in explaining how Nārāyaṇa has become the *avatāra* Kṛṣṇa (Neevel 1977:20–23). These qualities are said to co-exist in equal fullness in Vāsudeva (or Nārāyaṇa), the highest Godhead and *vyūha* (*paravyūha*). Śaṅkara does not object to the *vyūha* theory as such, but only the way that the theory is developed by the Pāñcarātrins.

Śaṅkara is far more critical of the *śaiva* Maheśvaras, Kāpālikas and Pāśupatas—and also of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Jainism and Buddhism,⁵⁸ all of which he explicitly describes as heretical (*veda-bāhya*). Neevel argues that Śaṅkara placed Pāñcarātra on a higher level than other systems, closest to Vedānta. Objections to Pāñcarātra did come from Pūrva-Mīmāṃsākas, who maintained that Pāñcarātra was in conflict with the *Veda-s*, but not from the commentatorial tradition of Vedānta, of which all known sources reveal a more or less positive attitude to Pāñcarātra. An important exception is Bādarāyaṇa, who, in the *Vedāntasūtra-s* (2.2.42–45, the so-called *pāñcarātra* section of the *tarka-pada*), raises objections to what the commentatorial tradition assumes to be Pāñcarātra doctrines, even though Pāñcarātra is not named. However, Neevel (1977:18–22) notes that Śaṅkara and Bhāskara (the earliest two commentators on the *Vedāntasūtra/Brahmasūtra*) treat this *sūtra* in only a cursory way; they could have levelled many objections to Pāñcarātra, but refrain. Both Vedānta and Pāñcarātra emphasised knowledge over action, and laid stress on a continuity with the *Upaniṣad-s*, but Pāñcarātra had developed an alternative and increasingly popular ritual tradition, which Neevel suggests may have threatened the livelihood and authority of *smārta* Brahmans, hence their opposition.

If Śaṅkara really was a *śaiva*, as depicted in the hagiographies, then his attitude towards the *vaiṣṇava* Bhāgavatas and his recognition

⁵⁷ The ‘six-qualities’ of Pāñcarātra are: *jñāna*, *aiśvarya*, *śakti*, *bala*, *vīrya* and *tejas*.

⁵⁸ (BSB 2.1.1–3; 2.2.4–6.) “*Smṛtis* are the scriptural texts called *Tantra*, written by the great seer (Kapila)”. It is not possible for Kapila and others to have attained perfection in their practice: “It is a false claim that liberation can be obtained through Sāṃkhya knowledge or the path of Yoga independently of the Vedas”...Yoga “leads to the acquisition of extraordinary powers”, but not liberation (BSB 2.1.1).

of Nārāyaṇa as the highest Self in his main work, the *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya*, is indeed remarkable.⁵⁹ Alston (1980a, Vol.1:10–14) observes that there is very little in Śaṅkara's commentaries to connect him with Śiva worship. He invokes Nārāyaṇa at the beginning of his *Gītā* commentary, who is said by Ānandagiri—his sub-commentator—to be his chosen deity (*iṣṭa-devatā*), and in the commentary he refers several times to Kṛṣṇa as Nārāyaṇa, even though the name Nārāyaṇa does not appear in the text of the *Gītā*.

Hacker (1995:33–39) has also considered the issue of Śaṅkara's religious orientation. Lorenzen (1983:160) believes Hacker's arguments that Śaṅkara was most probably a *vaiṣṇava* to be not altogether convincing, but Hacker's conclusions have yet to be refuted. Hacker observes that in the *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya* (BSB), Śaṅkara's definitive work, Śiva is not mentioned. There is one passing mention (3.3.32), in a mythological reference, to Rudra, who generated Skanda. But this is no evidence for *śaiva* predilection;⁶⁰ on the contrary, as *śaiva*-s prefer to refer to their *iṣṭa-devatā* as Śiva, and not Rudra, a name usually used by opponents. Earlier in the BSB (2.2.36–41), Śaṅkara refutes the doctrines of the *śaiva*-s (Maheśvara-s), whose God is Paśupati.

'Śaṅkara' is a well-known name of Śiva since ancient times, but concerning the notion that Śaṅkarācārya was a *śaiva*, or indeed an incarnation of Śiva as projected in the hagiographies, in the *Pañcapādikā* (v. 3) Padmapāda⁶¹ bows to his teacher who had merely the name of Śaṅkara, whom he contrasts with the real Śiva (whom he does not bow to). He states that Śaṅkara (his teacher) did not wear ashes smeared over his body like Śiva and his ascetic devotees, nor does the "new Śaṅkara" have any of the marks or emblems of Śiva. Śaṅkara's use of imagery is also *vaiṣṇava* in style, and not *śaiva*. Three times in the BSB (1.2.7; 1.2.14; 1.3.14) the *śālagrāma* is referred to in the context of a metaphysical analogy. Four times (3.3.9; 4.1.3 twice; 4.1.5) an image is used of the superimposition of the spiritual vision

⁵⁹ See also Hirst (1993:131–139), who presents a broad clutch of references from Śaṅkara's own works, indicating both his *vaiṣṇava* orientation and his conception of the Lord and 'Inner Controller' as Nārāyaṇa. In the *Gauḍapakārikā-bhāṣya* (1.6–7), Śaṅkara seems to imply that the founder of the *advaita* tradition is Nārāyaṇa, who is his non-dual self (see Hirst 1993:138).

⁶⁰ The *Dakṣiṇāmūrti-stotra* (attributed to Śaṅkara), on which Sureśvara wrote a *Vārttika*, the *Mānasollāsa*, is *śaiva* in orientation, but both are of doubtful authenticity (see Potter 1981, Vol. 3:550–551).

⁶¹ See Padmapāda (1989:6).

of Viṣṇu on idols (*pratimā*), as an instance of the superimposition of religious ideas on things. Hacker maintains that if Śaṅkara really was a *śaiva*, then the imagery would have more naturally employed the *liṅga* instead. Similar *vaiṣṇava* imagery occurs throughout the commentaries on the *Upaniṣad*-s.⁶² Imaginary persons used by Śaṅkara in explanations are also frequently *vaiṣṇava* characters, with names such as Devadatta, Yajñadatta, Viṣṇumitra and Kṛṣṇagupta. In his commentary on Gauḍapāda's *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā* (4.1), Śaṅkara equates Gauḍapāda's *Sambuddha* (Śākyamuni, the Buddha) with *Nārāyaṇa* (the *Puruṣottama*), once again indicating Śaṅkara's *vaiṣṇava* orientation. Also, In the BSB (3.4.20) Śaṅkara equates (third *āśrama*) *vanaprastha*-s with *vaikhānasa*-s, the latter being orthodox *vaiṣṇava*-s who have practically no associations with renunciation (see Colas 1992).

Hacker (1995:36) observes that Śaṅkara deviates from custom, in that he does not—with the exception of the *Gītā* commentary—include the invocation to a deity (*maṅgalācarana* or *namaskāra*) at the beginning and/or end of his works. Where he does include a *maṅgala*, as for the *Māṇḍūkya-bhāṣya* and *Taittirīya Upaniṣad-bhāṣya*, he invokes the neutral *Brahman* or *Ātman*. This Śaṅkara explains in his commentary on the *Kena Upaniṣad*, where he says that “he who, having been led to *Brahman*, is consecrated to sovereignty, does not wish to bow to anyone”. The evidence discussed does not necessarily indicate that Śaṅkara was specifically *vaiṣṇava*, as his realisation took him beyond religious identification. It merely points to Śaṅkara's probable religious background, which was evidently not *śaiva*.

A further clue as to Śaṅkara's religious orientation is provided by his attitude to Vināyaka (Gaṇapati/Gaṇeśa). Commenting on a passage in the *Gītā* (9.25), Śaṅkara remarks there are four kinds of worshippers (each attaining their own respective goal): *Devavrata*-s (who attain the *deva*-s), *Pitṛvrata*-s (who reach the realm of ancestors), *Bhūtavrata*-s (who attain the *bhūta*-s, ‘malevolent spirits’), and *Viṣṇuvrata*-s (the *vaiṣṇava*-s who worship ‘Me’, and reach ‘Me’).⁶³ Śaṅkara mentions three sects of *Bhūtavrata*-s by name: the Vināyaka, the Mātrgaṇa and the Caturbhagiṇī (Nagaswamy 1996:237–238).

Gaṇeśa makes his first appearance in the Hindu pantheon around

⁶² *Taittirīya* (1.6.1; 1.8.1); *Muṇḍaka* (2.1.4); *Praśna* (5.2); *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* (1.1.1; 5.1.1); *Chāndogya* (6.16.3; 7.1.4; 8.1.1).

⁶³ See *Bhagavadgītā* (tr. van Buitenen 1981:107).

the fifth century (Courtright 2001:7), and by the sixth century Vināyaka is well established as a classical deity within the Hindu pantheon in both north and south Indian temple worship (Nagaswamy 1996:239). He is also established mythologically, certainly by the seventh century, as the Tēvāram hymns of Appar and Campantar refer to Gaṇapati as the son of the God Śiva (Peterson 1991:101), and a number of hymns were composed to him. Yet it is apparent that Śaṅkara regarded the worship of Gaṇeśa as the lowest form of worship, that of malevolent spirits (*bhūta*). The horrifying nature of Gaṇeśa, leader of the attendants (*bhūta-s*) of Śiva, is described in a chapter of the *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* entitled *Mahāgaṇapatikalpa*. Śiva is said to have created him for the specific purpose of impeding those performing ritual sacrifices (Nagaswamy 1996:239). Within the development of *śaiva* worship, Gaṇeśa had become integrated within the orthodox *śaiva* tradition by the time of Śaṅkara, so his attitude to those who worship Gaṇeśa as *bhūtavrata-s* seems to be yet another clear indication of his non-*śaiva* religious inheritance.

The second group of *bhūta* worshippers that Śaṅkara mentions are those who worship the Mātṛgaṇa (which represents the Saptamātr̥s),⁶⁴ while the third group of *bhūta* worshippers mentioned by Śaṅkara are those who worship the 'four sisters' (*caturbhaginī-s*).⁶⁵ It is evident from Śaṅkara's commentaries that the worship of Durgā, Bhadrakālī, Vināyaka, the Saptamātr̥s, *rākṣasa-s*, *piśāca-s* and the sixty-four *yoginī-s* is considered the lowest grade of worship. Śaṅkara's classification of the *caturṣaṣṭiyoginī* worship with the lowest form of worship of *bhūta-s*, *preta-s* and *piśāca-s*, would provide further evidence against Śaṅkara's authorship of the Tantric *stotra-s* and commentaries attributed to him.

⁶⁴ These are usually Brāhmī, Maheśvarī, Kaumarī, Vārāhī, Indrāṇī and Cāmuṇḍa. This *gaṇa* also includes Gaṇeśa at the beginning and Virabhadra (or Vinādhara Śiva) at the end. The worship of the seven women is ancient, possibly being represented on Mohenjo-dāro seals (Ramachandra Rao 1992, *Pratīma-Kośha*, Vol. 6:246), and certainly found from the first century CE onwards. It is known that from the seventh century their worship in Tamil Nadu involved the sacrifice of goats or fowl, and was performed by non-Brahman priests.

⁶⁵ In an intriguing analysis of the term *caturbhaginī* used in the *Gītā-bhāṣya*, Nagaswami (1996:242–244) argues, from the evidence of commentators on the passage containing the term, that the original term used was *caturṣaṣṭiyoginī*, referring to sixty-four *yoginī-s* (associated primarily with Tantric worship), and not *caturbhaginī*. There was a close relationship between the sixty-four *yoginī-s*, Tantric Kaulas, and the Pāśūpatas.

Śaṅkara's two most important meetings, in the context of the hagiographies, are with Maṇḍanamīśra and Kumārila, the great debate (lasting between six and a hundred days) being between Śaṅkara and Maṇḍanamīśra.⁶⁶ The winner must convert to the life-style of the other. The arbiter is Maṇḍanamīśra's wife (Sarasavāṇī/Bhārātī/Ubhaya-Bhārātī/Sarasvatī), who decides that Śaṅkara has won. Maṇḍanamīśra is then initiated as a *saṃnyāsī* and becomes a disciple of Śaṅkara. Hacker (1995:38–39) suggests that the reason behind the traditional emphasis on the rivalry between Śaṅkara and Maṇḍanamīśra—two great orthodox Brahman monists, between whom there were only minor philosophical differences—was that Śaṅkara was most probably a *vaiṣṇava*, while Maṇḍanamīśra seems to have been a *śaiva*, as at the end of his *Brahmasiddhi* he calls the state of liberation *paramaśivabhāva*.⁶⁷ Hacker surmises that a few centuries later, when concrete differences between the two schools had been forgotten, Vācaspatimīśra successfully merged the two systems into one. From then on, Maṇḍana's doctrines survived as the so-called Vācaspati (*bhāmatī*) sub-school of *advaita*-Vedānta. However, it is apparent that Kumārila was also a *śaiva*, as the *maṅgalācaraṇa* at the beginning of his *Ślokaśārttika* is an explicit eulogy to Śiva.⁶⁸ The evidence fits a hypothesis being presented that the hagiographers could not have successfully presented Śaṅkara as an orthodox Brahman *śaiva* monist, engaged in an intense rivalry with other orthodox Brahman *śaiva*-s. Maṇḍanamīśra's and Kumārila's *śaiva* orientation had to be omitted, as in the hagiographies Śaṅkara is also a *śaiva*.

Although Śaṅkara's religious background is not entirely certain, his *advaita* philosophical position, entailing a doctrine of *māyā*, would not be inconsistent with a *vaiṣṇava* heritage. The *Paramārtha-sāra* (ascribed to Ādiśeṣa) and the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* are *vaiṣṇava* devotional works that espouse both a form of *advaita* and a doctrine of illusion, *māyā* (Alston 1980a, Vol. 1:36–37). Both texts slightly predate⁶⁹ Śaṅkara, and

⁶⁶ Portrayed as cordial and respectful in one set of texts, while in the other set there is an antagonism with the shaven-headed *saṃnyāsī* (Bader 2000:88–89, 185).

⁶⁷ See Kuppaswami Sastri (1937:300, section P.159.9).

⁶⁸ See Kumārila (1993:3, l. 1), who bows to “he whose body is pure consciousness, whose divine eyes are the three Vedas, who causes attainment of the highest, and who wears the crescent moon”; *viśuddhajñānadehāya trivedīdivyacakṣuṣe śreyahprāptinimitāya namaḥ somārdhadhārīṇe*.

⁶⁹ Hacker (1995:39) dates the *Paramārtha-sāra* to before the sixth century, while Hazra (1940:22) dates the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* to not later than the seventh century.

although he does not comment on these texts directly, there is no reason to suppose, as some of his critics have, that because Śaṅkara on occasion employed Buddhist concepts, his philosophical doctrines were necessarily or substantially inherited from a Buddhist milieu,⁷⁰ such as that of Gauḍapāda. If there is any conclusion to be drawn concerning Śaṅkara's religious background, it may be that he is best described as a reformed Pāñcarātrin or Bhāgavata, Śaṅkara-Bhagavat or Śaṅkara-Bhagavatpāda indeed being one of the names he uses to describe himself. This is but a surmise. However, a Pāñcarātra (and orthodox Vedic) background is also evident in the two other important Brahmanical renunciate orders that developed in south India around the beginning of the second millennium: the Śrī-Vaiṣṇava order of Rāmānuja, and the order of Madhva. Nevertheless, these Vedāntins' specific relationship to Pāñcarātra remains uncertain, as a fundamental principle of Pāñcarātra is that, for participation in the cult, an initiation ceremony is required, to be performed by an *ācārya*, a *maṭhādhipati* or a guru (Gnanambal 1977:108).⁷¹

We will first address Rāmānuja's connection to Pāñcarātra. According to the *Kōṭṭi Oḷugu* (the somewhat historically unreliable Śrīraṅgam temple chronicle), it is said that Nāthamuni, Yāmuna and Rāmānuja (the three most important *ācārya*-s in the early development of Śrī-Vaiṣṇavism)⁷² took *saṃnyāsa* from the householder state, but by the consent of Lord Varadarāja of Kāñcīpuram, rather than at the feet of another *saṃnyāsī*, as was traditional (Lester 1992:91–92). Neevel (1977:37) believes that Yāmuna's family, and that of his grandfather Nāthamuni, were of a class of Bhāgavatas, known as *śiṣṭa* Bhāgavatas, who performed both Vedic and Pāñcarātra prac-

⁷⁰ For a useful summary of Śaṅkara's relationship to Buddhist philosophy, see Mayeda (2000).

⁷¹ This initiation is based on five sacraments, known as *pañc-saṃskār* (or *cakraṅkana*), the *pañc-saṃskār* initiation also being fundamental to the first stage of initiation into the Daśanāmīs. For details of the *pañc-saṃskār* initiation into Śrī-Vaiṣṇavism, see Gnanambal (1977:183–186). A yellow string is tied around the wrist, the body is branded with symbols, and the candidate receives a new name and mantra.

⁷² Nāthamuni was born shortly after 907; Yāmuna (his grandson, the fourth *ācārya*) most probably flourished between 1022–1038; Rāmānuja's dates were probably moved back by several decades, to 1017–1137, to enable Rāmānuja (the sixth *ācārya*) to receive Yāmuna's blessings (see Neevel 1977:14–16). According to tradition, Yāmuna is Rāmānuja's teacher's teacher (*paramācārya*).

tices, installing images, prostrating and circumambulating temples.⁷³ Yāmuna makes every effort to distinguish Pāñcarātra from other non-Vedic traditions, defending it from attacks from the two major schools of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, the Bhaṭṭa (Kumārila), and Prabhākara. Halbfass (1983:92) comments that Yāmuna's *Āgamaprāmānya* (c.1000) is an exemplary statement concerning the authority of the so-called Pāñcarātra. Yāmuna also presents a long and elaborate refutation of the charge that Bādarāyaṇa rejected Pāñcarātra. (It was previously mentioned that Śāṅkara was also uncomfortable with Bādarāyaṇa's apparent rejection of Pāñcarātra.) One of Yāmuna's distinctive contributions was to deny that there were any general conflicts between *Veda* (or *śruti*) and Pāñcarātra (Neevel 1977:24). Yāmuna's works reveal many influences, including, directly, the *bhakti* of the Āḷvārs, tangentially Islam, but more importantly, Pāñcarātra. Neevel (1977:193) contends that by the time of Rāmānuja, a division of labour had taken place, in which Śrī-Vaiṣṇava *viśiṣṭādvaita* philosophy had hived off the philosophical activity of the Pāñcarātras, leaving their ritual activity to take a separate course.⁷⁴ However, according to tradition (the *Koḷ Oḷugu*) Rāmānuja was also a Pāñcarātrin ritually, opening the temple to full participation by *śūdra*-s, called *sāttada* Vaiṣṇavas ('those with no thread') (Stein 1999:233; Hopkins 2002:34).⁷⁵

⁷³ For details of Pāñcarātra eight-fold daily observances, see Czerniak-Drozdowicz (2002); for the worshipper's visualisation and installation of the deity, see Rastelli (2002).

⁷⁴ Lipner (1986:5) refers to Neevel's study, but contends that Rāmānuja, while recognising the authority of Pāñcarātra, does not explicitly identify his position with their views. However, according to tradition, after fleeing from Śrīraṅgam to avoid persecution, Rāmānuja settled at Melkote, directed the restoration of the Tirunārāyaṇa-svāmī temple, and renewed his *saṃnyāsa* on the stone marking the renunciation of the great sage Dattātreya (also the tutelary deity of the Jūnā *akhārā*) who is listed as the twenty-fifth *prādurbhava* (or *vibhava*) within a list of thirty-eight descents contained in the *Sāttvata Saṃhitā* (9.77–84)—copied almost verbatim in the *Ahīrbudhnyā Saṃhitā* (5.50ff.), an important Pāñcarātra text—one of the earliest sources within the Pāñcarātra tradition (Rigopoulos 1998:43). A continuity within the Śrī-Vaiṣṇava tradition with respect to Dattātreya is still evident. On January 31st 1971, the dying pontiff of the Yadugiri Yatrīja Maṭha at Melkote officially bestowed the title to the *gaddī* of the *maṭha* to a successor, in a ceremony performed at the Dattātreya temple. On the initiation day for the successor, the *tridaṇḍa* was handed over, and the *kaśāya* (ochre-coloured) robe was placed at the feet of Dattātreya (Gnanambal 1977:140).

⁷⁵ In two of his hagiographies, the *Rāmānuja-dīvyā-caritāi* and the *Prapannāmṛta* of Anantācārya, it is said that Rāmānuja visited Jagannātha at Purī and attempted, with the support of the king, to reform the worship in the temple and the lives of the priests, by introducing Pāñcarātra rites. The incumbent ('degraded') priests resisted,

Lester (1992:95) maintains that although *guru-paramparā* texts and temple chronicles place the Śrī-Vaiṣṇava practice of renunciation on a Vedic foundation, inscriptions and other evidence suggest otherwise, that *saṃnyāsī*-s and Jīyar *maṭha*-s, at least to begin with, were mostly inspired by non-Vedic traditions of renunciation, those of the Sāttada/Sāttvata *ekāṅgin/ekāntin* Bhāgavatas, in other words, Pāñcarātra.⁷⁶ Madhva (1238–1317), a *smārta vaiṣṇava*, was another important figure in the early development of Vedānta. He also fully accepted the Pāñcarātra (Zydenbos 2001:113, 116), and wrote a short text, *Samnyāsa-paddhati*, on rules for renunciates.⁷⁷

It is apparent that Śaṅkara was a *vaiṣṇava* who seems to have been significantly informed by Pāñcarātra—as were Rāmānuja and Madhva—yet Śaṅkara's hagiographers project him as an 'orthodox' (Vedic) *śaiva*. In the following chapter, it is proposed that Śaṅkara's early hagiographies projected him as a *śaiva* in the image of their Vijayanagara patrons who, beginning in the mid-fourteenth century, patronised what was essentially a 'reformed', 'orthodox' *śaiva* tradition that included *advaita śaiva maṭha*-s and Vedic scholarship. In the following section we will see that the writers of the earlier hagiographies do not clearly mention either Śaṅkara's founding of a renunciate order

and Rāmānuja was magically removed by Lord Jagannātha to Śrī Kūrmam, a *śaiva* temple in Andhra Pradesh. The incident is also briefly mentioned in the temple chronicle, *Mādaḷā Pañji* (Dash 1978:159–160). Lord Jagannātha and Balabhadra wear the Śrī-Vaiṣṇava *tilak* on their foreheads.

⁷⁶ By title, there are three types of renunciates in contemporary Śrī-Vaiṣṇavism: *jīyar*, *āṇḍavan* and *ekāṅgin*. The *jīyar*-s and *āṇḍavan*-s are former Brahman householders who have become *saṃnyāsī*-s; *ekāṅgin*-s are important in the historical development of Śrī-Vaiṣṇavism, but are unrecognised these days in works on or of Śrī-Vaiṣṇavas. With the exception of the *ekāṅgin* Brahmins at Tirupati, *ekāṅgin*-s came to be regarded generally as low-caste, even though they at one time enjoyed great power and prestige in *vaiṣṇava* temples. *Ekāṅgin* may be equated with the *ekāntin* Bhāgavatas, and while Śrīraṅgam Brahman authorities state that *ekāṅgin* designates a non-twice-born renunciate, it is unclear from the Śrīraṅgam chronicles whether the *ekāṅgin* is Brahman or non-Brahman. However, a mid-fifteenth century inscription in the Tirumalai-Tirupati temple contains the earliest reference to Sāttada Śrī-Vaiṣṇavas, who are identified as persons living a life of renunciation (either as *ekākin* or *ekāṅgin*), and as disciples of Kandāḍai Rāmānuja Ayyangar, who refers to himself as *parama ekāṅgin*, a title suspiciously close to that used by the Pāñcarātra Vaiṣṇavas. Kandāḍai Rāmānuja Ayyangar's teacher was Kandāḍa Aṅṅan of Śrīraṅgam, who was known as *sāttada parama ekaṅgin*, *sāttada* most probably being a corruption of *sāttvata*, designating the Bhāgavata/Pāñcarātra *vaiṣṇava* tradition, reflected in the title of its earliest text (Lester 1992:85–86).

⁷⁷ See Olivelle (1982) for a translation and commentary.

or the institution of *maṭha*-s, traditions which seem to have arisen well after the founding of the first *advaita maṭha*-s. Most of Śaṅkara's hagiographies include the inauguration of a *devī* shrine at Śṛṅgerī,⁷⁸ and non-Tantric *devī* worship at Kāñcī. *Devī* worship is apparent in the hagiographies of Śaṅkara, but in a non-Tantric, Vedic (*smārta*) form: radical *śaiva* opponents are defeated. The hagiographical tradition of *devī* worship is embodied in the *Maṭhāmnāya*-s, but we also find there deities such as Bhadrakālī (=Durgā), the tutelary deity of the Śāradā *pīṭha*. However, we have seen that worship of deities such as Bhadrakālī seems to have been considered by Śaṅkara as of the lowest order of worship. It is proposed that the *Maṭhāmnāya*-s represent the final stage of a process whereby radical 'Tantric' *nāgā śaiva* ascetics were integrated with a monastic order of 'reformed' *śaiva*-s, into the Daśanāmīs.

5.4 Pīṭha-s, maṭha-s, and the installation of disciples in the hagiographies

The paucity of references in the hagiographies to the founding of *maṭha*-s and the establishing of an ascetic order is striking,⁷⁹ the most obvious explanation being that, during the period that they were composed, the Śaṅkara *maṭha*-s did not have the prominence they now enjoy. There also appears to be no inscriptional evidence connecting Śaṅkara with any *maṭha*-s prior to 1652, indicating that the idea of his founding monastic centres was not widespread before that time.⁸⁰ The hagiographies indicate that the notion that Śaṅkara founded a sect may not have been prevalent for another century.

The earliest hagiography to mention the founding of a *maṭha* is

⁷⁸ Sarasvatī is installed at Śṛṅgerī in five of the hagiographies: AŚV, CŚV, TŚA, ŚDV, GVK (Bader 2000:75).

⁷⁹ The ŚDV has already been discussed, while the VŚV, GŚC, RŚA (Group B) and TŚA make no mention of succession, nor of the founding of monastic centres. Ungemach (1992:27) also remarks that the legend of Śaṅkara founding four *maṭha*-s under four disciples is not stated in any hagiography.

⁸⁰ The first inscription that specifically identifies Śaṅkara as the founder of a *maṭha* appears to be one dated 1652. It records a grant to the Śṛṅgerī "dharma-pīṭha" established by Śaṅkarācārya, for the worship of the gods Mallikāṛjuna, Vidyāśaṅkarasvāmī and Śāradā-amma; *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol. VI, Śṛṅgerī Jāgīr, no. 11 (see Kane HDŚ, Vol. 2, part 2:907; Bader 2000:241 fn. 28).

the *Śaṅkaravijaya* of Anantānandagiri (sec. 61–62).⁸¹ After installing the *devī* Sarasvatī in Śṛṅgerī, Śaṅkara is said to have founded a *maṭha* there and established the Bhāratī *sampradāya*. He placed Padmapāda⁸² in charge. Śaṅkara then proceeds to Kāñcīpuram (sec. 63), instigates the construction of two towns in the vicinity, consecrates a temple to the *devī* Kāmākṣī, and installs a *śrī-cakra*. He establishes a lineage of disciples, which would last until the end of the eon, in various cities, the first of which was the seat of learning (*vidyāpīṭha*) at Kāñcī (sec. 67). No other *maṭha* is specifically mentioned in this text, which is the one recognised by the proponents of the Kāñcī *maṭha* as the most authoritative biography of Śaṅkara.

Besides the AŚV, which only mentions *maṭha*-s and worship at Kāñcī and Śṛṅgerī, only two hagiographers, Cidvilāsa (CŚV) and Lakṣmaṇa-Śāstrī (GVK), mention the founding of four *maṭha*-s.⁸³

⁸¹ References are to the Madras edition of the AŚV, edited by Veezhinathan (see Anantānanda Giri 1971).

⁸² Sureśvara, according to the Calcutta edition of this text, which also only mentions the establishing of a lineage of disciples in Śṛṅgerī, and does not mention any *maṭha* founded at any other place (Bader 2000:235). This discrepancy between the two editions of the AŚV has been one of the contentious points fuelling the ongoing controversy concerning the legitimacy of the Kāñcī *pīṭha*, discussed previously. Another point of contention is that the Madras—but not the Calcutta—edition of the AŚV also mentions Śaṅkara's receipt from Śiva of five crystal *līṅga*-s (AŚV sec. 55, 66, 74), three of which were established by himself at Kedāra (*mukti-līṅga*), Nīlakaṅṭha (near Kathmandu) (*vara-līṅga*), and Śṛṅgerī (*bhoga-līṅga*). The fourth (*yoga-līṅga*) and fifth (*mokṣa-līṅga*) were given to Sureśvara, the former to be worshipped by him, and the latter to be sent to Cidambaram.

⁸³ See also Ungemach (1992:27). However, despite the fact that there is no mention at all in the ŚDV of the founding of four *maṭha*-s, the tradition of Śaṅkara founding four *maṭha*-s (in the four quarters of India) is so prevalent that one may even find this myth perpetuated in recent scholarship. Malinar (2001:93) states that “The philosopher Śaṅkara is claimed as the founder of the monastic institutions (*maṭha*) of the Daśanāmī orders and of the Advaita *sampradāya*. This position is elaborated and continuously re-created in numerous hagiographies.” This assertion is apparently incorrect. Further, Malinar focuses almost solely on the ŚDV, which contains no mention of the founding of either Daśanāmī orders or four (or any) *maṭha*-s. Similarly, Isayeva (1993:81) maintains, incorrectly, that “Most of the biographers are of the opinion that the main monasteries, which were founded by Śaṅkara...were established in the following order: Dvārakā, Badarīnātha, Purī, Śṛṅgerī and Kāñcī”, and that (p. 88) “The hagiographies enumerate ten Hindu monasteries founded by Śaṅkara, as well as ten monastic orders of *sannyāsins*”. Isayeva (1993:82, fn.10) also maintains, but with no supporting evidence, that each of the ‘ten names’ corresponds to one particular monastery, and that “to five other monasteries were assigned the monastic orders of Tīrtha, Purī, Vaṇa, Parvata and Sāgara”.

Jagannāth and Dvārakā figure in the *digvijaya* of Śaṅkara in only three hagiographies, and the popular tradition of dispatching disciples to the four quarters appears also in only the CŚV and GVK (Bader 2000:160–161). We have noted that Antarkar tentatively fixes the date of the CŚV around the sixteenth century, though acknowledging that fixing a date for this text is difficult.⁸⁴ The GVK is known to have been composed at the behest of an incumbent of the Śaṅkara *maṭha* at Śṛṅgerī, Svāmī Saccidānandabhārātī (on the *gaddī* from 1705–1741),⁸⁵ and records the traditions of the time (c.1735–1740).⁸⁶ The founding of the monastic centres follows the account of Cidvilāsa (CŚV), who appears to have been the first hagiographer to mention four *maṭha*-s.

Cidvilāsa extols Śṛṅgerī (CŚV 24.31–33a),⁸⁷ where the first *maṭha* (called *Śrī maṭha*) is established by Śaṅkara, who installs Sureśvara in that seat of learning. Śaṅkara is then said to establish other *maṭha*-s: near the Jagannātha temple in the east (presided over by Padmapāda); in the “western quarter” (where he installed Hastāmalaka); and “in the northern quarter he had a heavenly *maṭha* built” (where he installed Toṭaka) (CŚV 30.10–31.29). While there are specific references in the text to Śṛṅgerī and Jagannāth, and though the Gomatī (river) is mentioned by name as a *tīrtha* (CŚV 30.4) in connection with the western quarter, there is no mention in the text of either Dvārakā or Badarī(nātha) as the place of the founding of a *maṭha*. In the GVK, besides the specific references to the Śṛṅgerī and Jagannātha *maṭha*-s—also found in CŚV—there are specific references (3.59–62) to the *maṭha*-s at Dvārakā and Badarī.⁸⁸ The appointment of dis-

⁸⁴ Antarkar (1973:2) supplies several references—five to kings—from the CŚV that may at some time help to establish more precisely its date. Antarkar has not been able to deduce any dates from these references: 1. Bhadrasena of Rudrākhyānagar, near Prayāg (ch. 16); 2. Virasena, near the bank of the Tuṅgabhadrā river, Śṛṅgerī *maṭha* (ch. 24); 3. Rājasena, king of of Kāñcī (ch. 25); 4. Bhojasingh, king of Cidambar (chs. 26 and 27); 5. Ratnasingh, king of Badarī (ch. 31); 6. Rāmarāja of Anantaśayana (ch. 28). Bader (2000:38–40) largely corroborates Antarkar’s findings, but concerning an earliest date for the CŚV, he notes (p. 197) that some sections of the CŚV featuring debates between Maṅḍanamiśra and Śaṅkara appear to have been lifted from the *Pārāśara-mādhavīya* (1340–1360).

⁸⁵ Miśra (*Āmiṭ Kātrekhā* 2001:25).

⁸⁶ This is the first text giving a *guru-paramparā* for the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha*.

⁸⁷ All references to the CŚV are to the text edited by Antarkar (1973). See also Bader (2000:237–238).

⁸⁸ Antarkar (2001:22) observes that another *vijaya* of Śaṅkara, the *Bhagavat-*

ciples also follows the CŚV.⁸⁹ However, there is no unanimity in the hagiographies as a whole concerning the identity of Śaṅkara's leading disciples.⁹⁰

The only hagiographies to mention the founding of *maṭha*-s, the AŚV, CŚV and GVK, mention Śṛṅgerī as the place of the founding of the first *maṭha*. However, according to all the *Maṭhāmnāya*-s, Dvārakā is the first of the four *maṭha*-s to have been founded,⁹¹ a tradition that is clearly different from that embodied in the hagiographies. Given that the GVK is relatively late (c.1740), the only other source of the tradition of the founding of four *maṭha*-s amongst any of the earlier hagiographies of Śaṅkara is the CŚV, which, as we have seen, is partially incomplete, and which may be assigned to the sixteenth century.

5.5 *The first references to the 'ten names'*

Amongst the eight hagiographies of Śaṅkara scrutinised by Bader, the only one to mention the establishing of ten lineages is the CŚV (24.36–37a).⁹² This is said to occur while Śaṅkara is residing at Śṛṅgerī, but no more information is supplied. The only other hagi-

pādābhyudaya, mentions, besides the four places in connection with the founding of *maṭha*-s, also Kāñcī, but that this text post-dates the GVK.

⁸⁹ Regarding our previous discussion of the Sumeru *maṭha* at Banaras: the GVK (3.23) also refers to Śaṅkara contemplating five *maṭha*-s when he was in Banaras, four for his disciples and one for himself. However, after this fleeting reference, no more is said of the fifth *maṭha* (Antarkar 2001:23).

⁹⁰ See Bader (2000:98). The AŚV does not mention Toṭaka, who is usually counted, along with Sureśvara, Padmapāda and Hastāmalaka, as one of the four chief disciples. In five of the hagiographies, Śaṅkara's first disciple is Sadānanda, who gains another name, Padmapāda, from walking across water, lotus blossoms appearing under his feet from his intense devotion. In the TŚA, however, the two are treated as two separate individuals. In the AŚV, Padmapāda occupies a prominent place, but Sadānanda walking on water is not mentioned, nor is there any other story about the disciples.

⁹¹ The *Maṭhāmnāya-setu* states that the Śāradā *pīṭha* (at Dvārakā) is the "first *āmnāya maṭha*": *prathamah paścimāmnāyah śāradāmaṭha ucyate* (*Maṭhāmnāya-setu* line 1); Miśra (1996:33); Mishra (2001:1); Ūpādhyay (1967:601); Śarma (1963:648). The *Maṭhāmnāya-stotra* (of Śṛṅgerī) simply mentions Dvārakā first in the *āmnāya*-s of the *maṭha*-s: "In the western quarter the *kṣetra* is Dvārakā (and) the *maṭha* is Kālikā" (*digbhāge paścime kṣetraṃ dvārakā kālikā maṭhaḥ*).

⁹² *sampradāyān daśaivaitān śiṣyeśvārācaya svataḥ / tīrthāśrama-vanāraṅya-giri-parvata-sāgarāḥ // sarasvatī bhārati ca purīyete daśaiva hi /* (Antarkar edition, 1973:73).

ography to refer to a lineage is the AŚV, which (we have already noted) refers to the establishing of but one *sampradāya*, the Bhārātī (AŚV sec. 62). Curiously, the GVK, which follows the CŚV on the establishing of *maṭha*-s, like all the other hagiographies makes no mention of the ten names.⁹³ There is nothing in any of the hagiographies to connect *maṭha*-s with the Daśanāmī lineages, such as we find in the *Maṭhāmnāya*-s, nor do the published *guru-paramparā*-s accord with what little information is supplied by the hagiographies. It is apparent that the traditions of the *guru-paramparā*-s for the *maṭha*-s were independent from the sources for the traditions that are constituted in the *Maṭhāmnāya*-s, and from the sources that led to the hagiographies of Śaṅkara.

I have so far found no reference in any text to the ten names before the sixteenth century, excluding the possibility that the CŚV may possibly be earlier than that. The only early texts that I have been able to discover that refer to the ten names both utilise the same phrase utilised by Cidvilāsa, and were written between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. A reference to the ten names may be found in the *Yatidharmaprakāśa* of Vāsudevāśrama (66.14–15),⁹⁴ dated to between 1675 and 1800 (Olivelle 1976:18). In this passage Vāsudevāśrama is citing an earlier work, the *Yatidharmasaṅgraha* of Viśveśvarasarasvatī (pp. 102–103).⁹⁵ Viśveśvarasarasvatī was the teacher of the illustrious *advaita* philosopher, Madhusūdanasarasvatī (1540–1647), who is the person believed by some to have authorised the acceptance of *nāgā* lineages within the Daśanāmī order.⁹⁶ Given Viśveśvara’s relationship

⁹³ Michaels (2004:126) also notes that a connection between Śaṅkara and the Daśanāmīs appears to have been made after the 15th/16th centuries, as there is no mention of this in the earlier hagiographies.

⁹⁴ Discussing the procedure of conferring the meditation shawl (*yogapaṭṭa*)—which means initiation into *saṃnyāsa*—Vāsudevāśrama explains (66.3–4) that the cloth is held over the pupil, who, with the guru, other pupils and relatives, recites the chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā* called *Viśvarūpa*, up to the words “...enjoy a prosperous kingdom”. (Note that here also a *vaiṣṇava* text is recited.) “Then the guru should give him a name that is approved by all. Tīrtha, Āśrama, Vana, Araṇya, Giri, Parvata, Sāgara, Sarasvatī and Purī are the ten names (given to) renunciators. His name should be uttered appropriately with the titles *śrī* and *pāda*. From today onward you should always perform the initiation, the explanation (of texts) and the like, and also confer the meditation shawl on one who has been examined well” (66.13–18); ed. and trans. by Olivelle [1976, Part 1:99; 1977, Part 2:187].

⁹⁵ = *Viśveśvarapaddhati*, published by the Ānandāśrama of Pūṇe in 1909; see Olivelle (1977, Part 2:25)

⁹⁶ See Chapter 7.1.

to Madhusūdana, we may assign the *Yatidharmasaṃgraha* of Viśveśvara to around the end of the sixteenth century.

Another early reference to the ten names occurs in the *Vārāṇ* of Bhāi Gurdās (1551–1637), a disciple of the fourth Sikh guru, Guru Rām Dās, and scribe of the *Guru Granth Sahib* in the period of the fifth guru, Guru Arjun Dev. The *Vārāṇ* may be dated to the first quarter of the seventeenth century (Jodh Singh 1998, Vol.1:1–5). It states (*Vār* 8, *paudī* 13 [*varṇa*]): “Many are *yogēśvars* (great yogis) and many are sannyasis. Sannyasis are of ten names⁹⁷ and yogis have been divided into twelve sects”.⁹⁸ It seems that Daśanāmī-Saṃnyāsīs were also established in Nepal by the middle of the seventeenth century. A copper-plate inscription of 1635/6 from the Jagannāth temple in Hanumān Dhoka palace square in Kathmandu⁹⁹ employs the phrase *daśanāma saṃnyāsī* referring to several individuals with the surnames ‘Giri’, ‘Purī’ and ‘Bhāratī’.¹⁰⁰

That the notion of *saṃnyāsī*-s with ten names was established by the seventeenth century¹⁰¹ may be gleaned from a report in the *Dabistān*, composed in 1645, where it is reported (*Dabistān*, 1843, Vol. 2:139) that the *saṃnyāsī*-s are of ten names.¹⁰² Our chronicler accurately describes, perhaps for the first time, the division of the *saṃnyāsī*-s into the two main branches of the Daśanāmī-Saṃnyāsīs, the monastic and *nāgā*. It is suggested that perhaps a century or so before this report, the ten names—comprising two branches—became established: to my knowledge, there is no earlier reference.¹⁰³ In the

⁹⁷ *Sanñiāsī das nām dhari*.

⁹⁸ Trans Jodh Singh (1998, Vol. 1:214).

⁹⁹ See Vajracārya (1976:198, no. 10).

¹⁰⁰ Dayāla Bhāratī, Renukā Bharatī, Rāma Giri, Nirañjana Purī, Bāla Giri, Śaṅkaranāth Gadādhara Giri, Bhagavān Bhāratī, Purna Giri, Ayodhyā Giri, Kula Giri, Puruṣottama Giri.

¹⁰¹ Kane (HDŚ, Vol. 1, part 2:815) notes a reference to the ten names in the *Smṛtimuktāphala* of Vaidyanātha-Dīkṣita, a text he dates to c.1700.

¹⁰² “...Ban, A’ran, Tīrthah, A’shram, Kar (Giri?), Parbatah, Sākar, Bhārthy, Perī and Sarsatī. They are said to follow the dictates of Datāteri [Dattātreyā], and to be of two classes: “Dandaheri”, who do not have long hair and are attached to the precepts and regulations of the smṛiti; and the “Avadhūtas” who drink ashes, wear the “zunar” and “juta” [*jata*, ‘dreadlocks’]. Other saṃnyāsīs rubbing bhabūt [*vibhūti*] into the body remain twelve years standing up on one leg... Some of this class of men (are) of consideration and opulence and are escorted by files of elephants; they have carriages, fine apparel, courtiers, servants on foot and horseback.”

¹⁰³ It is claimed (see Michaels 1994:117ff.) that an (unnamed) *saṃnyāsī* follower of a Śaṅkarācārya came from the Āmaradaka Agnimaṭha at Kāśī and Prayāga to

next chapter the establishing of orthodox *śaiva advaita maṭha*-s will be discussed, and how Śaṅkara may have been projected onto the monastic tradition.

Nepal twice in the twelfth century, taught *yoga* and *tantra vidyā* there, founded two temples, initiated Ānandadeva (son of king Śivadevamalla) and others, and had the Paśupatināth temple renovated. This claim is based primarily on a Sanskrit inscription, said to be dated to 1142 (V.S. 1199, Nevārī Saṃvat 262), which is on a slab of stone now lying in the grounds of the Government Museum in Kathmandu. The text of the inscription is reprinted by both Regmi (1966:13–16) and Taṇḍan (1986:27–29), though the renderings of many of the lines and phrases of the inscription are substantially different in the two versions.

I have some doubts about both the dating of the inscription and its supposed provenance. Firstly, although Regmi (1966:13) states that the date figures of the inscription are lost, Taṇḍan (1986:27), in his preamble to the inscription, states that the date of the inscription is N.S. 262. I have been unable to ascertain how this was established, given that the date of the inscription is apparently unreadable. Secondly, given the discussion earlier in this chapter of Śaṅkara's religious orientation, it would seem improbable that one of his followers would be teaching *yoga* and *Tantra*, rather than *advaita-Vedānta*.

However, the Amaradaki [=Āmaradaka?] *maṭha*, a Śaiva-Siddhāntin institution that was particularly influential in south India during the twelfth century (see Ch. 6, fn. 39, 40) contributed to the development of the temple movement, was associated with *Tantra*, and supplied *śaiva-ācārya*-s who initiated many regents from the eleventh to thirteenth centuries. It seems possible that if the inscription does indeed date from the twelfth century, as maintained by Taṇḍan (1986:27) and Vajrācārya (1980:209ff.), then it may perhaps relate to a Śaiva-Siddhāntin rather than a *saṃnyāsī*. In support of this suggestion, firstly, it may be noted that in an incomplete sentence in v. 6 of the inscription Durvāsa is mentioned (though in which capacity it is difficult to discern accurately from the fragment). According to several *Tantra*-s, Durvāsa is the preceptor of the Amaradaki *maṭha* (ARE 1917, part II, para. 37 [1986:124]). Secondly, although Taṇḍan (1986) and Michaels (1994:117ff.) believe that this inscription signals the arrival of *saṃnyāsī*-s in the Kathmandu valley, I have been unable to see how such a conclusion could be derived from it. Although (possibly) a teacher named Śaṅkara—approached by pupils—is referred to in v. 9, no reference is made to either a *saṃnyāsī*, a *daśanāmī* or a Śaṅkarācārya. Also, in Ch. 4.1 it was pointed out that Śaṅkara was a relatively common name in the mediaeval period, and that the mention of someone named Śaṅkara does not necessarily refer to the author of the *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya* or a Śaṅkarācārya.

That the Amaradaki *maṭha* was in south India, yet supplied a preceptor to a Nepalese king would not be improbable: there was considerable religious and cultural contact between the two regions from the twelfth century onwards, and since either the twelfth or the fifteenth century the priests (and their assistants) of the Paśupatināth temple at Kathmandu have come from south India (Michaels 1994:116–132). Also, the Amaradaki *maṭha* was connected to the Gōlakī *maṭha*, which had a significant institutional presence in Kāśī. Notwithstanding a tradition amongst the so-called Bhaṭṭa-priests of Kathmandu that the worship of Paśupati and their priesthood were instigated by Śaṅkarācāryā, it has been suggested that if there were *śaiva* ascetics in the Kathmandu valley during the twelfth to fifteenth centuries, then they were most probably Śaiva-Siddhāntins rather than *saṃnyāsī*-s (i.e. followers of Śaṅkarācārya).

CHAPTER SIX

THE RISE AND INFLUENCE OF *ADVAITA MATHA-S*

In order to consider the relative importance and influence of *advaita matha-s* within the context of religious developments in India from the early to the late mediaeval period, a brief survey of the development of early Śaivism will first be presented. The processes will then be considered whereby several forms of Śaivism gradually came to replace Buddhism and Jainism as the dominant forms of religion in the south. This was primarily due to state patronage. The religious orientation of various rulers and prominent Vedāntins is discussed, and the initiation of kings by *rāja-guru-s*. A more detailed analysis of the institution and funding of *śaiva matha-s* up to the Vijayanagara period follows. The central thrust of this chapter is to illustrate how a new monastic tradition was founded by the early founders of the Vijayanagara empire, a tradition which also represented a ‘new’ orthodox *smārta* form of *advaita* Śaivism, primarily represented in Vedānta tradition and philosophy. It was only much later that Śaṅkara—ideally situated as an orthodox *advaita-vedāntin*—was projected onto that new monastic project, which originally seems to have had nothing to do with the *ācārya*. Although the work of many scholars of the period has been utilised in this chapter, the argument that a ‘new’ orthodox *śaiva* tradition was established is essentially novel.

6.1 *The Pāśupatas*

We will first consider the earliest known sect of *śaiva-s* in India, the Pāśupatas. In what many scholars believe to be one of the later additions to the *Mahābhārata* (XII, 349.64), there are references to different doctrines (*jñāna*) and sects (*mata*) prevalent at the time (c.300–500): the Pāśupata-s, Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Pāñcarātra and Vaidika. In the *Purāṇa-s*, the *vaiṣṇava* Pāñcarātras are sometimes condemned, but it is the Pāśupatas who are considered to be the most subversive. The Pāśupatas can be regarded as the prototypes of Śaivite ascetics, covering their body with ashes and sectarian markings, emphasising

yoga, and often criticised for anti-social behaviour. Śaivite sects, which seem to have developed in the early centuries BCE, all attribute their origin to the Pāśupatas—the oldest recognisable Śaivite sect—who worshipped Bhairava, the fierce form of Śiva (Maheśvara). The first textual references to Śaivism are found in Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* on Pāṇini's grammar, probably written in the second century BCE (Dyczkowski 1989:4). Patañjali (5.2.76)¹ refers to *Śivabhagat*-s, whom he describes as itinerant ascetics wearing animal skins and carrying an iron lance.

The Pāśupata doctrine² is attributed to Lākuliśa (or Nākuliśa), 'The Lord of the Staff', who was considered to be an incarnation of Śiva. His teachings, according to tradition, had been revealed by Śrīkaṅṭha, the consort of Umā (Chakraborti 1970:8; Pathak 1960:4–8). He is believed to have come from Baroda (Gujarat) and to have lived in the early centuries. However, it is far from certain that Pāśupata Śaivism began with him, as there is a tradition which admits the existence of Pāśupata teachers prior to Lākuliśa (Dyczkowski 1989:20). There were other groups of ascetics also known as Pāśupatas, and it is probable that Pāśupata became a general name for a number of sects. The earliest surviving texts of the sect are the *Pāśupatasūtra*, with the *Pañcārtha-bhāṣya* of Kauṇḍinya, which may be dated to around the fourth to the sixth centuries (Dyczkowski 1989:21).³ Pāśupata texts inform us that the Pāśupata ascetic should be a Brahman, and it was prohibited for him to address women or *sūdra*-s except under special circumstances.⁴ However, no Brahmanical rite is recommended, and many of its rituals seem to have been entirely non-Vedic (Dasgupta 1975, Vol. 5:142).⁵ Pāśupata philosophy appears to have been a

¹ Ed. Kielhorn (1906, Vol. 2:387).

² Pāśupata doctrine and the yoga doctrine of Patañjali bear distinct affinities (see Hara 1999).

³ For the chronology of the *Pāśupatasūtra* and its commentaries, see Hara (1994).

⁴ Ingalls (1962:291–297) believes that Pāśupata actions were far more lecherous than Kauṇḍinya's gloss suggests.

⁵ Dasgupta (1975, Vol. 5:130) remarks that the texts do not give us any philosophy of Śaivism but rather deal almost wholly with rituals, or rather modes of life. It is quite possible that *śaiva* philosophy was added to extant ascetic practices, as in the *Sarva-darśana-saṃgraha* of Mādhava the Pāśupata system is not identified with any form of philosophy, but with different kinds of ascetic practices.

relatively late accretion to a radically antinomian lifestyle, which included: wearing filthy garments; use of violent and indecent language; imitation of animals; feigning madness; spitting; defecation; and public sex acts. The Pāśupatas specified five levels of attainment,⁶ the second level being distinctively Pāśupata, whereby the initiate behaves in a manner (such as being mad, or like a dog) likely to cause censure and reprimand, courting disfavour, thereby relieving the initiate's previously accumulated bad karma. The Pāśupata goal was *mokṣa*, but also to be free to act at will.

The Pāśupatas are thought to have survived in two major factions, the Kāpālikas⁷ and the Kālāmukhas. The Kāpālikas were a radical and itinerant Śaivite sect famed for their carrying of a human skull, their immoral behaviour and their reputation for practising human sacrifice. They are believed to have been the instigators of Tantric ritual (White 1998), and are referred to in early (fifth or sixth cent.) Tantric literature (Lorenzen 1972:52). While the Kāpālikas represented the most heterodox aspects of Śaivism, the Kālāmukhas represented the more orthodox aspects, inaugurating temples and colleges in south India. Despite differences in practice, the Kālāmukhas maintained a doctrine very similar to that of the Pāśupatas. We will be returning to these *śaiva* sects, after first examining the causes of the rise of various forms of Śaivism in the south.

6.2 Maṭha-s and competing religious traditions in south India, 600–1500 CE

After the seventh century, there was a general decline in the influence of both Jainism and Buddhism in south India, with relatively few references to Buddhism in literature and inscriptions, although, as previously noted, Buddhism survived in some centres up until the thirteenth century. Jainism nevertheless still maintained some influ-

⁶ See Ingalls (1962); Davidson (2002:183–184). There are distinct parallels between the Pāśupatas and the Greek Cynics, both of which Ingalls believes had shamanic roots. The Cynics first appeared in the fourth century BCE and exerted considerable influence until the fifth century.

⁷ In Hala's Prakrit poem, the *Gāthāsaptāśati* (third to fifth century) there is one of the earliest references to the Kāpālikas (Dyczkowski 1989:26).

ence in the south for several centuries, and between the eighth and tenth centuries several new monastic orders were established in the Bangalore and Mysore districts. Royal and private charters registering land grants, and control over local tolls, raised the position of the Jaina pontiff almost to the position of a landlord, giving the *maṭha* considerable status in the local area. The adoration of the preceptor of Jaina *maṭha*-s developed into a cult during this period, numerous burial stones being erected by lay and monastic disciples, to which ritual worship was offered (Nandi 1973:108–113, 170; Champakalakshmi 1996:345; Davidson 2002:90).

Buddhism and Jainism were being challenged by the growing popularity of *vaiṣṇava bhakti* (centred on the Āḷvārs) and, more importantly, *śaiva bhakti*⁸ (centred on the Nāyaṇārs).⁹ Both Jainism and Buddhism had previously been patronised by the non-Tamil Cāḷukyas, but the adoption of Śaivism by the succeeding Tamil Pāṇḍya and Pallava dynasties entailed a loss of patronage for those religions, and the active promotion of Śaivism by the ruling elites of the Deccan and south India.¹⁰ The expansion of the powerful Tamil kingdom of the Pallavas under Mahendravarman I (580–630)¹¹ and his son Narasiṃhavarman I (630–668) coincided with the anti-Buddhist and anti-Jaina *bhakti* movement and the rise of a strong sense of Tamil

⁸ One of the most important centres of the early south Indian *bhakta* saints was Kāñcīpuram, a place also associated with the early career of Rāmānuja (13th century).

⁹ In the Tamil region, three *śaiva* poet-saints, Tirunāṇacampan̄tar, Tirunāvukkaracar and Cuntaramūrti, popularly known as Campantar (or Nāṇacampan̄tar), Appar and Cuntarar (sixth to eighth centuries), are recognised as the principal ‘leaders’ (*nāyaṇar*), or the ‘First Three Saints’, of the sixty-three Nāyaṇārs. In a later classification, Māṇikkavācakar (ninth century?), the author of the *Tiruvācakan̄* (‘Sacred Utterances’) is included with the other three poets, as ‘Preceptors of the Faith’ (*camayakuravar*) or ‘The Four’ (*nālvar*). Their vernacular poems were incorporated into the *Tēvāram*, also known as ‘The Complete Canon’ (*ataṅkaṇmuyai*) which comprises seven books and forms the bulk of the primary sacred texts of Tamil Śaivism. In the eleventh century the works of the ‘First Three Saints’ were compiled into the seven-volume *Tirumuṣai* (‘Sacred Utterances’), which served as primary scripture for this branch of Śaivism. It seems that the entire canon (which, amongst other works, also includes the *Tirumantiram* as Book X; see below) was not completed until the thirteenth century (Peterson 1991:12–15).

¹⁰ Buddhism survived for longer in the outlying regions of the east and north (Davidson 2002:90).

¹¹ According to tradition, Mahendravarman was converted from Jainism to Śaivism by the poet-saint Appar (Peterson 1991:9). For a brief resumé of the king’s literary activity, see Unni (1998:1–7).

identity.¹² While all the Pallavas worshipped the *trimūrti* (Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva), it was Śaivism that witnessed a remarkable growth, particularly during the reign of Narasiṃhavarman II (or Rājasimha, c.690/91–c.728/29) (Mahalingam 1969:123–124).¹³

The anti-social practices integral to both Jaina and Buddhist ideologies (such as their prohibitions on contact with women, and their generally negative attitude to art, literature and music), and the alien and artificial literary style of Jaina Tamil may also have been significant contributory factors in the decline of Jainism and Buddhism after the seventh century (Zvelebil 1973:192–197). In the early *bhakti* hymns of the *Tēvāram* (the collective title for the Nāyaṇārs' hymns)¹⁴ particular emphasis is given to the temple¹⁵ and ritual worship.¹⁶ However, it is apparent that the so-called *bhakti* movement of south India was mainly represented by Brahman and *kṣatriya* poets, and was not in any way a low-caste phenomenon articulating class-struggle or social protest, even though the ethos of the *bhakta*-s could be described as social negativism (Zvelebil 1973:192–197).¹⁷

¹² It may also be noted that the *bhakti* movements contributed significantly to the cult of the book—notably *Purāna*-s—in distinction to earlier oral traditions: texts came to be considered as protecting forces for domiciles, and particular merit could be accrued from copying a text (Brown 1986:76–78).

¹³ Rājasimha also seems to have continued supporting some Buddhist institutions. He is credited with the construction of a Buddhist *vihāra* at Nagapaṭṭinam.

¹⁴ The collective title *Tēvāram* ('a text related to ritual worship') was only given to the Nāyaṇārs' hymns in, perhaps, the sixteenth century.

¹⁵ The three poets sang hymns to Śiva as the god of shrines situated in 274 sacred places (five belonging to the Himalayas, the abode of Śiva), the Tamil places creating a Śaivite sacred geography (see Spencer 1970).

¹⁶ Besides the *bhakti* movement, more radical forms of Śaivism were also prevalent in the south. In the *Tirumantiram*, Tirumūlar (eighth/ninth century), the great Tamil *siddha* and Tantric, describes four paths of Śaivism, also called *śuddha-siddhānta* and *vedānta* (Thirumular 1999:vv. 1419–1501). In descending order of accomplishment, from *jñāna* to *bhakti*, are: *jñāni*-s, merging the "I in the you"; *yogi*-s, raising *kundalinī* through the six centres, attaining *siddhi* and *samādhi*; those in *kriyā*, not missing daily worship; those in *caryā* (performance of rites and ceremonies), who perform many pilgrimages. Those on the paths of *kriyā* and *caryā* wear earrings, *rudrākṣa* around the neck, and (presumably) the *vṛṣabha* (bull) and trident *mūdra*-s (seals). There is also a reference (v. 1449) to six schools of *vedānta-siddhānta*. This four-fold hierarchical scheme is the same as the four-fold division into 'quarters' (*pāda*) of both the Śaiva *Āgama* and the Pāñcarātra *Samhitā*, and probably does not accurately reflect real socio-religious divisions.

¹⁷ An examination of the caste-origin of the *bhakti* poets reveals that around 75% of the poet-saints were either of Brahman or *kṣatriya* origin. A further 20% (including Appar and Nammālvār) are *vellāla*-s, technically a *śūdra* caste, but in

In the tenth and eleventh centuries the Cōlas actively promoted the devotional Śaivism of the Nāyaṅārs, enlarging and rebuilding extant Śiva shrines visited by the Nāyaṅārs, who were installed as a feature of the iconography and ritual complex of the temple. They also perpetuated the institution, begun by the Pallava kings before them, of employing singers of the hymns of the Nāyaṅārs in ritual worship in the temples (Peterson 1991:14).¹⁸

Although developments in the dominance and decline of various religious movements are being discussed, particularly concerning the rise of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism, it is important to consider the frequently syncretic nature of religion at a popular level. To give but one example for the period under discussion: in Bengal in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, it is apparent that, in the eyes of the laity, there was practically no distinction between ‘Purāṇic’ Hinduism and Buddhism; people may have had ten Brahmanical *saṃskāra*-s performed by Brahmins, yet paid homage to the Buddha (Chakrabarty 2001:145).¹⁹ However, notwithstanding religious syncretism, sectarian conflicts nevertheless took place. The twelfth-century work of Cēkḱilār, the *Periya Purāṇam* (a hagiography of the sixty-three Nāyaṅārs), contains a description of a major conflict between Jainas and Śaivas, which occurred at Vaḍaṭali, near Kumbhakonam, wherein the Jainas are accused of hiding a *liṅga* and are forced to leave by the local Cōla ruler. The Jainas appear to have suffered considerably at the hands of zealous *śaiva*-s.²⁰ The period following

practice members of a community of middle-class landlords. The remaining 10% are either low-caste or of unknown caste.

¹⁸ Although they promoted Śaivism, the Cōlas, and the Pallavas before them, were also supporters of Jainism. An inscription dated to 945, in the reign of the Cōla king Madiraikoṇḍa Parakesarivarman, records a gift of gold to a devotee at a (most probably) Jaina monastery, Jinagiripallī. Other inscriptions during the reigns of the Cōlas record various grants and land gifts. These include an inscription of c.1116 (from the reign of Kulōttuṅga Cōla I), another, a few years later, from the reign of Vikrama Cōla, and an inscription dated 1199 records a gift of land to a Jaina temple (Desai 1957:34–35).

¹⁹ It is apparent that in mediaeval contexts, while texts may have been sectarian, ritual was frequently fluid, crossing Jaina, Buddhist, Muslim, Tantric, and sectarian ‘Hindu’ boundaries, creating shared patterns of worship. For evidence from the ninth to fourteenth centuries; see Granoff (2000:418–420); Orr (2000:24–25; 204, fn. 45).

²⁰ One indication of this is an epigraph at Śrīśailam, Andhra Pradesh, dated to 1512, recounting the pious achievements of a Vīraśaiva chief, named Liṅga, who took pride in cutting off the heads of Śvetāmbara Jainas (Desai 1957:23). There

the *Periya Purāṇam* witnessed a significant growth of *maṭha-s* (*maṭha/guhai/āṭṭanam*), which functioned not only as centres of sectarian learning but also of administration.

Inscriptional evidence for the Deccan and south India between 600 and 1000 reveals that the overwhelming majority of *maṭha-s* were in the central/western part of what is now Karnataka State (see Nandi 1973:205). This area, to the east of Goa, is known to have been home to around fifty Jaina, *śaiva* and Buddhist monasteries during that period.²¹ Although, as explained, *śaiva*-orientated sects are known to have existed since at least the early centuries BCE, *śaiva* monasteries²² were unknown before the eighth century (Nandi 1973:70–90; Swaminathan 1990:117).²³ Between the eighth and tenth centuries, there are around thirty-five inscriptions for *śaiva maṭha-s*, the earliest being for the Śaiva-Siddhāntins (see below), Pāśupatas,²⁴ Kāpālikas,²⁵ and the Kālāmukhas²⁶ of Mysore,²⁷ all of

is also a persistent tradition that Cuntarar was responsible for the annihilation of 8,000 Jains in Madurai (Nampi Aṅṭār Nampi, *Aluṭaiya Pillaiyār Tiruvulāmālai*, 59 and 74; see Zvelebil 1973:106). During the reign of the Kaḷacūrya king Bijjala (12th century), the Kālāmukha Ekānatada Rāmāyā exterminated many Jains at Ablūr. Kālāmukhas desecrated dozens of Jaina *basadi-s* during that period, many of which can be identified, after defeating the Jains 'in debate' (Settar 1999:77–79).

²¹ In Karnataka, nine other *maṭha-s* were situated in the Bangalore area, while two Jaina *maṭha-s* were in south Karnataka, one dating from the sixth century, the other from the tenth century. Four *maṭha-s* (two *śaiva* and two Jaina) were situated in Tamil Nadu, and seven in Andhra Pradesh. Four *maṭha-s* (Buddhist, *śaiva* and Jaina) were functioning in Orissa, around Bhubaneśvara, while two *śaiva maṭha-s* were situated on the coast of Maharashtra, south of Mumbai. Four *śaiva maṭha-s* are recorded in Madhya Pradesh.

²² There appear to have been few *vaiṣṇava maṭha-s* before the rise of the Śrī-Vaiṣṇava movement under Rāmānuja in twelfth and thirteenth centuries. See Gurumurthy (1979:17, 73), who lists four, the earliest being the Govindapadi *maṭha* founded in North Arcot in 969.

²³ One of the earliest references to a *maṭha* in inscriptions is in the Tirumēṅṅali inscription (of uncertain date) of Dantivarman Pallava (r.796–847) (Swaminathan 1990:117).

²⁴ The earliest inscription referring to Pāśupatas is dated 943, found at Hemāvati, Sira Tālukā, Mysore. Another important inscription, referring to Śiva becoming incarnate as Lākuliśa, is found at Ekliṅgi, near Udaipur, Rajasthan, dated 1028 (Bhandarkar 1995:166). There was also an important Pāśupata centre in Uḍupi, on the Kanataka coast in South Kanara district, supported by the Āḷupa chiefs. The Pāśupatas were also influential in the area around Paḷaiyāṅṅai (south Tamil Nadu) during the Cōḷa period. Rājendra I built a temple there for one of his queens that was used by Pāśupatas. The Dārāsura temple in the same town contains 108 sculptured figures of Pāśupata *śaivācārya-s* (Champakalakshmi 1996:346).

²⁵ The earliest occurrence of the word *kapālin* (one who bears a skull) is probably

whom had established *maṭha*-s in the south by around the middle of the tenth century.

The influence of the Pāśupatas appears to have been extensive. Davidson (2002:184–186, 341–343) has identified over one hundred Pāśupata sites, all over India, dating from the fifth to the twelfth century, and remarks that no comprehensive study has yet been undertaken, which would doubtless reveal more sites.²⁸ It appears (Davidson 2002:85) that Buddhist missionary activity was effectively supplanted by the Pāśupatas.²⁹ The Pāśupatas and Kālāmukhas, besides promoting their *āgama*-s, were both associated with Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophy.³⁰

By the tenth century there were *śaiva maṭha*-s all over the Deccan,

that in the *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* III.243 (c.100–300). Further references to Kāpālikas occur in the *Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad*, and various literary texts from the third to the fifth centuries onwards. The earliest inscriptional evidence is provided by Jaina inscriptions, one at Śravaṇa Beḷgoḷa (dated 960–974), and the other from Tirumakūdal-Narsipur Taluk in Mysore District (Lorenzen 1991:12–24). There is a copper-plate charter dated to 639, granting a village near Igatpuri, Maharashtra, for the worship of the god Kāpāleśvara (Bhandarkar 1995:168), though this does not indicate a *maṭha*.

²⁶ The earliest mention of the Kālāmukha sect is in a Rāṣṭrakūṭa grant of 807 (Nandi 1973:85). By the mid-tenth century the eastern Deccan (Telugu speaking) had become a stronghold of the Kālāmukhas. They rose to prominence during the 11th, 12th and early 13th centuries (see Lorenzen 1991:97–172).

²⁷ The Kālāmukha *maṭha*-s at Mayilāppūr and Tiruvorriyūr (in the Chennai area) and Tiruvāṭuṭurai appear to have an ancient history, and may date from the ninth or tenth centuries (Nilakanta Sastri 1992:117–118; Champakalakshmi 1996:385 fn. 65).

²⁸ By the seventh century Pāśupatas were associated, as teachers, with the court of Bhavavarma II, and during the eighth and ninth centuries Pāśupata Śaivism was well established in Cambodia.

²⁹ As late as 900, even Buddhist monarchs respected Pāśupata missionaries. In art, Lākuliśa is usually depicted in the image of the Buddha.

³⁰ Haribhadra (eighth century), in his *Ṣaddarśanasamuccaya* (vv. 13, 59), mentions that *naiyāyika*-s and *vaiśeṣika*-s are *śaiva*-s, while Guṇaratna (late fourteenth century; one of Haribhadra's commentators) states that the *naiyāyika*-s are *śaiva*-s, and the *vaiśeṣika*-s are *pāśupata*-s (Nandi 1973:84). Bhandarkar (1995:167) comments that the identification of *naiyāyika*-s with *śaiva*-s must be a mistake, as Bharadvāja of the Nyāya school is specifically referred to as a *pāśupatācārya*. Uddyotakara (c.500), an important Nyāya philosopher, worshipped the Supreme Lord as Śiva, in accordance with the practice of the Pāśupatas, while Praśastapāda (c.500), an influential Vaiśeṣika philosopher, was a Maheśvara *śaiva* (Hirst 1993:121). There are indications that both *naiyāyika*-s and *vaiśeṣika*-s were associated with the Pāśupatas, but the precise reference that several mediaeval commentators (including Haribhadra) make in regard to *śaiva*-s and *pāśupata*-s is often hard to determine.

the greatest concentration being around Dharvaṛ (central Karnataka). By the end of the Cōḷa period (early thirteenth century), nearly every temple in south India in the region governed by them had one or more *maṭha*-s functioning in close proximity to it (Nilakanta Sastri 1955:650; Suthanthiran 1986:192). From the early thirteenth century, numerous *śaiva maṭha*-s were established by devotees of what had become a canon of *śaiva* saints.³¹ Besides being educational institutions which were frequently in receipt of grants and donations (*vidyādāna*) to further educational activities,³² the *maṭha*-s were also often involved in charitable activities, including feeding arrangements for pilgrims and the poor, and in some cases setting up hospitals and maternity centres.³³ The early *maṭha*-s were but a few rooms attached to temples, but by the tenth century there were separate buildings for the residents.

During the latter half of the first millennium, it became common practice for regents to take initiation (*dikṣā*) from *śaiva* gurus, whose general influence was simultaneously enhanced by the growing popularity of devotional Śaivism amongst the population in some parts of India. In the south many kings, from the Cālukya, Hoysala, Cōḷa, Gaṅga, Cedī, Yādava, and subsequently the Vijayanagara dynasties, were initiated by *śaiva* preceptors—effectively undergoing a spiritual rebirth—usually in return for which substantial properties were donated, with revenue to be derived from the holdings.³⁴ Kings

³¹ See Rajamanickam (1964:231–250).

³² Amongst subjects studied were *Veda*, *Mahābhārata*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, the eighteen *Purāṇa*-s, *yogaśāstra*, systems of philosophy, logic (*tarka*), grammar (*vyākaraṇa*), poetry (*kāvya*), dramaturgy (*nāṭaka*), and sciences connected with literature (*sāhitya*) (Gurumurthy 1979:14; Swaminathan 1990:118). For educational subjects and salaries in *maṭha*-s during the Cōḷa period, see Nilakanta Sastri (1955:628–634).

³³ Gurumurthy (1979:14); Suthanthiran (1986:192); Swaminathan (1990:117).

³⁴ Vikramāditya I of the Cālukya dynasty of Bādāmī had as many as three *śaiva* preceptors, the first, Śrī Sudarśanācārya, performing the *śiva maṇḍala dikṣā*, for which he was granted a village in 660. Another of his gurus, Śrī Meghācārya, also received a village in the same year. An inscription of 1039 reveals that the Kālāmukha, Kriyāśakti Paṇḍita Deva, was *rāja-guru* of the Western Cālukya, (Jaya) Siṃha Deva. Sarveśvaraśakti Deva—an *ācārya* of seventy-seven temples—was *rāja-guru* of another Cālukyan monarch, Someśvara Deva, in 1070. In 1129 Someśvara Deva Bhūlokamalla made a grant to the *rāja-guru*, Vamaśakti Paṇḍita, the greatest of the Kālāmukha gurus, who also received a grant, in 1156, from Bijjaṇa Devarasa of the Kaḷaḥuriyas, over whom the guru had considerable influence.

Vamaśakti was also most probably the *rāja-guru* of the Hoysala king, Vīra, receiving a village from a grant made in 1193. It appears from another inscription, in

were consecrated and installed as royal protectors of the realm at the centre of a *śaiva maṇḍala*.³⁵ Davidson comments (2002:89) that “*śaiva* royal inscriptions are collectively the most extraordinary documents for the combination of religious fervour, erotic sentiment and graphically violent images”.³⁶ Records indicate that the *śaiva* preceptors, known as *rāja-guru*-s, were almost exclusively from the Śaiva-Siddhānta, Kālāmukha, and Mattamayūra orders (the latter also being a Śaiva-Siddhānta sect), though the lineage in a few inscriptions is hard to determine. We will now consider the available evidence on this influential role of the Śaiva-Siddhānta and Kālāmukha sects.

It is apparent that the Cōḷa *rāja-guru*-s (*ācārya*) were held in enormous

1191, that Kriyaśakti Deva was also the *rāja-guru* of the Hoysala ruler Narasiṃha Deva. The *rāja-guru*-s of the Hoysalas seem to have come from Āsandi-nāḍ, where there were five *maṭha*-s, the priests from there being known as Kampanācāryas. As recorded in 1245, the Yādava (or Seuṇa) rulers had Rudraśakti Deva, from the Koteśvara (or Koṭinātha) temple of Kuppattūr, as their Kālāmukha *rāja-guru* (Saleatore 1935; Nandi 1973:101–102; Settar 1999).

Cōḷa regents, from Rājarāja to Kulottuṅga (c.1000–1200), were initiated by a long line of Śaiva-Siddhāntin *ācārya*-s, many of whom came from north or central India (Laṭa, Gauḍa and Madhya regions). Their ‘surnames’ were all *-śiva* (and often *-śiva-panḍita*) and they were authors of a number of texts (Rajamanickam 1964:228–231; Nagaswamy 1998).

King Devendravarman of the eastern Gaṅga dynasty was initiated into Śaivism by Pataṅgaśivācārya, who received a village as *dakṣiṇā*. The Kālāmukha, Vidyeśvara, was acknowledged as the preceptor of the eastern Cāḷukya, Amma II (Vijayāditya VI), who donated four villages to his sect. Kumāra Svāmī was the preceptor of another regent of the eastern Cāḷukyas, Yuddhamalla II, who built a monastery for the exclusive use of *śaiva* monks and preceptors.

The preceptor of the Cedī king, Yuvarājadeva, was Sadbhāva Śambhu, who received a large province as *bhikṣā* (‘charitable donation’). King Gaṇapatideva of the Kākatīya dynasty was ordained by his preceptor, Viśveśvara Śambhū (Saleatore 1935; Nandi 1973:101–102; Settar 1999). The eastern Cāḷukyas were also, from the beginning and throughout their rule, active patrons of Jainism. The early Kākatīyas, based in Warangal, supported Jainism at the beginning of their reign (Desai 1957:19–22).

³⁵ The *rāja-guru* should perform a special *abhiṣeka* ritual, marking the king’s spiritual enthronement (see Nagaswamy 1998:26).

³⁶ Davidson (2002:129–130) believes that the term *devarāja*, which appears in many inscriptions, refers to the king identified with Śiva. This seems incorrect (see Kulke 1978b; Chandra 1992). *Devarāja* refers to the icon of power (a palladium, typically a *liṅga*) that is at the centre of a royal consecration ritual based on the *aindra abhiṣeka*, whereby the king is consecrated with the power of either Indra or Śiva. The ancient Vedic rite was augmented by Āgamic rites, and by the ninth century it had become established as the preeminent rite of royal consecration in many parts of Asia.

respect, and considered as the spiritual guardians of the country.³⁷ They came from Śaiva-Siddhānta lineages (*santāna*), and their functions included the supervision of the construction of temples,³⁸ and the keeping of documents and records of temple endowments. *Rāja-guru*-s could be householders or bachelors (most were householders) but not *saṃnyāsin*-s. They were sometimes hailed as *siddha*-s who could cure disease, and were meant to be able to predict impending disasters. They also used to perform various rituals to protect the king, including the annual *rāja-rakṣā*, during which the king was anointed with sacred ashes mixed with saffron powder (Nagaswamy 1998:24–26). By the thirteenth century, numerous Śaiva-Siddhānta *maṭha*-s had been established, which exerted a considerable influence in most parts of the Tamil region.³⁹ One of the *maṭha*-s most influential in supplying *rāja-guru*-s was the Gōlakī *maṭha*.⁴⁰

³⁷ Rājarāja refers to his *guru* as “my Lord” (*svāmī/udaiyār*), whom he adores as Śiva himself. According to the *Kāṃikāgama* (one of the principal texts in mediaeval Śaiva-Siddhānta), in temples the foremost place is offered to the *rāja-guru*, followed by the king and then the queen. It seems that the Rājendra Cōla brought *śaiva-ācārya*-s south, from Banaras and the Godāvāri region (Nagaswamy 1998:20–28).

³⁸ Three people were responsible for temple construction: the *yajamāna* (patron-builder); the architect-sculptor; and the *ācārya*, who was the most important. He should know *vāstu-śāstra*, and supervise all procedures (Nagaswamy 1998:24–26).

³⁹ According to the tradition pertaining to the Cōla *rāja-guru*-s, five *ṛṣi*-s (Kauśika, Kaśyapa, Bharadvāja, Gautama and Agastya [or Ātreya]) were initiated by Śiva. (This group of *ṛṣi*-s is often to be found in Śaiva-Siddhānta *Āgama* texts; see Brunner 1964:457.) The *ṛṣi*-s produced five lineages (*pāñca-santāna*-s: Durvāsa, Dadīci, Ruru, Śveta, and Upamanyu), which resulted in the establishing of five *maṭha*-s in the south: Mantāna-Kālīśvaram (at the centre), surrounded by Amardaki, Gōlakī, Puṣpagiri, and Raṇabhadrā. Mantāna-Kālīśvaram was most probably in the Godāvāri region, while the latter four *maṭha*-s (particularly Amardaki) played a central role in the development of the temple movement in south India. According to several *Tantra*-s, Durvāsa is the preceptor of the Amardaki *maṭha* (ARE 1917, part II, para. 37 [1986:124]). Aghora Śiva came from the Amardaki *maṭha* and was a resident of Kāñci. Though not a *rāja-guru* (Nagaswamy 1998:28ff.), he was an influential and prolific systematiser of a dualist form of Śaiva Siddhānta. His *Kriyā-krama-dyotika* (*Aghora-śivācārya-paddhati*), written in 1158, is still one of the most important texts in the south (Davis 1991:17).

⁴⁰ The Gōlakī *maṭha* also traces its lineage to Durvāsa, and was probably established in south India by Yuvarājadeva I (r.915–945?), a king of the Kalacuri dynasty. The *maṭha* had several lineages (*santāna*), and by the fourteenth century had numerous branches all over the south (Mahalingam 1962; Rajamanickam 1964:225; Dehejia 1986:89), employing many musicians and craftsmen. The pontiffs (who all have the surnames ‘Śiva’ or ‘Śambhu’) came from the same lineage (i.e. Śaiva-Siddhāntin) as those of the Mattamayūra sect, though there is also evidence that the *maṭha* may have had Pāśupata adherents and related Tantric associations at the time of

A considerable number of the Śaiva-Siddhānta *maṭha*-s were named after either the famous Brahman *śaiva* saint, Tiruṅṅānaśambandar, or the non-Brahman *śaiva* saint, Tirunāvukkaraśar.⁴¹ With regard to Vaiṣṇavism, non-Brahman participation became significant only after the time of Rāmānuja, in the thirteenth century. In the case of Śaivism, it is apparent that beginning in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries many new *maṭha*-s⁴² were established that were headed by lineages (*santāna*) of non-Brahman teachers, called *mudaliyār*.⁴³ It seems

its founding. The name ‘Gōḷakī’ may indeed derive from ‘Gola-giri’, indicating a circular Tantric *yoginī* temple, such as that at Bheḍaghāt, near Jabbalpur (Mahalingam 1962:447; Swaminathan 1990:119–121; Nilakanta Sastri 1992:118; Misra 1997:78). The Gollā/Gōḷakī or Lakṣādhāyī lineages (of the twelfth to fourteenth centuries) trace themselves from the Gollā *maṭha* of Banaras (which may be connected to the Bhikṣā *maṭha* of Banaras; see Rajaminickam 1964:227). The Gōḷakī *maṭha* supplied *rāja-guru*-s to the Kalacuri, Kākatiya, Mālva, and Telugu Cōḷa dynasties. One of the *maṭha*-s most influential preceptors, who founded several branch *maṭha*-s, was Viśveśvara Śiva (*fl.* mid-thirteenth century). While it is possible that the Gōḷakī *maṭha*-s also supplied the *rāja-guru*-s for the Tamil Cōḷas (Rajamanickam 1964:229), evidence indicates that it was the Amardakī *maṭha* which supplied most of their *śaiva-ācārya*-s (Nagaswamy 1998:30–33). Nothing is heard of the Gōḷakī *maṭha* after the sixteenth century, most probably because the *maṭha* was overshadowed by the growing influence of the *smārta maṭha*-s following the tradition of Śaṅkara (Mahalingam 1962:450). (For details of the *maṭha*-s’ activities, acquisitions, branches, lineages, and preceptors, see ARE 1917, part II, para. 33–38 [1986:121–125]; ARE 1936–7, para. 19 [1986:67].)

⁴¹ See *Annual Reports on Indian Epigraphy* (1986:102–104 [no. 538, para. 53, 28th July 1909]); Rajaminickam (1962) supplies a comprehensive list of *maṭha*-s.

⁴² See Gurusurthy (1979:70–73) for a list of sixty *maṭha*-s established between the tenth and fourteenth centuries.

⁴³ Rajaminickam (1962; 1964:214–250); Champakalakshmi (1981:421). There are some indications that the flourishing non-Brahman *maṭha*-s were opposed by Brahmans, though attempts to take them over were generally unsuccessful (Stein 1999:236–237). *Āgama* texts, in general, permit the initiation up to the second level (of three levels of initiation: *samayadīkṣā*, *viśeṣadīkṣā*, *nirvāṇadīkṣā*) of both *śūdra*-s and women, though some texts dispute *śūdra*-s’ rights to be initiated to the third (‘highest’) level (*nirvāṇadīkṣā*), and become *ācārya*-s. In some instances, to obviate restrictions, ‘*sat*’ (‘pure’) *śūdra*-s are created. Considerations of caste seem to be behind the scheme of four kinds of *śaiva*-s (variously named and categorised) to be found in many texts (Brunner-Lachaux 1963, Vol. 1:xxiii–xxiv; Brunner 1964:460ff.). According to the *Varṇāmacandrika*, a seventeenth century text produced by the (Śaiva-Siddhānta) Dharmapuram *maṭha* (long after the *maṭha* had been founded) to legitimise non-*smārta* worship, *śūdra*-s have the right to take all levels of *śaiva* initiation, and to become preceptors (Koppedrayar 1991:201). It is evident that many *śaiva maṭha*-s were significantly supported by members of the *vēḷāḷa* caste (originally low-caste, but subsequently comprising many middle-class landlords). For studies of other non-Brahman Śaiva-Siddhānta *maṭha*-s, see: Oddie (1984) for an account

probable that from the middle of the thirteenth century, many of the *maṭha*-s were founded by disciples of Meykaṇṭār⁴⁴ (Rajamanikkam 1962:222–223). The ascetic frequenters of Śaiva-Siddhānta *maṭha*-s were generally known as *śivayogin*-s or *maheśvara*-s, who are recorded in a large number of epigraphs.⁴⁵ According to the *Āgama*-s counted as authoritative for the southern Śaiva-Siddhāntins of the period under consideration (c.1000–1300), although authority lay ultimately in a mastery of the rites and texts of the *Āgama*, adherents also had the right to study the four *Veda*-s (Nagaswamy 1998:27). Śaiva-Siddhānta, in general, accepts the authority of the *Veda*, but considers the *Āgama* also to be both *Veda* and *śruti* ('revelation'), the *Āgama* in effect being a 'higher', more subtle revelation than the traditional *Veda*, which is regarded as a secondary revelation. A crucial distinction between the Vedic and Āgamic traditions is that whereas the *Veda* is only open to the 'twice-born', the Āgamic revelation is for all four *varṇa*-s, including *śūdra*-s, who seem to have been quite powerful within the general expansion of Śaiva-Siddhānta (Brunner 1964:451ff.).

The Kālāmukhas were divided into at least two major orders, the *Śakti-pariṣad*, which had four separate subdivisions, and the *Siṃha-pariṣad*. The *Siṃha-pariṣad* seems to have been distributed over a large area, including parts of Andhra Pradesh and Mysore, though the *Śakti-pariṣad* was probably the more important order. The main centres of activity of the *Śakti-pariṣad* were the Dharvaṛ and Shimoga districts of Karnataka (Lorenzen 1991:97). Between the middle of the eleventh and the end of the thirteenth century, the Kālāmukha *rāja-guru*-s of south India came from either Balligāve (Balligāme/ Belagāve),⁴⁶ Kuppattūr, Āsandi-nāḍ or Śrīparvata (Śrīsailam), the first two places being most important, particularly Balligāve (in the Śikāripura *tālukā* of Shimoga district, in Karnataka), which from

of the Dharmapuram and Tiruvāvaṭuṭurai *maṭha*-s; Arooran (1984) for the *maṭha*-s at Tiruvāvaṭuṭurai, Tarumapuram and Tiruppaṇantāl; Yocum (1990) for the Tiruvāvaṭuṭurai Adhīnam (founded in the seventeenth century).

⁴⁴ Meykaṇṭār is one of the most important figures in the development of Śaiva-Siddhānta in the south. His *Civañānapōtam*, written around 1221, was a Tamil text that laid the basis for a shift in Śaiva-Siddhānta theology from Sanskrit to Tamil (see Davis 1991:17–18).

⁴⁵ See *Annual Reports on Indian Epigraphy* (1986:102–104), no. 538, para. 53, 28th July 1909.

⁴⁶ Before approximately 1100, the place was called Valligāme, and then Bali-pura (Settar 1999:56).

the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries was hardly matched by any mediaeval Deccan city: with over fifty temples, it was famous for its splendours and seats of learning.

The earliest record of the presence of Kālāmukhas at Baḷḷigāve is from 1019 (Settar 1999:70), while it is recorded in 1036 that Baḷḷigāve had five Kālāmukha *maṭha*-s (Saletore 1935:34–38; Settar 1999:68). From 1036 to 1139 Baḷḷigāve was home to at least thirteen monastic orders, including one Buddhist, two Vaiṣṇava, three Jaina, one Advaita, one Śrotiya and six Kālāmukha, the Kālāmukhas being the most important and influential of the orders (Settar 1999:65–66).⁴⁷ The Kālāmukha influence spread all over Karnataka under Hoysala and Cāḷukya patronage (Venkatarman 1950:74), the most prominent division of the Kālāmukhas being centred in the Koḍiya *maṭha*, at the Kedāreśvara temple⁴⁸ in Baḷḷigāve, from where many of the Kālāmukha *rāja-guru*-s came. The Koḍiya *maṭha* first appears in records in 1139, from when it appears in records alongside the original five *maṭha*-s.⁴⁹ It received substantial patronage from the Kaḷacūrya king, Bijjala, who was closely involved with Basava, the key figure in the development of the Vīraśaiva order.⁵⁰ The short-lived prominence of the Koḍiya *maṭha* was overshadowed by another *Śakti-pariṣad* branch, the Mūvarukṇeyasantani of Parvatāvali (Settar 1999:69, 77). By the end of the twelfth century the Kālāmukha order had begun to decline in power and influence.

Besides providing preceptors to kings, the Kālāmukha *pañcamāṭha*-s, as an institution, patronised *vaiṣṇava*-s⁵¹ and supervised the transac-

⁴⁷ Although Lākuliśa is hagiographically connected to the founding of the Pāśupata order, the Baḷḷigāve records frequently refer to Lākuliśa-Kālāmukha in the same phrase, but no reference ever occurs in records to either Pāśupatas or Kāpālikas (Settar 1999:69).

⁴⁸ The full name of Śiva who presided over this temple was Dakṣiṇa-Kedāreśvara ('Lord of the Southern Kedāra').

⁴⁹ Interestingly, the oldest of the original five Kālāmukha *maṭha*-s that can be dated is the Pāñcaliṅga *maṭha* (Settar 1999:67). It will be recalled that in Śaṅkara's hagiographies the Kāñcī stream of texts (the AŚV and its derivatives) devote considerable emphasis to Śaṅkara's establishing five *liṅga*-s. Could this story perhaps be an echo of the importance given to the establishing of a five-*liṅga maṭha* within the Kālāmukha tradition?

⁵⁰ The Vīraśaivas Prabhudeva and Akkamāhādevī were also connected with Baḷḷigāve. Vīraśaivas took over *maṭha*-s of the Kālāmukhas after the latter declined (Settar 1999:78).

⁵¹ *Epigraphia Carnatica* VII (Shikapura), 131, 132.

tions of other *śaiva* institutions in 1104 and 1113.⁵² However, as noted above, Kālāmukhas appear to have had serious conflicts with Jains. The Kālāmukhas worshipped not only Śiva, but also Viṣṇu and Brahmā, and accepted not only the *Āgama*-s, but also the *Veda*-s, *varṇa*-s and *āśrama*-s. Nevertheless, *vaiṣṇava* critics such as Rāmānuja and Yāmunācārya represented the Kālāmukhas as anti-Vedic (Settar 1999:68–69). As revealed in inscriptions, not only were kings being initiated and making substantial donations to Kālāmukha gurus, but so were their viceroys and provincial officials, who were often entitled *Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara* (Narasimham 1929:116).⁵³

Prior to the ninth century, inscriptions hardly mention any lineage of teachers, but from the ninth century onwards a preceptor is rarely mentioned without his lineage. The role of the royal preceptor was clearly becoming institutionalised, resulting in the enhanced role and influence of the institution to which a line of preceptors was attached. The *śaiva* gurus were, like their Jaina counterparts, becoming deified as cult objects. Archeological evidence indicates that already by the seventh century (and perhaps earlier) Pāśupata teachers were thought to become identical with Śiva at the moment of death, and temples were erected with a *liṅga* installed bearing their name (Stietencron 2001:24). The enhanced status of many pontiffs of *śaiva maṭha*-s was partly in view of the irrevocable nature of royal grants (*śāsana*-s) and partly owing to the absolute rights of the pontiff over the temple or monastery. In a record of around 900 is to be found one of the first references to a *mahant*, whose rights in this instance are absolute.⁵⁴ However, in many instances local bodies or assemblies had the right to remove the pontiff, should he have committed moral offences or be deemed to have brought the *maṭha* into disrepute. Nandi (1973:99–101) comments that absolute control over the properties of the temple or monastery led to a kind of feudal organisation in important monasteries, some of which organised mass *śaiva* initiation (*dīkṣā*) rituals, thus furthering their sphere of influence. The *maṭha*-s

⁵² EC VII (Shikapura), 131, 99.

⁵³ The Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara, Kundamarasa, made grants in 1019 after washing the feet of his guru, Mūliḡa Śivaśakti Paṇḍita of Balliḡama. Govinda Rāja, the younger brother of Kṛṣṇa Rāja, made endowments to Someśvara Paṇḍita Deva. See Saletore (1935:38) for other instances.

⁵⁴ EC X, Srinivaspur *tālukā*, 29. The grant, by Kunnayya, was also made to the servants of five (presumably resident) *mahant*-s.

also attracted itinerant trade on account of their organisational network, contributing significantly to urban growth (Champakalakshmi 1996:210).⁵⁵ Itinerant traders were also significant donors to *maṭha*-s, some of which were named after them.

Misra (1997) discusses the power of *maṭha*-s and their pontiffs in central India in the ninth and tenth centuries, based on records of nine Śaiva-Siddhānta *maṭha*-s. The initiates promoted *vaiśeṣika* philosophy and Āgamic Śaivism, from “fortress-like structures”. The movement was rooted in the Guṇa-Śivpuri region, but spread over central India, and on to Gujarat, Rajasthan, Andhra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The network of Śaiva-Siddhānta *maṭha*-s traced their lineages back to the Mattamayūra (‘drunken peacock’) sect at Kadavaha.⁵⁶ From the seventh to the thirteenth centuries, these monasteries supplied many of the *rāja-guru*-s to regents of several of the dynasties previously referred to. Some of the pontiffs were low-caste, but regardless of caste—which had theoretically been eliminated after initiation—received land-grants from the state. Nominally celibate,⁵⁷ several of the pontiffs wrote religio-philosophical texts that became relatively widely known.⁵⁸ It has been estimated (Misra 1997:74; Dehejia 1986:89) that the dispensation in grants and land to the pontiffs of these *śaiva maṭha*-s amounted to one third of the revenue of the entire Kalacuri state, indicating the importance of *śaiva maṭha*-s to Kalacuri polity.

The *maṭha*-s employed not only artisans and tenant farmers, but also a contingent of law-enforcement officers (*vīrabhadra*-s and *vajramuṣṭi*-s)

⁵⁵ Champakalakshmi (1996:385) draws attention to the close relationship indicated between the increase in trade activities, craft production—especially oil and textiles—and the institution of *śaiva maṭha*-s. The Kālāmukha (Pāśupata) *maṭha*-s of the ninth and tenth centuries (in centres such as Mayilāppūr and Tiruvorriyūr), the *bhakti maṭha*-s named after *śaiva* saints (of the eleventh and twelfth centuries), and the well organised *maṭha*-s of the Gollā/Gōḷakī or Lakṣādhāyī lineages (of the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, which trace their lineage from the Gollā *maṭha* of Banaras), were all invariably located in trade and craft centres.

⁵⁶ See Davis (2000) for further details of the Mattamayūra sect.

⁵⁷ It is apparent from records of various kinds that celibate orders were not always so. Derrett (1974) analyses a legal ruling from the sixteenth century—during the reign of Veṅkata I—at Jambukeśvara, whereby it is ordered that the pontiff of a Pāśupata *maṭha* should be a *grhastha*. It is apparent that the *maṭha* had been occupied by various non-celibate Pāśupatas, nominally a strictly celibate order.

⁵⁸ These include the *Vyomati-tikā* of Vyomaśiva, the *Prāyascitta-samuccaya*, *Naimittika-kriyā-anusandhana* and *Soma-sambhu-paddhati* (Misra 1997:76).

whose powers of enforcement included mutilation and castration. In terms of the powers and privileges enjoyed within the hierarchy of the state, the pontiffs of the *maṭha-s* appear to have been ranked higher than Brahmans and the chief priest, in other words, second only to the regent himself.⁵⁹ The pontiffs also held more land than the *kṣatriya-s*, who were subservient to them. The *maṭha-s* rendered services to the state in various ways, including the garrisoning of war-forces, the provision of elephants, horses and perhaps wealth, the manufacture of armaments for battle, the maintenance of arsenals, training in warfare, and even participation in battle. Several pontiffs are praised in inscriptions not only for their knowledge of religious texts, but also for their political wisdom, their power against enemies, and their knowledge of weaponry. They also participated in civil administration, one pontiff (Vimalaśiva) being praised for his ability to make even distant people pay taxes.⁶⁰ Taxes were also levied by the *maṭha-s* themselves on many items, including a wide range of animals and farm produce, taxes being another source of the *maṭha-s*' considerable wealth. The titles of the pontiffs, such as *nātha*, *adhipati* and *pāla* were those usually reserved for royalty, and such was the importance of the pontiffs to the state that, time and again, their "venerable feet were revered by the lustre of the crest jewels of the princes" (Misra 1997:77).

The relationship of *maṭha-s* to the empires of south India in the first centuries of the second millennium is particularly relevant in the context of understanding the traditions associated with development of *advaita maṭha-s*, particularly those of Śṛṅgerī and Kāñcīpuram, which are connected by hagiographers with the activities of Śaṅkarācārya. In this regard we now turn to the founding of the Vijayanagara empire, considering the religious orientation and initiation of its regents, and their patronage of various religious institutions.

6.3 *Religious initiation and orientation of the Vijayanagara rulers*

After the collapse of the Cōḷa and later Cāḷukya empires, four dynasties arose in south India; the Yādavas of Devagiri, the Kākaṭiyas

⁵⁹ See *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. 4, part 1, nos. 63, 64, 70; Misra (1997:75).

⁶⁰ *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. 4, part 1, no. 64, v. 44.

of Warangal, the Hoysalas of Dvārasamudra and the Pāṇḍyas of Madurai, who dominated the south in the thirteenth century. By 1328 these kingdoms had come under the control of the Delhi sultanate, but subsequent revolts against Delhi resulted in the establishing of the independent sultanate of Ma'bar at Madurai (which lasted from 1335 to 1378), the Bahmanī sultanate (in 1347 at Bijapur, Karnataka), and the kingdom of Vijayanagara, whose capital was modern-day Hamppe (Hampi), Karnataka.⁶¹

Up to 1565, three dynasties ruled Vijayanagara; the Saṅgama (1336–1485), Sāluva (1485–1505), and the Tuḷuva (1505–1570). Harihara (Rāya)⁶² I, the eldest of the five sons⁶³ of the chieftain Saṅgama, was the first king of Vijayanagara (1336–1356). Within a few years, with the assistance of his brothers—primarily Bukka but also Mārappa—Harihara built up an extensive empire stretching from coast to coast, an empire that was constantly at war with the Bahmanī sultanate. Bukka I (1356–1377) succeeded his brother Harihara I, Bukka's son, Kumāra Kampana, being famed for the conquest of Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam, defeating the Muslim governor of Kaṇṇanūr (six miles north of Śrīraṅgam), and the destruction of the Ma'bar sultanate (1334–1371).⁶⁴

The traditional date of the founding of Vijayanagara is 1336. 1346 has also been suggested, the date of the famous 'festival of victory' at Śṛṅgerī, to which we shall return. These dates have been questioned by Kulke (1985:126), who maintains that Vijayanagara probably only emerged under Bukka I as a capital, in the area of the old Hoysala capital, previously called Virūpākṣapaṭṭaṇa, Hosapaṭṭaṇa

⁶¹ For the history of this period, see Saletore (1934); Mahalingam (1940); Venkataraman (1950); Majumdar (1960, Vol. 6); Krishnaswami (1964); Dallapiccola (1985); Verghese (1995); Aiyangar (2000).

⁶² The Saṅgamas are frequently referred to in inscriptions as *rāya* ('king').

⁶³ The other four brothers were *Kāmpa*, Bukka, Mārappa and Muddappa. Curiously, the name Muddappa does not appear in some inscriptions as one of the brothers, another brother being named as either Saṅgama or Saṅkara (Filliozat 1973:135).

⁶⁴ The event is celebrated by Kampana's wife, Gaṅgā Devī, in her epic, *Madhurāvijayam*. After the victories, Kampana's commandant, Goppana, brought back and facilitated the reinstallation of the two main idols of Śrīraṅgam that had been secreted at Śingavaram (Gingee) and the foot of the Tirupati hill. Śrīraṅgam had twice been sacked, once by Malik Kufūr in 1310–1311, and during the Tughluq incursions in 1327–1328 (Nilakanta Sastri 1992:126).

or Vijayavirūpākṣapura.⁶⁵ The first inscription mentioning the name Vijayanagara is from 1357, the year after Harihara I died and Bukka I took the throne. Bukka gave himself the regal title *Mahārājādhirāja paramēśvara*, but only in 1368, shortly before his death. Initially, all brothers had the title *Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara*.

Bukka I was followed by Harihara II (1377–1404), under whom the Vijayanagara empire expanded all over south India up to the Kṛṣṇa river. Harihara II's three sons, Virūpākṣa I, Bukka II and Devarāya I, all vied for the throne after Harihara's death, Devarāya succeeding and ruling from 1406 to 1422. Devarāya's two sons, Rāmacandra and Vīra Vijaya, both ruled for brief periods, followed by Vīra Vijaya's son, Devarāya II (1424–1446), the greatest of the Saṅgama rulers. After Devarāya II, the reigns of Mallikārjuna (1446–1465) and Virūpākṣa II (1466–1485) were weak, resulting in Sāḷuva Narasiṃha (1485–1491), governor of Candragiri, usurping the throne in 1485.

Sāḷuva Narasiṃha was succeeded by his minor sons, Timma (1491) and Immaḍi Narasiṃha (1491–1505), the latter being assassinated by his Tuḷuva minister, Vīra Narasiṃha, whose reign (1505–1509) was followed by that of his half-brother, Kṛṣṇadevarāya (1509–1529), the greatest king of Vijayanagara. Acyutarāya, a half-brother of Kṛṣṇadevarāya, then ruled from 1529–1542. Following his death, a faction led by Rāmarāya, Kṛṣṇadevarāya's son-in-law, installed Sadāśiva (the nephew of Acyutarāya) on the throne, though Rāmarāya remained the *de facto* ruler. Under Rāmarāya, the Vijayanagara empire regained some territory lost under Kṛṣṇadevarāya but the combined forces of the Delhi sultanate finally defeated Rāmarāya, who died in January 1565 at the decisive battle of Rakkasa-Taṅgaḍi, also known as the battle of Tāḷikōta. The Vijayanagara capital was sacked and temporarily occupied by the Muslim armies, thenceforth ceasing to be an imperial capital. Northern Karnataka came under

⁶⁵ Venkataranayya (1974:34) maintains that there is inscriptional evidence (of 1323) that Harihara I was first a king in Gutti (Jaggatāpi-Gutti), in the present Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh. However, an inscription from 1347 states that Harihara was reigning in the 'Gutti-rājya', and governing from Vijayanagara (Sewell and Aiyangar 1932:191 [*Epigraphical Annual Reports made to the Archaeological Survey of Madras*, 1921, App. A, C-P. 9]). Filliozat (1973:xvii) suggests that there may have been two Hariharas, as a solution to this and other conflicting inscriptional evidence.

Muslim control, and as the empire disintegrated, independent feudatories arose. Tirumala, Rāmarāya's brother, moved to Penugonḍa⁶⁶ in the Anantapur district, founding the Āraṇiḍu dynasty (1570–1646) there with the puppet ruler, Sadāśīva. The capital of the vestiges of the empire subsequently moved twice, to Candragiri in North Arcot district, in 1592, and then to Vellore in 1606 (Verghese 1995:2).

Many historians have presented the glorious history of the Vijayanagara empire in terms of a Hindu empire established in the face of Muslim aggression and persecution.⁶⁷ The Vijayanagara rulers have been presented as Hindus whose patronage of and association with Hindu institutions, particularly the *advaita maṭha* at Śṛṅgerī, and whose defeat of the Muslims, notably at Madurai, saved and revived Hindu *dharma* from impending destruction. However, although wars with the Bahmanī sultans were frequent, their cause was more political and economic than religious. There were also numerous military expeditions against less powerful Hindu rulers, such as the Śambuvarāyas, the Reḍḍis of Koṇḍavīḍu, the Velamas and the Gajapatis (Verghese 1995:3). Muslim soldiers also fought in the armies of the Vijayanagara regents, undermining the notion that the protagonists were fighting essentially religious wars.

Kulke (1985:120–125) also questions the traditional account, presented by several prominent historians,⁶⁸ of the origins of the Saṅgama brothers. According to this account, the brothers were serving in Warangal in the Eastern Deccan, which was overrun by Sultan Muhammad Tughluq in 1323. They fled to Kampili, which was also subsequently captured in 1327 by the Muslims, who had them taken to Delhi as prisoners and converted to Islam. The Sultan of Delhi then sent Harihara I and Bukka to take over the administration of Malik Muhammad in Kampili, and put down a revolt by Hindu subjects. They are then said to have been converted back to Hinduism by the sage, Vidyāraṇya, and to have built a Hindu

⁶⁶ Penugonḍa, Delhi, Kolhapur and Jina Kāñcī are counted as the four Vidyāsthānas of the Jains (Desai 1957:161).

⁶⁷ See, for example Saletore (1934, Vol. 1:1): “south of the Vindhya...after eight and sixty years of humiliation...the smouldering forces of Hinduism suddenly swept away the growing menace...The terror which shook the country to its foundation was entirely foreign; the measures adopted to meet and rout it were purely indigenous”.

⁶⁸ Sewell (1900); Nilakanta Sastri (1958); Venkataramanayya (ed. Majumdar) (1960, Vol. 6:271–325).

empire. However, the evidence indicates that the Saṅgamas began their career under the Hoysala king, Ballala III, and were never converted to Islam.⁶⁹ We shall also see that the Vijayanagara rulers were indeed initiated into Śaivism, but not by Vidyāraṇya.

The religious culture of the Vijayanagaras and previous kingdoms was generally cosmopolitan. Inscriptions of the later Cāḷukyas and Hoysalas exhibit an almost uniform pattern, beginning with an invocatory verse in praise of Śiva, Viṣṇu, Jina or Śakti. However, this is not a characteristic of Vijayanagara inscriptions, most of which begin with a short obeisance:⁷⁰ “Salutation to Virūpākṣa”, “Salutation to Gaṇapati”, or “Salutation to Vīrabhadra”, all of which are śaiva deities.⁷¹ In general, the inscriptions mention a variety of both vaiṣṇava and śaiva deities, goddesses such as Sarasvatī, and also refer to various characters from the *Mahābhārata*. The Vijayanagara rulers extensively promoted important Hindu institutions, in endowments to Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava temples and *advaita maṭha*-s, and in the patronage of commentary on the *Veda*. But the earlier Vijayanagara rulers were essentially śaiva, and like many of the other kings and regents of previous times, were initiated by śaiva gurus.

Kāśīvilāsa Kriyāśakti Ācārya, almost certainly a Kālāmukha, is known from several inscriptions to have been the *rāja-guru* of the first two Saṅgama rulers, Harihara I and Bukka I, the founders of the Vijayanagara empire, and perhaps also of Harihara II and Devarāya I.⁷² The precise lineage of this particular Kriyāśakti is difficult to

⁶⁹ Wagoner (2000) has shown how the account of the founding of Vijayanagara and the ‘conversion’ and ‘apostasy’ of the brothers was derived from a melding together—first by N. Venkataramanayya in 1929, then elaborated by Nilakanta Sastri in 1946, and then repeated by subsequent historians—of ‘histories’ contained in two sets of texts: (i) ‘Iṣāmī’s *Futūh al-Salāṭīn*, written in Gulbarga between 1347 and 1350; Baranī’s *Ta’rīkh-i Firūz-Shāhī*, written at the Sultanate court of Delhi; *Rihlah* or *The Travels of Ibn-Baṭṭūṭa*, written in 1354; (ii) *Rājakāla-nirṇaya*, *Vidyāraṇya-kārajñāna*, *Vidyāraṇya-vṛttānta*, and *Vidyāraṇya-śaka*, written in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The latter set of texts is particularly unreliable historically. The *Vidyāraṇya-kārajñāna* contains distinct motifs in common with other texts, notably the *Pratāparudra Carītram* and *Kōil Oḷugu*, indicating a common source for the accounts.

⁷⁰ See UVAT 1985.

⁷¹ In two records, obeisance to Śrī Rāmānuja is found, and in some other records only the name of the deity is mentioned, such as Śrī Viṭṭhala and Śrī Tiruveṅkaḷanātha. Only thirteen inscriptions contain an invocatory verse, two invoking Jina, nine invoking Śiva, one praising Viṣṇu, and one invoking both Śiva and Mādhava (Rajasekhara 1985:104).

⁷² Only one inscription contradicts this: in 1396 Khaṇḍeya Rāya Khaleśvara Devayya is called *rāja-guru* (Saletore 1935:39 fn. 29).

determine. He is also referred to as *Rāyarājaguru-maṇḍalācārya* (Rama Rao 2000:44). There were two other Kālāmukha gurus, Kriyāśakti Deva and Kriyāśakti Paṇḍita, who headed two of the five Kālāmukha *maṭha*-s in Balligāme in 1113 (Saletore 1935:39).⁷³ Although Kriyāśakti is also a common name for Pāśupatas (Lorenzen 1991:161–164), it seems that this Kriyāśakti (Kāśīvilāsa) was a Kālāmukha of the *Śakti-pariṣad* branch of that order, *kriyāśakti* referring to an office rather than a personal name. As revealed in a stone inscription to Bukka, dated 1368, and two other inscriptions of 1347 (Verghese 1995:8), Kāśīvilāsa Kriyāśakti was also the guru of one Mādhavamantrin,⁷⁴ who was the great minister of Mārappa, one of the five Saṅgama brothers (Saletore 1935:33 fn. 2). Between 1347 and 1442 at least three different Kālāmukha Kriyāśakti gurus are mentioned in Vijayanagara literary and epigraphic sources, namely Kāśīvilāsa, Vāṇīvilāsa and Candrabhūṣaṇa.⁷⁵ After the reign of Devarāya II (1424–1446) there are no further references to Kālāmukha gurus.

The tutelary deity of both the Kālāmukhas and the earlier Vijayanagara rulers was Virūpākṣa, who was housed in the Kālāmukha Koḍiya (or Kōṭi) *maṭha* at Balligāve, and not in the royal temple of Vijayanagara at Pampā-kṣetra (Saletore 1935:38–39), which housed Pampādevī, originally a local goddess, who had become the consort of Virūpākṣa. The *Prakāśikā* of Cannibhaṭṭa,⁷⁶ who was at the Vijayanagara court, refers to Vijayanagarī and Virūpākṣa as different places, Virūpākṣa having probably been derived from the name of the deity (Thakur 1961:527). All the copper-plate records from

⁷³ See *Epigraphia Carnatica* VII (Shikapura), 99, p. 67.

⁷⁴ There are several Mādhavas (who are not to be confused with the *vaiṣṇava* dualist Madhva), whose identities are examined below

⁷⁵ Kriyāśakti is mentioned as the *kula-guru* of Harihara II in a copper-plate grant of 1378. *Rāja-guru* Vāṇīvilāsa Kriyāśakti is referred to in a record of 1379. In two copper-plate grants (of 1398 and 1399) Harihara II is praised as the worshipper of the feet of *rāja-rāja-guru-pitāmaha* Kriyāśaktideva. Devarāya I is referred to in an inscription of 1410 as having received supreme knowledge by the favour of *rāja-guru* Kriyāśakti, who is also mentioned in a grant made in the same year by Vijaya Bhūpati, Devarāya's son. In 1429, Harihara II made a grant to Brahmans, with Kriyāśakti at their head. Kriyāśaktideva is mentioned in a record of 1431, the last inscription referring to a 'Kriyāśakti' being in 1442, when *rāja-guru* Kriyāśakti Oḍeya is referred to. Candrabhūṣaṇa Kriyāśakti appears in the court of Devarāya II, in a work of Śrīnātha, a Telugu poet (Verghese 1995:8, 112).

⁷⁶ Most probably the author of the *Sarva-darśana-saṃgraha* (see below).

Vijayanagara end with the honorific ‘signature’ ‘Śrī Virūpākṣa’,⁷⁷ at least until 1570 (Rajasekhara 1985:103). However, after the decisive defeat of the Vijayanagaras at the battle of Tālikōta in 1565, the Āravīḍu king, Veṅkaṭa II, who was established in Penugoṇḍa, replaced ‘Śrī Virūpākṣa’ with ‘Śrī Veṅkateśa’ (the *vaiṣṇava* deity of Tirupati) as the official signature. The later Vijayanagara regents were primarily *vaiṣṇava*.⁷⁸

Whatever their personal initiation or religious inclination, like many successful politicians the Vijayanagara rulers patronised a variety of religious institutions, including Vīraśaivas,⁷⁹ followers of Madhva,⁸⁰

⁷⁷ In one example the honorific signature names both Virūpākṣa and Śrīkaṅṭhanātha (Śīva) (UVAT 1985:83).

⁷⁸ The Vijayanagara rulers remained *śaiva* up until Virūpākṣa II (1466–1485), the first Vijayanagara ruler to convert to Śrī-Vaiṣṇavism being Sāluva Narasiṃha, who usurped the throne in 1485. He was a devotee of Veṅkaṭeśvara of Tirupati (Tirumalai) and Narasiṃha of Ahobalam. Under the later Tuḷuvās the Veṅkaṭeśvara temple was built up to become the most splendid temple of the realm (Michell 1995:276). Kṛṣṇadevarāya (1509–1529) is known to have venerated Śrī-Vaiṣṇava ascetics such as Govindarāja—who is called his guru—and Veṅkaṭa Tātācārya. The Telugu *vaiṣṇava* tradition maintains that Tātācārya was the guru of Kṛṣṇadevarāya. There is also a story that Vyāsarāya temporarily occupied Kṛṣṇadevarāya’s throne during an inauspicious conjunction of planets (Nilakanta Sastri 1992:128). Kṛṣṇadevarāya’s favourite deity was Veṅkaṭeśvara of Tirupati, one of the main centres of Śrī-Vaiṣṇavism. The last Tuḷuva emperor, Sadāśiva, and his regent, Rāmarāya—whose guru was Pañcamatabhañjanam Tātācārya—also owed their primary allegiance to Śrī-Vaiṣṇavism. Patronage for *śaiva* institutions seems to have more or less ceased under Sadāśiva and Rāmarāya, the last of the Vijayanagara rulers (Verghese 1995:9; Champakalakshmi 1996:343).

⁷⁹ The Vīraśaivas, also called Līṅgāyats, were widely active in the Vijayanagara period, particularly in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The most important figure in the development of Vīraśaivism was Basava, who was minister to the Kalacūri king Bijjala from 1162–1167. The most important Vīraśaiva *maṭha*-s were at Śrīsailam, Saṅgameśvaram and Ummattūr (Nilakanta Sastri 1992:129). It is known that Devarāya II patronised Līṅgāyat gurus, and some Līṅgāyats, such as the Generals Lakkaṅṇa and Camarasa, rose high in state service. Grants were made to various *jaṅgama*-s (wandering Vīraśaiva priests), and it is assumed that there were many Vīraśaiva *maṭha*-s, though there are but a few records. There is no evidence, however, to support the claim that Devarāya and his immediate successors were Vīraśaivas (Verghese 1995:8, 112, 117). For an account of contemporary Vīraśaiva renouncers (*virakta*), see Bradford (1985).

⁸⁰ Little is known about the presence of Vaiṣṇavism in Karnataka before the time of the dualist Madhva (1237–1317). (For Madhva’s dates, see Glasenapp 1992:9–11.) Madhva (Ānandatīrtha) was born in a *vaiṣṇava smārta* family, and besides accepting the *Vedasamhitā*-s as authoritative, also accepted *Mahābhārata*, Vālmiki’s *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Purāṇa*-s agreeing with these, and the entire *Pāñcarātra* (Zydenbos 2001:113, 116). The temple of Kṛṣṇa at Uḍupi, which is the centre of the Madhva school, is first

and Jainas.⁸¹ Devarāya II, although initiated into Śaivism, endowed the Śrī-Vaiṣṇava temples at Śrīraṅgam and Tirumalai, and also sponsored Jaina institutions⁸² in the imperial capital and elsewhere (Verghese 1995:9).⁸³ Besides the sects previously mentioned, there was also a significant presence of Nāths in south India during this period. Some records also seem to mention a Christian *divān* (chief minister) to Devarāya II in 1445 (Nilakanta Sastri 1992:127). Up to 10,000 Muslim horsemen were employed in Devarāya's army, and Harihara II had a mosque built in 1439 in the Muslim quarter of Vijayanagara at the behest of a Muslim patron, the warrior Ahmad Khān

mentioned in an epigraph of 1366–1367 (Ramesh 1970:300). According to tradition, Madhva appointed eight disciples to conduct worship of Kṛṣṇa at the *maṭha* founded by him at Uḍupi. This led to the founding of eight *maṭha*-s in Uḍupi, which currently function as branch *maṭha*-s of the main *maṭha*, known as the Kṛṣṇa *maṭha* (Nilakanta Sastri 1992:121–122). However, the tradition was primarily established by another group of four of his disciples: Padmanābha, Narahari, Mādhava and Akṣobhyatūrtha. These disciples were succeeded by Jayatūrtha and his successors, who were the most influential group of Madhva's adherents. This lineage bifurcated around 1412, the younger division further bifurcating around 1435, resulting in three branches, known as the Vyāsarāya, Rāghavendra-svāmī and Uttarādi *maṭha*-s (Verghese 1995:113). The Madhva sect is currently the largest *vaiṣṇava* sect in Karnataka State (Siauve 1957:iv).

⁸¹ Bukka I was behind the Jaina-Vaiṣṇava accord of 1368, which specifically mentions, along with others, the Jainas of the Penugoṇḍa Nāḍu. It seems that this charter was necessary as the Jainas appear to have been subject to considerable harassment in the latter half of the fourteenth century (Desai 1957:161, 402). There are very few records of the Saṅgamas that mention new constructions, the earliest of them dating to 1385 and recording the construction of a *caityālaya* for the Jina, Kuntu Nātha, the seventeenth Tirthaṅkara (*Archaeological Survey of India: South Indian Inscriptions* [ASI], Vol. 1, no. 152, pp. 153–160). This was on behalf of a general of Harihara II, Irugappa Daṇḍanāyaka—perhaps the greatest patron of the Jainas amongst Vijayanagara officials—who was a pupil of Puṣpasena, and is also associated with other Jaina centres, such as Śravaṇa Beḷgoḷa ('white tank of the Jainas') and Tiruparuttikunṟu (Nilakanta Sastri 1992:129).

⁸² A record of 1426, issued on the order of Devarāya II for the erection of a *caityālaya* to Pārśvanātha (ASI, Vol. 1, No. 153), reveals that state aid was being given to Jainas, who nevertheless were on the decline both politically and numerically (Rajasekhara 1985:106). Nevertheless, during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Jainism was adhered to by large sections of the population, and all over the south Karnataka region many Jaina *basti*-s were restored (Ramesh 1970:300). During this period the main Jaina strongholds were Kāñcī, Śravaṇa Beḷgoḷa and the Tuḷuva area (south-west Karnataka) (Nilakanta Sastri 1992:129).

⁸³ During this period, although little is heard of Buddhism, there is a reference by a Javanese poet in 1362 to Buddhist monks "living at six monasteries in Kāñcīpuram", indicating that Buddhism continued to be practised (Sewell and Aiyangar 1932:195 [*Memoirs of the Batavian Society of Arts* LIV, 1902]).

(Rajasekhara 1985:107; Wagoner 1999:250). Kṛṣṇadevarāya and his successor, Acyutarāya, although converted to Śrī-Vaiṣṇavism,⁸⁴ gave significant gifts and endowments to both *vaiṣṇava* and *śaiva* temples,⁸⁵ including some in Kumbhakonam, notably the *vaiṣṇava* Śāraṅgapāṇi, Rāmasvāmī and Cakrapāṇi temples, and the *śaiva* Ādi Kumbheśvara temple.⁸⁶ The political adaptation of Vijayanagara rulers to religious situations is well illustrated by the policy of Rāmarāya, the last of the Vijayanagaras, who allowed mosques to be built, and refused to heed the advice of his brother, Tirumala Rāmarāya, and other Hindu subjects, who wished to prevent cow-slaughter in the Muslim quarter (Turukavāḍa). Further, he had the *Koran* placed before himself in the Audience Hall, so that Muslim soldiers would feel more comfortable making obeisance before him. The Vijayanagaras and the Nāyakas also made substantial endowments to the *darga*-s (tombs) of Muslim saints, where miracles were believed to be performed (Nilakanta Sastri 1992:127).

Having considered the Vijayanagaras' general religious orientation, the *śaiva* initiation of the early rulers by Kālāmukha *rāja-guru*-s, and the patronage they extended to various traditions, we now turn

⁸⁴ There is a claim that a sage of the Madhva sect, Vyāsarāya (Vyāsātīrtha), was the *rāja-guru* of Śāluva Narasiṃha and of the Tuḷuvas, Vīra Narasiṃha, Kṛṣṇadevarāya and Acyutarāya. Eleven *samādhi*-s (known as *br̥mādvana*-s) of Madhva saints are to be found at Vijayanagara, indicating their influence there between around 1324 to 1623. Vyāsarāya was a significant presence in the courts of Śāluva Narasiṃha and the Tuḷuva rulers—down to Acyutarāya—from around 1499 until his death in 1539. Although Kṛṣṇadevarāya and Acyutarāya are known to have venerated Vyāsarāya, there is little supporting evidence for the claim that Vyāsarāya was a *rāja-guru*. There is another claim that Virūpākṣa II was a Śrī-Vaiṣṇava. However, both of these suppositions are principally based on accounts to be found in sectarian hagiographic works (Verghese 1995:8–9, 113–114).

⁸⁵ Kṛṣṇadevarāya repaired the Virūpākṣa temple at Haṃpe soon after his succession, and made gifts to the *śaiva* temples at Tiruvaṅṅāmalai, Cidambaram, Kālahasti, Śrīsailam and Amarāvati. Gifts were also given to the *vaiṣṇava* temples at Kāñcī, Tirupati, Siṃhācalam and Ahōbālam. Amongst those in his service were *smārta*-s, Jainas and *vaiṣṇava*-s (Nilakanta Sastri 1992:126). Acyutarāya, on the occasion of his coronation, gave an equal number of villages to the temples of Ekāmbaranātha and Varadarāja at Kāñcī.

⁸⁶ This temple was built during the Vijayanagara period and hosts a twelve-yearly Mahāmāgham festival, when bathing in the temple tank during the month of *Māgha* is equivalent to a bath in all the holy rivers of India, mirroring the annual bath at the Māgh Melā at Prayāga. A *vaiṣṇava maṭha*, first attached to the Śāraṅgapāṇi temple in the seventeenth century, has become an important *vaiṣṇava* pontifical seat in south India.

specifically to their founding and patronage of a new orthodox *śaiva* institution at Śṛṅgerī.

6.4 *The Saṅgamas' patronage of the Śṛṅgerī maṭha and its pontiffs*

Crucial to our inquiry into the history of the Daśanāmī order is the origin of the monastic tradition at Śṛṅgerī. In this section, an attempt will be made to disentangle epigraphic evidence from tradition, in order to establish the identity of the most important figures in the earliest decades of the *maṭha*, namely its first three pontiffs (Vidyātūrtha, Bhāratūtūrtha and Vidyāraṇya), Sāyaṇa (the commentator on the *Veda*-s), and at least two individuals named Mādhava (one of whom is often mistakenly identified with Vidyāraṇya). We have surveyed the importance and influence of various Śaiva-Siddhāntin *maṭha*-s and lineages, and how the *Veda* was studied, but with foremost authority bestowed upon the *Āgama*-s. In this and the following section, it will be seen how the the pontiffs patronised by the early Vijayanagaras at Śṛṅgerī were essentially representatives of a new, orthodox, *śaiva*, Brahmanical, *advaita*-Vedānta monastic tradition, 'orthodox' in respect of primarily representing Vedānta, and constituting a tradition that acknowledged its ultimate authority as deriving from the *Veda*.

We will first consider the founding of the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha* and its first pontiffs. It is well known that the Saṅgamas extended significant patronage to the *maṭha* at Śṛṅgerī. In 1346 Harihara I led his four brothers on a pilgrimage there, where they celebrated the 'festival of victory' (*vijayotsava*), the conquest of the earth from the eastern to the western shore. The inscription records grants to forty Brahmans "well-versed in the *Veda*",⁸⁷ and praise is bestowed on Vidyātūrtha *guru*, "whose friendship gained is never lost" (UVAT⁸⁸ 1985:71–73).⁸⁹ Saleore believes (1935:39–40) that Vidyātūrtha was the pontiff of

⁸⁷ The wife of the late Hoysala king Ballala III, Kikkāyitai, also participated in this ceremony and donated land. This and other evidence undermines the contention made by several historians that the Vijayanagaras conquered the Hoysalas (Kulke 1985:122).

⁸⁸ This work, on Vijayanagara inscriptions, hence referred to as UVAT, contains the text and translation of many of the inscriptions referred to in this section.

⁸⁹ See also EC VI (*Śn* 1), p. 92.

Śṛṅgerī at the time, and together with the famous Vidyāraṇya, to whom we shall return, was responsible for considerable financial aid⁹⁰ to the rulers in their military campaign, which brought on them the envy of their contemporaries, and which caused a pledge of eternal friendship to be made to the head of the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha*. Although the traditional *guru-paramparā* of the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha* records the death of Vidyātīrtha in 1333,⁹¹ several epigraphic records, from Śṛṅgerī and other places, clearly indicate that Vidyātīrtha continued to be alive at least until June 14th 1375.⁹² Saletore (1935:40) believes that Vidyātīrtha remained guru of the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha* until this date. However, in 1356 Bukka paid homage to Vidyātīrtha, and also made land grants to Bhāratīrtha and his disciples “to live and carry on their religious observances in sacred Śṛṅgerī” (UVAT 1985:70, v. 1; 72, v. 3). According to tradition, Bhāratīrtha (=Bhāratīkṛṣṇatīrtha) followed Vidyātīrtha (=Vidyāśaṅkara) as pontiff of Śṛṅgerī,⁹³ and it seems probable that Bhāratīrtha was, for some time, head of Śṛṅgerī, but perhaps under Vidyātīrtha (Rama Rao 2000:42). Bhāratīrtha is indeed described in one inscription, in so many words (UVAT 1985:116, v. 10), as the disciple of Vidyātīrtha.⁹⁴ While Vidyātīrtha appears not have left any written works, both Bhāratīrtha and Vidyāraṇya wrote several *advaita*-Vedānta texts which are considered to be important works within the Vedānta tradition.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ There is a legend (Saletore 1934, Vol. 1:142) of Vidyāraṇya bringing down a shower of gold for three and three-quarter hours.

⁹¹ See Aiyer and Sastri (1962:164). Venkataraman (1959:28) refers to Vidyātīrtha as also Vidyāśaṅkaratīrtha.

⁹² On this date (*śaka* 1298, *rākṣasa*, *āṣāḍha*, *śukla*, 15) a gift of land was made by Paṇḍarideva Oḍeya (viceroys over the Maṅgaḷūru-rājya) to Vidyātīrtha for conducting worship in the Śiva temple at Uḷayibettu in the Mangalore *iālukā*. In an inscription dated 1377, Vīra Bukka Oḍeya (Bukka I) is spoken of as having become “very great” with the assistance of Vidyātīrtha. A stone record at Śṛṅgerī of 1365 restates the founders’ friendship with Vidyātīrtha. See Saletore (1935:40) for further details of the relevant inscriptions. The evidence does not seem to exclude the possibility that Bhāratīrtha took over the *gaddī* at Śṛṅgerī after 1356, yet Vidyātīrtha continued to perform functions and receive grants.

⁹³ See Venkataraman (1959) for the details of the lives of all the pontiffs of Śṛṅgerī.

⁹⁴ According to tradition, Vidyātīrtha founded eight *maṭha*-s and installed therein eight of his disciples: Śaṅkarānanda, Saccidānanda, Sāndranda, Advaitānanda Śevadhī, Mahādeva Śiva, Advaita Sukhānanda, Śivayogī and Pratyagjyotī. Vidyāraṇya and Bhāratīrtha (Advaita Brahmānanda) remained at Śṛṅgerī (Shastry 1982:18).

⁹⁵ Bhāratīrtha wrote a commentary on the *Brahmasūtra*-s, the *Adhikaraṇamāla* (or

At Śṛṅgerī there is the splendid temple of Vidyāśaṅkara. It is the main temple of the *tīrtha*, and tradition associates it with the founding of a *maṭha* in Śṛṅgerī by Śaṅkara. Although this temple may have been erected in memory of Vidyātīrtha, the notion that the temple was either consecrated in 1356, under the supervision of Bhāratātīrtha—who granted 120 *ṛtti*-s (stipends) to various Brahmans on the occasion (ARMAD⁹⁶ [Śṛṅgerī] 1916:15)—or constructed as late as 1380 (ARMAD [Śṛṅgerī] 1933:226), has been challenged by Michell (1995). A careful consideration of both epigraphic evidence and architectural style leads Michell to the conclusion that the Vidyāśaṅkara temple, which has a *līṅga* representing Śaṅkara, was constructed in the mid-sixteenth century.⁹⁷ Inscriptions of 1390, 1430 and of the Tuḷuva period (1515–1545) refer to the deity Vidyāśaṅkara, but not to any temple. Given the abundance of inscriptions in Vijayanagara, Michell comments (1995:276) that it is indeed strange that the largest and most finely appointed temple of the area is utterly devoid of any foundational inscription. He believes that the probable reason is that the temple was sponsored and built by the pontiffs of the Śṛṅgerī *advaita maṭha* itself, in an attempt to gain prestige for their *śaiva* institution. As we have seen, from the late fifteenth century onwards the Vijayanagara regents switched their primary religious allegiance from Śaivism to Vaiṣṇavism, an allegiance also followed by family members, ministers and military commanders. This is reflected in the changed honorific signature and the erection of important new *vaiṣṇava* temple complexes in the sixteenth century (Michell 1995:276). It is suggested that, in this context, the Vidyāśaṅkara temple was built to enhance the prestige of the site. It also seems probable, given the other evidence presented so far in this book, that around the time of the construction of the temple in the mid-sixteenth century, the legend of Śaṅkara founding *pīṭha*-s may first have been disseminated.

Vaiyāsikaranamāla). The *Pañcadaśī* is attributed to both Bhāratātīrtha and Vidyāraṇya, and the *Jīvanmuktivivēka* is attributed to Vidyāraṇya (Venkataraman 1959:37–38), though the authorship of many of the texts attributed to Vidyāraṇya is problematic (see fn.126).

⁹⁶ *Annual Report of the Mysore Archaeological Department*.

⁹⁷ Epigraphs of 1346 and 1356 make no reference to any temple, and Michell doubts that a record of 1375 (ARSIE 1929, no. 460) from Kuḍupu (near Mangalore), which refers to offerings to be made to the Śaṅkaradeva temple at Śṛṅgerī, refers to the Vidyāśaṅkara temple.

According to tradition, Vidyāraṇya is connected with both the founding and the success of the Vijayanagara project (UVAT 1985:25). There are four early inscriptional references to Vidyāraṇya: in a copper-plate grant of 18th April 1336, the village of Yāraguḍi is renamed Vidyāraṇyapura (UVAT 1985:46, vv. 1–38),⁹⁸ while in a grant made shortly afterwards,⁹⁹ Harihara I is described (UVAT 1985:57, vv. 22–25)¹⁰⁰ prostrating himself at the feet of the holy ascetic Vidyāraṇya, “comparable to Lord Śiva Himself, the one of supreme austerity and devotion...”. In these inscriptions Vidyāraṇya is credited with assisting the Saṅgamas in founding Vijayanagara in 1336. However, it is almost certain that these two copper-plate grants are spurious, being backdated (ARMAD 1934:139–142; Filliozat 1973:xiv–xv; Kulke 1985:123), as are two others, one dated 1370 (?), and another dated March 23rd 1344—twelve years before Bukka became king—in which king Bukka is exalted: seated on a bejewelled throne, he shines “in Vidyā, the city established by [the sage] Vidyāraṇya” (UVAT 1985:66, vv. 14–16).

The first genuine epigraphic mention of Vidyāraṇya is dated October 25th 1375 (ARMAD Śg. 1933:226; Filliozat 1973:xxx, fn. 1). On this date a grant was made by Bukka—during the incumbency of the governance of Mangalore by Paṇḍarideva—[to] “the holy feet of Vidyāraṇya of Śṛṅgerī” (UVAT 1985:60, v. 1), who had by now, it is assumed, become pontiff of the *maṭha*.¹⁰¹ This would agree with a *kaḍḍā*¹⁰² of the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha* that states that Bhāratūṛtha died in 1374 (ARMAD Śg. 1933:226–227). The land-grant was for the feeding of Brahmans and daily offerings to Lord Vidyāśaṅkara, the deity later housed in the temple built in honour of Vidyātūrtha. Saletore (1935:41) believes inscriptions indicate that it was to Vidyātūrtha, and not to Vidyāraṇya, that the Saṅgamas credited their success,¹⁰³ even though

⁹⁸ According to this copper-plate inscription (vv. 27–28)—the ‘Bestarahalli’ grant—this was the date of Harihara’s coronation, in the presence of the god Virūpākṣa and his consort Pampā.

⁹⁹ The ‘Kāpaluru’ grant.

¹⁰⁰ See also EC (X, no. 70:241).

¹⁰¹ Other grants were made: in 1377, in the presence of Vidyāraṇya of Śṛṅgerī; in 1378, under the orders of Vidyāraṇya (UVAT 1985:89, 93).

¹⁰² A *kaḍḍā* is a long piece of cloth covered with paste, and used for records (see Shastry 1982:9–12).

¹⁰³ A copper-plate grant dated 1377 states that Bukka Oḍḍeya was born to free the land of *mleccha*-s, and became the sole lord of the earth by the grace of Vidyātūrthas-

in later tradition the honour goes to *Paramahaṃsa Parivrājakācārya* Vidyāraṇya *Śrīpāda*. Vidyāraṇya is also credited with the authorship of numerous works, but we shall see that, besides his genuine works, others are not of his authorship, but credited to him in the mistaken belief that he was named Mādhava before he took *saṃnyāsa*.

The evidence indicates that it was the triumvirate of Vidyātīrtha (Vidyāśaṅkara), Bhāratītīrtha (Bhāratīkṛṣṇatīrtha) and Vidyāraṇya who are intimately connected with the politics of the early Vijayanagaras, Vidyāraṇya perhaps awarded the *gaddī* of Śṛṅgerī as a reward for his manifestation of showers of gold, if the legend has some historical basis. This seems not improbable, given the evidence, previously reviewed, of the considerable wealth of the *śaiva maṭha*-s in previous centuries. In the aforementioned inscription of May 26th 1386 (UVAT 1985:116, vv. 10–11) the three sages are mentioned together, Bhāratītīrtha, as the disciple of Vidyātīrtha, “coming to full bloom in the rays of the sun that is sage Vidyāraṇya”.

While there is inscriptional evidence for the association of the triumvirate with the (Tuṅga) Śṛṅgerī *maṭha*, they are also all claimed by the Kuḍali *maṭha* at Śṛṅgerī (Antarkar 2001:61–62). Vidyātīrtha is also claimed by the tradition of the Kāñcī *maṭha*. The *guru-paramparā* of the *Puṇyaślokaṃjaṛī*, by Sarvajñasadāśivabodha (56th pontiff from 1524 to 1539), the earliest account of the pontiffs of the *maṭha*, states that Vidyātīrtha, a disciple of Candracūḍa,¹⁰⁴ ruled there for seventy-three years (from 1297 to 1370) as the fifty-first preceptor, retiring with his disciple, Śaṅkarānanda, to the Himalayas, where he died (Rama Rao 1931:83).¹⁰⁵ The fifty-second pontiff, according to the traditional account, was Vyāsācala Mahādevendrasarasvatī, who may have been the author of one of the early hagiographies of Śaṅkara, the *Vyāsācala-Śaṅkaravijaya* (see Ch. 5.1 fn. 8).

As previously noted, the first mention of Vidyāraṇya in connection with Śṛṅgerī is in an inscription of 1375; no earlier inscriptions at

vāmī. Another grant of 1380—which gives details of previous grants—relates that, in 1346 the five brothers (and Bukka Oḍeya in 1356) had gone to the *senior* Śrīpāda (Vidyātīrtha). Saletore (1935:41) believes this inscription and the other evidence referred to “demolishes the contention of all those who have erroneously maintained that Vidyāraṇya Śrīpāda was instrumental in the founding of the Empire of Vijayanagara”.

¹⁰⁴ Vidyātīrtha was called Sarvajñaviṣṇu, son of Śaraṅgapāṇi of Bivāraṇya, before *saṃnyāsa*. Also, Candracūḍa was previously Gaṅgeśa according to this account.

¹⁰⁵ See also Mallappa (1974:20); Kuppuswami and Seshadri (2001b:6).

Śṛṅgerī mention Vidyāraṇya, but only Bhāratīūrtha and Vidyātūrtha, who are mentioned in inscriptions, respectively, nearly thirty and nearly twenty years previously (Kulke 1985:130). In a copper-plate grant of 1380 (ARMAD 1916:57) it is recorded that Bukka had written a letter to Vidyāraṇya Śrīpāda, who was then in Banaras, requesting him to return to Virūpākṣa (Hampe). Vidyāraṇya returned to Hampe, from where he was taken to Śṛṅgerī and granted land for his maintenance, in Kikunda-nāḍu.¹⁰⁶ Cikka, the son of Harihara (Harihara II), also granted land to Vidyāraṇya, as did Harihara II, who, in 1380, confirmed all previous grants that had been made (Saletore 1935:41; Kulke 1985:133). In an inscription dated November 25th 1384, Harihara II is described as having “acquired the empire of knowledge unattained by other kings ... by the grace of Vidyāraṇya muni” (UVAT 1985:108). Harihara II is also recorded in this inscription as having made a donation to two disciples of Vidyāraṇya: Sūrappa and Kṛṣṇadeva. It was during the last two years of the reign of Bukka I, and then in the reign of Harihara II that Vidyāraṇya, most probably, was pontiff of the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha*, from October 1375 to his death on May 26th 1386.¹⁰⁷

In 1386, before he died, Vidyāraṇya was present when Harihara II made a grant, recorded on copper-plate, to Nārāyaṇa Vājapeya-yati, Narahari Somayāji and Paṇḍari Dīkṣita, who are acknowledged as “Promoters of the Commentary on the Four Vedas”. On January 29th 1386, Vidyāraṇya made a land-grant to a lay attendant for the purposes of food offerings at the temple of Gopīnātha (ARMAD 1934:139–141; UVAT 1985:111).¹⁰⁸ Shortly after Vidyāraṇya’s death,

¹⁰⁶ This particular account of Vidyāraṇya’s return from Banaras is repeated in the *Guru-vaṃśa-kāvya* and in a *kaḍita* at Śṛṅgerī (ARMAD 1933:226–227).

¹⁰⁷ The putative date of Vidyāraṇya’s succession is supported by a *kaḍita* at the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha*, which states that Bhāratīūrtha died in 1374 (ARMAD 1933:266ff.). However, the *kaḍita* records are not entirely reliable. The situation is further complicated by the existence of several other Vidyāraṇyas. One of them is mentioned at Śṛṅgerī in 1515 (ARMAD 1916:18); another is the guru of a *svāmī* at the Kuḍali *maṭha* in 1591; Vidyāraṇya is claimed by some as the founder of the Kuḍali *maṭha*; another Vidyāraṇya may have been a pontiff of the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha* at the time of Kṛṣṇadevarāya (ARMAD 1933:146). Vidyāraṇya is also claimed as the founder of the Virūpākṣa *maṭha*, as described in the Puṣpagiri *Maṭhāmnāya* (see Anantendra Sarasvati 1968:386–387); also, several gurus of the Āvaṇi *maṭha* are called Vidyāraṇya (Rama Rao 1931:91).

¹⁰⁸ A disciple of Vidyāraṇya named Śaṅkarāraṇya-Śrīpāda made an endowment to a temple at Chantāru in the Uḍupi *tālukā* in 1402 (*Annual Report on South-Indian Epigraphy* 1928:81).

Harihara II made further grants, in 1386, of land in Kikuṇḍa-nāḍu, which was named Vidyāraṇyapura in his honour (ARMAD 1933:134–146). Significantly, in an inscription dated May 3rd 1384 (UVAT 1985:102) Vidyāraṇya is referred to as Kṛiyāśakti-Vidyāraṇya,¹⁰⁹ indicating the probability that Vidyāraṇya was a Kālāmukha before his accession to the Śṛṅgerī *gaddī*, a *gaddī* that had already been occupied by Bhāratūṛtha and Vidyātūṛtha, Vedāntins who represented a new orthodox tradition. While Bhāratūṛtha's religious background is uncertain, Vidyātūṛtha was almost certainly a *maheśvara* (see below). We have seen that Vidyātūṛtha and Bhāratūṛtha are mentioned in a number of inscriptions dating from 1346. However, as Vidyāraṇya is first mentioned in 1375, it seems highly improbable that he was associated with the founding of Vijayanagara or a *maṭha*. It seems that his active role in the 1330s and 1340s was projected back from a later age (Kulke 1985:128).

Also central to this period of early Vijayanagara religious history are Sāyaṇa and Mādhava, the latter often being identified erroneously with Vidyāraṇya. Mādhava's identity is further complicated by the existence of at least one other contemporary with the same name. Concerning the identities of Mādhava and Sāyaṇa, there is an inscription (UVAT 1985:34), unfortunately undated, at the Aruḷāla-Perumāl temple at Kāñcīpuram. This record is dedicated to Sāyaṇa, of the Bhāradvāja *gotra*, Sāyaṇa being the famous commentator on the *Veda*-s. His mother Śrīmāyī is named; as are his father, Mayaṇa; his younger brother, Bhoganātha; and his elder brother, Mādhava. This Mādhava, of the Bhāradvāja *gotra*, and the brother of Sāyaṇa, is one of the great mediaeval commentators on *dharmaśāstra*, whose fame in the south stands second only to Śaṅkarācārya (Kane HDŚ, Vol.1, part 2:779). For the purposes of explication, this Mādhava will be henceforth referred to as Mādhava [B]. (Futher on in this section we will consider the identity of another Mādhava, who will be referred to as Mādhava [A].)¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ This has been interpreted by some as referring to two individuals, but the text (UVAT 1985:98, 1.1–7) seems to indicate one person, as the relevant case endings are in the singular.

¹¹⁰ The distinction between Mādhava [A] and Mādhava [B] was first clearly analysed and demonstrated by Narasimhachar (1916a; 1916b; 1917). It was further commented on by Rama Rao (1930; 1931; 1934), and subsequently endorsed by Kulke (1985).

During the middle of the fourteenth century, Mādhava [B]—sometimes referred to as Mādhava-*ācārya*—served as a minister and advisor to Bukka I.¹¹¹ According to Rama Rao (1930:703), there are five works that may be attributed with some certainty to this Mādhava, who was philosophically orientated to *advaita*.¹¹² This Mādhava [B] has also been identified with the author of the *Śaṅkara-dig-vijaya*, the most well-known of the hagiographies of Śaṅkara. In the opening verse of the ŚDV, the author pays obeisance to his guru, Vidyāūrtha. This work was originally entitled *Samkṣepa-Śaṅkara-jaya*, and in some current printed editions¹¹³ is attributed to Mādhava-Vidyāraṇya. The colophons at the conclusion of each of the sixteen chapters of the ŚDV state that the work was written by Mādhava (not Mādhava-Vidyāraṇya). But this author could not have written the text before 1650 (Sawai 1985; Bader 2000:54–55), several centuries after the time of both Mādhava [B] and Vidyāraṇya. The identification of Mādhava [B] with Vidyāraṇya has led to numerous works being wrongly attributed to Mādhava [B] (Rama Rao 1930:705–706).¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Due to the erroneous identification of Mādhava with Vidyāraṇya (see below), it has sometimes been assumed that Mādhava/Vidyāraṇya was also a minister to Harihara I, Bukka I and Harihara II (see, for example, Venkataramanaya [Majumdar] 1990, 4th edn., Vol. 6:323)

¹¹² *Pārāśarasmiti-vyākhyā* (*Pārāśaramādhavīya*), *Vyavahāra-mādhava*, *Kālamādhavīya* (*Kālanirṇaya*), *Jīvanmuktiviveka*, and *Jaiminīyanyāmālāvīstara* (which examines the *sūtras* of Jaimini). The *Pārāśaramādhavīya* and *Vyavahāra-mādhava* provide rules on *dharma*, while the *Kālamādhavīya* is concerned with the requisite timing for dharmic acts. The *Pārāśaramādhavīya* considers renunciate life, but primarily for the three lower classes of renunciators. The *Jīvanmuktiviveka* focusses on the life of the *paramahansa*, the highest type of renouncer, and is also attributed to Vidyāraṇya (see Olivelle 1977, part II:25; Vidyāraṇya 1996: Translator's Preface), owing to the frequent but problematic identification of Mādhava with Vidyāraṇya (see below). Vidyāraṇya salutes Vidyāūrtha, one of the first pontiffs of the Śrīgerī *maṭha*, in the opening stanza of this work.

¹¹³ The Ānandāśrama edition.

¹¹⁴ Such as *Vidyāmādhavīya*, *Mādhavanidāna* and *Sarva-darśana-saṃgraha*. Some scholars, such as Lorenzen (1983), have revised their former opinion (also held by Hacker 1995:ch. 1) that the author of the *Sarva-darśana-saṃgraha* and the *Śaṅkara-dig-vijaya* were one and the same person, namely Mādhava-Vidyāraṇya. The evidence indicates that Mādhava [B] was certainly not the author of the ŚDV, and probably not the author of the *Sarva-darśana-saṃgraha*, an account of the sixteen systems of philosophy that espouses *advaita* as the 'highest' philosophy. In this work it is stated both that the author is Sāyaṇa-Mādhava, and also Mādhava, "the Kaustubha-jewel of the milk-ocean of the fortunate Sāyaṇa" (Mādhava-Āchārya 1882:1.3–4). It has been suggested that this work may have been by Mādhava [C], also known as Māyaṇa, one of the two sons of Sāyaṇa, who was neither Mādhava [A] (see

In his seven known works,¹¹⁵ which include his Vedic commentaries, Sāyaṇa also provides corroborating information concerning his family, mentioning his parents, his younger brother Bhoganātha, and his elder brother, Mādhava [B]. Sāyaṇa¹¹⁶ first lived at the court of Prince Kampa (a younger brother of Harihara I), in the east of Vijayanagara, and then, following Kampa's death, served as advisor and minister to his young son, Saṅgama II, who became ruler of the eastern province. Mādhava [B] became the *mahā-mantrin* (Kane Vol.1, pt.2:789), and Bhoganātha a minister-chamberlain for Saṅgama II (UVAT 1985:80–83).¹¹⁷ This latter inscription, of 1356, was composed by Bhoganātha, who states his veneration for the preceptor Śrīkaṅṭhanātha,¹¹⁸ a *śaiva advaitin* who lived in the early twelfth century (Suryanarayana Sastri 1930:1–35; Nagaswamy 1982:97). This Śrīkaṅṭha, who is also referred to in an inscription as a Kālāmukha,¹¹⁹ was most probably the *rāja-guru* of Vikrama Cōḷa (c.1121) (Rajamanickam 1964:229; Nagaswamy 1998:35).¹²⁰

below), governor of Banavase (and minister to Harihara I, Bukka I and Harihara II), nor Mādhava [B], minister to Bukka I (Rama Rao 1930:714; Venkataraman 1959:34). The author of the SDS (1.2) states that he daily follows his guru Sarvajña-Viṣṇu, son of Śāraṅgapāṇi, who knows all the *Āgama*-s, thus ruling out Mādhavas [A] and [B]. However, a most insightful analysis by Thakur (1961) indicates that the author of the SDS was Cannibhaṭṭa (Cinna or Cennu), son of Sahajasarvajña Viṣṇu Bhaṭṭopādhyaya, who was also a preceptor to Sāyaṇa and Mādhava [B]. Cannibhaṭṭa was a younger contemporary of Sāyaṇa and Mādhava, author of a sub-commentary on the *Pañcapādikāvivarāṇa*, and worked in the Vijayanagara court under the patronage of Harihara Mahārāja. The SDS shares many passages and quotations from Cannibhaṭṭa's other works. Thakur suggests that the plan of the work may have originated with Mādhava, and been written by Cannibhaṭṭa, with the help of Sāyaṇa and Mādhava.

¹¹⁵ *Subhāṣita-sudhānidhi*, *Prāyaścitta-sudhānidhi* (*Karmavipāka*), *Alankāra-sudhānidhi*, *Dhātuvṛtti*, *Puruṣārtha-sudhānidhi*, *Yajñatantra-sudhānidhi*.

¹¹⁶ 'Sāyaṇa' also was not an uncommon name during the period under consideration. Filliozat (1973:xxx) records six different Sāyaṇas from inscriptions, son of Harihara I, son of Kampa I, son of Bukka I, son of Mārappa, son of Kampa II, and minister of Kampana I.

¹¹⁷ Rama Rao (1930:711), however, doubts that Mādhava served Saṅgama II, believing that, at Vijayanagara, Mādhava was only ever a minister of Bukka I.

¹¹⁸ This Śrīkaṅṭha (nātha) is not to be confused with the Śrīkaṅṭha who was the preceptor of the Pāśupatas.

¹¹⁹ *Epigraphia Carnatica* VII (Shikapur), 99 (1113 CE).

¹²⁰ Śrīkaṅṭha, like Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva (Ānandatūṛtha), commented on the *Brahmasūtra* of Bādarāyaṇa, and spearheaded the non-dualist Śivādvaitha school, which is particularly important in the south, and is based on his commentary, the *Śrīkaṅṭha-bhāṣya*. These four philosophers could be considered as the most influential

Having served *mahāmaṇḍaleśvara-s* in the eastern provinces, Sāyaṇa and Mādhava then appear to have moved to Vijayanagara and both became ministers to Bukka I, but in different capacities.

Sāyaṇa lived to see Bukka II's son, Harihara II, enthroned as king of Vijayanagara, in 1377, and died during the latter's reign. Sāyaṇa's guru was Vidyātūrtha. In Sāyaṇa's Vedic commentaries and some other later works, the term "Mādhavīya" occurs in the colophon. However, it is clear from the introductory verses of the *Puruṣārtha-sudhānidhi* and the *Yajurveda-bhāṣya* that Mādhava was approached by Bukka I to write the texts, but Mādhava entrusted their composition to his younger brother, Sāyaṇa (Rama Rao 1930:709). There is also no evidence, apart from a copper-plate *inām* of dubious authenticity,¹²¹ that different sections of the *Veda-bhāṣya* were written by a team of Brahmans under the guidance of Sāyaṇa. A reference was made previously to three Brahmans who received grants at Śrīgerī in 1386 for their commentaries on the four *Veda-s*. However, Sāyaṇa does not acknowledge anyone's assistance in his works (Kulke 1985:131), and this gift to Brahmans does not necessarily indicate that Sāyaṇa was assisted in his commentaries. The works of Sāyaṇa and Mādhava [B] also indicate that Mādhava [B] was also a minister to Bukka II (one of the three sons of Harihara II), who asked both Sāyaṇa and Mādhava to compose treatises on the *Veda-s*, *Purāṇa-s* and *Smṛti-s*.

Besides Mādhava [B], it is also apparent that there was another Mādhava, [A], who was governor of Banavasi (Goa), and the author of *Tātparyadīpikā*, a commentary on the *Sūtasamhitā*. On his instruction, Brahmans were brought from Andhra Pradesh and Kashmir, and settled with land in Karnataka (Rama Rao 1930:709 fn. 1). From several inscriptions, including one from Goa, dated 1391, it

philosophers up until the fourteenth century, their systems being the subject of a commentary, *Catur-mata-leśa-saṅgraha*, by Appaya Dīkṣitā, who flourished in the latter half of the sixteenth century. Śrīkaṇṭha was a contemporary, or near contemporary, of Rāmānuja, with whom he had many philosophical similarities, both of their systems being variants of *viśiṣṭādvaita*. But for minor details, the philosophy of Śrīkaṇṭha is essentially *advaita*. Śrīkaṇṭha is associated with Cidambaram, though may have come from the north (Suryanarayana Sastri 1930:16, 28, 73, 285). He may have come from the Gōlakī *maṭha* (ARE 1936, para. 19 [1986:67]). The significance of support by the Vijayanagara rulers for particular *advaita* traditions is discussed below.

¹²¹ The authenticity of this copper-plate, of 1386, is doubted as it refers to Vidyāraṇya as living some months after his death (Rama Rao 1930:711).

is known that his parents were Mācāmbikā and Cauṇḍabhaṭṭa; that he served as minister to Harihara I, Bukka I and Harihara II, from 1347 to 1391; and that his guru was Kāśīvilāsa Kriyāśakti (Filliozat 1973:136).¹²² Mādhava [A] was also minister to prince Mārappa, the younger brother of Harihara I. In 1368, this Mādhava *mantrin* is twice described in inscriptions as “depending on king Bukka’s lotus feet”, something that a *saṃnyāsī* would never state. This Mādhava [A] also clearly never became Vidyāraṇya (Kulke 1985:128).

According to tradition at Śṛṅgerī (Venkataraman 1959:28–39; Sawai 1985), Sāyaṇa is the elder brother of Vidyāraṇya, and this and other references are explained by claiming that Vidyāraṇya was called Mādhava before his taking *saṃnyāsa* from Vidyāsaṅkaratīrtha (=Vidyātīrtha), the tenth *jagadguru* of Śṛṅgerī, Vidyāraṇya becoming the twelfth *jagadguru*, after Bhāratīrtha. The editors of UVAT (1985:33), in accord with the Śṛṅgerī tradition,¹²³ also maintain that Sāyaṇa was named Bhāratīrtha after *saṃnyāsa* and that the Mādhava *ācārya* [B] who became Vidyāraṇya was different from the Mādhava *mantrin* [A] of the Āṅgīrasa *gotra* who was Provincial Governor of the area that is now Goa. However, the claim of tradition that Mādhava [B] became Vidyāraṇya is impossible, not least because Mādhava [B] praises, as his guru, Bhāratīrtha, who, according to tradition, would have been his brother with a new name.

While there seems to be no doubt that there were at least two Mādhavas (one of the Āṅgīrasa *gotra* [Mādhava A], and the other of the Bhāradvāja *gotra* [Mādhava B]), both of whom were closely involved with the Vijayanagara rulers, it is apparent from a careful consideration of both the literary and the epigraphic evidence that neither of the Mādhavas changed their name to become Vidyāraṇya, the *saṃnyāsī* (Rama Rao 1930:712–717; Filliozat 1973:135; Kulke 1985:129–132).¹²⁴ In the five authentic works of Mādhava [B], partic-

¹²² Inscription no.146.

¹²³ See Venkataraman (1959:29).

¹²⁴ One of the most useful studies of the Mādhava-Vidyāraṇya identity issue is presented by Rama Rao (1930; 1931; 1934; 2000). See also Raghavan (1976). Besides Mādhava [A] and [B], Vidyāraṇya has also been identified with Vidyāmādhava—son of Nārāyaṇapūjyapāda of the Vasiṣṭha *gotra*, author of *Vidyāmādhavīya*, an astronomical work—and with Mādhava, son of Indukara, author of the medical work of the sixteenth century, *Mādhava-vidāna* (Rama Rao 1931:82). Another Mādhava, Veṅkaṭa Mādhava, wrote a commentary on the *Rg Veda*, the *Rgārtha-dīpikā*, a work composed on the banks of the Kāverī river at the time of the inauguration of the

ular features are common: invocatory verses addressed to Bhāratīrtha and Vidyāīrtha, and references to his first work, *Pārāsarasṁṛtivyākhyā*, in which full details of his parentage are given. He also calls himself a minister (*amātya*), and the bearer of the burden of sovereignty of Bukka (Kulke 1985:128). It is also apparent that Mādhava [B] was a married householder and a performer of Vedic sacrifices. In one inscription of 1377 (*Mysore Archaeological Report* 1915:42), Māyaṅṅa the son of Mādhava is mentioned, while the *Śivatattva-ratnākara* (dated to 1709) describes Mādhava as having sons and grandsons (Rama Rao 1931:82).

Throughout the works of Mādhava [B], it is Bukka I who is mentioned as his patron; no mention is made of either Harihara I or Harihara II. The inscriptions mentioning Vidyāraṅya, however, are all of the reign of Harihara II. Moreover, the tradition relating to Vidyāraṅya, including the narratives of Nuniz and Ferishta, depicts Vidyāraṅya as having taken *saṁnyāsa* before Bukka I came to the throne, and as having gained the throne for Harihara I by dint of his spiritual power. Also, according to the literary tradition of the *maṭha-s*, Vidyāraṅya was a poor Brahman, unable to marry.¹²⁵ The *Vidyāraṅya-kārajñā*, *Śivatattva-ratnākara* and *Guru-vaṁśa-kāvya* also speak of Vidyāraṅya setting Harihara on the throne, yet Mādhava makes no mention of either Harihara I or Harihara II. The married Mādhava (who performs Vedic sacrifice, necessarily with his wife) and the *saṁnyāsī* Vidyāraṅya cannot be the same person in the same period of time, in the reign of Bukka I, or later.

Further, Mādhava [B] refers to himself as Mādhava in all his works. If he had become Vidyāraṅya at any time, he would have been prohibited, according to the rules of *saṁnyāsa*, from referring to himself by his pre-*saṁnyāsa* name. Yet Mādhava never refers to himself anywhere, even by allusion, as Vidyāraṅya. Nor is an identity made between Mādhava and Vidyāraṅya in the works by the other Mādhavas previously referred to, nor in several other works from the next couple of centuries that refer to either Mādhava or Vidyāraṅya. As already observed, Sāyaṅṅa lived into the reign of Harihara II, yet

Cōḷa empire in the tenth century under Parāntaka I (Nilakanta Sastri 1992:124); and yet another Mādhava, Mādhavatīrtha, a disciple of Ānandatīrtha, became a *vaiṣṇava* pontiff around 1333 (Sewell and Aiyangar 1932:184 [EI, vi, 260]).

¹²⁵ According to the *Maṅṁmaṅjarībhedīnī* and *Guru-vaṁśa-kāvya* (Rama Rao 1934:804).

Sāyaṇa refers to his brother as a performer of Vedic sacrifices, and not as a *saṃnyāsī*, nor as Vidyāraṇya. Also, as previously observed, Mādhava invokes Bhāratīūrtha as his guru, yet Vidyāraṇya does not once refer to Bhāratīūrtha. Vidyāraṇya, in his works,¹²⁶ instead acknowledges Vidyātūrtha and his guru Śaṅkarānanda.¹²⁷ Despite the fact that Vidyāraṇya's importance and role in the affairs of Vijayanagara was most probably projected back from a later time, it is clear from inscriptional and other evidence that Vidyātūrtha, Bhāratīūrtha, Vidyāraṇya, Sāyaṇa and Mādhava [B] played a highly significant role in the Hindu religious revival under the Vijayanagaras, primarily represented in the *advaita*-Vedānta tradition established at Śṛṅgerī. We now turn to the issue of Śaṅkara's putative involvement with that tradition.

6.5 Śaṅkara and the founding of the Śṛṅgerī maṭha

Tradition associates the founding of Śṛṅgerī and the other main *maṭha*-s with Śaṅkara. However, an examination of Śaṅkara's hagiographies, undertaken in the previous chapter, revealed that there is no evidence for this in the earlier hagiographies. We will see that inscriptional evidence also reveals no connection between Śaṅkara

¹²⁶ *Anubhūti-prakāśa*, *Vivaraṇa-prameya-saṅgraha* and *Pañcadaśī*. The authorship of the *Pañcadaśī* is slightly problematic, as the author first pays salutations to the lotus feet of his guru, Śrī Śaṅkarānanda (Vidyāraṇya 1975:1.1). According to tradition (Venkatraman 1959:52), Śaṅkarānandabhāratī was the sixteenth pontiff of Śṛṅgerī, taking *saṃnyāsa* in 1428, and occupying the *gaddī* from 1448 to 1454. We have seen that Vidyāraṇya died in 1386, so for his guru to have been Śaṅkarānanda would have been impossible. Numerous other works are attributed to Vidyāraṇya (see UVAT 1985:23–24). Vidyāraṇya's literary activity was exaggerated in later times, first occurring in the *Vidyāraṇya-kārajñāna*, a work of semi-prophecy, composed between around 1664—after the collapse of the Vijayanagara empire—and 1709. In this work Vidyāraṇya is credited with initially composing numerous works that were then written by Sāyaṇa and Mādhava, including the *Veda-bhāṣya*. This attribution to Vidyāraṇya is repeated in the eighteenth century *Guru-vaṅśa-kāvya*. Vidyāraṇya's hagiography is contained in the *Maṇi-maṅjari-bhedinī*, where he is identified with Mādhava and credited with the authorship of many works. Mādhava's identity with Vidyāraṇya is propounded in several other works emanating from the Śṛṅgerī and Kāñcī *maṭha*-s (Rama Rao 1931:80).

¹²⁷ There is one tradition that links Vidyāraṇya with Tantra, indicated in a list of the heads of the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha*, in the *Gadyāvalī*, a work on Tantric ritual by Nijātmaprakāśayogindra (Antarkar 2001:48).

and either the founding or early history of any *maṭha*. We have seen that the early pontiffs of Śṛṅgerī were *śaiva*, and we will also see that the Kāñcīpuram *maṭha* appears to have been consistently *śaiva*. Śrīkaṇṭha(nātha), a *rāja-guru* and an important *advaita* Śaiva-Siddhānta philosopher in the twelfth century, will be again mentioned in this section. It will be suggested that he can be seen as a transitional figure in the shift from Āgamic Śaivism—represented by the previously powerful Kālāmukhas, Mattamayūras and Śaiva-Siddhāntins—to a new Brahmanical *advaita* institution that was established at Śṛṅgerī. Śaṅkara has been shown to be *vaiṣṇava*, and it will become evident that his immediate disciples were also *vaiṣṇava*. It will also be argued that it is improbable that Śaṅkara inaugurated either *devī* worship or the *smārta* tradition at Śṛṅgerī, with which tradition credits him. Finally, it will be suggested that Śaṅkara's projection onto the Śṛṅgerī project, and the attachment of specific legends to his name concerning the founding of *maṭha*-s and the instigation of an order of ascetics, developed in a three-stage process.

We will first consider the earliest evidence of any *maṭha* at Śṛṅgerī. The two oldest inscriptions at Śṛṅgerī, found in the Pārśvanātha *basti*, date from 1150 and 1160. The first praises the *Jīna-śāsana*, and the second contains information about a donation from Jaina merchants, indicating that Jainism was established in Śṛṅgerī in the twelfth century (Kulke 1985:132). It is known that the South Kanara district of Karnataka was long a stronghold of Jainism, which received considerable patronage after the advent of Hoysala power (Ramesh 1970:298). A Hoysala feudatory, Lokanāthadevarasa, was a Jaina, and an inscription from 1334 records land-grants to the *basti* of Śāntinātha, built at Kārakaḷa by the disciples of the Jaina preceptor Kumudacandra-bhaṭṭarakadeva. The Ālupa ruler, Kulāśekhara III, was also an active supporter of Jainism, as shown by inscriptions dated 1384 at Mūḍabidure, when he made grants to the Jaina *tīrthankara* Pārśvanātha, and worshipped at the feet of the Jaina preceptor Cārukīrti. However, the Ālupas were predominantly *śaiva*, as were the early Vijayanagara rulers.

The first record of any kind concerning an *advaita* presence at Śṛṅgerī dates to 1346 (UVAT 1985:71–73), an inscription in which obeisance to Śambhu (Śiva) and Vidyātīrtha is stated. It records the visit of the five brothers—on the occasion of the *vijayotsava*—and the donation of land for the maintenance of Bhāratīrtha (who, as we have seen, is an *advaita-vedāntin*), his disciples and forty Brahmins.

But this inscription only refers to Śṛṅgerī as a *tīrtha*, and not as a having a *maṭha*. The first mention of a *maṭha* at Śṛṅgerī is in 1356, when Bukka I donated villages for the maintenance of those at the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha* (Kulke 1985:132).¹²⁸ While we cannot be certain that there was no *advaita maṭha* at Śṛṅgerī much before 1356, some circumstantial evidence may indicate the former presence of Jainas, as Bhāratīrtha is praised as having demolished the teachings of the Jainas and Buddhists.¹²⁹

An outstanding puzzle is the precise sectarian situation at Śṛṅgerī just before the founding of a *maṭha*. As mentioned previously, Vidyātirtha left no written works. But in both texts and inscriptions, Vidyātirtha is referred to as a Maheśvara,¹³⁰ which may possibly indicate a Śaiva-Siddhāntin. However, as noted at the beginning of this section, Bhāratīrtha did leave a text, which is *advaita-vedāntin* in perspective. The exact processes which led to the establishing of an *advaita-vedānta* monastic tradition are hard to determine.

From the time of the first recorded Vijayanagara grant to Śṛṅgerī, in 1346, until Vidyāraṇya's death in 1386, donations to the *advaita maṭha* increased enormously, multiplying approximately five-fold in that period, indicating the importance of Śṛṅgerī to the Vijayanagara rulers.¹³¹ However, neither the grant of 1380, previously referred to, confirming all previous grants, nor any other inscription, give any indication that there was any kind of institution at the site receiving any kind of income prior to the first grants in 1346. The Śṛṅgerī

¹²⁸ Tradition credits Vidyāraṇya with establishing eight *advaita maṭha*-s, but this remains uncorroborated. Besides Śṛṅgerī two other *advaita maṭha*-s are known from records, one being the Vidyāraṇya-svāmī *maṭha*, centred on a well, and located to the west of the Virūpākṣa temple at Vijayanagara. This *maṭha* was associated with the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha* and is referred to in an inscription of Kṛṣṇadevarāya from 1515, but the date of the foundation of the *maṭha* is uncertain and disputed. The head of the *maṭha* in the 1990s, Narasiṃhabhāratī, traces his lineage from Vidyāraṇya. The other *advaita maṭha* is the Cintāmaṇi *maṭha* in Ānegondi, believed to have been established in the early fourteenth century (Verghese 1995:116).

¹²⁹ Kulke (1985:133); ARMAD (1933:211–218, 1.66ff.).

¹³⁰ See Mallappa (1974:28): Vidyātirtha is referred to as a Maheśvara in EC VI, Śg 2, 5, 12, 14, 24, 28; in the works of Sāyaṇa; at the end of every chapter of *Anubhūti Prakāśa*; the beginning and end of every part of the *Veda-bhāṣya*; at the beginning and end of *Jīvanmuktiviveka*; and in Śaṅkarānanda's *Bṛhadāraṇya-ḍīpikā*.

¹³¹ In the first ten years, from 1346 to 1356, the income from the villages at Śṛṅgerī amounted to between 250 and 360 *gadyāna*-s (=610 g.). During Vidyāraṇya's stay at Śṛṅgerī, income was between 1419 and 1871 *gadyāna*-s (Kulke 1985:133).

maṭha continued to be endowed with grants by the later Saṅgamas, Bukka II giving an endowment for the maintenance of the library there in 1406. More land was given by Devarāya II in 1431, and by Mallikārjuna in 1451. The Nāyakas of Keḷadi (Shimoga district) established an independent state from 1499 to 1763, and continued the support of the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha* originally instituted by the Vijayanagaras (Shastry 1987).

As we have seen, the Vijayanagara inscriptions bestow praise on various deities, including Śiva, Gaṇeśa, Virūpākṣa and Rāmacandra; and the *ācārya*-s Śrīkaṇṭhanātha, Vidyātīrtha, Bhāratīrtha and Vidyāraṇya. Given that the eulogies in many of the inscriptions are quite lengthy, and considering that Śaṅkara is so intimately connected to Śṛṅgerī in later tradition, it is remarkable that Śaṅkarācārya is not mentioned in any inscription. In an inscription of 1346 praise is bestowed on Vidyātīrtha, Bhāratīrtha, and on Vidyāraṇya's knowledge of *advaya* (*advaita*) (UVAT 1985:116, v. 10), yet Śaṅkara, later so particularly associated with *advaita*, is not mentioned. In a *kaḍḍa* copy of Harihara's inscription of 1380, Bhāratīrtha is praised for defeating Bhaṭṭa (Kumārila), but here also no mention is made of Śaṅkara (Kulke 1985:134), who, as recalled, defeated Kumārila in debate in the hagiographies. Shastry (1982:7) also comments on the *Śrī-puruṣottama-bhāratī-carita*, the manuscript of which is to be found in the archives of Śṛṅgerī. Composed by "Viṣṇu", and belonging to the fifteenth century, the first three chapters give an account of the *ācārya*-s of Śṛṅgerī, from Vidyāśaṅkara to Candrasēkharabhāratī II, and the other nine chapters deal with Puruṣottamabhāratī, until his assumption of the pontificate at Haṃpe, and his taking over the administration of the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha*. Here also, remarkably, no mention is made of Śaṅkara.

It was suggested in Chapter 5 that Śaṅkara was relatively unknown during his life-time, and probably for several centuries after, as there is no mention of him in Buddhist or Jaina sources for some centuries; nor is he mentioned by other important philosophers of the ninth and tenth centuries, notably the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas, *śaiva* adherents of a philosophy favoured, as we have seen, by the Kālāmukha *rāja-guru*-s. Potter (1977, Vol. 1:15) remarks that even the *advaita* system scarcely receives any mention by Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas until the time of Śrīharṣa (c.1075–1125), who critiques Nyāya and espouses Vedānta.

Our brief survey of the inscriptional evidence from Śṛṅgerī and Kāñcī also reveals no trace of the name of Śaṅkara, even in the four-

teenth century, after the founding of the Śrīṅgerī *maṭha*. It has been argued that Śaṅkara's religious orientation was distinctly *vaiṣṇava*. However, the prime religious orientation of the early Saṅgamas, their *rāja-guru*-s, and the early *advaita* pontiffs, was distinctly *śaiva*. We have seen that Vidyātīrtha, the first pontiff claimed by Śrīṅgerī to have any genuine inscriptional reference, is also referred to as a Maheśvara, a sect which, as we have seen, was commented on by Śaṅkara with particular condemnation.

If we examine the works of Śaṅkara's immediate disciples it is also apparent, as first observed by Hacker (1995:38), that they and nearly all the early *advaita* philosophers up to the tenth century were *vaiṣṇava*, "in a restricted sense of the word". This is apparent from the introductory invocations (*maṅgalācaraṇa*) to the available works of Śaṅkara's disciples.

Toṭaka begins his *Śrutisāra-samuddhāraṇam* with an invocation to Hari; Vyāsa is also mentioned.¹³² The other references in the text that might provide a specific clue to Toṭaka's religious orientation are in verse 85, where he refers to Śrī Rāma; verse 148, where he refers to Hari (of the *Bhagavadgītā*) as the teacher of all teachers; and the final verse, v. 179, where he bows down to Lord Viṣṇu. Toṭaka makes no reference anywhere to Śiva, and is particularly critical of the Sāṃkhya, Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika systems.¹³³

Sureśvara also offers obeisance to Viṣṇu in the first verse of his *Naiṣkarmyasiddhi*,¹³⁴ and refers to omniscient Hari at IV.64; at IV.76 he states that "Śaṅkara obtained through the power of his yoga the knowledge which reveals the abode of Viṣṇu and which destroys the entire world of bondage".

The *Pañcapādikā*, the work of Padmapāda¹³⁵—another of Śaṅkara's disciples—begins with three invocations.¹³⁶ The first is to the eternal *brahman*; the second is to Bādarāyaṇa (author of the *Vedāntasūtra*/*Brahmasūtra*); the third is to his teacher Śaṅkara, who is described as being without the "enjoyment" of a family, or Umā, without *vibhūti*

¹³² See Comans (trans., 1996). The only other work attributed to Toṭaka is the *Toṭakāṣṭaka* (Rajagopala Sastri 1968:63).

¹³³ See, for example, vv. 140–141.

¹³⁴ See Balasubramanian (trans., 1988).

¹³⁵ This is his only known authentic work (Potter 1981, Vol. 3:563).

¹³⁶ See Padmapāda (1948; 1989), *Pañcapādikā* (text in edition of Vedakavivamsam T. R. Srinivasan; trans. in edition by Venkataramiah).

(the sacred ashes worn by *śaiva*-s), of mild nature (unlike the *ugra*, ‘fierce’ form of Śiva), and without Vināyaka (i.e. Gaṇapati). This description of Śaṅkara by one of his chief disciples seems to be overtly distinguishing the venerable teacher from any explicit connection with Śiva or *śaiva*-s. This might be contrasted with a description of, for example, Sadāśivasarasvatī, pontiff of the Kāñcī *maṭha*, who was referred to in an inscription of 1527 as an incarnation of Śiva, wearing holy ash and *rudrākṣa-mālā*. There is little in the *Pañcapādikā* to indicate Padmapāda’s religious orientation. However, at one point, when discussing *Brahman* (I.3.49)¹³⁷ Padmapāda refers to the (transient) bliss of Hiraṇyagarbhaloka (the abode of Kṛṣṇa), and then quotes from the *Bhagavadgītā*. At *Pañcapādikā* II.5.12, Padmapāda refers to the sentient Hiraṇyagarbha (the ‘Lord’ who is also subject to transmigration), beyond whom lies *Brahman*. No genuine works are available for Hastāmalaka, Śaṅkara’s fourth disciple.¹³⁸

Sarvajñātman, author of the *Saṅkṣepaśārīraka*, was a pupil of Sureśvara. In the introductory invocation he invokes Viṣṇu,¹³⁹ and then, having saluted Vyāsa, Śrī Śaṅkara and Śrī Sureśvara (vv. 6–8), states that the obstacles [to writing the treatise] have been removed by “my preceptor’s contemplation on Lord Nārāyaṇa” (v. 10). Interestingly, as noted by Veezhinathan in his introduction to the text, Sarvajñātman¹⁴⁰ is associated with the Kāmakoti *pīṭha* at Kāñcī. According to tradition he took *saṃnyāsa* directly from Śaṅkara, and was nominated successor to the *maṭha*, with Sureśvara, his preceptor, as his protector.

However, it is apparent that there is something odd about aspects of the traditional account here. As discussed in the previous chapter, in the Śaṅkarite tradition the Kāmakoti *pīṭha* at Kāñcī is particularly associated with Śaivism. This is substantiated in other sources also. Appar (seventh century), one of the sixty-three Nāyaṇārs, refers to *śaiva maṭha*-s at Kāñcī (Balambal 1999:32), and makes one of the earli-

¹³⁷ Venkataramiah’s edition, p. 209.

¹³⁸ To Hastāmalaka is attributed the *Hastāmalakaślokāh*, but this is probably spurious (Potter 1981, Vol. 3:19). Amongst other important Vedāntins, Ānandabodha invokes Viṣṇu, while Vimuktātman bows to his own self (Hacker 1995:38).

¹³⁹ See Sarvajñātman (Veezhinathan trans., 1972).

¹⁴⁰ Traditional dates for Sarvajñātman place him in the fourth century BCE, but if he was a disciple of Sureśvara, he must be placed around the eighth or ninth century.

est known references to Kāmākṣī, the presiding deity of the Kāmakoṭi *pūṭha*. Campantar, Appar's contemporary, refers to Śiva in union with Kāmakoṭi of "Kacci", which refers to Kāmākṣī of Kāñcī. The *śaiva bhakta* Cuntarar, who lived in the eighth century, also refers to the *kāmakoṭṭam* of Kāñcī (Nagaswamy 1982:204–207). The term *kāmakoṭi* was used, from the eleventh century onwards, to refer to *ammaṅ* shrines,¹⁴¹ but crucially, from the time of Appar, *kāmakoṭi* referred to the consort of Śiva. The Kāmakoṭi *pūṭha*, as currently constituted, was built during the reign of Śrīraṅgarāya in the late sixteenth century (Balambal 1999:39),¹⁴² though the present Kāmākṣī temple may well be at the same site visited by Cuntarar (Nagaswamy 1982:207). As observed in the previous chapter, it was only in 1686 that the name Śaṅkarācārya first appears in inscriptions of the *maṭha*.

The earliest inscriptional records of the pontiffs of the Kāñcī *maṭha*, dating from 1290, also clearly show that the pontiffs of the *maṭha* were *śaiva*. Yet the first three *advaita samnyāsī*-s claimed by the Kāñcī tradition, namely Śaṅkara, Sureśvara and Sarvajñātman, are evidently *vaiṣṇava*. In the previous chapter, Hacker's (1995:38–39) suggestion was considered, that the reason behind the rivalry between Śaṅkara and Maṅḍanamīśra, as portrayed in the hagiographies of Śaṅkara, was most probably that Maṅḍanamīśra was a *śaiva*, which would have been in distinction from almost all other *advaita vedāntin*-s of the time (when, it should be added, religious affiliation was not a trivial affair). This is not to say that political or hagiographical expedience may not transcend religious sensibilities.

¹⁴¹ From the thirteenth century onwards, *devī* shrines, known as *ammaṅ* shrines, became a prominent feature of temple worship in Tamil Nadu. Although from at least the eighth century *devī* images in the temple were common, separate shrines for the *devī* as part of the temple complex were rare until the thirteenth century. Among the most important *devī*-s were Durgā, Jyeṣṭhā (the fearsome sister of Lakṣmī), and the Sapta-Mātrkāś. From the eleventh century onwards, the *ammaṅ* shrines were invariably called *kāmakoṭṭam* or *tirukāmakoṭṭam* in all temples, whence the name of the Kāmakoṭi *pūṭha* at Kāñcī. Folk goddesses, worshipped most probably since very ancient times at the village level, first started gaining prestige in south India in the Cōla period (985–1050). Absorbed into the religious practice of temple culture, *devī*-s were associated with both Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism. After the eleventh century, *ammaṅ* shrines, those devoted to Pārvaī or Umā, gradually replaced other, older *devī* shrines. By the fourteenth century, most Śiva temples had such a shrine, known as a *kāmakoṭṭam*. *Devī*, with many names, also appeared as the consort of Viṣṇu in the main *vaiṣṇava* centres of south India, enjoying a universalisation in the company of Purāṇic deities (Stein 1973:77–80; Nagaswamy 1982:204–206; Stein 1999:238).

¹⁴² ARE 1954–1959:no. 349.

Regarding the various traditions that were to become subsumed under the umbrella of ‘Hindu’—a process that properly began in the early sixteenth century—pre-Muslim religious orientation in India was distinctly sectarian and non-universalist. The significance of this, in the context of religious identity, will be explored in the following chapter. An analysis of a manual on *pūjā* for priests (*Pūjā-pad-paddhati*), the eleventh-century *Somaśambhu-paddhati* of Somaśambhu (probably south Indian), is pertinent in this respect. The removal of *līṅga* (internal ‘marks’ of a previous religion) was a fundamental process in initiation into Śaivism; there was no question of ‘equality of faiths’, as the removal of the *līṅga* removed all the merit that may have been acquired while following the previous creed (Stietencron 1995:56–63). As there is considerable evidence that Śaṅkara and his immediate disciples were *vaiṣṇava*, there is all the more reason to doubt their connection with the early monastic tradition of either Śṛṅgerī or Kāñcīpuram.

The monastic traditions that developed at Śṛṅgerī and Kāñcīpuram, as represented in the works that we have at our disposal from the hand of the early known (as opposed to hagiographically presented) pontiffs, were essentially and distinctly orthodox. As has been indicated, they were essentially *śaiva*, yet, in accord with Brahmanical tradition, *smārta* orthodoxy was demonstrated by their acknowledgement of the *Veda* as the ultimate source of knowledge. In this, the *advaita* pontiffs and their strictly Brahmanical cohorts were somewhat distinct from the Kālāmukhas, Mattamayūras and Śaiva-Siddhāntins who had been so influential and powerful in previous centuries.¹⁴³ These sects, while accepting the *Veda*, as we have seen, laid prime emphasis on the *Āgama*. They did not deny the authority of other texts to other traditions: simply, religious traditions were hierarchised, and within their own orders, Āgamic Śaivism was at the apex. After the fourteenth century the influence and estates of the Kālāmukha and Mattamayūra orders significantly declined, their role to a significant extent being eclipsed by the new and heavily patronised *smārta advaita maṭha-s*.

The *smārta* tradition, centred on Śṛṅgerī, may have also been competing with Śrī-Vaiṣṇavism. Suryanaran Sastri (1930:42, 74) remarks

¹⁴³ It may be noted that the *śaiva* sects under discussion were also significantly influenced by Tantra (see Lorenzen 1991:3–7).

that under the Cōlas Vaiṣṇavism had found little favour, but that there is evidence that the influence of Rāmānuja's movement, open to all castes,¹⁴⁴ engendered a new aggression by *vaiṣṇava*-s against *śaiva*-s.¹⁴⁵ Haradatta (d.1119), for example, was forced to defend his *śaiva* teachings in public, seated on a red-hot tripod, and wrote the *Hari-hara-tāratamya*, which Sastri (1930:74) describes as “a monument of sectarianism, such as could have been called forth only by the intolerant spirit of a religion on the upward and onward march”.

It was previously noted that one of the most important philosophers of the early mediaeval period was the *śaiva advaitin* Śrīkaṇṭha, a Kālāmukha (also referred to as a Śaiva-Siddhāntin) who most probably lived in the early twelfth century. He is mentioned in a Vijayanagara inscription (UVAT 1985:80–83) as a teacher of Bhoganātha (minister to Saṅgama II), and as a form of Paśupati who expounds a new Maheśvara doctrine (vv. 12–13). Śrīkaṇṭha argued for the authority both of the *Veda* (including the *Upaniṣad*-s) and the *śaiva Āgama*-s, and his role in attempting to harmonise the two traditions has been compared with a parallel task undertaken by Rāmānuja—around the same time as Śrīkaṇṭha—to harmonise Pāñcarātra *Āgama* with the *Veda* (Suryanarayana Sastri 1930:11). A crucial difference, of course, is that while the six-fold path of the *śaiva Āgama*-s is open to all *varṇa*-s, the *Veda* is only for the ears of the twice-born. The *śaiva*-orientated *advaita* of Śrīkaṇṭha may be understood as the bridge between the more Tantric Kālāmukhas and the orthodox *smārta śaiva* tradition that developed at the *advaita maṭha*-s sponsored by the Vijayanagaras. It is perhaps partly in response to the situation outlined above that the early hagiographers found Śaṅkara's orthodox Vedic position¹⁴⁶ and philosophical erudition so suitable for elaboration into a *digvijaya*. Śaṅkara's orthodox position would, of course, have been fully acceptable to Brahmins.

We now turn, finally, to the tradition that Śaṅkara inaugurated both *smārta* and *devī* worship at Śrīgerī. The predominant practice

¹⁴⁴ For the role, status and social mobility of *sūdra*-s in the early Śrī-Vaiṣṇava movement, see Stein (1968).

¹⁴⁵ The reformist zeal of Rāmānuja may have contributed to the rivalry there between *śaiva*-s and *vaiṣṇava*-s for royal patronage (Champakalakshmi 1996:397–398).

¹⁴⁶ For Śaṅkara's relationship to Vedic orthodoxy, see Rambachan (1991).

of the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha* is *smārta*,¹⁴⁷ being the Brahman tradition of the worship of five deities, *pañcayatana-pūjā*, namely Āditya (Sūrya), Ambikā (Devī), Viṣṇu, Gaṇeśa and Śiva. At Śṛṅgerī a sixth deity, Kumāra (Skanda, Subrahmaṇya, Murugaṇ), is also worshipped. *Smārta* adherents have as *iṣṭa-devatā* either Śiva or Viṣṇu.¹⁴⁸ Śaṅkara is credited by tradition with the initiation of *smārta* worship¹⁴⁹ at Śṛṅgerī (Sawai 1992:23), yet our previous analysis of his religious orientation revealed his ranking of *devī* and Gaṇapati worship as of the lowest order (alongside *bhūta-s*), and his distaste for Śiva, making it highly improbable that he initiated this form of *śakti* worship at Śṛṅgerī—as projected by his hagiographers—or instituted *smārta* worship. It seems that his association with *devī* worship was a result of his projection by his hagiographers as a *śaiva*, with the complementary *śakti* worship inherent to *śaiva* traditions, particular in such sects as the Kālāmukhas.

The *advaita maṭha-s* of Śṛṅgerī and Kāñcī have presiding *devī-s*: Śāradā and Kāmākṣī, respectively. *Devī* worship has been, and continues to be, an integral feature of the worship of the *maṭha-s* since the latter part of the fourteenth century, when the *maṭha-s* began to receive Vijayanagara patronage. According to tradition, Śaṅkara installed Śrī Śāradā *devī* at Śṛṅgerī, and a great festival in her name is performed in January to celebrate the anniversary of Śaṅkara's inauguration of her worship at the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha* (also known as Śrī Śāradā *pūṭha*). Śāradā is worshipped daily and also during the festival of Navarātri (Sawai 1992:73). However, although Śāradā is associated with both Dvārakā and Śṛṅgerī, and while there is evidence of the

¹⁴⁷ See Venkataraman (1959:136–165) for details of temples, shrines and worship at Śṛṅgerī. See Dazey (1993:158–160) for the daily routine of the Śaṅkarācārya, and the festivals celebrated.

¹⁴⁸ The two sectarian traditions are outwardly distinguished by, usually, either three horizontal lines of *vibhūti* on the forehead (*tripuṇḍra*), for *śaiva-s*; or by three vertical marks (*ūrdhvapūṇḍra*), usually of sandal-paste (*candan*), for *vaiṣṇava-s*. In south India, *smārta-s* generally follow the *advaita* tradition represented at Śṛṅgerī, or the *dvaita* tradition represented by Madhva. There are at least twelve divisions amongst *smārta-s*, four of them being Vaḍagalai, and six of them being Teṅgalai, the two main divisions of Śrī-Vaiṣṇavism (Nilakanta Sastri 1992:113). *Smārta* practice in Karnataka, in general, has long been to apply the *tripuṇḍra*, but the followers of Madhva apply a distinguishing single vertical line (Zydenbos 2001:120). Most varieties of sectarian marking usually also include a red round dot (*akṣatā*) between the eyebrows, which represents *śakti*.

¹⁴⁹ For details of *smārta* worship, see Bühnemann (1988).

worship of Durgā and Lakṣmī in Vijayanagara (Filliozat 1985:313), there is no mention of Śāradā *devī* in any Vijayanagara inscription, the main *devī* found in records being Pampā (consort of Virūpākṣa). The most important festival for the Vijayanagara rulers was *mahānavamī*, celebrated in honour of Durgā, and also Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī; on the ninth and final day, several thousands of buffaloes, sheep and goats were sacrificed before the *rāya*-s and nobles (Nilakanta Sastri 1992:131). Considering the evidence presented above, it seems that the *devī*-s became incorporated into the temple rites of the *maṭha*-s during the early period of Vijayanagara involvement with the *advaita maṭha*-s—several centuries after the time of Śaṅkara—but that the *devī* at Śṛṅgerī was not Śāradā at that time.

As we have seen, the earliest of Śaṅkara's hagiographies was most probably written during the Vijayanagara period. The connection of Śaṅkara to either Kāñcī or Śṛṅgerī in the earlier of the hagiographies precisely fits the region where the Vijayanagaras were operating, endowments being made to both *maṭha*-s, particularly Śṛṅgerī. Vijayanagara being the centre of what might be called 'Hindu India' at the time, the earlier hagiographers would have had no reason to write of *advaita maṭha*-s in places still occupied by Muslim regimes to the north. It was previously explained that the legend of the four *maṭha*-s was a feature only of the later hagiographies. The *Cidvilāsa-Śaṅkaravijaya-vilāsa* was probably written in the sixteenth century, and here for the first time are disciples dispatched to the four quarters of India. The names of all four *maṭha*-s do not appear until later still (perhaps around 1650), after the fall of the Vijayanagara empire and the conversion of the later rulers to Vaiṣṇavism.

It appears that hagiographers in the service of the Vijayanagara rulers wrote the earliest hagiographies of Śaṅkara, projecting him in the image of their sponsors as an incarnation of Śiva¹⁵⁰ (who also performs *devī* worship). The two southern *maṭha*-s were written into the hagiographies to enhance their status as resorts of Śaṅkara, the saviour of the Vedic tradition. This has created the legacy of a continuing dispute, resting on the irony that Śaṅkara probably founded neither *maṭha*.

¹⁵⁰ Hacker (1995:29) also believes that Śaṅkara was transformed into a *śaiva* folk-hero in a reconstruction of Hinduism—in the face of Muslim aggression—by his hagiographers, but wrongly attributes the project to Vidyāranya (assisted by Sāyaṇa).

Several conclusions may be drawn concerning the development of the hagiography of Śaṅkara, and the final attribution to him of the founding of an order of renunciates and four *maṭha*-s.

1) Śaṅkara's connection with Śṛṅgerī and Kāñcī was established some time after the founding of any *advaita maṭha* in either of those places; this connection was perhaps first made in the fourteenth or fifteenth century in the earlier hagiographies which, as we have seen, contain no reference to his establishing any *maṭha*. The *Śaṅkaravijaya* of Anantānandagiri, perhaps the earliest of the hagiographies, dated perhaps to post-fourteenth century (Bader 2000:24), and associated with Kāñcī, is unique amongst the hagiographies in that it contains no reference to the four disciples of Śaṅkara, instead providing an account of twelve disciples who accompanied Śaṅkara when he went to see his guru (Bader 2000:258–259).

2) The next stage in the elaboration of Śaṅkara's hagiography was to attribute to him four main disciples and the founding of a *maṭha* in either Kāñcī or Śṛṅgerī (depending which stream of hagiography is referred to).

3) The third stage of hagiographic projection is to attribute to Śaṅkara the founding of four *maṭha*-s in the four quarters of India under four disciples. This stage, I believe, most probably coincides with the production of the *Maṭhāmnāya*-s, which both affirmed Śaṅkara's conquest of the four quarters, and also integrated into that picture Śaṅkara's founding of an order of ascetics, many lineages of which, up until the time of the dissemination of the integrated picture, had no connection to the orthodox traditions represented by the *advaita maṭha*-s. Many prominent Vedāntins bear one or another of the ten names of the Daśanāmī family. There are the first preceptors of Śṛṅgerī: Bhāratīrtha, Vidyāīrtha, and Vidyāraṇya.¹⁵¹ Madhva (the dualist) was initiated under the name Pūrṇaprajña, was named Ānandaīrtha when he was an *ācārya*, and was only later called Madhva. The three important scholars (*munitrayam*) within the early

¹⁵¹ The name Araṇya is currently an unusual Daśanāmī name. As has been observed by Gerald Larson, although Sāṃkhya doctrine permeates Indian philosophy generally, followers of Sāṃkhya are practically non-existent. Larson found but one Sāṃkhya *maṭha*, near Banaras. However, there is a lineage of Sāṃkhyans—named Araṇya—at the Kapil *maṭha* at Madhupur in Bihar, which was founded in 1938 by Svāmī Hariharānandāraṇya, who is said to have revived Sāṃkhya (see Dharmamegha Araṇya 1989).

Madhva Vedānta tradition were Madhva, Jayatīrtha (1365–1388) (who codified Madhva's doctrines), and Vyāsatīrtha (1460–1539) (Sarma (2003:17).

Several of the prominent Vedāntins of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries bore the name Sarasvatī, including Sadānanda Yogendrasarasvatī (Sadānanda),¹⁵² who wrote the *Vedāntasāra*, on which a commentary, the *Subodhinī*, was written by his grand-disciple, Narasiṃhasarasvatī of Banaras, in 1588 (Nikhilananda 1978:xii).¹⁵³ Other important Vedāntins of this period were Brahmānandasarasvatī, author of the *Brahmānandīyam*, and Madhusūdanasarasvatī—the author of the *Advaitasiddhi*—an *advaitin* but also a devotee of Kṛṣṇa (see Nelson 1998).¹⁵⁴ Jagannāthāśrama was a great teacher of south India, living in the latter half of the fifteenth century. His pupil, Narasiṃhāśrama, became one of the most reputed teachers of Vedānta in the early half of the sixteenth century (Dasgupta 1975, Vol. II:53–55).¹⁵⁵

Unravelling lineages in terms of orders is inherently complex, given that orders may flourish or decline, that many people of historical importance bear the same name, and that lineages may bifurcate into orders with different religious or philosophical positions. While these *advaita* Vedāntin-s are unquestionably in what might be called the philosophical *paramparā* of Śaṅkara, citing his arguments and works, this, I would suggest, is quite different from maintaining that these authors believed—whether they did or not—that they were of a *saṃnyāsī* order begun by Śaṅkara, moreover a family also comprising militant Girīs, Purīs and Bhārātīs.

The social, religious and political processes that may have been behind the integration of diverse lineages into an orthodox order is the central issue addressed in the following chapter.

¹⁵² His guru was Advayānandasarasvatī. There appear to have been two individuals named Sadānanda who are occasionally confused (Ramachandran 1968:206), one being the author of the *Vedāntasāra*, the other being the author of the *Advaita-brahmasiddhi*.

¹⁵³ See also Hiriyanā (1929:17); Haramohan Mishra (1983:v).

¹⁵⁴ Madhusūdana was a pupil of Viśveśvar(ānanda)sarasvatī (pupil of Sarvajña-viśeṣa, and pupil's pupil of Govindasarasvatī) (Dasgupta 1975, Vol. II:55). Besides the *Advaitasiddhi*, to Madhusūdana are attributed the *Siddhāntabindu*, *Vedāntakālpala-tikā* and *Advaita-ratna-rakṣana* (Rajagopalan 1968:255).

¹⁵⁵ Some of the foremost Vedānta writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries flourished in a Vedāntic circle, directly or indirectly under the influence of Narasiṃhāśrama and Appaya Dīkṣita.

CHAPTER SEVEN

NĀGĀ-S, SŪFĪS AND PARALLEL RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES

Examined in the previous chapter was the claim that Śaṅkara founded *maṭha-s*, in particular the Kāñcīpuram and Śṛṅgerī *maṭha-s*. There appears to be no evidence to substantiate this claim, or the tradition that he founded an order of ascetics. It was also shown that the *guru-paramparā-s* of the *maṭha-s* are quite unreliable, and that the earliest an *advaita* tradition can be discerned at the *maṭha-s* is 1155 at Kūḍali, 1290 at Kāñcīpuram, and 1346 at (Tuṅga) Śṛṅgerī. Evidence for the foundation of the other *maṭha-s*, namely at Dvārakā, Purī, and Jyośimāṭh, is even more elusive, and firm records do not go back more than a few hundred years. If Śaṅkara did not found the Daśanāmīs, then what is needed is some kind of explanation of when and why the order might have come into existence as a recognisable entity.

In this chapter, the context for the formation of the Daśanāmīs as a distinct order will be explored, the central hypothesis being that the Daśanāmī order formed in response to religious and political developments, some time in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The formation of an order essentially integrated two sets of disparate and previously unconnected lineages pertaining to the *nāgā* and monastic traditions. It is suggested that around the time of the formation of the *akhārā-s* of the Daśanāmīs, a Daśanāmī identity was created—encapsulated in the all-India purview of the *Maṭhāmnāya-s*—integrating monastic and military *saṃnyāsī-s*, and enhancing the legitimacy of both sets of lineages, the instigation of which was attributed to Śaṅkara. As indicated in Chapter 2, of the thirteen militant *akhārā-s* currently functioning in India, the six non-Daśanāmī *akhārā-s*¹ are believed to have formed in this period, and it seems most probable that the Daśanāmī *akhārā-s* also formed around the same time, notwithstanding claims to greater antiquity.

¹ The three Bairāgī (Rāmānandī) *akhārā-s*, and the three Sikh-affiliated *akhārā-s* (the Nirmala and the two Udāsin *akhārā-s*).

7.1 *The formation of militant ascetic orders*

As early as the eighth century, Pāśupata ascetics were armed by guilds to protect trade (Davidson 2002:80).² Lorenzen (1978) provides other examples of Indian fighting ascetics in the early mediaeval period. In a frequently cited reference to fighting ascetics in the *Kabīra Bijaka* (Abhilash Das 1997:56–57 [*Ramainī* 69]), most probably written in the mid-sixteenth century, scorn is poured on *yogī*-s, *siddha*-s, *mahant*-s and ascetics who resort to arms, keep women and collect property and ‘taxes’.³ Besides the Madāri *fakīr*-s (see below), the first groups of mercenary ascetics to be in any way organised appear to have been the Nāths⁴ (Orr 1940:6) and the Saṁnyāsīs. Perhaps the earliest recorded confrontation between ascetic fighters is that recorded in Abu-l-Faḏl’s *Akbar-nāma* (1972:422–424)⁵ when rival groups of Saṁnyāsīs and ‘Jogīs’ (Nāths) clashed, watched by Akbar, in the late sixteenth century.⁶ Other organised militant orders, such as the early Sikh *khālsā*,⁷ the Udāsin and Nirmala orders,⁸ Dādūpanthī,⁹

² In the eleventh century, King Harṣa (Harṣadeva) (r.1089–1101), short of funds, raided temples for icons he could melt down. He employed groups of naked ascetics, who defiled the temples with spittle and excrement. Basham (1951:206) believes they may have been Ājīvikas.

³ This particular section of the *Bijaka* appears to have been written not only after the time of Kabīr, but also some time after the battle of Panipat in 1526, as firearms are referred to; firearms were used for the first time on a large scale on Indian soil during this battle (Lorenzen 1978:61). Lorenzen (1992:9–12) dates Kabīr to between the mid-fifteenth century and c.1525.

⁴ Nāth-Yogīs maintained a stronghold at the gorge at Galtā (near Jaipur) until usurped by militant *vaiṣṇava*-s in the sixteenth century (Orr 1940:8). The state of Jodhpur (and the wider area of Marwār) was heavily influenced by the Nāths in the first half of the nineteenth century, particularly in relation to the rise to power of Mān Singh, whose guru was Ayas Dev Nāth (assassinated in 1815). Nāths were also an element in the Jodhpur army (see Gold 1996; White 2001:9–19). In royal chronicles of Rajasthan, Kumaun and Nepal may be found accounts of how particular Nāth-Siddhas use yogic powers and intrigue to install patrons favourable to them on the throne (White 2001:5–6). ‘Siddhas’ were not only heterodox power brokers: the famous eleventh-century writer and Tantric, Abhinavagupta, was also a *siddha* (see Muller-Ortega 1989:60–61).

⁵ Referred to in Ch. 2.1.

⁶ In his *Memoirs*, Jahāngīr (r.1605–1628) reports not less than two or three thousand people attending contests at arenas for athletes or pugilists, at places such as Agra and Lahore. However, it is not known what proportion of them were in the hands of sects like the Dādūpanthīs or Gosains (Kolff 1990:28).

⁷ According to the Sikh tradition, the *khālsā* (‘brotherhood’) was founded in 1699 by Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth guru in descent from Nānak, the founder of the

Rāmānandī (Bairāgī),¹⁰ Nimbarkī and Rādhāvallabhī *nāgā-s*,¹¹ all formed between the time of Akbar and the eighteenth century, with a substantial recruitment of low-caste *śūdra-s* into Sikh, Rāmānandī and Daśanāmī *akhārā-s* (Pinch 1996:26–27).

Even though there had been sporadic attacks on *saṁnyāsī-s* by

order. However, it appears that the *khālsā* formed gradually from bands of roving warriors, during most of the eighteenth century, as an element in the expansion of Punjabi Jāts, and the consequent reaction of the Mughals (McLeod 1976:1–19, 51). The Nihāṅgs, soldier ascetics (also referred to as Akālīs), a subdivision within the *khālsā*, were formed, according to tradition, in 1690, by Mān Singh (see Farquhar 1925a:340).

⁸ The Udāsīn order was founded, according to tradition, by Śrī Cand, during the seventeenth century, as was the other Sikh-related *akhārā*, the Nirmala (see Singh 1951:64; Ahuja 1994; Oberoi 1997:124–127). However, the Sikh orders are more accurately understood as a continuation, within a new community, of an already extant ascetic tradition with significant correspondences with the Nāths, including particular respect for *haṭha-yoga* practices, and a reverence for the *dhūān* (= *dhūnī*) (McLeod 1980:35 fn. 2, 103, 203). The three militant, ascetic, Sikh-related orders are the Nihāṅg, Udāsīn and Nirmala.

⁹ Towards the end of Akbar's reign, Dādū (d.1604), a cotton-cleaner from Ahmadabad, organised a new sect of Rāma devotees, the Dādū *panth*, which comprises *virakta-s* (ascetics), *vastradhārin-s* (householders), and *nāgā-s* (*khākī* [ash-clad] *virakta-s*). The Dādū *panth nāgā-s* had a prominent role in the armies of some princes, notably in Jodhpur, and still retain a small *akhārā* that bathes with the Nirmohi *anī* at Kumbh Melās. The Dādūpanthīs claim that their *nāgā-s* are descended from Sundardās, a disciple of Dādū, and thus from the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. Although the genealogy of the Dādūpanthī *nāgā-s* may possibly have begun around the mid-seventeenth century at the earliest, firm records are only available from the second half of the eighteenth century; they were officially constituted in 1756 (Thiel-Horstmann 1991:257, 268–269). According to Orr (1940:15) the Dādūpanthīs first fought alongside the Rāmānandīs, and then set up their own *akhārā*.

¹⁰ The *vaiṣṇava* Rāmānandīs appear to have constituted their military branches between approximately 1650 and 1720 (Ghurye 1964:177; [Thiel-] Horstmann 2001). According to Rāmānandī tradition, the decision to arm *vaiṣṇava* ascetics was taken at the meeting of the *catuḥ sampradāya* at Galta (near Jaipur), in 1713 (Burghart 1978b). However, Rāmānandīs were already armed and organised by 1693 (see below).

¹¹ According to Orr (1940:10–17), the Rādhāvallabhīs joined ranks with the Nimbarkīs, while armed Viṣṇuvāmī militants entered the service of Rāja Bijay Singh of Jodhpur as mercenaries in 1779, as one of sixteen fighting *akhārā-s* (seven *akhārā-s* were Rāmānandī; seven Nimbarkī; one Madhva; one Viṣṇuvāmī). *Samnyāsīs* and Viṣṇuvāmīs continued to serve the Jodhpur state for nearly a century, until they were finally disbanded by Mahārāja Jsvant Singh in 1875. Up to the early twentieth century, the Jaipur state maintained a force of 5,500 *nāgā-s*, comprising mostly Dādūpanthīs, but also Nīmāvats (Nimbarkīs) and Rādhāvallabhīs. *Samnyāsīs*, Dādūpanthīs and Viṣṇuvāmīs were still employed in the Bundi and Koṭa states until 1915.

Muslims—such as the massacre of a large number of devotees at Haridvār by Timur in 1398 (Nevill 1909a:254)—it seems that the formation of the *saṃnyāsī akhārā*-s was not primarily in response to Muslim harassment. Many follow Farquhar (1925b:483), who believes that Madhusūdanasarasvatī (1540–1647), the well-known Vedāntin philosopher, approached Emperor Akbar (1542–1605) to seek advice on the protection of the order to which he belonged from harassment by armed Muslim *fakīr*-s. He was advised by his trusted Rājā Birbal, who was present, to initiate a large number of non-Brahmans. Thus were many *kṣatriya*-s and *vaiśya*-s—and, says Farquhar, “multitudes of *sūdra*-s at a later date”—admitted into the order. It is said that half the Bhārātīs refused to accept this and went to Śrīgerī to remain ‘pure’, thus making three-and-one-half lineages ‘pure’. The recruitment of *nāgā*-s into fighting units appears to have taken place around the time of Akbar’s reign, although it is unlikely to have been a specific response to harassment by militant Sūfīs.¹² Farquhar’s conclusion was based on anecdotal evidence, and the historical evidence (see Ch. 2.1) indicates that the main conflicts of the period were between sects of Hindu renunciates—more specifically between *vaiṣṇava* Bhairāgīs and *śaiva* Saṃnyāsīs¹³ (also known as *gosain*-s)—rather than between *saṃnyāsī*-s and militant Sūfī orders (Sikand 1998). A further problem with Farquhar’s thesis is that Akbar is recorded witnessing a fight between *saṃnyāsī*-s and *yogī*-s (see Al-Badāoni 1986 Vol. 2:94–95; Abu-l-Fazl 1972:422–424), illustrating that militant Hindu orders were already in existence in some form during his reign, but perhaps organised only within the previous few decades.¹⁴ Rāmānandī and

¹² Although the story of the founding of the *akhārā*-s cannot be confirmed, it seems that Madhusūdanasarasvatī may have had a connection with Akbar’s court (Halbfass 1983:88).

¹³ Although a distinct ‘Hindu’ identity seems to have formed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (see below), significant disputes concerning sectarian Hindu identity persisted well into the nineteenth century. In the Kachava kingdom of Amber-Jaipur a major dispute finally erupted in 1864 concerning *vaiṣṇava* and *śaiva* affiliation. Under Mahārāja Rāmsingh II, zealous *śaiva*-s had chased *vaiṣṇava*-s from the capital of the kingdom, Jaipur. For many months the wearing of the vertical *vaiṣṇava* *tilak* had been effectively banned, and only those wearing the horizontal three-line *tilak* were to be seen in the streets (Clémentin-Ojha 1999:349).

¹⁴ Lorenzen (1978:62–64) believes that the various fighting orders that emerged in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—in response to social, economic and political change—may be divided into two broad groups: those movements concerned with the protection of specific, local, economic and social interests; and

Dādūpanthī traditions maintain that their military organisation was in response to the aggressive activities of the *saṃnyāsī*-s. However, the evidence indicates that *nāgā* military activity flourished under direct state patronage,¹⁵ and was not primarily religiously sectarian, even though inter-sectarian battles did take place at Hindu *melā*-s.

The organisation of *saṃnyāsī*-s and other ascetics into military *akhārā*-s can be understood as a relatively seamless transition between the two lifestyles of *nāgā* and soldier: both require rigorous self-discipline, and an adaptability to harsh conditions. The travelling *jamāt* is perfectly adaptable to a military unit, with its command structure, information network, and proficiency in practical camping and cooking arrangements over wide areas of India. Soldiers, naked and theoretically beyond identifiable caste, are *celā*-s of a commander, who performs the religious rituals of his sect, thus increasing the bond of the unit. In mediaeval India, asceticism, trade and war were by no means incompatible (see Kolff 1990:77). Some western commentators have been challenged to reconcile the idealised ascetic striving for *mokṣa*—referred to in the Introduction—with militant *saṃnyāsī*-s (see Lochtefeld 1994). However, if the practice of *tapas* ('asceticism') is considered in its Indian context, epic and Purāṇic material illustrates how *tapas* almost invariably leads to boons and the acquisition of material powers, and also frequently of magical weaponry with which to overcome and kill adversaries.¹⁶ The powers of militant, ash-covered *gosain*-s are quite reconcilable with their

those involved in popular, sometimes regional, rebellion against central authority. However, the categories are not entirely distinct, as different groups operate in both domains. Lorenzen categorises the Sikhs, broadly, in the second group, while the Daśanāmī *nāgā*-s, he maintains, formed for the protection of non-*nāgā* land and monastic property. Though the Daśanāmī *nāgā*-s may have protected monastic property, there are no available historical records of this.

¹⁵ For example, in the reign of Aurangzeb (1658–1707), under an imperial decree of 1692–1693, five Rāmānandī commanders were authorised to move freely about the whole empire, with standards and kettledrums, and without hindrance, in charge of foot and horse-mounted soldiers (Orr 1940:9).

¹⁶ Pinch (1997:12–15) comments on the historical change in attitude towards *tapas*, comparing Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* (usually dated to around the first century) with the *Rāmcaritmānas* of Tulsīdās (c.1543–1623), particularly in the Bālakāṇḍa. In short: Vālmīki elevates it, in the traditional way, as leading to power; but Tulsīdās pours scorn on *tapas*, preferring *bhakti*. Pinch suggests that this shift in attitude is a reflection of the change in the social attitude of the times towards religious ascetics, evinced by the activities at the time of armed, marauding *gosain*-s and *fakīr*-s. Disdain for this kind of lifestyle was also shared by the *nirgunī bhakta* Kabīr.

mythological counterparts. In the construction of an identity for the Daśanāmīs, the lifestyles and activities of both monastic monks and armed, ash-covered *gosain*-s are equally valid within the framework of traditional Hinduism.

7.2 *The development of Sūfī institutions in India*

If we consider Sūfī institutions in India, many aspects of their development seem to provide a plausible rationale for a parallel institutionalisation of the Daśanāmī order. The first Sūfī settlements in India¹⁷ date from the eighth century (Siddiqi 1989:14).¹⁸ Another wave of Sūfī Shaikhs, who migrated from Khurasan (western Afghanistan/Iran) to Delhi during the time of the Delhi sultanate, were distinctly militant, and did not always exhibit the pietistic attitude that some writers have extolled, their wrath leading to “the discomfiture, misery and often death of those who presumed to oppose [them]” (Digby 1986:60). Between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries, Bijapur (also known as the Bahmanī state) was a Sūfī stronghold in India. The Bahmanī state was a region contiguous and frequently at war with Vijayanagara, with which it had considerable structural similarities (Eaton 2002:160–166). At its height in the mid-seventeenth century, the Bijapur sultanate was one of the largest and most powerful states in the subcontinent, second only to the Mughal empire. The first Sūfīs to enter the Bijapur plateau arrived in the late thirteenth century (Eaton 1997:36–48), and were what might be called ‘warrior Sūfīs’, who are virtually indistinguishable in many respects from Daśanāmī *nāgā*-s. The first of these warrior Sūfīs to gain renown was Shaikh Sūfī Sarmast (d.1281),¹⁹ who, with his army of seven hundred *ghāzī*-s (‘religious soldiers’)—according to his hagiography—killed

¹⁷ The first Muslim conquest in the subcontinent was of the Sindh region, in 711/712, by Ibn al-Qasim (see Schimmel 1980:3–4).

¹⁸ The first major Sūfī to settle in the subcontinent was al-Hujwīrī (c.1009–1071). Called Dātā Ganj Bakhsh by his followers, he is the author of the first major treatise on Sūfism in Persian, the *Kashf al-mahjūb*. His tomb (in Lahore) subsequently became a ‘gateway’, visited by all Sūfīs who migrated to the subcontinent (Rizvi 1978:112–113; Schimmel 1982:3).

¹⁹ All dates in this and the following sections are given as CE. For the conversion of dates—given in many sources according to the Muslim calendar (A.H.)—to other calendars, see Sewell and Dikshit (1896:105ff.).

many Hindus and engaged in battle with a Hindu king.²⁰ During a crucial fifty-year period, from 1296 to 1347, militant Sūfīs seem to have been extensively involved with Muslim military expansionism in the Deccan. In this period, the Sūfīs, besides providing the Muslim armies with an element of religious legitimacy, may have represented the only element of Islamic organisation at the frontiers of expansion, most probably centred on *khānqāh*-s (simple monastic dwellings) (Eaton 1997:46).²¹

Sūfī Sarmast belonged to no institutional order as such, as he predated any such organisation in south Asia, yet, as a Sūfī, he had been initiated by a *pīr* (a Muslim religious preceptor), enabling him to initiate others. Within the Sūfī world this system of initiation (*baiy'a*)²² and authoritative transmission is known as *khilāfat*, and is a direct parallel with the *guru-paramparā* arrangement that operates within the Hindu domain. Integration through the *khilāfat* system is the single most important criterion for being a Sūfī.²³ From the fourteenth century onwards, an institutional network of *khānqāh*-s became established, based on a *silsilā* ('chain') from a founding *pīr* (or *shaikh*). By the mid-fourteenth century, warrior Sūfīs—who had not been affiliated to any order—had more or less disappeared from the Bijapur area. They were replaced by Sūfīs who were affiliated to

²⁰ Another warrior Sūfī, Pīr Ma'bari Khandyat, who died in the early fourteenth century, accompanied one of the sultan of Delhi's campaigns in the struggle to gain control of Bijapur. According to Ma'bari's hagiography, he slaughtered many idolatrous local *rāja*-s. He appears also to have accompanied Malik Kufūr—who we encountered in the previous chapter (fn. 64)—in 1311, during his military campaigns in the south. While Sarmast and Ma'bari are known to have been involved with armies, other Sūfīs appear in Bijapur in the late thirteenth century who are remembered for their military prowess, martyrdom, and attacks on Hindus and idolatry. Amongst them are Āli Pahlavan (a companion of Sūfī Sarmast), Shaikh Shahid, Pīr Jumna, and Tigh Brahna.

²¹ In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, *khānqāh*-s also functioned as travellers' rest houses (*sarāi*), thus facilitating the spread of the fame of saints. There were up to 120 *khānqāh*-s in Delhi, where three nights' stay was possible (Digby 1976).

²² The initiation ritual involves the teacher grasping the pupil's hand (or touching his head), and investing the best disciples with a *khirqā* (a garment of, usually, patched wool). Some were also given a licence or diploma (called *ijāza* or *khilāfat-nāma*), authorising them to act as deputies (*khalīfa*), and disseminate the principles and practices of their respective orders (see Rizvi 1978:102).

²³ For an analysis of the *pīr-murīd* (teacher-disciple) relationship, one of the basic pillars of Sūfī organisation, see Islam (2002:385–396).

one or another of the Sūfī orders that had developed in the Middle-East, notably the Chishtī, Qādiri and Shattāri orders.²⁴

One of the first Sūfīs to become closely associated with the Bahmanī court at Bijapur was Shaikh Siraj-uddīn Junaidī (d.1380), who assisted with the coronation of the new king, Ala-uddīn Hasan, in 1347, and received what was perhaps the first land-grant to a Deccani Sūfī, the village of Korchi, which has since remained in the hands of his descendants. Shortly after his coronation the new sultan distributed four hundred pounds of gold and a thousand pounds of silver in the name of Nizām ud-Dīn (-al Dīn) Aulia, the great Chishtī of Delhi. As a consequence, his successor Muhammad Śāh Bahmanī, was able to obtain a declaration of allegiance from virtually all the Sūfīs of his kingdom (Eaton 1997:60–61).

It will be recalled that the first land-grants to Śṛṅgerī were just a year earlier, in 1346, in somewhat parallel circumstances; namely, patronage of a *saṃnyāsī* institution in return for favours presumably rendered. In another parallel with Daśanāmī institutions, the Indian Sūfī Shaikhs of the fourteenth century and later—following a tradition of some of their predecessors in the eleventh and twelfth centuries in Khurasan—were considered to have a divinely sanctioned jurisdiction over a specific territory (*wilāyat*).²⁵ There were frequent challenges to various claims of jurisdiction and ‘protection’, both from within the

²⁴ Their occupation of the Deccan was in part as a consequence of Muhammad bin Tughluq’s order of 1327 that the *khānqāh*-s of Delhi be vacated. Resident Sūfī-s were ordered to migrate to the Deccan to inhabit the new capital at Daulatabad, as part of a general policy of resettlement. In 1347 many Deccanis revolted against the rule of Delhi, and the Bahmanī kingdom was established at Gulbarga.

²⁵ Heads of *sisilā*-s dispatched their *khatīfa*-s to various provinces, called *wilāyat*. *Khatīfa*-s, in their turn, appointed subordinate *khatīfa*-s for various cities and settlements. Thus a hierarchy of saints came to be established in northern India, with the chief saint established at the centre, controlling a network of *khānqāh*-s spread over the country. Mediaeval records show numerous instances of such territorial distribution (Nizami 1961:175–177). At the beginning of the fourteenth century, Shaikh Nizām al-Dīn of the Chishtī *sisilā* was identified with the well-being and fortune of the city of Delhi, over which the Shaikh exercised his ‘governance’. In an account of the late fourteenth century, Amīr Khwurd describes how Mu‘īn al-Dīn’s *wilāyat* extended all over India (Digby 1986:72). The notion of ‘divine jurisdiction’ is perhaps most amply exemplified in the person of Mu‘īn al-Dīn Chishtī (d.1236), who founded the Chishtī lineage in India. His tomb in Ajmer became a major centre of pilgrimage, notably after Akbar’s pilgrimages on foot there between 1562 and 1575. Today, the festival for the anniversary of the saint is the greatest pilgrimage festival of Muslims in the Indian subcontinent.

order and from rival orders (Digby 1986:63–72), one example being the cult of Dattātreya,²⁶ one of several Hindu devotional cults that arose in Maharashtra in this period.²⁷ Tulpule believes (1979:352) that the Dattātreya cult probably arose as a reaction against the activity of Sūfīs, who were exerting a significant influence on the traditional religion of Maharashtra.

7.3 *Religious identity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries*

In this section, we turn to the issue of religious identity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and how there was an ample context in this period for the development of a distinct Hindu sectarian identity for the Daśanāmīs. It was observed in Chapter 5.6 that the first references to *Daśanāmī* appear around the middle of the sixteenth century. Around the same time, we find the first references to the term ‘Hindu’, as used self-reflexively to distinguish ‘Hindu’ from other religious traditions, specifically Islam. As noted in the previous chapter, in the earlier part of the first millennium, *śaiva* and *vaiṣṇava* were considered as distinct religious traditions, and the term ‘Hindu’ was not used by the traditions themselves.

The first use of the term ‘Hindu’ by Hindus was by Vijayanagara regents in 1352. This appears to be the first use of the term ‘Hindu’ in any Indian language source (Talbot 2003:90). Devarāya II is described as “the sultan among Hindu kings (*hindurāya-suratrāṇa*)” in inscriptions of 1424²⁸ and 1428.²⁹ The term was previously only used by Muslims, and it was not until the late thirteenth century that Persian literature written in India uses the term ‘Hindu’ as a religious designation. The Vijayanagara use of the term appears to have been an appropriation in order to distinguish Indic from Turkish polities, and, according to Talbot (2003:90–91), was not used to

²⁶ Narasiṃhasarasvatī (1378–1458) is regarded as the second *avatāra* of Dattātreya (a deity comprising the *trimūrti* Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva). He is the central figure in the history of the cult, and most probably its founder (Rigopoulos 1998:111–112).

²⁷ Another example is the Mahānubhava sect, founded by Cakradhar (d.1273), who was the last of a series of five human incarnations, called the ‘Five Kṛṣṇas’ (see Feldhaus and Tulpule 1992).

²⁸ EI, Vol. III, no. 5, vv. 19–20, p. 40.

²⁹ EI, Vol. XIII, no. 1, vv. 10–13, p. 10.

represent a distinction between those of the ‘Hindu religion’ from those of the ‘Islamic religion’.³⁰

The term ‘Hindu’ was first used self-reflexively in a religious sense in Bengal during the early part of the sixteenth century by Vallabhīya and Gauḍīya *vaiṣṇava*-s, who actively proselytized, converting not only among Hindu groups, but also occasionally Muslims. “The Hindus now start using this foreign term as a device of asserting and defining their identity against the foreigners; the fact that they are named, excluded and defined as “others” by these foreigners provides them with a new sense of their own identity, as well as a new perspective on the otherness of others” (Halbfass 1988:192). In the seventeenth century the term ‘Hindu’ is also used in Maharashtra where Śivājī (1627–1680) led successful campaigns against the Mughal rulers. However, the projection in hagiography³¹ of Śivājī as an entirely ‘Hindu’ ruler, a protector of gods, Brahmans and cows, fighting demonic ‘Muslim’ adversaries—such as the Mughal captain Udebhān, who sacrificed a pregnant cow before battle and killed his eighteen mistresses—is misleading. Indeed, in the army of Afzal Khān (Śivājī’s chief adversary) there were many Hindus; and in Śivājī’s own army there were many Muslims (Laine 1999:307). Nevertheless, it is during this period that ‘new’ and distinct religious identities emerge. Discussing this issue in the age of Śivājī, Laine (1999:315) concludes: “In short, the complex diversity of religious belief and practice, which early Muslim arrivals to India saw as a multitude of sects and communities, was now a unity, a religion, a *dīn*.”

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, on the one hand there appears to have been a tendency towards the establishing of a distinct ‘Hindu’ identity, while on the other there was also an apparent tendency—in the consciousness of difference—towards religious universalisation, a process that came to successful fruition during the following two centuries. The tendency towards religious universalisation is readily apparent in the Prañāmī sect, which was founded in the same period in the Jamnagar district of Gujarat. Its

³⁰ However, in the latter inscription (vv. 10–13) Devarāya is compared in numerous virtues with Rāma, son of Daśaratha.

³¹ Notably, the *Śivabhārata*, commissioned at the time of Śivājī’s coronation in 1647. The writing of historical biographies (*carita-bakhar*) began in Maharashtra with the advent of Marāṭha rule under Śivājī (see Wagle 1997:135).

first preceptors were Devcand (b.1581) and Prāṇnāth (1618–1694).³² Prāṇnāth believed in the unity of religions, reflected in the teachings of the Bible, Veda, Koran, Jaina scriptures and other holy works, and spent sixteen months in Delhi unsuccessfully attempting to dissuade Aurangzeb from what is generally perceived as his anti-Hindu policy (Mukharya 1989:113; 1999:122).

During the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries religious identity became a significant political issue with new dimensions in many parts of India. Although there had been earlier attacks on Hindu temples by Islamic regimes—primarily as demonstrations of power at the frontiers of campaigns, rather than being specifically anti-religious (Eaton 2000)—there was a period of cessation of hostilities from around 1420 onwards. However, in the late sixteenth century attacks on Hindu temples recommenced (Talbot 2003:104–107). By the middle of the seventeenth century, communal relationships between landed Sūfīs and Hindus became increasingly violent in the Deccan, with many Sūfīs participating in various conflicts in the region. Under a *farmān* ('royal decree') of 1679, Hindu temples were destroyed, and a tax (*jazīyā*)³³ on Hindus, that had been rescinded by Akbar (r.1556–1605)³⁴ in 1564/5, was reinstated in 1679 by Aurangzeb (r.1658–1707), who at first desisted from imposing it, partly owing to his allegiance to the Rājput̄s. His reimposition of the tax appears not to have been specifically anti-Hindu, but was part of an attempt to rally support from an increasingly orthodox clergy (*ulamā*)³⁵ (Chandra 2003:141–142).³⁶ Nevertheless, there is

³² Prāṇnāth's mother tongue was Gujarati, but he was well acquainted with Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Rajasthani and Hindi. He twice made tours of Muslim Arabia, and had an extensive knowledge of Islam. All Prāṇāmī literature is in Hindi, written in the *devanagārī* script, and Prāṇnāth was the first Hindi poet to use the word *hindavi* (Hindustani), considering it as the 'national' as well as a link language.

³³ The tax has been calculated as amounting to a month's wages from a tradesman's income for a year (Chandra 2003:142). It was in force until 1713; it was again imposed between 1717 and 1720 ([Thiel-] Horstmann 1991:268).

³⁴ Akbar's son and successor, Jahāngīr (r.1605–1628), generally continued—but with important exceptions—the liberal policy of his father, permitting Hindu pilgrimage to such places as Haridvār, preventing forcible conversion to Islam, and even paying daily allowances to extra-faith converts. Many Hindus also held high public office (Sharma 1937–1938:307–315).

³⁵ Bayly (1985:191) believes Aurangzeb's 'tilt' towards Islam may have been to build up local support against the power of Hindu *zamīndār*-s.

³⁶ During periods of conflict between Mughal and Hindu rulers, up until the

also some evidence that Aurangzeb, after his conquest of Bijapur in 1686, contributed to the widening divisions between the Muslim and Hindu communities, purging non-orthodox and 'eclectic' Sūfis (Eaton 1997:244–246).

Regarding Hindu/Muslim relations, changes in government perceptions and policy can be seen in developments within the sultanate of Bijapur. Eaton (1997:99–114) discusses the cultural syncretism of the sultanate under Sultan Ibrahim II (1580–1627). The Sultan, a Sunni Muslim and a Deccani, was a noted scholar, with a considerable knowledge of Sanskrit.³⁷ He is hailed as one of the great poets of the age, and actively supported various Hindu religious and cultural institutions,³⁸ one of his popular epithets being *jagadguru*.³⁹

The religious eclecticism of Ibrahim II was not shared by his successor, Sultan Muhammad Ādil Śāh (1627–1656), under whom an orthodox Muslim religious establishment came to play a heightened religio-political role in Bijapur. Up to a fifth of the wealth derived from military conquests went to support Muslim organs of state (Eaton 1997:115). Muhammad styled himself a *mujahid* ('wager of

eighteenth century, it is important to recognise that the political battles were not in any way similar to, for example, the religious wars waged in Europe between Protestant and Catholic regimes. By contrast, in India, no Muslim enclaves were sieged; populations were not expelled on the basis of religion; there were no forced conversions; banks maintained branches in both Hindu and Muslim regions, extending credit regardless of religion; and Hindus and Muslims served in respective governments and armies on both sides. (For further details, see Gordon 1999.)

³⁷ His dominance in the region can be traced from 1583, when the Shi'a *khutba* (the Friday sermon, in which the secular ruler's name was revered and prayed for) was replaced by that of orthodox Sunnism (Eaton 1997:100).

³⁸ He composed one of the landmarks of Dakani literature, the *Kītab-i Nauras*, a treatise on the nine sentiments (*rasā*) of Sanskrit literature, which also discusses the subject of Indian musical *rāga*-s. Instead of the usual Muslim invocation, *bism-ullah*, the book opens with a prayer to Gaṇapati. Śiva, Parvatī and Bhairava also feature prominently in the work. It is reported that Ibrahim even had an image of Sarasvatī brought into the palace for his personal worship. Being infatuated with music, Ibrahim also instituted a national music-holiday, *Īd-i Nauras*, in which thousands of Hindu musicians participated. He issued orders ensuring the rights of pilgrims to perform rituals to the Hindu deity Khanderao (Mallari), and supported the upkeep of a Hindu temple at Chinchvad, near Pune (Eaton 1997:111).

³⁹ Besides support for Hindu institutions, Ibrahim tolerated Shi'a Muslims—though not in his employment—and was the first sovereign to allow Jesuits to establish mission churches in the kingdom. He nevertheless wished to be remembered above all as a good Muslim; on his tomb are Arabic couplets from the Koran, extolling the piety of Abraham (father of Isaac), who is described as not a Jew, nor a Christian, but a Muslim.

*jihad*⁴⁰) and *ghāzī* ('religious fighter') in his campaigns, from 1638 to 1649. Government regulations (*Dastur al-Āmal*) issued under Muhammad specifically separated the Hindus and Muslims as distinct and unequal communities for the first time in the history of Bijapur.⁴⁰ Reaction to the religious eclecticism came not only from government but also from the Sūfī orders of Bijapur, primarily from the newly-arrived Qādiri and Shattāri orders. The reformist Sūfīs of Bijapur were often hostile to Brahmans, Hindu ascetics and *yogī*-s. There are several semi-hagiographic accounts of the time that describe various spiritual battles between Sūfīs and Hindu *yogī*-s and *gosain*-s; the Sūfīs, of course, emerging victorious. Even though warrior Sūfīs had been active in India since the thirteenth century, it was only in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that the image of the Islamic holy warrior (*ghāzī*) appears in Indo-Muslim writing, an image that was then retroactively attributed to numerous individuals of previous centuries (Talbot 2003:107).

During the period under consideration Sūfīs began to exert considerable influence on the administration in Delhi, some gaining very prominent status. Amongst Chishtis, Khwāja Muinud Chishti and Shaikh Salim Chishti were virtually made patron saints of the Mughals (Chandra 1996:145). The status of Shaikhs was such that they were considered to be above some aspects of law (Shackle 1976:162). Already by the sixteenth century the Mughal emperors had established extensive bureaucratic hierarchies that dispensed royal funds and land to Sūfī shrines, frequently regulated by appointed trustees (Ernst and Lawrence 2002:21). Also, contrary to certain preconceptions concerning the nature of Islam, some Sūfīs of the mediaeval period in the subcontinent enjoyed a particular kind of prestige, as they acted as priests at *dargāh*-s ('tombs of departed *pīr*-s'), and also performed rituals as intermediaries between God and supernatural forces (Gaborieau 1989).⁴¹

Besides the more orthodox Sūfīs of the *dargāh*-s there were also

⁴⁰ The Muslim population were obliged to attend the Friday prayers, and preachers were instructed not to allow any Hindu influences on Islam. Muslims were instructed not to attend festivals such as Holi, Divāli and Dassera, when taxes on sheep, *ghī*, and rice were imposed for those attending (Eaton 1997:117–118).

⁴¹ Gaborieau's study is limited to Nepal, but it seems probable that the situation was similar in north India.

many *majzūb* ('dervish'/Madāri)⁴² Sūfīs wandering around. In the *Dabistān* (p. 223)—written in the mid-seventeenth century—they are compared with Saṃnyāsī-Avadhūts, rubbing themselves with ashes, the most "perfect" of them going naked—even in the severe cold of Kashmir and Kabul—with black turbans and tangled hair, sometimes clad with iron chains, and drinking large quantities of *bhāṅg*. In terms of life-style and appearance there is little to distinguish them from Nāths and Daśanāmī *nāgā*-s.⁴³

During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries arose what has been called the 'the Nakshbandi reaction', an orthodox Sūfī movement against religious eclecticism in Mughal India, represented by Akbar, and against 'unorthodox' Sūfī orders and practices. This movement roughly parallels events during this phase of Bijapur's history (Eaton 1997:124). The reformist Nakshbandis had spread widely throughout Muslim-dominated north India, many obtaining high posts in the civil and military administration.⁴⁴ Many men, not only those with a high degree of traditional Islamic learning, but also military adventurers and soldiers, abandoned their previous occupations and joined the Nakshbandis during the time of Aurangzeb's rule. Some recent immigrants from Central Asia who were military commanders holding high office in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries became clients of Nakshbandi *bābā*-s, though there seems to be no evidence of proseytizing or conversion of non-Muslims (Digby 2001:7–8). The influence of the Nakshbandis may

⁴² An order founded by Śāh Madar (=Shaikh Badi'u'd-Dīn, b.1315) (Rizvi 1993:318).

⁴³ These kinds of Sūfīs were known by various names in different regions of India, including: Madāris, Haydaris, Malamatis, Torlaks, Babs, Abdals, Jamis, Malangs, Jalalis, and Qalandars. This radical form of Sūfism is also known as *qalandar*. The early Qalandari branches were founded in the Middle-East, Turkey, Egypt and Sindh in the thirteenth century (Schimmel 1983:335; Rizvi 1993:301–321; Ernst and Lawrence 2002:21–22). Radical Sūfīs were noted for being quarrelsome and sometimes violent, giving rise to anxiety when they stayed in *khānqāh*-s in India. Yet their spiritual powers were feared and respected (Digby 1976:172). For a graphic account of some of the radical practices of a sect of *fakīr*-s in Hyderabad, the Rufāyis, descended from Sayed Ahmad Kabīr Rafāī (d.1160), see Hunt (1934).

⁴⁴ The Nakshbandi order derives its name from Bahā'uddīn Naqshband (d.1390), who came from central Asia. His most successful successor was 'Abdu'l-Khālīq Ghijduwānī, who taught 'the way of the Khojas (teachers)', *ṭarīqa-yi Khwājagān*, and established connections with trade guilds and merchants. Under Khwāja Ahrār, Nakshbandis came to dominate central Asia, establishing a firm footing in India at the end of Akbar's reign, shortly before 1600 (Schimmel 1983:364–367).

also be seen in the pattern of marriages between Nakshbandis and the royal house (Damrel 2000:180–187).

One of the most famous of the orthodox reformers was a Sunni Muslim, Shaikh Ahmad Faruki of Sirhindī (1563–1624),⁴⁵ who was a Nakshbandi. He disliked Shi'a Islam, and attempted to reform all orders.⁴⁶ Sirhindī rose to become governor of the province of Bihar, and oversaw a network of up to 1,600 *khulafa/khalifa*-s (Rizvi 1993:226, 293) that, according to Jahāngir, was active in every town of the empire.⁴⁷ Both the more conservative Sirhindī, a Nakshbandi, and his more eclectic and 'Nāth yogic' Chishti predecessor, Abd al-Quddūs Gangohī (d.1537), agreed on the principle of prohibiting *kafir*-s from government service, except in minor posts. Sirhindī went further, however, wishing to reimpose a tax on non-Muslims, and attempting to prohibit Muslim dress for non-Muslims.⁴⁸

The assertion of a distinct Muslim identity on the part of the political elite also roughly coincided with the heightened importance of the institutions of Sūfī *pīr*-s. From around the mid-seventeenth century, the *khānqāh*-s of the Bijapur region, which were previously occupied by the early migrant *pīr*-s, were replaced by *dargāh*-s, which sometimes included a courtyard, a small mosque and the graveyard of the *pīr*-s descendants. Spiritual power ceased being transmitted from one *pīr* to another, and began to be transmitted from the *pīr* to the *dargāh* where he was buried (Eaton 1997:210–213; Lapidus 1988:460). Also, whereas previously the *pīr* holding the office of *kālīfā* (or *sajjāda-niṣn* 'one who sits on the prayer carpet') had been

⁴⁵ Sirhindī—also known as 'Mujaddid' ('saviour') Alf i-Sani—traced his descent from Caliph 'Umar, and believed that he and three of his successors (beginning with his son, Muhammad Ma'ṣum) were the highest representatives of God (*qayyūm*), directly elected to reform Islam (Schimmel 1983:369; Rizvi 1993:202ff.).

⁴⁶ The nature of the 'Nakshbandi reaction' has been questioned by Damrel (2000), who argues that Sirhindī's reform programme was essentially his own personal agenda, rather than being rooted, as many scholars have maintained, in Nakshbandi tradition. Sirhindī was imprisoned but was eventually released, after which he initiated Šāh Jahān (Haq 1935:17ff.). Although primarily a Chishti, Sirhindī was also initiated into the Qādiri (and maybe also the Suhrawardi) order, and then, finally, into the Nakshbandi order. Sirhindī traced his line of allegiance to the Prophet through twenty-one Nakshbandis, twenty-five Qādiris and twenty-seven Chishtis. He maintained Chishti ties even after he became a Nakshbandi (Damrel 2000:182).

⁴⁷ On the relationship between Sirhindī and Jahāngir, see also Sharma (1937–1938:312–313).

⁴⁸ See Rizvi (1993:215–329) for a comprehensive account of Sirhindī.

succeeded by initiated disciples (*murīd*-s), the criterion for succession changed, and it passed to a hereditary heir and his family, *pīrzada*-s ('sons of the *pīr*'), who enjoyed—and still enjoy—the social prestige inherent in being descendants of an illustrious predecessor. The *dargāh*-s became dynamic social institutions centred on the personality cult of the departed *pīr* and his descendants.

Although for many centuries the devotion of a *pīr* to his deceased teacher (Shaikh) had been frequently expressed by pilgrimage to his tomb—a local pilgrimage that in some instances was considered a Great *hajj* (Shackle 1976:162–163)—Sūfism changed from being a discipline for a small elite, to becoming a movement of popular devotionism, many *dargāh*-s becoming general places of pilgrimage. Although the *pīr*-s of some *khānqāh*-s had acted as spiritual preceptors to Sultans, ties between *pīr*-s and Sultans remained largely informal. However, a significant development in the late seventeenth century was that many *pīrzada*-s entered into formal association with the state, and permanent land-grants (*inām*) were issued, which were substantially augmented up to the beginning of the eighteenth century by subsequent Sultans, including Aurangzeb. The land-grants, enshrined within the *Dastur-al-Āmal*, established a new relationship between the state and Sūfī institutions, which began enjoying power and prestige within the state in a new and significant way, as the “Brahmans of Islam” (Eaton 1997:212–221, 247). The influence of Sūfīs may be gauged from the fact that there was more Persian Sūfī hagiographical literature produced in India than in all of Persia and Central Asia combined (Ernst and Lawrence 2002:48).⁴⁹

Sūfī institutions were clearly very influential on the Muslim state during the period under consideration, and it is interesting to consider a parallel in the structures of the Sūfī and Daśanāmī schemes of their respective orders. During the middle ages it was very common for Sūfīs to trace their lineage to the four Caliphs, and thence to the Prophet Muhammad. Hagiographers also retrospectively assigned such lineages to famous Sūfīs, such as Jālāl al-Dīn Rūmī (1207–1273), author of the *Mathnawī*. In the *Al-Jawāhīr-ul Mudiyya* of Shaikh Muhyiddin Abdul Kadir (d.1373), and other works, Rūmī was attached to

⁴⁹ One of the earliest works of Sūfī hagiography was Muhammad Ja'far al-Khuldī's *Hikayāt al-Awliyā* (late ninth or early tenth century), a work no longer extant (Islam 2002:3).

the lineage from Abu Bakr's family. However, this is contradicted by epigraphic and other evidence (Güven 1991:24–27). The Maulawi sect of Sūfīs, who descend from Rūmī, thus trace the lineage of their sect back through Rūmī to Abu Bakr, the first Caliph.⁵⁰ It was during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that the organisation of Sūfī orders as teaching lineages first crystalised (Rizvi 1978:83),⁵¹ a link to the lineage of the Prophet Muhammad being crucial.⁵² During initiation the lineage of the chain of masters is recited, a practice subsequently supplemented by the writing out of the names of the masters of the order, resulting in a filial tree (*shajara*). Knowing the names of previous masters conferred special religious merit (Ernst and Lawrence 2002:19–23). In this context it is interesting to note the observations of the author of the *Dabistān*, written in 1645, comparing the Hindus and the (celibate) Muslim Sūfīs:

[The Sūfīs], as they have heard that there ten classes of sanyāsīs, and twelve of yogīs,⁵³ they also pretend to be divided into fourteen classes; when they meet together, the questions which they ask are: who are the four sages, and which are the fourteen noble families? And they impose upon their disciples many years of service, before they reveal to them the four sages and fourteen families; they say: the sage of sages is the [1] illustrious Muhammed (may the peace of God be upon him!), and after him, devoted to godliness, [2] Ali (may the blessings of God be upon him!); from him the Khalifat devolved upon [3] Imam

⁵⁰ The four Caliphs reigned as follows: Abu Bakr (632–634); 'Umar (634–644); 'Uthmān/'Usman (644–656); 'Ali [bin Abi Talib] (656–661).

⁵¹ An example is the Indian Chishti order, which has a tradition of twenty-two masters. Many Chishtis trace their lineage to the archangel Gabriel, and reckon the 21st successor as Shaikh Niẓām ud-Dīn Aulia (d.1325), and the 22nd as Shaikh Nasir ud-Dīn Mahmud Chiragh-i Dihli (d.1356). However, the branch of the Chishti order that predominates in the Deccan starts with the Prophet Muhammad, and counts Shaikh Niẓām ud-Dīn's successor, Burhan ud-Dīn Gharib (d.1337) as the 21st successor, and Zayn ud-Dīn Shirazi (d.1369), as the 22nd (Ernst and Lawrence 2002:23).

⁵² Most Sūfī orders regard 'Ali as their Shaikh, and trace their descent from either 'Ali, or from Hasan al-Basri (656–661), who was born in Medina and settled in Basra. According to Sūfī tradition, Hasan became 'Ali's disciple, though this is doubted by mediaeval and modern scholars (Rizvi 1978:27, 83).

⁵³ This is a reference to the twelve *panth-s* (*baropanthī*) of Nāth-yogīs/*siddha-s*, which are: Satyanāth, Dharma, Rām, Nateśvar, Kanthar, Kapil, Vairāgya (Bhartṛhari), Mannāth (Gopicand), Ayae, Pagal (associated with Cauraṅgināth or Puran Bhagat), Dhavja (associated with Hanumān or Mahāvīr), Gaṅgānāth (associated with Bhīṣma, son of Gaṅgā) (see Banerjea 1988:13–14). For the complete *guru-ṣaramparā* of the Nāths, descending from the 'nine Nāths', see Vilāsnāth (1998:61–81).

Hossain;⁵⁴ then [4] Khaja Hossen of Basora,⁵⁵ also was his disciple and a khalif; these four personages are the four sages (*Dabistān* pp. 220–221).

The text continues with a list of fourteen families,⁵⁶ which are said to descend from two Caliphs.⁵⁷ Similarities between the Sūfī and Saṃnyāsī overviews of their respective orders is evident.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Husain (624/5–669/70) was the son of ‘Ali. His assassination—while opposing the Umayyads—was a decisive moment in the separation of the supporters of ‘Ali (Shi‘a) from the Sunni community.

⁵⁵ Hasan al-Basri (642–728); most Sūfī lineages claim to pass through him.

⁵⁶ In the eleventh century, the Persian Sūfī, Shaikh al-Hujwīrī classified twelve Sūfī orders, linking each to a famous Sūfī master, despite the fact that there was seldom a correspondence between these early ascetics and the well-known Sūfī orders of later times. Sultanate and Mughal *tazkira* (‘hagiographical family-tree’) writers added two more Sūfī orders—to make fourteen—but the lists are not consistent (Ernst and Lawrence 2002:24).

⁵⁷ The text continues: “They say besides, from Khaja Hossen, of Basora, sprang two branches: the first was that of the Khalif Hossen Basorī Habīb Ajemī, from whom nine families proceeded, named as follows: Jībīān, Tāikerīān, Kherkīān, Sīkatīān, Jenīdīān, Gazrūnīān, Tūsiān, Ferdusiān, and Soherwardīān. From the second Khalifat of Hossen Basorī, which was that of Shaikh Abdul Wahid Zaid, came forth five families with the following titles: the Zebūrīān, Aiāsīān, Adhamīān, Habūrīān and Cheshtīān, and these are the fourteen noble families.”

The *Ā-in-i Akbarī* of Abu-l-Faḥl (1972, Vol. 2:393–420) provides a somewhat different list of the fourteen Sūfī orders that existed in India at the time of Akbar (r.1556–1605): Habībī, Tayfūrī, Karkhī, Saqatī, Junaydī, Kāzrunī, Tusi, Firdaus, Suhrawardī, Zaydī, F’yāzī, Adhamī, Hubayrī, and Chishtī. The lives of the fourteen founding saints are also sketched. “It is said Ali, the Prince of the Faithful, had four viceregents, *viz.*, Hasan, Husayn, Kamil, and Hasan Basri. The source of these orders they believe to be Hasan Basri who had two representatives, Habbib-i-Ajami, from whom the first nine obtain their spiritual fervour, and the other Abdu’l Wāhad-b-Zayd, from whom the last five are filled with consolation” (p. 394). Five Sūfī sects played an important role in India from the fourteenth century onwards: Shattārī, Qādīrī, Qalandarī, Nakshbandī, and Uwaysī (Siddiqī 1989:35).

The earliest *silsilā* was the Qādīrī, founded by Shaikh Abdul Qādīr Jīlānī (d.1166) (Rizvi 1993:6 fn. 1). From the beginning of the thirteenth century, the most important of the organised Sūfī orders in India were the Chishtī and Suhrawardī, the former order being more ascetic, independent from state patronage, and also open to outsiders. Suhrawardīs were more closed to outsiders, accepted government service, and became wealthy. From the fourteenth century, Sūfīs were often initiated into both orders (Rizvi 1993:13, 217, 272). The Qādīrī and Shattārī orders became influential in India in the fifteenth century. The Shattārī order became closely identified with the state elite (dressing like kings, with followers in military uniform), but lost favour with Akbar, and declined in influence (Lapidus 1988:448). For the founding and resumé of the history of the Qādīrī, Suhrawardī, Kubrawī (which has two Indian branches, the Firdawsī and Hamadani), Nakshbandī (Khawājagan), and Chishtī orders, see Rizvi (1978:84–120). For the Shattārī order, see Rizvi (1993:62–64).

⁵⁸ Sūfī and Daśanāmī traditions have parallels even today. During initiation,

It is not only Sūfī orders that trace their descent from four preceptors. Also, as previously noted, the *śaiva* Pāśupata order traces its origin to the four disciples of Lākuliśa. The *vaiṣṇava* Vaikhānasa tradition also traces its origins to four Vedic schools, represented, according to the *Ānanda-saṃhitā* (XVII. 38–39),⁵⁹ by four Vedic ṛṣi-s who were disciples of Vikhānasa: Marīci, Atri, Kaśyapa and Bhṛgu (Colas 1996:14, 20).⁶⁰ Within the Indian epic tradition, Vyāsa, the reputed author of the *Mahābhārata*, is said to have had four disciples: Sumanta, Jaimini, Paila, and Vaiśampāyana (see Kramisch 1924:2). According to the Jaina Śvetāmbara tradition, four pupils of Vajrasvāmin (fifth–sixth cent.?) founded four *kula*-s (‘clans’) for the mendicant community: the Candra (sometimes *-kula*), the Nirvṛtti (sometimes *-kula*), the Vidyādhara *gaccha* (‘those who travel together’) and the Nāgendra *gaccha*. In the mid-thirteenth century, referring to “the four *kula*-s” was a way of referring to the totality of the Śvetāmbara mendicant community (Dundas 1993:251–252; Cort 2001:42).⁶¹ The Sikh-related Baṛā (‘large’) Udāsīn *akhārā* was founded, according to tradition, by Śrī Cand, the eldest of the two sons of Guru Nānak (1469–1539). The *akhārā* is divided into four divisions, namely: Balu Hasna; Phul Sahib (or Mīān Sahib); Almast; and Bhagat Bhagvān (or Gonda). These four *dhūnī*-s (*dhūān*)⁶² are said to have been instituted in 1636 by the four disciples of Bābā Gurdita, who followed Śrī Cand on the *gaddī*.⁶³ According to the *Bhaktamāla* (v. 32) of Nābhadaśa⁶⁴

Daśanāmī-Saṃnyāsīs receive instruction on their *Mathāmnāya*, and usually receive a paper, such as the *Daśnām-kalp-vṛks*, providing the four *matha* scheme. A largely parallel procedure still operates at the Amin ud-Dīn *dargāh* on Śāhpur Hill, near Bijapur (Eaton 1997:304). On induction to the order, *murīd*-s are issued with printed certificates linking them, through Amin ud-Dīn, to the Chishti Sūfīs of Delhi, and ultimately to the Prophet.

⁵⁹ The earliest part of the Vaikhānasa corpus dates from the ninth century, while the bulk was composed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

⁶⁰ See also Caland (1941:i–xxxvi).

⁶¹ There is some evidence that all of these four *gaccha*-s were extant in the late fourteenth century, but by the sixteenth century only the Candra *gaccha* was still flourishing. The *gaccha*-s, as organisational units, gradually replaced ‘the four *kula*-s’ during this period.

⁶² Besides the four *dhūnī*-s, seven *bhaktīs*-s were founded, that is, centres of Sikhism in different parts of India, but mostly in Punjab (Singh 1951:64–66). There is here also some kind of a parallel with the seven Daśanāmī *akhārā*-s.

⁶³ See Ch. 3.1.

⁶⁴ See Pollet (1963:76, 171).

(c.1600), Rāmānuja had four disciples;⁶⁵ and it seems the organisation of the four *vaiṣṇava sampradāya*-s may have first formally arisen in the sixteenth century.⁶⁶

This is not to suggest that the *Ṣaṃnyāsī*s necessarily borrowed the idea of four ‘disciples’ from the Sūfī or any other tradition, as Śaṅkara may possibly have had four disciples, though it is perhaps significant that the chief *mahant*-s of the *akhārā*-s are sometimes called *pīr*, a Muslim honorific term. However, some evidence has been presented to show that there was a very fertile context for the development of an identity for an orthodox Hindu order. By the middle of the seventeenth century in north and south-central India, there was harassment of Hindu *saṃnyāsī*-s and *yogī*-s; the heightened power and prestige of *pīr*-s and *dargāh*-s with their proud and remunerative lineages; a more orthodox regime at Delhi perceived by many as essentially hostile towards Hindus; and, importantly, large roving bands of militant *nāgā-saṃnyāsī*-s with what seems to have been a non-orthodox Tantric background. The notion of ten names seems first to be attested around the end of the sixteenth century, around the time of the formation of the first militant *akhārā*-s. It is suggested that it was in this context that the *Maṭhāmnāya*-s emerged as an ideological response to the *saṃnyāsī*-s’ social and political situation. The *Maṭhāmnāya*-s built on to the notion of Śaṅkara as a *śaiva* who conquered the four corners of India with Vedānta, with the claim that Śaṅkara also founded of an order of ascetics, who consequently became united under an orthodox Hindu umbrella. The Daśanāmī order amalgamated lineages of militant Girīs, Purīs and Bhāratīs, with other monastic lineages, producing the compound order of ‘Tīrtha, Āśrama, Vana, Araṇya, Giri, Parvata, Sāgara, Sarasvatī, Bhāratī and Purī’.

Some of the activities of the *nāgā*-s and *akhārā*-s will now be discussed to illustrate the diversity of Daśanāmī activities, by this time with some kind of orthodox identity.

⁶⁵ Śrutiprajña, Śrutideva, Śrutidhāmā, and Śrutidadhi.

⁶⁶ See Ch. 2.1, fn. 7.

7.4 Mercenary and military activities of nāgā-s and gosain-s

Sarkar (1958:262–286) records the service to various regents in north India by *nāgā* armies of up to many thousands of Daśanāmī-Saṃnyāsī *gosain*-s, Bairāgī and other fighting orders, who fought in numerous battles, both defensive and aggressive. During the early eighteenth century the city of Jhansi was the capital of a small state ruled over by Daśanāmī *gosain*-s (see below). During the latter half of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries they were employed, in many instances as a regularly paid standing army, in service to Mahārājas of Jodhpur, Jaipur, Jaisalmer, Bikaner, Udaipur, Baṛaudā, Marvār (western Madhya Pradesh), and Bhuj (capital town of Kacch).

In an official bond-letter dating from the 1730s, addressed to the Mahārāja Jaisingh II (r.1700–1743),⁶⁷ the Rāmānandī, Vrijānand, abjures the carrying of arms and allowing armed monks to attend Rāmānandī communal feasts. This indicates their conspicuous presence.⁶⁸ It is further stated that those Rāmānandīs who do so will be expelled from the seven-branched Śrī Rāmānandī *saṃpradāya* (the seven-branched *saṃpradāya* being perhaps modelled on the seven *akhārā*-s of the Daśanāmīs). The Daśanāmīs, along with Sant and other *vaiṣṇava* orders, were similarly requested to sign such bonds ([Thiel]-Horstman 2001:3–4). However, this did not prevent their extensive military campaigns.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Jaisingh II was a king of the Kachavāhā dynasty of eastern Rajasthan. The kings of this dynasty operated as semi-autonomous regents under the Mughals. Their capital moved from Ajmer to Jaipur in 1739.

⁶⁸ They were permanently established at a small fort at the base of Nahargarh hill (Orr 1940:11).

⁶⁹ Rāmānandī warriors under Vrijānand subsequently engaged in battle in 1744 in the neighbouring states of Koṭā and Būndī with forces that were threatening Īsvarsingh, Jaisingh II's successor. Although the Rāmānandīs fought on behalf of the Mahārāja of Jaipur, they were not on his regular payroll. Vrijānand died in 1752, and was succeeded by Bālānand, whom Rāmānandī tradition credits with giving definitive shape to the military organisation of the Rāmānandīs, in 1734. Although Bālānand is cast as a Rāmānandī, Rāmānanda is nowhere mentioned in the relevant documents of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Rather, it is Rāmānuja who figures as the spiritual fountainhead of the order ([Thiel]-Horstmann 2001:8). Bālānand's forces fought against the Jāṭs who were seeking to expand. Outside Rajasthan, Bālānand had strongholds in the entire Braj-Bhāratpur region, and as far away as Jagannāth Purī. Bālānand died in 1795, his funeral being attended by numerous dignitaries, testifying to his power and influence. He had

The militant Dādūpanthīs were supported by the Mahārāja of Jaipur, Mādhav Singh, who reigned from 1750 to 1767. Court records reveal that, beginning in 1768, the *nāgā*-s began to receive ever more lucrative land-grants and payments. By 1803, eight years after they had officially joined state forces, 4,000 *nāgā*-s were a part of the 13,000-strong state army of Jaipur.⁷⁰

There are other documented instances of large bands of *gosain nāgā*-s being hired for specific military offensives. In 1763, Pṛthvī Nārāyaṇ Śāh, king of Gorkha, and the founder of modern Nepal,⁷¹ was engaged in a campaign to extend his empire into the Kathmandu valley (Baral 1964:231–234). His chief adviser and strategist was the ascetic Nāth-*siddha*, Bhagavantnāth, who used his influence to negotiate various matrimonial and military alliances between Gorkha and some of the other forty-five kingdoms of western Nepal. During Pṛthvī Nārāyaṇ’s attack on the village of Sāgā, his Ghorkalese troops were confronted by five hundred *nāgā*-s who were fighting on behalf of one of his opponents, Jayaprakāś Malla, king of Kathmandu. The leader of the *nāgā*-s, Gulābram, had given a sword to Pṛthvī Nārāyaṇ Śāh when the latter visited him in Banaras twenty years previously. Gulābram, believing the sword to be responsible for the king’s success in battle, had returned for recompense, which was denied. Gulābram and his forces then took up arms with Jayaprakāś, but with disastrous consequences; all the *nāgā*-s were slaughtered by the Ghorkalese army. Gulābram, however, escaped. During the 1780s, some seven hundred *nāgā*-s died in battle in another Himalayan province, Kumaon. 1,400 *nāgā*-s had been enlisted, with the promise of substantial financial rewards, by king Mohan Cand in his unsuccessful attempt to recapture his seat at Almora, from which he had been deposed by his rival, Harṣdeo Jośi, king of the neighbouring province, Gaṛhvāl (Agrawal 1993:325).

been an *ācārya* for forty-three years and had accumulated much wealth and several important temples; he was succeeded by Govindānand.

⁷⁰ Croke (1896, Vol. 4:238) reports that the Dādūpanthī *nāgā*-s live in seven camps or villages in the neighbourhood of Jaipur. They are occasionally sent out to coerce revenue defaulters. Their pay is one *anna* per day in peacetime, and two per day during active service. All are never on duty at the same time; those left at home cultivate land, breed camels or lend money. As late as 1914, a group of Dādūpanthīs offered military service to the Government of India for the First World War. However, they refused to enlist in the regular army, and their offer was not accepted (Orr 1940:12 fn. 4).

⁷¹ See Burghart (1995) for the king’s attempt to found a “Hindu” kingdom.

The careers of three prominent Daśanāmī *gosain nāgā-s*, namely Rajendra Giri Gosain (d.1753), and his *celā-s*, the brothers Anūp Giri Gosain (Himmat Bahādur) (1730–1804) and Umrao Giri Gosain (b.1734), have been documented by Sarkar (1958:123–261) and Bhalla (1944).⁷² Their studies reveal the extent of some *gosain-s*' power, wealth, influence and duplicity. At the height of their careers the *gosain-s* commanded a force of up to forty thousand horse and foot soldiers. The movement and recruitment of troops was greatly facilitated by a network of weapon-stocks and grain-stores in the countryside. *Gosain-s* also looked after food-producing small holdings at different times of the year. When on campaigns, most of which were executed in the Gangetic region, they carried equipment—including materials for mounting fortified locations—on elephants and other pack animals, and had camel-mounted guns. The army was equipped with excellent horses and state-of-the-art weapons, including musketry and artillery.⁷³ They were highly regarded by the British as a fighting force, ranked alongside the Afghans, Jāts and Sikhs, and particularly renowned for their night-time guerilla operations: naked, slippery with oil, and deadly with the dagger.

The *gosain-s* Rajendra Giri, Anūp Giri, Umrao Giri, and their *nāgā samnyāsī* armies, fought on behalf of several rulers and regents, their mercenary approach to war resulting on some occasions in their changing sides to fight on behalf of former adversaries. Their patrons in the mid-eighteenth century included the Safdar Jang,⁷⁴ *vazīr*

⁷² See also Kolff (1971) and Barnett (1987) for further details of their activities and political developments.

⁷³ Military equipment also included bows and arrows, shields, spears, discuses (worn around the neck), the 'rocket' (a metal cylinder with knives), and the 'umbrella' (a mechanism of revolving iron balls) (Orr 1940:16).

⁷⁴ The Mughals also supported Rāmānandī *nāgā-s* at Ayodhya. Safdar Jang granted seven *bīghā-s* of land at Hanumān hill to Abhay Rām Dās, the abbot of the Nirvāṇī *akhāyā*. During the reign of Shuja's successor, Asaf ud-Daulah (r.1775–1793), funds were raised to construct part of the fortress-like building to be found at this site. It seems that originally the Nāths and then the Daśanāmīs were the former occupants of the hill. The Daśanāmīs also used to dominate Ayodhya, but were evicted from Ayodhya (except for the Siddhigiri *maṭha*) and the hill then occupied by the Jūnā *akhāyā*. Rāmānandī forces were led by Abhay Rām Dās (van der Veer 1988:143–147). All Mughal emperors, from Akbar to Śāh Ālam II (the last Mughal emperor, r.1759–1806) also supported Nāth institutions and individuals, as has the royal house of Nepal since the mid-eighteenth century. Śāh Ālam II was highly influenced by the charisma and yogic powers of Mastnāth (White 2001:8, 15).

(‘chancellor’) to the Mughal Emperor (Ahmad Śāh) and ruler of the province of Avadh, and his successor Shuja-ud-Daulah.⁷⁵ Campaigns were launched against the encroaching Afghans,⁷⁶ and an unsuccessful attempt to capture Delhi was also pursued in 1753, resulting in the death of Rajendra Giri. In league with the Afghans, the *nāgā*-s also fought the Marāṭhas. Before the battle of Panipat in 1761, an assembly of the Afghans were most upset at the sight the naked army of Shuja, “with their things and buttocks exposed” (Sarkar 1958:158).

A combined army of Mughals, Pathāns, Ruhelās, Rājput̄s, *nāgā*-s and others fought the British in battles at Patna and Buxar in 1764. However, the British repelled the attackers with superior fire-power (Sarkar 1958:163–166). Anūp Giri and Umrao Giri continued their mercenary activities under other patrons, including the Jāṭs under Javahīr Singh, in their unsuccessful campaign to capture Delhi from the Ruhelās in 1764 and 1765 (Sarkar 1958:170–172). However, in 1767 the two *gosain*-s again changed sides, serving under the Marāṭha, Ragunāth Rao (Sarkar 1958:178). During Rao’s absence in the Deccan, the *gosain*-s lived by plundering Bundelkhaṇḍ, to be subsequently re-employed by the *navāb* of Avadh, Shuja-ud-Daulah, between 1767 and 1775. They were paid the colossal sum of 48,000 rupees per year (Bhalla 1944:129). Together with the Marāṭha, Gopāl Rao, the two *gosain*-s were employed as high commanders who held the power of *dastkhat* (‘signature’), entitling them enlist troops without reference to Shuja (Barnett 1987:79).⁷⁷ For the next fifteen years the *gosain*-s served a series of regimes⁷⁸ in Delhi, interspersed with periods of sanctioned plunder. Anūp Giri’s last patron, from 1789 and 1802, was the Marāṭha, Ali Bahādur, who eventually conquered

⁷⁵ Politically expedient ‘religious syncretism’ on the part of regents and power-brokers during this period was not uncommon (see Bayly 1985:177–191).

⁷⁶ In one campaign the Afghans, under Ahmad Śāh Abdali, attacked the holy shrine of Gokul, near Mathurā. Four thousand *nāgā saṃnyāsī*-s and *bairāgī*-s defended the shrine, but two thousand of them were slain (Sarkar 1958:154).

⁷⁷ In battle against the Marāṭhas in 1787, *śaiva nāgā gosain*-s under Anūp Giri fought alongside another army of *nāgā*-s, including five thousand musketeers, under the *vaiṣṇava bairāgī* commander, Bālanānand, who was in service to the Mahārāja of Jaipur, who had up to 10,000 *nāgā*-s in his army (Bhalla 1944:130–134; Sarkar 1958:226–252; Chandra 1977:21).

⁷⁸ These were Mirza Najaf Khān (who seized Delhi in 1773); the Marāṭha, Mādhav Rao Scindia (from 1784); and Śāh Ālam II. Anūp was in charge of the defence of the city during the two latter regimes.

Bundelkhaṇḍ with the assistance of Anūp Giri's forces, for which he was rewarded with 1,300,000 rupees (Bhalla 1944:133).⁷⁹

The Treaty of Bassein, signed in 1802, ceded large parts of Bundelkhaṇḍ from the Marāṭhas to the British. In 1803 Anūp Giri and his forces at first united with the Marāṭhas to repel the British, who were threatening Anūp's territory. However, through the British Collector, Mr. Mercer, and Colonel Mieselbach, Anūp sold himself and his 4,000 cavalry and 8,000 foot-soldiers to the British. When his forces arrived they received a thirteen-gun-salute (Bhalla 1944:134). Alongside the British under Colonel Powell, they conquered Bundelkhaṇḍ, defeating the Marāṭha chief, Śamśer Bahādur (son and successor of Ali Bahādur), other warlords and Buṇḍela chieftans (Pinch 1997:10). Anūp concluded a treaty with the British on September 4th, yielding a *jāgīr* of 2,200,000 rupees, the right to maintain a force of 10,000 cavalry, and a swathe of land between Kalpi (near Mathurā) and Allahabad. Anūp's brother Umrao Giri had been imprisoned on account of a conspiracy, but his release and a pension were negotiated. Anūp Giri died in 1804 at the age of seventy, shortly after the conclusion of the war.⁸⁰ Anūp Giri had a son, Narender Giri, but he did not inherit his father's estate (Bhalla 1944:135).⁸¹

7.5 Saṃnyāsī-s, fakīr-s and rebellion in east India

After the defeat of the *navāb* Siraj-ud-Daulah at the battle of Plassey in 1757, the British had gained control of revenue collection in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa by 1767. In the general breakdown of law and order during the disintegration of Mughal authority—after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707—many *saṃnyāsī*-s and *fakīr*-s had become organised in roving bandit/*dacoit* groups, sometimes known

⁷⁹ In 1791 Anūp Giri placed local Rājput̃s and others under the command of a Dutch colonel, John Mieselbach (Sarkar 1958:256).

⁸⁰ Anūp established a small town in Bundelkhaṇḍ, named Gosainpur (Hunter 1885, Vol. 5:173). His earthly remains were deposited in a tomb two miles north of Banda.

⁸¹ According to Sarkar (1958:205), Anūp Giri's son was Kumār Gaṅgā Giri, and another adopted son was Kumār Kañcangir. Umrao Giri had two sons, namely Kumār Jagat Giri and Uttam Giri, who were also involved in courtly life and mercenary activity (Sarkar 1958:245).

as Piṅḍarīs.⁸² Company records contain numerous reports of incursions by these ‘marauding’ and frequently armed groups, the first of which took place in 1743 (Ghosh 1930:36). Although often naked, leading *gosain*-s frequently wore gold and silver bangles and necklaces, sometimes studded with pearls and diamonds (Ghosh 1930:19).

British forces were subsequently engaged in numerous skirmishes and battles with bands of *saṃnyāsī*-s and *fakīr*-s in Bihar and Bengal (Ghosh 1930; Chandra 1977).⁸³ The British version of events is, by and large, endorsed by Ghosh, whereby the ash-clad, *bhāṅg*-drinking *saṃnyāsī*-s and *fakīr*-s are presented as marauder-bandits, masquerading as pilgrims, but extracting money and goods from local landlords and peasants on false pretences. However, this view has been challenged (Chandra 1977; Chatterjee 1984): if the socio-economic situation of the region at the time is considered, then the disturbances can be seen as part of a larger movement of peasant unrest and rebellion against colonial repression and excessive taxation, sometimes leading to starvation; *saṃnyāsī* and *fakīr nāgā*-s were frequently at the spearhead of the movement.⁸⁴

⁸² After the battle of Panipat in 1761, the Marāṭhas were forced to rely on mercenaries, some of whom received the name ‘Piṅḍarī’ (Gordon 1969:426).

⁸³ From 1757 there are reports of battles between up to 5,000 *saṃnyāsī*-s and British sepoys, forced seizure of money from *zamīndār*-s’ *kacaharī*-s (‘revenue offices’) and Collectors, and raids on villages and factories at Dacca and other places by groups of armed *saṃnyāsī*-s and *fakīr*-s. The first raid on a British factory was at Rampur Boalia, in Dacca, in 1763, by *saṃnyāsī*-s assisted by unemployed cotton workers. In some raids British agents were killed, and army captains were regularly dispatched to disperse the raiders, not always successfully; both sides frequently suffered extensive casualties. The raids were frequently successful as the robbers could flee from the British-held territories of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. In a series of successful raids on *zamīndār*-s in 1773, the *saṃnyāsī*-s were led by Motī Giri and Dharma Giri (Chatterjee 1984:8). In the latter decades of the eighteenth century the *fakīr*-s were under the leadership of the Madāri Sūfī, Mañju Śāh (d.1787), whose first raid in Bengal was conducted in 1771 (Chandra 1977:49–68). By 1774 he had established a cantonment in Dinajpur district of well-armed Rājṣūts, with whom he had formed an alliance. A series of raids were conducted in 1786 by Musa Śāh (d.1792), a relative of Manju, who retreated to a headquarters he had established in Gorkha, Nepal. Various groups of *saṃnyāsī*-s and *fakīr*-s operated out of Myemsingh (in what is now northern Bangladesh), an area over which ruling authorities, including Garos, Koches, Afghans, north-Indian Brahmans and breakaway Mughals, had only ever been able to exert minimal control (van Schendel 1985:140–144).

⁸⁴ The situation was significantly exacerbated by the great famine of 1770/1771, when around one third of the population of Bengal, some fifteen million people, died. However, Warren Hastings was able to write to the Board of Directors that, despite the decrease in population, revenue had increased in 1771, in comparison

Groups of *saṃnyāsī*-s and *fakīr*-s—who occasionally fought each other (Chandra 1977:29)—together with other pilgrims had for many centuries enjoyed annual pilgrimages to holy places in Bihar, Bengal and Assam.⁸⁵ Some *fakīr*-s had enjoyed extraordinary privileges under various patrons in the seventeenth and the early part of the eighteenth century. Prior to full British control over revenue, Muslim authorities occasionally issued *sanad*-s ('deeds/grants') to ensure the rights of the *fakīr*-s to collect alms and acquire property,⁸⁶ a demand on meagre peasant resources also regarded as legitimately collectable by the British in the form of tax. Some groups of *saṃnyāsī*-s were also employed simply as mercenaries in the service of political rivals to the British.⁸⁷

British forces, under orders from Warren Hastings, made strenuous

to 1768, owing to his diligent efforts: taxes were collected with the help of troops. Price-fixing, monopoly purchase, enforced monoculture, and control over trade in many goods, such as grain, salt, cotton and opium were amongst the economic tactics used by the British, leading to deprivation and workers' anger. The price of rice increased enormously. Exorbitant demands for payment led to ryots being evicted from their land, many of them swelling the ranks of the roving *saṃnyāsī* and *fakīr* bands, perhaps to up to 20,000 strong. Farmers enlisted the help of *nāgā*-s to resist new taxes introduced in 1770 (Chandra 1977:149, 166; Chatterjee 1984:6).

⁸⁵ Visited by *saṃnyāsī*-s and other Hindus in this part of India were places such as Janakpur (in the Terai), Mahāsthengarh (near Bogra), places along the Brahmapūtra river, Gaṅgā Sāgar (on the bay of Bengal, about fifty miles east of Calcutta), Jagannāth Pūri and Kāmākṣī (near Guahati). Many *saṃnyāsī*-s began their annual pilgrimage cycle from the Māgh Melā at Allahabad in January/February. The *fakīr*-s and other Muslim pilgrims, who entered Bengal by the same route as that followed by the *saṃnyāsī*-s—and who were generally better received in Muslim-dominated Bengal—went to *dargāh*-s, several of which are located in Dinajpur and Malda districts, and to the famous Adīna mosque, near Pandua, also in the Malda district. Some pilgrimage sites were common to both *fakīr*-s and *saṃnyāsī*-s, one being a bath in the river Karotoya at Mahāsthengarh, where there is the *dargāh* of Pīr Sāh Sultan (Ghosh 1930:24–29). Another was at Makhanpur, in the district of Cawnpore, 140 miles from Agra, where the headquarters of the Mardāri *fakīr*-s and the tomb of Sāh Madār are situated. Hindus also frequented the place, believing the saint to be an incarnation of Lakhan (Ghosh 1930:27).

⁸⁶ In 1659 Shuja-ud-Daulah issued a *sanad* to the *fakīr* Janab Śāh Sultan Hasān Mūriā (of the Burhana sect, which is the same as the Madāris, who, of all Sūfī sects, most closely resemble *saṃnyāsī nāgā*-s) whereby within the countries of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa he was free to roam with all the paraphernalia of the *julūs* ('procession'), and confiscate properties with no heir, or which are rent-free. Although no contributions were to be levied, the *fakīr* "will be supplied with provisions", according to the *sanad* (Ghosh 1930:22).

⁸⁷ Five or six thousand armed *saṃnyāsī*-s undertook raids in 1773, in the pay of Darpa Deo, *rāja* of Baikantapur. In the same year another large raiding group was reportedly in the pay of the Bhutanese (Chandra 1977:72–73).

efforts to prohibit, rout and dispel the raiders entering Bengal. No less than four battalions of the army were actively engaged against the *saṃnyāsī*-s and *fakīr*-s (Chandra 1977:84, 101–114), and attempts were also made to remove settled *saṃnyāsī*-s—many of them being landless peasants—of which there were several thousand in some districts.⁸⁸ The British negotiated with the Nepalese, and signed a treaty with the Tashu Lāmā of Bhutan, to prevent *saṃnyāsī*-s from being resident in their territory, and by 1800 the rebellion that had continued for thirty-five years was finally suppressed. Raids on Company-owned finance and property in east India ceased (Chandra 1977:131–137), and the few military *nāgā*-s who remained in south Bihar in 1809/1810 were reported to have abandoned arms (Pinch 1996:31).⁸⁹

Nevertheless, it seems that some *saṃnyāsī*-s (or those pretending to be *saṃnyāsī*-s) were still involved in criminal activities in the nineteenth century. Their activities were virtually indistinguishable from, and carried out in broadly the same region (central India) as those of maruding bands of Piṇḍarī highway robbers (van Woerkens 2002:26ff.). These bandits were also called Thag (Thug/Thugi/Thagi) by the British, a term that had already been used in South Asia to refer to criminal assassins for about a thousand years.⁹⁰ In 1830, a government ‘Department of Thagis and Dacoits’ was set up by the

⁸⁸ A law was passed in 1773 to prohibit the carrying of arms by *saṃnyāsī*-s and *fakīr*-s, and certain sects of *saṃnyāsī*-s, *bairāgī*-s and *fakīr*-s were expelled from Bengal and Bihar, becoming ‘prohibited sects’. Farmers found to be harbouring members of prohibited sects were to be severely punished (Chandra 1977:60).

⁸⁹ After a series of land-reforms had been implemented by Warren Hastings, by 1790 revenue collection for the British was undertaken by a new class of landlords, who frequently employed *saṃnyāsī*-s and *fakīr*-s for that purpose. Under the Permanent Settlement of Bengal Act of 1793, responsibility for law and order then passed from the *zamīndār*-s to a newly created police force (Chandra 1977:165). Some *zamīndār*-s granted land, in a religious donation (*sibbotar*), rent-free, to ascetics. Landlords thereby enhanced their own status in the area, and gained a protection force of armed *saṃnyāsī*-s to guard their estates. *Saṃnyāsī*-s were also given land after they had assisted landlords’ own forces in repelling aggressors (Chatterjee 1984:3). In north and east Bengal, some *saṃnyāsī*-s still live on the produce of endowed lands (Ghosh 1930:160).

⁹⁰ Bhāsarvajña (ninth century) makes perhaps the first known reference: he refers to the *thakaśāstra* in connection with the killing of Brahmans. Several writers use the term in the following centuries; and a fourteenth century Muslim report mentions *thag*-s. The term *thaka/thaga* may be derived from the Sanskrit root *sthag* (‘cover/conceal’). See Halbfass (1983:13, 24 fn. 61) for further details and references.

Governor General, Lord William Bentick. It was to oversee the activities of Thugs, and was run by William Sleeman, a British official who is responsible for the stereotyping of the term ‘Thug’. Sleeman had read an article by Dr. Sherwood (a surgeon in Madras), published in 1816, entitled ‘Of The Murderers Called Phansigars [‘stranglers’]’, which so concerned him that he transferred to the Civil Service in 1818 (Annan 1967:64ff.).⁹¹ Sleeman, the initiator and architect of the anti-Thug campaign, came to believe that three-quarters of Hindu and Muslim mendicants were criminals (van Woerkens 2002:102ff.), and that the Thugs—who worshipped Kālī, and either strangled or poisoned their victims—constituted an organised criminal sect.⁹² Such was the British suspicion of ascetics that a police handbook (*sādhu-i-kitab*, written in Urdu) was issued in 1913 to enable officers to identify *sādhu*-s by their appearance and sectarian markings (Pinch 1996:8). However, within the socio-political context of the time, it is apparent that the Thugs were not an organised religious sect or a caste; that their activities were entirely mercenary; and that the notion of a Thug ‘conspiracy’ was unfounded, but nevertheless helped to finance Sleeman’s department,⁹³ which was quite successful in catching and punishing several thousand criminals. Marauding Piṇḍarī groups that had previously been employed, on an occasional basis, as mercenaries by various powers such as the Marāṭhas, in many instances simply continued their ‘criminal’ marauding activities when states had insufficient funds to pay them (see Gordon 1969).

There is also a widely-held nationalist notion, still prevalent, of a specifically Hindu militant *saṃnyāsī* rebellion against British rule in the eighteenth century, famously taken up as the main theme of a novel by Bankim Chandra Chatterji⁹⁴ (1838–1894), *Ānandamath*. The influence of this image is apparent in that *Bande Mataram*, the *saṃnyāsī* song from the novel—which was set to music by Rabindranath Tagore—became the unofficial anthem of the Independence

⁹¹ According to van Woerkens (2002:44ff.), who provides a comprehensive account of the Thugs, Sleeman first heard of specific crimes of the Thugs sometime between 1822 and 1824; an anti-Thug law was passed in 1836 (p.100).

⁹² See Sleeman (1903, Vol. 1:96–111) for his account of the iniquity of the Thugs.

⁹³ The idea of a criminal religious cult also proved popular with the Victorian press and as a theme for novelists (see Rushby 2002:8–15).

⁹⁴ For Chatterji’s role in the formation of Neo-Hinduism, see Halbfass (1988:243–246, 334–341).

movement.⁹⁵ However, we have seen that the situation regarding *sādhu*-s in the eighteenth century cannot simply be characterised as a Hindu *saṃnyāsī* uprising against British rule: Sūfī *fakīr*-s were involved with *saṃnyāsī*-s in the Bengal rebellion, and the *gosain* fighters formed substantial alliances with not only the Mughals but also the British. *Saṃnyāsī*-s performed various roles in the period under discussion, both in support and against the rule of various powers. Nor can *saṃnyāsī*-s and *fakīr*-s be characterised, as they were by the British, as simply ‘Thugs’. This is to ignore the complex, various and shifting roles of many *saṃnyāsī*-s in this period: as ascetics (some of whom would not so much as touch a coin), and as pilgrims, traders, money-lenders, mercenaries, protection guards, bandits, and on occasion even diplomats.⁹⁶

7.6 Gosain traders and bankers

Many of the political conflicts previously discussed had ceased by the beginning of the nineteenth century, by which time many thousands of *gosain*-s⁹⁷ had settled in Bengal and other parts of India, many of them being ex-soldiers from disbanded armies of various regents. These settled *gosain*-s, some of them rich from war, engaged

⁹⁵ M. K. Gandhi also took up the song as a constituent of his nationalist ideology. When V. D. Savarkar, the famous Indian freedom-fighter, was at high school in Nāsik, he belonged to and recruited members to a secret society of revolutionaries, aiming to liberate their motherland from British rule. Members greeted each other with *Bande Mataram*, and in a pamphlet with that name Savarkar asserted that the assassination of British officials is the first stage of the revolution. In his monumental work, *Indian War of Independence, 1857*, Savarkar refutes British accounts of the Mutiny of 1857 as failed. The work, which describes how *sādhu*-s, *saṃnyāsī*-s and *fakīr*-s can become revolutionaries, was banned but achieved wide circulation, becoming, for half a century, the Indian revolutionaries’ gospel and handbook. Savarkar was imprisoned for terrorist activities from 1910 to 1937. He then became president of the Hindu Mahāsabhā from 1937 to 1944 (McKean 1996:73–77). See Savarkar (1989) for his conception of *Hindutva*.

⁹⁶ In the 1770s, Puraṅ Gir mediated between the Panchen Lāmā and the British, serving both sides in their negotiation of a trade treaty between Bengal and Tibet. After the death of the Lāmā, Puraṅ Gir (and his successor, Daljit Gir) continued his negotiating role with the Lāmā’s successor. In 1779 Puraṅ Gir travelled with the Panchen Lāmā to Peking to visit the Chinese emperor (Clarke 1998:66).

⁹⁷ The number of *śaiva* and *vaiṣṇava* ascetics in north India in the last decades of the eighteenth century was considerable, around 500,000, comprising around five percent of the population (Bayly 1992:126, 183).

in money-lending, banking and trading, involving significant amounts of money overall. Evidence of *saṃnyāsī-s'* involvement in trade may be seen in Banaras, where in 1787 they were the dominant merchant class, having a substantial trade in cloth, raw silk, gold and silver, in a network extending to the Deccan, Bengal and Nepal. In Banaras alone they owned forty of the leading business houses, representing a significant sector of the economy.⁹⁸ Established also in Mirzapur, the *gosain-s*, who were mostly Giris, were described by G. H. Barlow, sub-secretary to the Bengal government, as being “a religious sect remarkable for their wealth, and for their integrity in all commercial transactions” (K. P. Mishra 1975:95–96). In Mirzapur, the *gosain-s* were the accepted leaders of the merchant community (Bayly 1992:143), one Giri *mahant* being notorious amongst merchants (Crooke 1896, Vol. 2:471). In 1911, the Giris of the Mirzapur area were reported to have land-holdings amounting to 44,784 acres, income deriving also from rent and money-lending (Chatterjee 1984:3–4).

By the 1780s *gosain-s* had become the dominant money-lending—frequently at exorbitant rates of interest⁹⁹—and property-owning group in Allahabad, Banaras, Mirzapur, Ujjain and Nāgpur (Bayly 1992:126, 143; Kolff 1971), and were major brokers in Rajasthan and the Deccan, at places such as Hyderabad and Pūṇe (Clarke 1998:58).¹⁰⁰ There was, however, often a very thin line indeed between tax-collection, dacoity and money-lending.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ In 1786/1787 the total value of the *saṃnyāsī-s'* imports and exports which passed through the customs houses of Banaras and Mirzapur was 1,614,759 Rs.. Around 40% of the trade was in raw silk, most of which was brought from Bengal and traded in Mirzapur and Banaras for bullion or other commodities (K. P. Mishra 1975:96). The figure given above only records the *declared* goods, and does not account for what appears to have been a substantial non-declared trade. In 1809/1810, one *gosain* merchant alone sent silk worth 650,000 Rs. to the United Provinces (Cohn 1964:177).

⁹⁹ Aware of the *saṃnyāsī-s'* profitable money-lending business, the British government enacted various measures in 1772 to cap loan rates (at 2%) and restrict the *saṃnyāsī-s'* business.

¹⁰⁰ Chatterjee suggests that the increase in money-lending activities of the *saṃnyāsī-s* was partly a consequence of a decline in their previously profitable silk-smuggling business. This decline was an effect of superior British production techniques, extra levies and custom posts. The *saṃnyāsī-s* complained to the British administration of being taxed in both Banaras and Mirzapur, and for a while tried to smuggle goods through Bihar. The British nevertheless recognised the value of the *saṃnyāsī-s'* trade (Cohn 1964:177).

¹⁰¹ Marāṭha tax records of the mid-eighteenth century illustrate the nexus between

In the 1780s, European banking houses were also established to finance trade, with the resultant consequence that *saṃnyāsī-s'* profitable loan businesses were effectively squeezed (Chatterjee 1984:7). The extent of the *saṃnyāsī-s'* money-lending business may be gauged from their involvement in the financing of the war between Pṛthvī Nārāyaṇ Śāh, Jayaprakāś Malla and others, in their struggle for control of the Kathmandu valley in the mid-eighteenth century, referred to in the previous section. It is evident that Pṛthvī Nārāyaṇ Śāh helped finance his campaign with cash loans from *saṃnyāsī* traders, who had trade agencies in several cities in the valley.¹⁰² The *gosain-s* were repaid, and as a reward they were awarded charters to trade freely in his domain. The *gosain-s* profited handsomely from both sides throughout the duration of the conflict, in terms of both financial interest earned and trading rights.¹⁰³ However, it appears that some *gosain-s* and Kashmiris were expelled from Nepal by Pṛthvī Nārāyaṇ Śāh owing to their allegiance to the Malla dynasty (Regmi 1975, Vol. 1:117–121, 201).¹⁰⁴

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it is apparent that some *saṃnyāsī maṭha-s*—which were occasionally fortified (Ghosh

money-lending, dacoity and mercenary activity. The *gosain* (or any) money-lender would typically loan money against the purchase of goods, and also arrange transport and guards. Default on repayment could result in land and its derivative revenue being acquired by the lender, an arrangement that was legally binding. Transfer of ownership of land and its revenue meant that the new 'owner' could demand money from tenants. Rulers also used their military forces to collect taxes, and the military were often *gosain-s* (Gordon 1971).

¹⁰² The first request for a loan was made in 1745, addressed to Mahant Kamala Bana, Mahant Lakṣman Purī, and Dāyal Purī. This was in a period when Jayaprakāś Malla was in exile—but not abdication—from his throne in Kathmandu. In 1748, Jayaprakāś Malla, alarmed at the threat to his realm, then borrowed 20,000 Rs., after extensive bargaining, from Kamala Bana Gosain and Rakham Purī Gosain to help finance his bid to reclaim the throne, which was successful.

¹⁰³ In 1764 Jayaprakāś issued a charter requesting that the *gosain-s*—Durbasa Bana, Lakṣman Bana, Jageśvara Bana, Bhagavati Bana (disciple of Kamala Bana), Bhor Bana, Naval Bana and Catūr Bana—reside in Kathmandu with him, enjoying royal favour. After the eventual fall of Kathmandu, the new ruler Pṛthvī Nārāyaṇ Śāh continued to support *gosain-s*. In 1786 he issued another charter, addressed to the first four of the above-named *gosain-s*, permitting them to conduct trade to Tibet, subject to statutory checking and taxes. It is curious that this lineage of Daśanāmīs, the Bana (Van), although so prominent in Nepal in the eighteenth century, is very meagrely represented these days.

¹⁰⁴ Sometime after 1792 the *gosain-s* were also expelled from Tashilumpo in Tibet, owing to the suspicion by the Chinese authorities that they were acting as spies for their enemies (Clarke 1998:56, 67).

1930:20)—became, effectively, storehouses for the trade in goods (including raw silk, shawls, opium, gold, silver, copper and spices) which was carried out by *celā*-s of various *mahant*-s over wide areas of north India. *Samnyāsī* traders who profited were able to buy land, sometimes acquired from both peasants and landlords suffering insuperable debt. Individuals and groups of pilgrims traded in precious and semi-precious gems, notably coral and pearl from the Coromandel coast and Sri Lanka. They also traded in diamonds, brocade, broadcloth, tobacco, indigo and conch shells. Coral and pearl were two of the principal exports from Bengal to Tibet, while musk, gold-dust and yaktails were brought from there (Clarke 1998). A network of *maṭha*-s and pilgrimage routes throughout India greatly facilitated contacts, trade, resting places and loan facilities. Armed *nāgā*-s were available to protect the transportation of goods and bullion traded from as far afield as Ahmadabad, Baraudā, Pūṇe, Nāgpur, Bengal, Kashmir, Nepal and Tibet. The *nāgā*-s' religious status and their fearsome reputation also made them virtually immune from prosecution or police harassment (Bayly 1992:184). In 1792, the *rāja* of Nepal complained that “although the *fakīr*¹⁰⁵ is full of faults and deserving death”, he could only expell them from his territory and could not confine or kill them, as that would be contrary to religious law (Ghosh 1930:9).¹⁰⁶

The *gosain*-s were all members of a religious fraternity¹⁰⁷ whose

¹⁰⁵ In Nepalese records of this period, the term *fakīr* is used also for *samnyāsī*.

¹⁰⁶ The different status of ascetics regarding the law may be seen also in ancient India, in *Dharmaśāstra*. Olivelle (1987:48), reviewing injunctions found in several works, notes that ascetics, when found guilty of a crime, were not subject to the corresponding punishment (instead they were required to perform religious works for the king); they were not to be tortured during interrogations; judges were expected to show leniency towards them; and wandering ascetics could obtain a pass from the Controller of Shipping that allowed them to cross rivers without paying the usual fee. Amongst the privileges for Brahmanical ascetics were land-grants that were made to them in newly-settled countryside; they were exempted from the salt tax; and the property of an ascetic could not be taken as booty when an enemy's land was conquered.

¹⁰⁷ Clarke (1998:53) suggests that the *gosain*-s may have been either *vaiṣṇava* or *śaiva*. However, *gosaṁin* (*gosain*) followers of Caitanya and Vallabhācārya are not, to my knowledge, ever mentioned in ethnographic reports of the period. The information supplied concerning *gosain*-s indicates that they were followers of Śaṅkara (i.e. *Daśanāmī*s), most of them having one of the ‘ten names’. However, *vaiṣṇava* Bairāgīs are mentioned as traders at Chhartarpur, in Madhya Pradesh (Kolff 1971:215). Pinch (1996:43) remarks that the term *gosain* began to lose its specific *śaiva* and

rules and codes of practice were recognised by initiates, further facilitating trading arrangements. They were also favoured as religious mendicants who, in some kingdoms, were exempt from full taxation on their goods. In Banaras, for example, *gosain*-s paid special rates on their transit goods (Bayly 1992:143, 165). *Matha*-s also received religious donations, particularly at *melā*-s when pilgrims frequently donated handsomely to a *mahant*, and generally used rent-free land. The passing of wealth from a deceased *mahant* to, frequently, a sole *celā* or a closed group of *celā*-s, ensured that institutional wealth, which was sometimes considerable, remained 'in house'.¹⁰⁸ This arrangement had distinct financial advantages over the traditional family arrangement, whereby a father's wealth and property was often dispersed to many relatives, sometimes geographically distant, upon his death.

Even in the mid-nineteenth century the *gosain*-s were still an important element in north Indian trade and commerce.¹⁰⁹ They owned fleets of boats and controlled a major share of the trade along the Ganges, transporting goods from the United Provinces to Bengal—some of which went on to Europe—and brought Bengali and British goods to Mirzapur and Banares for trade (Cohn 1964:180). Until the 1840s *gosain*-s remained the key inland merchants in the growing colonial trade in cotton. The British were significantly irritated by the success, authority and general popularity of the *gosain*-s—a popularity the colonial masters did not enjoy—and attempted to blacken their name. The *gosain*-s, however, were no economic partisans: in 1857 the *gosain matha*-s of the United Provinces had at least 200,000 Rs. invested in government paper currency (Bayly 1992:241–242).

In north India, there was a decline of the trading activities of the

Daśanāmī connotations only in the nineteenth century in Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh where it generally referred to *nāgā*-s. By the end of the century *gosain* had become a general term for both *śaiva* and *vaiṣṇava sādhu*-s.

¹⁰⁸ In a case that reached court in Calcutta, the disputed wealth of one *matha*—not considering immovable property—amounted to 242,000 Rs. (A. K. Mishra 1975:99).

¹⁰⁹ During the late eighteenth century, corporate religious institutions had invested in a substantial building programme. In Banaras, by 1816, there was said to be one pilgrim rest house for every ten houses. The use of dressed stone in the construction of religious buildings was a major influence on the stone-cutting business, which was controlled by the ascetic orders (Bayly 1992:127).

gosain-s in the nineteenth century, which may have been a consequence of agricultural development in the Punjab and the change from river to railway transport (Cohn 1964:181). The increase in British hold over trade and exports is also evident, in that between 1814 and 1854 British exports in commodities tripled (Rothermund 1993:23). However, the *gosain akhārā-s* adapted astutely to changing economic patterns, diversifying rapidly into urban property ownership after 1802.¹¹⁰ Following the construction of the railways, the *gosain-s* also capitalised on the rapidly rising value of urban properties. Although the *gosain-s*' involvement in trade and banking declined in the nineteenth century, they still enjoyed considerable income from rent,¹¹¹ and maintained their position as a major money-lending

¹¹⁰ It has been estimated that around 250,000 acres of land are still owned by the Daśanāmī *akhārā-s*, about half being the property of the Jūnā *akhārā*. Until recently, the entire Girnar hills area in Gujarat was under the control of a *nāgā* from the Jūnā *akhārā* (Gross 1992:163).

¹¹¹ In Banaras district in 1909, the *gosain-s* owned 10,304 acres of land (Nevill 1909b:114). Sinha and Saraswati (1978:262) provide a list of nine *paramahaṃsa-s* of Banaras who, between 1926 and 1931, had substantial bank deposits at the *koṭhī* ('banking house') of the Jaṅgambari *maṭha* before the *koṭhī* went into legal liquidation. Their deposits were mostly of around 2,000 Rs. to 3,000 Rs., but one, that of Svāmī Svarūpānanda Maṇḍaleśvara, was of over 20,000 Rs. Joint families of 'respectable' city bankers could earn around 20,000 to 80,000 Rs. per annum towards the end of the nineteenth century (Bayly 1973:41). It seems that up until around 1925 there were a few wealthy *maṭha-s* in Banaras that were also known as *koṭhī-s*. The *koṭhī-s* used to feed the general public and ascetics on certain occasions but were guarded and only inhabited by the *mahant* and his servants who entertained wealthy people and high officials. It seems that some of the *paramahaṃsa maṭha-s* of Banaras were once affluent, namely the Bihārī Purī, Bodh Gayā, Paramārtha Giri, Dakṣiṇāmūrti, Dhurbeśvara, Jageśvara, Haṭhiyā Rāma, Narsimh Cauk, Annapūrna, Hari Gīrika, and Prakāśānanda *maṭha-s*.

Samnyāsī estates also occasionally have an ambiguous position in regards to religious status and the law. Sinha and Saraswati (1978:80) cite a legal case (Judgement of the High Court of Allahabad, Case No. 21 [1928], Appeal No. 584 [1934]) involving one Svāmī Rāmcaran Purī, who describes himself as a landlord (*zamīndār*) and a banker, and not a *paramahaṃsa*. He states that he is the Municipal Commissioner of Banaras, paying a substantial amount of money in taxes and rent money to the government and the Mahārāja of Banaras. (Per year, he paid 2,000 Rs. to the government, 35,000 Rs. to the Mahārāja, 200 Rs. in municipal taxes, 208 Rs. in income tax and "some *anna-s*" on banking business.) He had inherited the property, the *maṭha*, from his ancestors and also purchased further property himself. There were three temples on his property, of Lakṣmī, Mahādeva and Bhāgavatī, and he would feed and distribute alms to visiting Brahmans, *sūdra-s* and *fakīr-s*. He argued that his property was not an endowment, that he was the sole owner, and that he had the right to sell or mortgage it should he so choose. He claimed to have been given the property without any conditions attached, and to be performing

group, not only in the cities, but also in the small towns and villages along pilgrimage routes (Bayly 1992:452).¹¹² Even in the early twentieth century the Mahārāja of Jaipur employed a group of *nāgā*-s as tax collectors (Farquhar 1925c:452). The influence of the *gosain*-s on the economy of north India had been such that Bayly (1992:242) comments: “As some of the largest urban property owners in the Gangetic and central Indian towns, and as important lower-level money-lenders, ironically it was [*gosain*-s] who became the nearest of any Indian business community to the emerging bourgeoisie that European theorists, from Sleeman to Marx, wished to see”.

7.7 *Samnyāsī-s and the modern political world*

The wealth of merchants and bankers appears to have played a significant role in the establishment of the nascent Congress Party. Although some members of the Viceroy’s executive council assumed that the Congress was supported by journalists, lawyers and other professionals, it is apparent that between 1885 and 1901, very many of the elected members were from the trading and banking classes, such as the Naupati bankers, the commercial aristocracy of Banaras. These bankers (*mahājan*) financed pilgrim centres and trade in sugar, indigo, opium, *gāñjā* and *bhāñg*. A high percentage of the assets of the major bankers, who had a close connection with the functions of local government, was also absorbed in the foundation of temples, bathing *ghāṭ*-s, community shrines and religious trusts (Bayly 1973:29–43). In terms of life-style, there was little difference between bankers and *saṃnyāsī*-s.¹¹³

On another front, in Calcutta, it was believed in 1912 that an *akhārā* was being used as a cover for the Midnapore revolutionary

charitable activities only, without the constraints that would be incumbent upon an endowed property.

¹¹² Nevill (1909a:256) remarks that the Udasīs [of Uttar Pradesh]: “Besides their religious duties carry on a considerable trade in money-lending”. The *Daśanāmī śaiva akhārā*-s of the *nāgā gosain*-s (the [Mahā]-Nirvāṇī, Nirañjanī and Jūnā) are said by Nevill (1911:71) to be “equally wealthy and carry on extensive banking business”.

¹¹³ Until the 1880s, the major bankers of Allahabad lived as joint families in several small mud houses in the central market area. In a typical *mahājanī* family, food remained strictly vegetarian and servants were few (Bayly 1973:41–42).

society, plotting against British rule (Taylor 2001:52). At the meeting of the National Congress in Nāgpur in 1920, over a hundred *nāgā*-s attended. It was decided that they could carry the message of Independence and non-cooperation around India, as the masses of the towns and villages had high regard for them. Gandhi urged the *nāgā*-s to visit military camps and advise the soldiers to give up their employment (Pinch 1996:5). *Sādhu*-s were regarded by the British authorities as a serious threat in their involvement with the non-cooperation movement, as already in the mutiny/rebellion of 1857 *nāgā sādhu*-s had been involved, even though not militarily to any large extent.

It is apparent that during the twentieth century, and particularly since Independence, the Daśanāmīs have turned towards other activities, establishing colleges and *āśrama*-s, many *paramahaṃsa*-s preaching as a means of livelihood in big cities such as Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta, their chief patrons being big businessmen and important officials in the government. However, as has been explored by McKean (1996), there is a considerable connection between several important *saṃnyāsī* institutions and right-wing organisations such as the RSS, BJP,¹¹⁴ VHS¹¹⁵ and VHP.¹¹⁶ The VHP—which has recruited many *sādhu*-s to its ranks¹¹⁷ (Jaffrelot 1996:355)—supported the claim of

¹¹⁴ By 1991, the BJP had six saffron-clad MPs (Jaffrelot 1996:479).

¹¹⁵ The closing ceremony of a meeting of the *Viśāl Hindu Sammelan*, held in Kerala in April 1982, was presided over by the Śaṅkarācārya of Kāñcīpuram (Chiriyankandnath 1998:212).

¹¹⁶ One prominent example is the relationship between the VHP (*Viśva Hindu Pariṣad*) and the Divine Life Society (DLS). The DLS was founded in 1936 by Svāmī Śivānanda, its headquarters being in Haridvār. Śivānanda (Sarasvatī) took *saṃnyāsa* in 1924 from the Daśanāmī, Svāmī Viśvānandasarasvatī, though he subsequently makes virtually no reference to his guru. One of Śivānanda's early disciples was Svāmī Cinnmāyānanda (d.1993), who founded the VHP in 1964, which the DLS carefully avoid mentioning. Śivānanda's successor, Svāmī Cidānanda, maintains ties with the VHP. Significant events in the expansion of the DLS were Śivānanda's founding of the All World Religions' Federation in 1945, and the All World Sādhus' Federation in 1947 (McKean 1996:164–179). At the inaugural meeting of the VHP in August 1964, it was decided to organise a world Hindu *sammelan* during the Allahabad Kumbh Melā, on 22–24 January 1966. Among the 25,000 attending delegates were two Śaṅkarācāryas, from Dvārakā and Purī (Jaffrelot 1996:198; Bhatt 2001:180–185). For the involvement of Jayendrasarasvatī (Śaṅkarācārya of the Kāñcī *piṭha*) with the VHP in the 1980s, see Jaffrelot (1996:357).

¹¹⁷ Jaffrelot (1996:357) maintains that the Hindu nationalist movement made major advances in the early 1980s by mobilising Hindu leaders who could be seen as 'ecclesiastical' authorities.

Svāmī Vāsudevānanda to the succession to the Jyotir *pīṭha* in 1998, his rival being beaten up at the Kumbh Melā (Krishnan 2002:28). While attempting, to some extent, to remain outside political involvement, the Daśanāmī Śaṅkarācāryas have inevitably been drawn into the *Rām Janm Bhūmī* dispute at Ayodhya, given their status as religious authorities.¹¹⁸ As of 2002, four of the Śaṅkarācāryas (of the four *āmnāya maṭha*-s) were opposed to the VHP's temple construction plan, while Jayendrasarasvatī (of the Kāñcī *pīṭha*) has been asked by the government to help negotiate the issue. The VHP are very keen for the other Śaṅkarācāryas to throw their weight behind temple construction, even though they are reluctant to do so (Krishnan 2002). The proximity of Jayendrasarasvatī¹¹⁹ to the government was evident when he sent Brahman representatives to Delhi to perform rituals on the morning of R. Venkataraman's inauguration, on the 25th July 1987, as the eighth President of India. Adding to the long list of the President's degrees and awards, the Śaṅkarācārya bestowed on Venkataraman the title '*Sat seva ratna*'.¹²⁰ Perhaps one of the most illustrative links between the Daśanāmī-Saṃnyāsīs and the modern political world is the case of Umā Bhāratī, a *saṃnyāsīn* who became a politician, and who was subsequently sworn in, on 8th December 2003, as the first woman chief minister of the state of Madhya Pradesh.

Although the Śaṅkarācārya of the Kāñcī *maṭha*, Jayendrasarasvatī, has been involved in political life at the highest levels, that did not prevent his arrest at Mehboobnagar in Andhra Pradesh on 11th November 2004 for conspiracy to murder A. Śaṅkarāman, a manager of the Varādaperumal temple at Kāñcīpuram, who died in the temple office on 3rd September 2004.¹²¹ The murder was committed

¹¹⁸ For further details of the Śaṅkarācāryas' involvement with 'Ayodhya', see Jaffrelot (1996:413 fn. 3, 470–471)

¹¹⁹ For brief biographies of Candraśekharendrasarasvatī and his disciple Jayendrasarasvatī, see Cenknar (1996:55–57).

¹²⁰ 'The Jewel of True Service'. See www.parliamentofindia.nic.in/rs/whoswho/vp/rvenkataraman.htm; www.indiademocracy.com/resources/presidents/rvenkataraman.jsp

¹²¹ For further details of the case, see (for all bibliographical entries, see under www.): www.industelegraph.com/story/2004/11/12/01357/717; www.outlookindia.com/ptinews.asp?id=318369; www.hinduismtoday.com/hpi/2004/11/17.shtml; <http://in.rediff.com/news/2004/nov/17agnl.htm>;

by a gang of five, including Kadiravan and Rajini, who were allegedly hired by Appu and Ravi Subramanian (a building contractor) at the behest of the Śāṅkarācārya. The Śāṅkarācārya's arrest was authorised by the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, J. Jayalalitā. The seventy-year-old Śāṅkarācārya was also accused of involvement in an assault on Rādhākṛṣṇan (an auditor and associate of the *maṭha*), his wife and an associate that took place on 20th September 2002. Jayendrasarasvatī's appointed successor, the 'junior' *ācārya* Vijayendrasarasvatī,¹²² was also arrested for conspiracy to murder, together with twenty-two others, including the Kāñcī *maṭha* manager, Sundaresa Iyer, and Vijayendrasarasvatī's younger brother Raghu in connection with the two cases. It has been alleged¹²³ that between May and July 2004 Śāṅkarārāman wrote a number of letters complaining of the misappropriation of temple-related funds by the two Śāṅkarācāryas, his final letter of 30th August containing a threat to take the *maṭha* to court. Perhaps in a moment of weakness, Jayendrasarasvatī authorised the silencing of his critic. Jayendrasarasvatī and Vijayendrasarasvatī were originally remanded in custody until 26th November 2004, a stay which was extended until 10th December. (It should be emphasised that at the time of going to press none of the allegations against any of the parties have so far been proven.)

Within a week of the arrest of the Śāṅkarācārya, there were protests, hunger strikes and the closure of temples in cities such as Lucknow, Banaras Sātārā and Haridvār. Even Muslim leaders in Ayodhyā and Sātārā came out in his support. There has been some comment in the press that the Śāṅkarācārya's influence in the AIDMK (All India Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) party, and the considerable wealth of the Kāñcī *maṭha*, a privately run body that—as noted in Chapter 2—has assets estimated at between 1.1 and 2.2 billion U.S. dollars, over which the Tamil Nadu Endowments Department has no control,¹²⁴ may be behind the charges.

2005.shtml; <http://onlypunjab.com/fullstory2k5-insight-news-status-24-newsID-6387.html>; <http://www.countercurrents.org/comm-anand031204.htm>; <http://newsinfo.com/2003/01/22/2201seercase.html>; http://www.iacfa.org/p_news/nit/iacpa-archieve/2004/12/03/diary1-03122004.html; <http://www.countercurrents.org/comm-anand231104.htm>

¹²² Vijayendrasarasvatī was officially appointed as successor to the *gaddī* of the Kāñcī *maṭha* in 1987.

¹²³ <http://www.countercurrents.org/comm-anand231104.htm>, p. 2

¹²⁴ www.hinduismtoday.com/hpi/2004/11/17.shtml, p. 2. Particularly in the

However, many prominent people, including Jayalalitā, have denied these allegations.

Jayendrasarasvatī and Vijayendrasarasvatī were granted bail on 10th December, when they returned to a significant welcome in Kāñcīpuram. A court hearing is scheduled in the Chengalpatta Sessions Court for January 2006 for the charges of murder and those related to the assault on Rādhākṛṣṇan.

7.8 Concluding remarks

In the Introduction to this book, one of the hypotheses proposed was that the projection by the Brahmanical tradition of the image of the 'lone male *saṃnyāsī*' (beyond caste, ritual and social engagement), though influential even today, is misleading. Firstly, although the *saṃnyāsī* is projected as being 'beyond caste' both in Brahmanical texts and in many contemporary anthropological and Hindu studies reviews, it is evident from our survey of Daśanāmī institutions in the first three chapters of this book that caste has an important influence on the life of the *saṃnyāsī*. Secondly, even though most Brahmanical texts proscribe *saṃnyāsa* for women, references in the Introduction and Chapter 1 illustrate both the historical and the current existence of numerous women *saṃnyāsī*-s.

Noted in the Introduction were the studies of Dumont (1960; 1998) and Burghart (1978; 1983a; 1983b; 1996). It was observed that Dumont's seminal article of 1960, which apprehended the image presented in Brahmanical texts of the 'lone' *saṃnyāsī* who lives independently of the conventional social world, ignored the renunciate's necessary initiation into a new social order, namely a renunciate institution. Burghart's more sophisticated model, which was refined in his later publications, of parallel social orders whereby the political realm and renunciate institutions are juxtaposed, while improving on Dumont's analysis, was also found to be inadequate—even if initially useful for understanding a complex range of phenomena—for encapsulating the complex roles that renunciates have played and

1990s under the stewardship of Jayendrasarasvatī, the Kāñcī *matha* significantly expanded its investments in hospitals, schools and colleges (<http://www.countercurrents.org/comm-anand231104.htm>, p. 3).

continue to play. In the previous section, the influences of some *saṃnyāsī*-s on the political world at the highest level were presented. Such involvement undermines the neat distinctions between social worlds that Burghart articulated. I would contend that the roles of *saṃnyāsī*-s and other renunciates are historically too complex to be captured in any kind of binary model, even though such models may serve as useful navigatory schemes.

Several ethnographies were cited in the Introduction to illustrate how *saṃnyāsī*-s are not only lone mendicants, but are settled as castes in various regions of India, performing a variety of roles, as priests, farmers and traders. Many of these settlements seem to have been established by ex-mercenaries after the demise of the *saṃnyāsī nāgā* armies during the nineteenth century, whose activities have been reviewed in this chapter. Amassed wealth was most probably, in some instances, also channelled into land and property now at the disposal of the *akhārā*-s and *paramahansa maṭha*-s. The role of *saṃnyāsī*-s in the history of India since the sixteenth century is evidently complex, whether viewed from religious, economic or political perspectives; and the material presented in this book illustrates this.

Historically, there may well have been some old, male, Brahman ritualists who renounced ritual life and wandered alone. However, these Brahman *saṃnyāsī*-s would have been already initiated into the Brahmanical world through *upanayana*. An important consideration is whether the many kinds of ascetics—who were not old Brahmans—mentioned by commentators during the first millennium could have adopted that way of life without being formally initiated by a guru. In the modern context, the *saṃnyāsa* rite, which has remained substantially stable in form since the earliest textual records (from around the third century BCE), simultaneously constitutes both a renunciation of a former social life, and an initiation into a spiritual lineage via a guru. The *saṃnyāsī* is not a ‘real’ and recognised *saṃnyāsī* unless he or she has passed through the *virajā-homa* under a guru. This is true today, and I have argued that it is highly improbable—but for some exceptions—that it was otherwise in the past, though this is difficult to substantiate. In general, lineages—inherent in *guru-paramparā*-s—transmit religious teachings, a sectarian mythology and a sectarian identity, and engender institutions over time. It is this package that essentially constitutes a sect, whether in the context of settled *saṃnyāsī* communities, or amongst wandering *sādhu*-s.

The analysis of the *saṃnyāsa* rite in a modern context (presented

in Chapter 3) illustrates how the two main wings of the Daśanāmīs come together on the occasions of its performance, when representatives from the monastic tradition also provide preceptors for the militant wing of the *akhārā*-s. The ten lineages of the Daśanāmīs, spread between the *daṇḍī*-s, *paramahaṃsa*-s and *nāgā*-s, are brought together not only through initiation rites, but through the adoption of an identificatory structure, encapsulated in the information contained in the *Maṭhāmnāya*-s, texts which were analysed in Chapter 4. When the *saṃnyāsī* is initiated, the guru imparts to the candidate the relevant details regarding how his or her new name fits into the scheme of the *Maṭhāmnāya*-s, with its associated identificatory markers (*brahmacārī* name, *gotra* name, and *sampradāya* name) and association of the name with one of the four *pīṭha*-s, which has its jurisdiction and founding *ācārya*. Śaṅkara's fame as an *advaita* philosopher, and his well-established reputation for performing a *digvijaya* and founding four *maṭha*-s and an order of Brahmanical ascetics, provide the specific substance that bonds the identity of the Daśanāmīs as a sect of *saṃnyāsī*-s. One of the central issues of this study was to investigate how this identity came to be forged, in the light of historical information which undermines the veracity of the *Maṭhāmnāya*-s' presentation of the founding of the sect.

In the latter part of Chapter 4, it was shown how numerous *maṭha*-s have claimed to be founded by Śaṅkara, and that claims were being contested by several of them in the nineteenth century. Still today, the Kāñcīpuram and the Śrīgerī *maṭha* are in dispute as to which one is the genuine southern *pīṭha*. *Guru-paramparā*-s were shown to be unreliable, and with the exception of the southern *pīṭha*-s, some of which appear to date from the thirteenth century, records of the other *maṭha*-s cannot be traced back further than about 250 years. In attempting to understand how the name of Śaṅkara came to be associated with the founding of a monastic tradition, the contents of his hagiographies were examined in Chapter 5. It was shown how the early hagiographies make no mention of the founding of *maṭha*-s, and that the four *maṭha*-s first appear in hagiographic work in an 'incomplete' form in the late sixteenth century at the earliest. Regarding the founding of a renunciate order, amongst the twenty extant hagiographies, only in one of the later texts (Cidvilāsa's *Śaṅkara-vijaya-vilāsa*) are the 'ten names' briefly enumerated. This text may be dated to the late sixteenth century (or slightly later), a period when, for the first time, the 'ten names' phrase also appears in other texts.

It is apparent from Śaṅkara's own works (which were examined in Chapter 5) and the works of his immediate disciples (analysed in Chapter 6) that Śaṅkara and most of his disciples (Toṭaka, Sureśvara and Padmapāda) were not *śaiva*, yet Śaṅkara is projected as a *śaiva* in hagiographic works, which began to be produced around the fourteenth century. In Chapter 6 it was proposed that Śaṅkara, who was relatively unknown during his lifetime and for several centuries thereafter, was projected as an incarnation of Śiva by hagiographers in the image of their Vijayanagara patrons, who—in common with many other regents of the Deccan between the eighth and fifteenth centuries—were initiated into Śaivism by *śaiva rāja-guru-s*. This established Śaṅkara's reputation as a *śaiva*, yet, as mentioned, the hagiographies generally fail to provide the key features central to Daśanāmī identity, namely that Śaṅkara founded four *maṭha-s* and an order of ascetics.

In Chapter 6 it was also shown how the early Vijayanagara regents patronised Śṛṅgerī from the mid-fourteenth century, effectively establishing a lineage and a *maṭha* that represented a 'new', orthodox form of *advaita* Śaivism. However, it was evinced that there is no historical evidence to associate Śaṅkara with the founding of a *maṭha* at any of the places now recognised as Śaṅkarite *pīṭha-s*, including Śṛṅgerī. In this chapter (Chapter 7) political developments during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have been analysed, and it has been proposed that these developments provide an entirely adequate context for understanding the formation of an identity for a Hindu sect such as the Daśanāmīs. It was during this period that militant *akhāyā-s* of all the sects appear to have formed, and it was proposed that the structure of Daśanāmī identity may have been influenced by the model of sectarian identity that had been developed by Sūfī orders, who during this period exercised significant influence within the dominant Islamicate polities of north India. Through the creation of an orthodox Daśanāmī identity, with *paramparā-s* receding to Śaṅkara, lineages of both militant *nāgā samnyāsī-s* and those pertaining to the monastic tradition were forged into a sect with an identity, gaining added prestige from being founded by someone who was, by then, a famous Brahman *samnyāsī*. It has been proposed that the tradition embodied in the *Maṭhāmnāya-s* is possibly of much more recent origin than is generally believed.

It should be emphasised that the conclusions derived from this study of religious developments in South Asia from the early to late mediaeval period are but a 'thesis in process': further information

may come to light that could undermine any aspect of this study; and constructive criticism is invited. From the outset, no disrespect was intended to any individual or organisation, and it should be cautioned that this is a study of religious institutions that may have little to do with anyone's spiritual experience. As noted in the Introduction, those *saṃnyāsī*-s who find their way into history and books such as this do so because their engagement with 'the world' has in some capacity rendered them historically visible. Those *saṃnyāsī*-s who live according to the ideals of *saṃnyāsa*, engaged in quiet contemplation of the divinity, detached from the world, and shunning the glare of any kind of publicity, will remain forever unnoticed, yet vital to the spiritual inheritance of South Asia.

APPENDIX 1

NUMBERS AND PERCENTAGES OF ORTHODOX,
REFORMIST AND RADICAL *SĀDHU*-S

1.1 The chart below constitutes an overview of Tripathi's (1978:156, 242–249) research regarding *sādhū* sects active in the state of Uttar Pradesh during the time of his sociological investigation. The survey covers a total of 500 *sādhū*-s in various sects.

[(V): *vaiṣṇava*. (S): *śaiva*. (N): *nirguṇī*]

<u>Orthodox sects</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Orthodox sects</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
1. Śrī Sampradāya (V)	25	5.0	27. Kāpālīka (S)	1	0.2
2. Nimbārkī (V)	21	4.2	28. Śākta (S)	4	0.8
3. Brahma Sampradāya (V)	20	4.0	<u>Total:</u>	<u>354</u>	<u>70.8</u>
4. Madhva Gauḍīya (V)	24	4.8			
5. Rāmānandī (V)	33	6.6			
6. Vallabhacārī (V)	27	5.4			
7. Sakhī (V)	3	0.6			
8. Udāsīn (V)	5	1.0			
9. Svāmī Nārāyaṇ (V)	5	1.0			
10. Dhāmī (V)	3	0.6			
11. Dharnīśvarī (V)	1	0.2			
12. Mahānubhāva (V)	2	0.4			
13. Hariścāndī (V)	3	0.6			
14. Malūkdāsī (V)	1	0.2			
15. Parīnāmī (V)	4	0.8			
16. Rāsik (V)	2	0.4			
17. Parāśrāmī (V)	1	0.2			
18. Rādhā Vallabhī (V)	6	1.2			
19. Rādhā Rāmnī (V)	4	0.8			
20. Daśanāmī (S)	60	12.0			
21. Kānphaṭa (S)	60	12.0			
22. Aghorī (S)	10	2.0			
23. Liṅgāyat (S)	10	2.0			
24. Kīnārāmī (S)	10	2.0			
25. Karaliṅgī (S)	5	1.0			
26. Gaṅpatya (S)	4	0.8			

<u>Reformist sects</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Reformist sects</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
1. Brāhma Kumārī (N)	5	1.9	33. Bavari (N)	2	0.4
2. Kabīr (N)	5	1.0	34. Śivoham (S)	20	4.0
3. Dādū (N)	5	1.0	35. Sat Sain (S)	10	2.0
4. Nirmala (N)	5	1.0	<u>Total:</u>	<u>140</u>	<u>28</u>
5. Bhagat (N)	1	0.2			
6. Bābā Lālī (N/V)	3	0.6			
7. Caran Dāsī (V)	3	0.6			
8. Dariyadāsī (N)	1	0.2			
9. Nirankārī (N/V)	4	0.8			
10. Kāyam (N)	1	0.2			
11. Rādha Soamī (N)	5	1.0			
12. Dariya (N)	5	1.0			
13. Ghīsa (N)	4	0.8			
14. Garībdāsī (N)	5	1.0			
15. Gulabdāsī (N)	4	0.8			
16. Lāl (N/V)	3	0.6			
17. Naṅgī (N/V)	2	0.4			
18. Nirāñjanī (N/S)	5	1.0			
19. Nāmdhārī (N)	5	1.0			
20. Nirankārī (N)	4	0.8			
21. Paltu Sahabī (N)	1	0.2			
22. Prem Prakāśī (N)	4	0.8			
23. Panap (N/V)	3	0.6			
24. Raidāsī (V)	1	0.2			
25. Rām Sanehī (N/V)	4	0.8			
26. Śiva Nārāyaṇī (N/S)	5	1.0			
27. Satta Nāmī (N)	1	0.2			
28. Sītā Rāmī (N/V)	4	0.8			
29. Sādh (N)	1	0.2			
30. Saheb (N)	4	0.8			
31. Sutharā (N)	3	0.6			
32. Seva (N)	2	0.4			
<u>Radical Sects</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>			
1. Ānanda Margī (N)	2	0.4			
2. Muni Samāñī (N)	2	0.4			
3. Kumbhī Patia (S)	2	0.4			
<u>Total:</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>1.2</u>			
<u>Grand total:</u>	<u>500</u>	<u>100</u>			

1.2 The chart below comprises the various sects who were resident in the ascetic *maṭha*-s of Benares in 1968, as published by Sinha and Saraswati (1978:51).

[(S) = *śaiva*. (V) = *vaiṣṇava*. (SK) = *sikh*]

		<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
1. Daṇḍī (S)	(Daśanāmī)	237	2	239
2. Nāgā (S)	(Daśanāmī)	85	6	91
3. Paramahansa (S)	(Daśanāmī)	288	8	296
4. Rāmānandī (V)		253	5	258
5. Rāmānujī (V)		75	5	80
6. Nimbarka (V)		10	28	38
7. Madhva (V)		1	0	1
8. Gauḍīya (V)		3	0	3
9. Viṣṇusvāmī (V)		30	0	30
10. Kabīrpanthī (V)		35	1	34
11. Garībdāsī (V)		5	1	6
12. Dādūpanthī (V)		2	0	2
13. Ghīsa (V)		3	0	3
14. Svāmīnārāyaṇ (V)		15	0	15
15. Gorakhpantī (S)		3	0	3
16. Nirmala (SK)		15	0	15
17. Udāsin (SK)		79	0	79
18. Nihāṅg Sikh (SK)		10	0	10
19. Bauddha		5	0	5
20. (Others)		35	41	76

APPENDIX 2

ŚRĪ MAṬHĀMNĀYASETU, MAHĀNUŚĀSANAM,
ŚEṢĀMNĀYA¹

Śrī Maṭhāmnāyasetu

Śāradā Maṭhāmnāyaḥ

1. prathamah paścimāmnāyaḥ śāradāmaṭha ucyate /
kītavāraḥ sampradāyas tasya tūrthāśramau pade //
2. dvārakākhyam hi kṣetraṃ syād devaḥ siddheśvaraḥ /
bhadrakālī tu devī syād ācāryo viśvarūpakāḥ² //
3. gomaṭtūrtham amalam brahmacārī svarūpakāḥ /
sāmavedasya vaktā ca tatra dharmam samācaret //
4. jīvātmaparamātmaikya bodho yatra bhaviśyati /
tattvam asi mahāvākyaṃ gotro 'vīgata ucyate //
5. sindhusauvīrasaurāṣṭramahārāṣṭrās tathāntarāḥ /
deśāḥ paścimadiksthā ye śāradāmaṭhabhāgināḥ //

¹ The Sanskrit texts (including verse numbers) presented below are as contained in Mishra (2001:1–52). Several typographical errors have been corrected, and variant readings of words and phrases are occasionally substituted from other versions of *Maṭhāmnāya-s*, notably Śarma's (1963:642–652), where Mishra's text is unclear. For the translation, Mishra's (2001:1–52) English translation was consulted, as was that of Dazey (1987:577–602), and the Hindi translations of Upādhyāy (1967:601–617) and Mīśra (1996:33–57). In the various published versions of the *Maṭhāmnāya-s* the order of some of the verses is different, even though the content is substantially similar; this has been indicated in the footnotes. The published versions of the *Maṭhāmnāya-s* (given below) generally follow the verse order of either Śarma (1963) or Mishra (2001). ['l' =line; 'v' =verse.]

Maṭhāmnāya-s, or extracts from them, are contained in the following Hindi publications: Śarma (1963:642–652); Upādhyāy (1967:601–617); Vidyānand Giri (1993:60–65); Mīśra (1996:33–57); Sadānand Brahmācārī (2001:24–26); Puṛī (2001:44–48); Haridvār Giri (n.d.:66–69). The *Maṭhāmnāyopaniṣad* (a short version of the *Maṭhāmnāya-setu*) is published in *Un-Published Upaniṣads* (Kunhan Raja 1933:48–49). Antarkar (2001:72) refers to versions I have not seen: *Maṭhāmnāya-stotram* and *Maṭhāmnāya-setu* (ed. Bodas), Śrīraṅgam: Vāṇī Vilās Press (1954; 1958; 1975). Three English publications contain *Maṭhāmnāya-s*: Aiyer and Sastri (1962:49–57, 102, 110); Chakraborty (1973:180–181), which contains two short sections; and Mishra (2001:1–52), which contains an appendix (Appendix 2:59–61) that compares the verses of three published versions of *Maṭhāmnāya-s*, those of Śarma (1963), Upādhyāy (1967), and Kameśvar Nāth Mīśra (1996). See Bibliography for further details.

² Hastāmalaka (Upādhyāy, v. 2)

6. triveṇīsaṅgame tūrthe tattvamasyādi lakṣaṇe ^{/3}
snāyāttattvārtha bhāvena tūrthanāmnā sa ucyate //
7. āśrama-grahaṇe prauḍha āśāpāśa vivarjitah /
yātāyāta vinirmukta evāśrama ucyate⁴ //
8. kīṭādayo viśeṣeṇa vāryante yatra jantavaḥ /
bhūtānukampayā nityaṃ kīṭavāraḥ sa ucyate //
9. sva svarūpaṃ vijānāti svadharmo paripālakaḥ /
svānande krīḍate nityaṃ svarūpo baṭur ucyate //

Govardhana Maṭhāmnāyah

10. pūrvāmnāyo dvitīyaḥ syād govardhanamaṭhaḥ smṛtaḥ ^{/5}
bhogavāraḥ sampradāyo vanāraṇye pade smṛte //
11. puruṣottamaṃ tu kṣetraṃ syāj jagannātho 'sya devatā /
vimalākhyā hi devī syād ācāryaḥ padmapādakaḥ //
12. tīrthaṃ mahodadhīḥ proktaṃ brahmacārī prakāśakaḥ /
mahāvākyam ca tatra syāt prājñānaṃ brahma cocyate //
13. ṛgvedapaṭhanaṃ caiva kāśyapo gotram ucyate /
aṅgavaṅkālīṅgaś ca maḡadhotkalabarbarāḥ /
govardhanamaṭhādhīnā deśāḥ prācī vyavasthitāḥ //
14. surame nirjane sthāne vane vāsaṃ karoti yaḥ ^{/6}
āśābandhavinirmukto vananāmā sa ucyate ^{/7}
15. araṇye samsthito nityaṃ ānande nandane vane /
tyaktvā sarvam idaṃ viśvam āraṇyaṃ parikīrtyate //
16. bhogo viśaya ityukto vāryate yena jīvinām /
sampradāyo yatīnāṃ ca bhogavāraḥ sa ucyate //
17. svayaṃ jyotir vijānāti yogayuktiviśāradaḥ /
tattvajñānaprakāśeṇa tena proktaḥ prakāśakaḥ //

Jyotir Maṭhāmnāyah

18. tṛtīyas tūttarāmnāyo jyotir nāma maṭho bhavet /
śrīmaṭhaś ceti vā tasya nāmāntaram udīritam ^{/8}

³ vv. 6–8 = l. 1–4 in Chakraborty (1973:180).

⁴ “eṣa” (Upādhyāy, v. 7); “etaḍ āśrama lakṣaṇaṃ” (Chakraborty, l. 4).

⁵ A few lines of a *Maṭhāmnāya* pertaining to the Govardhan *maṭha* that are not to be found in other texts, even though the information contained therein is substantially similar, are included by Chakraborty (1973:181):

“govardhana maṭhe ramye vimalāpīṭha saṅgake /
pūrvāmnāye bhogavāre śrīmat kāśyapa gotrajaḥ /
mādhyavasya sutaḥ śrīmān sanandana iti śrutaḥ /
prakāśa brahmacārī ca ṛgvedī sarvaśāstra vit /
śrīpadmādaḥ prathamācāryatvenābhyaṣicyata //

⁶ “surame nirjane deśe vāsaṃ nityaṃ karoti yaḥ” (Chakraborty, l. 5).

⁷ “āśāpāśavinirmukto vananāmā sa ucyate” (Chakraborty, l. 6).

⁸ “ānandavāro vijñeyaḥ sampradāyo 'sya siddhikṛt” (Śarma, p. 649, v. 7).

19. ānandavāro vijñeyah sampradāyo 'sya siddhidah /
padāni tasya khyātāni giriparvatasāgarāḥ //
20. badarīkāśramah kṣetram devo nārāyaṇah smṛtaḥ /
pūrṇāgiriś ca devī syād ācāryas toṭakah smṛtaḥ //
21. tīrtham ca ālakanandākhyam⁹ ānando brahmacāry abhūt /
ayam ātmā brahma ceti mahāvākyam udāhṛtam //
22. atharvavedavaktā ca bhṛgvākhyam gotram ucyate /
kurukaśmīrakāmbhajapāñcālādivibhāgataḥ /
jyotirmaṭhavaśā deśā udīcīdigavasthitāḥ //
23. vāso girivane nityam gītādhyāyanataparāḥ /¹⁰
gambhīrācalabuddhīś ca¹¹ girināmā sa ucyate //
24. vasan parvatamūleṣu prauḍham jñānam vibharti yaḥ /¹²
sārāsāram vijānāti parvataḥ parikīrtyate //
25. tattvasāgara gambhīra jñānaratnaparigraḥ /¹³
maryādām vai na laṅghyeta sāgaraḥ parikīrtyate //¹⁴
26. ānando hi vilāśā ca vāryate yena jīvinām /
sampradāyo yaṭinām ca ānandavārah sa ucyate //
27. satyam jñānāmanantam yo nityam dhyāyet tattvavit /
svānande ramate caiva ānandaḥ parikīrtyate //

Śṛṅgerī Maṭhāmnāyah

28. cathurtho dakṣiṇāmnāyah śṛṅgerī tu maṭho bhavet /
sampradāyo bhūrivāro bhūrbhuvo gotram ucyate //
29. padāni trīṇi khyātāni sarasvatī bhāratī purī /
rāmeśvarāhvayaḥ kṣetram ādivārāhadevatā //
30. kāmākṣī tasya devī syāt sarvakāmaphala pradā /
hastāmalaka¹⁵ ācāryas tuṅgabhadreti tīrthakam //
31. caitanyākhyo brahmacārī yajurvedasya pāṭhakah /
ahaḥ brahmāsmi tattraiva mahāvākyam samūritam //
32. āndhradraviḍakarṇāṭakeralādiprabhedataḥ /
śṛṅgeryadhīnā deśās te hy avācīdigavasthitāḥ //
33. svarajñānarato¹⁶ nityam svaravādī kavīśvaraḥ /
saṃsārasāgarāsārā hantā 'sau hi sarasvatī //¹⁷

⁹ “tīrtham tvalakanandākhyam nandākhyo...” (Śarma, p. 649, v. 9).

¹⁰ “vāso girivare(?) nityam gītābhyāse hi tatparāḥ” (Chakraborty, l. 9).

¹¹ “... vuddhīśca ...” (Chakraborty, l. 10).

¹² “vaset parvatamūleṣu prauḍho yo dhyāna tatparāḥ” (Chakraborty, l. 11).

¹³ “vaset sāgaragambhīre dhanaratna parigrahaḥ” (Chakraborty, l. 13).

¹⁴ “maryādāśchānalaṅghyena sāgaraḥ parikīrtitaḥ” (Chakraborty, l. 14).

¹⁵ Sureśvara (Upādhyāy, p. 608, v. 3); Pṛthvīdhara (Śarma, p. 649, v. 13). Śarma identifies Pṛthvīdhara as Hastāmalaka.

¹⁶ “svarajñānavaśo ...” (Chakraborty, l. 15).

¹⁷ “saṃsāra-sāgare śārābhijño ya sa sarasvatī” (Chakraborty, l. 16).

34. vidyabhāreṇa sampūrṇaḥ sarvabhāraṃ parityajan /¹⁸
duḥkhabhāraṃ na jānāti bhārātī parikīrtyate¹⁹ //
35. jñānatattvena sampūrṇaḥ pūrṇatattvapade²⁰sthitaḥ /
parabrahmarato nityaṃ purīnāmā sa ucyate //²¹
36. bhūriśabdena sauvarṇyaṃ vāryate yena jīvinām /
sampradāyo yatīnām ca bhūrivāraḥ sa ucyate //
37. cinnātraṃ caityarahitam anantam ajaraṃ śivam /
yo jānāti sa vai vidvān caitanyaṃ tad vidhīyate //

*Mahānuśāsanam*²²

38. maryādaiṣā suvijñeyā caturmaṭhavidhāyini /
tām etāṃ samupāśritya ācāryāḥ sthāpitāḥ kramāt //²³
39. āmnāyāḥ kathitā hy ete yatīnām ca pūthak pūthak /²⁴
taiḥ sarvaiś caturācāryairniyogena²⁵ yathākramam //²⁶
40. prayoktavayāḥ svadharmeṣu śāsanīyās tato 'nyathā /
kurvantu eva satatam aṭanaṃ dharaṇitale //²⁷
41. viruddhācaraṇaprāptāv ācāryāṇām samājñayā /
lokān saṃśīlayanty eva svadharmāpratirodhataḥ //
42. sva-svarāṣṭrapratiṣṭhityai sañcāraḥ suvidhīyatām /
maṭhe tu niyato²⁸ vāsa ācāryasya na yujyate //²⁹
43. varṇāśrama sadācārā asmābhir ye prasādhitāḥ /
rakṣaṇīyāḥ sadaivaite sva sva bhāge³⁰ yathāvidhi //

¹⁸ Mishra's alternative rendering of terms are utilised in this line, which corresponds to Chakraborty, l. 17.

¹⁹ "parikīrtitaḥ" (Chakraborty, l. 18).

²⁰ "tattve" (Chakraborty, l. 19).

²¹ =Chakraborty, l. 20.

²² Śarma's version of the *Mahānuśāsanam* omits vv. 38 and 65. Most of the verses of this text also appear in Śarma's *Maṭhāmnāyasetu* (pp. 649–650, vv. 21–48), which has several verses (14, 15, 16, 44) not contained in Mishra's version of that text. Upādhyāy (pp. 609–612) includes v. 38 (of the text above) as the last verse of the Śringerī *Maṭhāmnāya*, and begins the *Mahānuśāsanam* at v. 39. Miśra (1996:49–57) includes most of the verses of the *Mahānuśāsanam* in the latter part of the *Śeṣāmnāya* (subsequent to v. 10).

²³ v. 38 =Śarma, p. 649, *Maṭhāmnāyasetu*, v. 21.

²⁴ "uktāścatvāra āmnāya yatīnām hi pṛthak pṛthak / te sarve caturācāryaniyogena yathāvidhi //" (Śarma, *Maṭhāmnāyasetu*, v. 14).

²⁵ "sarve" (Mishra).

²⁶ "te sarve caturācāryā niyogena yathākramam" (Upādhyāy, pp. 612, v. 1). vv. 39–64 (above) =Miśra, *Śeṣāmnāya*, vv. 48–73.

²⁷ vv. 40–41 =Śarma, vv. 15–16.

²⁸ "nityaṃ" (Śarma, v. 22).

²⁹ vv. 42–49 =Śarma, *Maṭhāmnāyasetu*, vv. 22–29.

³⁰ "rakṣaṇīyāsta evaite sva sve..." (Śarma, v. 23; Upādhyāy, p. 613, *Mahānuśāsanam*, v. 5).

44. yato vināṣṭir mahatī dharmasyāsyā³¹ prajāyate /
māndyaṃ santyājyam evātra dākṣyam eva samāśrayet //
45. parasparavibhāge tu na praveśaḥ kadācana /
paraspareṇa kartavyā hy ācāryeṇa vyavasthitiḥ //
46. maryādāyā vināśena lupyeraṇa niyamāḥ śubhāḥ /
kalahāṅgārasampattir atastām³² parivarjayet //
47. parivrāḍ āryamaryādo māmakinām yathāvidhi /
catuṣpīṭhādhiḡām sattām prayuṅjyāc ca pūthak pūthak //
48. śucir jīteṇdriyo veda vedāṅgādi viśāradaḥ v
yogajñāḥ sarvaśāstrāṇām sa madāsthānam āpnuyāt //³³
49. uktalakṣaṇa sampannaḥ syāc cen matpīṭhabhāg bhavet /
anyathārūḍhapīṭho `pi nigrāhārho maṇiṣṇām //
50. na jātu maṭham ucchindyād adhikāriṇy upasthite /
vighnānām api bāhulyād eṣa dharmāḥ sanātanāḥ //
51. asmaṭpīṭhe³⁴ samārūḍhaḥ parivrāḍ uktalakṣaṇaḥ /
aham eveti vijñeyo yasya deva iti śruteḥ //³⁵
52. eka evābhiṣecyaḥ³⁶ syād ante lakṣaṇa-sammataḥ /
tattatpīṭhe krameṇaiva na bahu yujyate kvacit //³⁷
53. sudhanvanaḥ samautsukyānivṛtyai dharmahetave /
devarājopacārāṃś ca yathāvad anupālayet //³⁸
54. kevalaṃ dharmam uddiśya vibhavo brahmacetasām /
vihitāś copakārāya padmapatranayaṃ vrajet //
55. sudhanvā hi mahārājas tathānye ca nareśvarāḥ /
dharmapāraṃparīmetām pālayantu niranṭaram //
56. caturvarṇyaṃ yathāyogyāṃ vāṇmanaḥ kāyakarmabhiḥ //³⁹
guroḥ pīṭhaṃ samarceta vibhāgānukrameṇa vai //
57. dharām ālambya rājānaḥ prajābhyaḥ karabhāgiṇaḥ /
kūtādhikārā ācāryā dharmatas tadvad eva hi //
58. dharmo mūlaṃ manuṣyāṇām sa ca ācāryāvalambanaḥ /
tasmād ācāryasumaṇeḥ śāsanam sarvato (a)dhikam //
59. tasmāt sarvaprayatnena śāsanam sarva-sammataṃ //⁴⁰
ācāryasya viśeṣeṇa hy audāryabharabhāgiṇaḥ //

³¹ “...dharmasyatra...” (Śarma, v. 24).

³² subs., from Śarma, v. 26.

³³ “...tantrāṇām” (Śarma, *Maṭhāmnāyasetu*, v. 28); “...śāstrāṇām sa madāsthānam āpnuyāt” (?) (Mishra).

³⁴ “...pīṭhe...” (Śarma, v. 31).

³⁵ v. 51 = Śarma, *Maṭhāmnāyasetu*, v. 31; Upādhyāy, p. 614, *Mahānuśāsanam*, v. 13.

³⁶ “...evābhiṣecyaḥ” (?) (Mishra).

³⁷ v. 52 = Śarma, *Maṭhāmnāyasetu*, v. 52; Upādhyāy, v. 14.

³⁸ vv. 53–55 = Śarma, *Maṭhāmnāyasetu*, vv. 32–34; Upādhyāy, vv. 14–17.

³⁹ vv. 56–58 = Śarma, *Maṭhāmnāyasetu*, vv. 40–42; Upādhyāy, vv. 18–20. (References to Śarma below are to the *Maṭhāmnāyasetu*.)

⁴⁰ v. 59 = Śarma, v. 46; Upādhyāy, v. 21.

60. ācāryākṣipta daṇḍās tu kūtvā pāpāni mānavāḥ /
nirmalāḥ svargamāyānti santaḥ sukūtinō yathā //⁴¹
61. ity evaṃ manur apy āha gautamo 'pi viśeṣataḥ //⁴²
viśiṣṭa śiṣṭācāro 'pi mūlād eva prasiddhyati //
62. tān ācāryopadeśāś ca rājadaṇḍāś ca pālayet /
tasmād ācārya rājānāvanavadyau na nindayet //⁴³
63. dharmasya⁴⁴ paddhatir hy eṣā jagataḥ sthitiḥetave /
sarvavarṇāśramaṇāṃ hi yathāśāstram vidhīyate //⁴⁵
64. kūte viśvagurur brahmā tretāyām uṣisattamaḥ /
dvāpare vyāsa eva syāt kalāv atra bhavāmy aham //
65. maṭhāś catvāra ācāryā catvāraś ca dhurandharāḥ /
sampradāyaś ca catvāra eṣā dharmavyavasthitiḥ //⁴⁶

Śeṣāmnāya⁴⁷

66. athordhvaṃ śeṣā āmnāyās te vijñānauka vighrahāḥ /
pañcamas tūrdhva āmnāyaḥ sumerumaṭha ucyate /
sampradāyo 'sya kāśi syāt satyajñānābhide pade //
67. kailāsaḥ kṣetramity uktam devatā 'sya nirañjanaḥ /
devī māyā tathācārya īśvaro 'sya prakīrtitaḥ //
68. tūrtham tu mānasam proktam brahmatattvavagāhi tat /
tatra saṃyogamātreṇa saṃnyāsam samupāśrayet //
69. sukṣmavedasya vaktvā ca tatra dharma samācaret /
ṣaṣṭhaḥ svātmākhyā āmnāyaḥ paramātmā maṭho mahān //
70. sattvatoṣaḥ sampradāyaḥ padaṃ yogam anusmaret /
nabhaḥ sarovaram kṣetram⁴⁸ parahamśa 'sya devatā //
71. devī syān mānasī māyā ācāryaś cetanāhvayaḥ /
tripuṭītūrtham utkūṣṭam⁴⁹ sarvapuṇyapradāyakam //
72. bhava pāśavināśāya saṃnyāsam tatra ca āśrayet /
vedāntavākyavaktā ca tatra samācaret //

⁴¹ v. 60 =Śarma, v. 43; Upādhyāy, v. 22.

⁴² v. 61 =Śarma, v. 45; Upādhyāy, v. 23.

⁴³ v. 62 =Śarma, v. 44; Upādhyāy, v. 24.

⁴⁴ “dharmapaddhatireṣā...” (Śarma, v. 47).

⁴⁵ v. 63 =Śarma, v. 47; Upādhyāy, v. 25).

⁴⁶ v. 65 =Śarma, v. 39. Śarma's text concludes: “iti śrīmatparamahamśaparivrā-jakācārya śrīmacchaṅkara bhagavatkrtau maṭhāmnāyāścatvaraḥ samāptāḥ”. [Thus are the four-fold maṭhāmnāya-s, written by the honourable paramahamśa ascetic, Śrī Śaṅkara Bagavat, completed.]

⁴⁷ This section of text is referred to as ‘Maṭhāmnāyasetu’ by Śarma; as ‘Śeṣāmnāya’ by Upādhyāy (pp. 310–311). Miśra appends this text to the previous section.

⁴⁸ “nabhikuṇḍali” (the centre of the coil) is given as the *kṣetra* by Kunhan Raja (1933:49).

⁴⁹ The *tūrtha* is given as Trikuṭi by Kunhan Raja.

73. saptamo niśkalāmnīyāyaḥ sahasrārṅkadyutir maṭhaḥ /
 sampradayo (a)sya sacchiṣyaḥ śrīguroḥ pādūke pade //
74. tatrānubhūtiḥ kṣetraṃ syād viśvarūpo (a)sya devatā /
 devī cicchaktināmnī hi ācāryaḥ sadguruḥ smūtaḥ //
75. sacchāstraśravaṇaṃ tīrthaṃ jarāmūtyuvinaśakam /
 purṇānandaprasādena saṃnyāsaṃ tatra cāśrayet //⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Kunhan Raja's text (*Maṭhāmnāyopaniṣat*) also details seven *āmnāya*-s (the four standard *āmnāya*-s, and three other *śeṣāmnāya*-s). The main details of all seven *āmnāya*-s are similar to those presented above.

TRANSLATION

Śrī Maṭhāmnāyasetu [*The division of the revered traditions*]

Śāradā Maṭhāmnāya

1. The first is the western tradition (*āmnāya*). The monastery (*maṭha*) is called Śāradā. Its *sampradāya*⁵¹ is *kīṭavāra*. The [*saṃnyāsīn*] names [‘titles’, *padā*] are Tīrtha [holy ford] and Āśrama [hermitage].
2. The *ḷṣetra* is Dvārakā. The male deity is prescribed as Siddheśvara. The female deity is Bhadrakālī. The [first] *ācārya* is Viśvarūpaka.⁵²
3. The *tīrtha* is the pure Gomatī [river], the *brahmacārī* [name] is Svarūpaka; and he is a reciter of the *Sāmaveda*; he should observe the *dharma* therein.
4. There will be known the unity of *jīvātman* and *paramātman*. “Tattvamasi”⁵³ is the *mahāvākya*. The *gotra* is called Avigat.
5. Sindhu, Sauvīra, Saurāṣṭra, Mahārāṣṭra and other places also are the territories in the western direction apportioned to the Śāradā *maṭha*.
6. “Tattvamasi” is the figurative meaning of the *tīrtha* at the confluence of the three rivers. He who bathes there, in the essence of that saying, is called Tīrtha.
7. He who is mature, who has shunned the noose of desire, is seized of [the condition of] Āśrama. Free from coming and going, only he is called ‘Āśrama’.
8. Through [the distinction of] compassion for insects [*kīṭa*], he shoos away [living] beings [from] there. From [his] compassion for living beings, he is always called Kīṭavāra.
9. He who knows himself is surrounded and protected by his own *dharma*.
He always amuses himself in his own bliss. A young lad [a Brahman *brahmacārī*] is called Svarūpa.

Govardhana Maṭhāmnāya

10. The second tradition is the eastern, prescribed as the Govardhana *maṭha*.
The *sampradāya* is Bhogavāra. The [*saṃnyāsīn*] titles prescribed are Vana [forest] and Araṇya [jungle].

⁵¹ For the sense of specific terms used in the *Maṭhāmnāya*-s, see ch. 4.2–4.3.

⁵² Hastāmalaka (Upādhyāy, v. 2).

⁵³ “You are that”.

11. The *kṣetra* is Puruṣottama [and] its male deity is Jagannāth. The female deity is Vimalā. The [first] *ācārya* is Padmapādaka.
12. The *tīrtha* is proclaimed as the ocean. The *brahmacārī* [name] is Prakāśaka.
And the *mahāvākya* there is “prajñānaṃ brahma”.⁵⁴
13. The *R̥gveda* is studied, [and] the *gotra* is that of Kāśyapa. Aṅga, Vaṅga, Kaliṅga, Magadha, Uṭkala and Barbarā are the territories situated in the east, presided over by the Govardhan *maṭha*.
14. He who makes [his] dwelling a place in a uninhabited forest is free from the ties of hope, [and] is called Vana.
15. Situated in the jungle, he dwells in eternal bliss in a sylvan paradise.
Having renounced this whole world, he is called Araṇya [jungle].⁵⁵
16. He keeps a distance from peoples’ so-called pleasures and sensual enjoyments.
And the *sampradāya* of the ascetics (*yati*-s) is called Bhogavara.
17. He who is proficient in the practice of yoga, producing light within himself, in the manifestation of knowledge of reality, is called Prakāśa.

Jyotir Maṭhāmnāya

18. The third tradition is the northern tradition of the *maṭha* called Jyotir.
It is also [called] Śrī-Maṭha, which is its other name.
19. The *sampradāya* is known as Ānandavara, which confers perfection. Its titles (*paḍa*-s) are called Giri, Parvata and Sāgara.
20. The *kṣetra* is Badrīkāśrama; the male deity is [to be remembered as] Nārāyaṇa, and the female deity is Pūrṇāgiri. Its [first] *ācārya* is [to be remembered as] Toṭaka.⁵⁶
21. The *tīrtha* is the Alaknanda [river]. Ānanda is the *brahmacārī* [name].
“Āyamātmā Brahma”⁵⁷ is the *mahāvākya*.
22. The *Atharvaveda* is spoken, [and] the *gotra* is said to be Bhṛgu. The [territory] apportioned is Kuru, Kāśmīr, Kāamboja, Pāñcāla, *et cetera*.
Other territories situated in the north are also included under the authority of the Jyotir *maṭha*.
23. Living in the forests and hills, he is eternally engaged in the study of the *Gītā*.

⁵⁴ “Knowledge is Brahman”.

⁵⁵ “lakṣaṇaṃ kila” (Chakraborty, l. 8, instead of “parikīryate”).

⁵⁶ “Troṭaka” (Śarma, p. 649, v. 9).

⁵⁷ “The self is Brahman”.

- [He is] thoughtful, steadfast, wise, and is called Giri.
24. He who lives in the mountain valley, his knowledge is mature. He knows the quintessence of everything [and] is called Parvata [mountain].
25. He grasps the gem of knowledge [in] the deep ocean [*sāgara*]. He who verily never exceeds his [moral or juridical] limits is called Sāgara.
26. He distances himself from the pleasures and enjoyments of the world [living beings]. The *sampradāya* of the ascetics [here] is called Ānandavara.
27. [The ascetic] knows the truth [which is] the culmination of knowledge [and] always thinks about truth. He enjoys the delight in himself and is called Ānanda.

Śṛṅgerī Mathāmnāya

28. The fourth tradition, then, is [that of] the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha*. The *sampradāya* is Bhurivāra [and] the *gotra* is Bhūrbhuva.
29. The three titles [*pada*] are named Sarasvatī, Bhārātī and Purī. The *kṣetra* is called Rāmeśvara [and] the male deity is Ādi Vārāha.
30. Its female deity is Kāmākṣī, who bestows the fruits of all desire. Hastāmalaka⁵⁸ is the [first] *ācārya* [and] the Tuṅgabhadra [river] is the *tīrtha*.
31. The *brahmacārī* name is Caitanya; he recites the *Yajurveda*. The *mahāvākya* to be uttered there is “Ahaṃ Brahmāsmi”.⁵⁹
32. Āndhra, Draviḍa, Karṇāṭaka, Kerala, *et cetera*, are the apportioned territories which are included as being subject to [the authority] of Śṛṅgerī.
33. Always intent upon self-control, uttering [the mantra] *sva*, a lord amongst poets, the defeater of the entire ocean of worldly existence, he is called Sarasvatī.
34. He who is full of the weight of knowledge, he relinquishes the burden of everything. He does not know the burden of suffering, and is called Bhārātī.
35. [He] filled with true knowledge, established in a condition filled with truth, [and] always gratified in the highest Brahman, is called Purī [town].
36. He who utters correct sounds [speaks truly], through many words, keeps a distance from the [beings of] the world. The *sampradāya* of the ascetics [here] is called Būrivāra.
37. Consciousness, freed from mental fluctuations, is infinite, undecaying, [and] auspicious. He who knows this is verily wise, [and] he is called Caitanya.

⁵⁸ See fn.15.

⁵⁹ “I am Brahman”.

Mahānuśāsanam [The great instruction]

38. This rule giving the instruction for the four *maṭha*-s is to be well discerned. The *ācārya*-s [who are] established in succession, are to be supported by this rule.
39. The traditions (*āmnāya*) of the ascetics, which are declared, are [to be] separately distinguished. All of these four *ācārya*-s, through [this] injunction, [are to be appointed] in succession.
40. [People], engaged otherwise, should be made to perform their own *dharmā*-s, under this order. They [the *ācārya*-s] should constantly wander on the surface of the earth.
41. If people engage in forbidden conduct, they should be guided in [the non-obstruction of] good conduct of their own *dharmā*, by the the *ācārya*-s.
42. Each one properly abiding in his own territory, wandering around is to be practised. The *ācārya* should not make a permanent residence in a *maṭha*.
43. We have clearly presented the [rules for] the virtuous conduct of *varṇa* and *āśrama*. According to [this] injunction, the rules should be preserved by each [*ācārya*] in his own area.
44. Since the great destruction of *dharmā* is produced by this [failure to uphold *dharmā*], indolence should be renounced, [and] one should just rely on skill [and ability].
45. There should be no intrusion into one another's territory at any time. [This] should be mutually observed, arranged by [each] *ācārya*.
46. If, through the destruction of the boundaries, these auspicious injunctions are violated, [then] then the embers of strife [will] be fanned [aggravated], [which] should be avoided.
47. The wandering ascetic, according to [this] injunction, [should observe] the boundary [established by me], [and] the separate existence [i.e. non-interference] enjoined upon the four *pīṭha*-s.
48. He who is pure, a master of his senses, [and] proficient in the *Veda* and *Vedāṅga*, *et cetera*, [and] is a knower of yoga [and] all *śāstra*-s, he should obtain our rank and position.
49. A perfected person, who has the aforementioned qualities, should be entitled to my *pīṭha*. Otherwise, even one who has ascended the *pīṭha* [who does not have the requisite qualities] may be restrained by the wise.
50. A qualified person who is installed at the *maṭha* should never be uprooted [from there], even should many difficulties arise. This is the eternal *dharmā*.
51. The wandering ascetic, who has the aforementioned qualities, [and] who ascends our *pīṭha*, he should be known by [his saying] "It is I", as one hears it said "*yasya deva*" (lord of whom).⁶⁰

⁶⁰ A famous scriptural saying from *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 6.23: *yasya deva parābhaktīrya-thādeva tathā gurau...*

52. In the end, only one [*ācārya*] who has the [agreed upon] characteristic is [to be] anointed [as *ācārya*]. [This is to be done] at each *pīṭha*, [and] only in succession; [and] there should not be more [than one *ācārya*] anywhere.
53. [Like] [king] Sudhanvā,⁶¹ possessed of the enthusiasm for the cause of *dharmā* in creation, so he should protect the reverence to gods and kings.
54. Having explained the *dharmā* of isolation,⁶² he is [shown to be] powerful among those whose minds are directed to Brahman. Let him wander; and help [will be] bestowed [on him] [through his] acting like a lotus petal.⁶³
55. The great king Sudhanvā and other rulers of men should should continuously protect the *dharmā* that is traditionally handed down.
56. The *pīṭha* of the guru should be honoured with speech, mind, body and actions, according with the propriety of the four *varṇa*-s, [and] verily, [it should be occupied] in due succession, [and] according to the [established territorial] divisions.
57. Kings, depending on support, are entitled to taxes from their subjects. *Ācārya*-s, [on whom] power is conferred, are [similarly] entitled to authority with respect to *dharmā*.
58. *Dharmā* is the root of humanity, and an *ācārya* is its support. Therefore, the instruction of a well-adorned *ācārya* is greater than everything.
59. Therefore, the instruction [of the *ācārya*], through all [his] continuous endeavour, is assented to by all people; the *ācārya*'s discrimination is [held] as a responsibility in his heart.
60. Men who have committed sins, but who are struck by the *ācārya*'-s stick [i.e. punished], will enter heaven pure, like people who do good.
61. Thus, in this way, also Manu and also Gautama particularly declared. Even the conduct of the most learned of the learned [*ācārya*-s] becomes [is made] well known, from the root [as it were].
62. The instruction of the *ācārya* and the punishment of the king are for the welfare of the people. Therefore, the *ācārya* and the king should not be criticised, and should be properly respected.
63. This manual on *dharmā* is for the maintenance of the world; it is indeed enjoined as a *śāstra* [scripture] upon people of all castes and stages of life.
64. In the Kṛta age Brahṁā is the world-guru; in the Tretā age it is the most virtuous ṛṣi-s [wise seers]; in the Dvāpara age it is indeed Vyāsa; now, in the Kālī age, it is "I [am]".

⁶¹ A king from Kerala whom Śāṅkara meets in the *Śāṅkara-dīg-vijaya*.

⁶² *Kevalam*, pertaining to a meditative ascetic, *kevalin*.

⁶³ Undisturbed by the muddy waters beneath.

65. *Dharma* is maintained by these [things]: the four *maṭha*-s, the four *ācārya*-s (who bear the burden [of responsibility]), and the four *sampradāya*-s.

Śeṣāmnāya [The remaining doctrine]

66. Next, there are the [other] remaining ‘heavenly’ [*ūrdhva*] *āmnāya*-s, [which are] distributed in the form of knowledge. The fifth *āmnāya* is the ‘heavenly’ *maṭha*, called the Sumeru *maṭha*. Its *sampradāya* is Kāśī [Banaras]; its titles [*pada*] are distinguished as truth and knowledge.
67. The *ḷsetra* is said to be [mount] Kailās. Its male deity is Nirañjana, [and] its female deity is Māyā. And its *ācārya* is worshipped as the Lord [*īśvara*].
68. The *tīrtha* is proclaimed as the mental one⁶⁴ [*mānasa*], which is absorbed in the essence of Brahman. There, through union [with Brahman], refuge should be taken in renunciation [*saṃnyāsa*].
69. The sixth *āmnāya* is one’s own self. The ‘subtle’ *Veda* is spoken, and there *dharma* should be observed. The great *maṭha* is the the great Self [*paramātman*].
70. The *sampradāya* is the joy of reality; the title [*pada*] is to be remembered as *yoga*.
The ocean of the sky is the *ḷsetra*, [and] the male deity is *paraḷhaṃsa*⁶⁵ [the highest kind of ascetic].
71. The female deity is Mānasī Māyā, and the *ācārya* is said to be Cetan [self/intelligence]. The *tīrtha* is Tripuṭī which brings forth the bestowal of all merit.
72. There, one should resort to *saṃnyāsa* for the destruction of wordly bonds, and the sentences of Vedānta are uttered. There, *dharma* is to be practised.
73. The seventh *āmnāya* is the Niṣkala [stainless?],⁶⁶ the *maṭha* is Sahasrār-kadhuti [the splendour of a thousand suns]. Its *sampradāya* is Sacchīśya [the good student]; the holy footprints [or wooden sandals, *pādukā*] of the guru are the title [*pada*].
74. The *ḷsetra* there is realisation [*anubhūti*]; the male deity is Viśvarūpa [the form of the universe]; the female deity is verily named Cīṭ-śakti; the *ācārya* is declared as Sadguru.
75. The *tīrtha* is the hearing of sacred scripture, which is the destroyer of old-age and death. Through the grace of total bliss, there *saṃnyāsa* is resorted to.

⁶⁴ The notion of mental *tīrtha*-s is also recognised in classical sources. For example, Bhīṣma extolls their virtues to Yudhiṣṭhira (MBh XIII.111).

⁶⁵ = *paramaḷhaṃsa*

⁶⁶ Perhaps from *niṣkalanika*, or from *niṣkala* (to drive away).

THE HISTORY AND MYTHOLOGY OF THE KUMBH MELĀ

Whether Daśanāmīs reside almost permanently in a *maṭha* or *āśrama*, or travel, the vast majority will attend the Kumbh Melā (or Kumbh Parv),¹ particularly a Mahā ('great') Kumbh Melā at Prayāg. It is the largest festival on earth, when, in recent years, up to an estimated fifteen million people will pass through or reside permanently during the six weeks of the festival.² The main purpose is to bathe at particularly auspicious times, of which there are usually five during each Melā.³ Bathing at auspicious times⁴ is believed to eradicate accumulated sin and, for the more mythologically minded, to confer

¹ The terms *melā* and *parv* both mean 'festival' or 'occasion for religious observance', *parv* being the term generally preferred by *saṃnyāsī*-s. The term *kumbha* means 'pot', and also indicates the astrological sign of Aquarius.

² Bedi and Bedi (1991:114) provide the following statistics for the attendance (in millions) at the Prayāga Kumbh for Maunī Amāvasyā: 1906, (2.5); 1918, (3); 1930, (4); 1942, (1.2); 1954, (6); 1966, (7); 1977, (10); 1989, (15). Maunī Amāvasyā is the most important bath of the Melā, and also a time most auspicious in the Hindu calendar for offering *pinḍā* for ancestor (*pitr*) worship.

³ The main baths for the Kumbh Melā are as follows (the dates are for the 2001 Prayāg Kumbh; *saṅkrānti* is the term used for when the sun or a planet enters a new astrological sign; * indicates the most important baths for *saṃnyāsī*-s). At Prayāg: Pauṣa Pūrṇimā (full-moon, plus eclipse, 9th Jan.); Makar Saṅkrānti* (14th Jan.); Maunī Amāvasyā* (24th Jan.); Basant Pañcmī* (29th Jan.); Māghī Pūrṇimā (8th Feb.); Mahā-Śivarātri (12th Feb.). The *akhārā*-s perform the 'royal procession' (*śāhī julūs*) three times: Makar Saṅkrānti, Maunī Amāvasyā, and Basant Pañcmī. At Haridvār, the three most important baths are on: Mahā-Śivarātri*; the new moon day (*kṛṣṇa-amāvasyā*) of Aries* (Caitra); the first day (*saṅkrānti*) of Taurus* (Vaiśākha). At Nāsik: when Jupiter, Sun and Mars enter Leo (Śrāvaṇa/Simha *saṅkrānti*)*; Leo (Śrāvaṇa) *kṛṣṇa-amāvasyā**; Śrāvaṇa full-moon*; *amāvasyā* of Virgo* (Bhādrapada); Ekādaśī (the eleventh day of either fortnight of the lunar month) of Scorpio (Kārtika). At Ujjain the most important baths are on; Meṣa (Aries) *saṅkrānti* *; Vaiśākha (Taurus) *kṛṣṇa amāvasyā*; the full-moon of Vaiśākha. In 1921 plague broke out at Ujjain, since when there has only been one 'royal bath' (Puri 2001:173). The baths for the 1980 Ujjain Melā were: 31st March (Caitra Pūrṇimā); 14th April (Meṣa *saṅkrānti*); 15th April (Vaiśākha *amāvasyā*); 17th April (Akṣaya Tr̥tīyā); 19th April (Śaṅkarācārya Jayantī); 30th April (Vaiśākha Pūrṇimā) (Sarma 1980:11).

⁴ See Stanley (1977:27–31) for an explanation of the significance of particular astronomical events, such as *amāvasyā*.

some drops of the Nectar of Immortality (*amṛta*) on the bather. The Kumbh Melā not only attracts pilgrims from throughout India and Nepal but is also a gathering of all major Hindu religious and ascetic organisations.⁵ For sects such as the Daśanāmīs, it is a unique occasion for a gathering of their order from far and wide, when important issues are discussed and decided. Śāṅkarācāryas and all branches of the order attend, elections within the *nāgā akhārā-s* take place, and *saṃnyāsa* and *nāgā* initiations are performed.⁶ The pageants of the *akhārā-s* arrive at the site, making their ‘entry procession’ (*peśāvī julūs*), with *mahant-s* and *svāmī-s* on decorated daises atop elephants (these days mostly on tractor trailers), who are garlanded by officials. They are accompanied by naked, sword-yielding, ash-covered *nāgā-s* blowing *nāgphāni* (a serpent-shaped horn), some on horseback. At the camps of the *akhārā-s*, *bhūmī-pūjā* will be performed, and the *akhārā* flag (*dhvaj*) will be raised fifty feet high. On the occasions of the main baths, the *akhārā* will make a ‘royal procession’ (*śāhī julūs*) to the *saṅgam*. The Melā, crowded with multitudes of men and women such as you may not meet twice in a lifetime, has made an impression on all who have ever visited. Two of the sites, Haridvār and Prāyag, are the location of the headquarters of six of the seven Daśanāmī *akhārā-s* (see Ch. 2.1), the military wing of the Daśanāmīs.

The Kumbh Melā usually takes place every three years, rotating around four sites: at Prayāg (the ‘*tīrth-rājī*’), at the *saṅgam* of the

⁵ There is scant evidence in the *Veda* for institutionalised pilgrimage (*yātrā*); Yāska’s *Nirukta* does not list pilgrimage among the meanings of *yātrā* (Sanskrit for ‘travel’), although this term became the most common one for pilgrimage in the Purāṇic period (c.200–1000). Bhaṭṭa Lakṣmīdhara’s *Kṛtyākālpataru* (‘the wish-fulfilling tree of general duties’; c.late 11th–early 12th cent.) was a work that exercised a great influence in Mithilā, Bengal, and northern and western India. Discussed in the text is how to properly discharge the traditional triple-debt (*ṛatraya*) to the seers, ancestors and gods: pilgrimage is stated to be one of the incumbent duties (Bharati 1963:147). On the significance of *tīrtha* (‘ford’)-*yātrā*, Salomon (1979) translates and discusses a mediaeval text, *Tīrtha-pratyāmnāyāh*, the earliest extant version of which appears in the *Smṛtyarthasāra* of Śrīdhara, dating to c.1150–1200. In this text, around one hundred pilgrimage sites throughout India are ranked according to the amount of merit obtained by visiting them, the merit being evaluated in terms of both the distance to be travelled, and a correspondence with regimes of purification penances (*kṛcchra* or *prājāpatya-kṛcchra*) (see Ch. 3.1). The fundamental feature of the system of the *Tīrtha-pratyāmnāyāh* is its emphasis on rivers, the text being organised around the main rivers of India.

⁶ The second most important *melā* for the *akhārā-s* is that at Gaṅgā Sāgar, near Calcutta, held every year during Makar Saṅkrānti.

Gaṅgā and Yamunā rivers;⁷ Haridvār, on the banks of the Gaṅgā; Ujjain, on the banks of the Śīprā; and Tryambakeśwar (near Nāsik), on the banks of the Godāvarī. Śaiva nāgā initiations take place in Prayāg, Haridvār and Ujjain, whereas vaiṣṇava nāgā initiations take place at Nāsik.⁸ There is a tradition that Śaṅkarācārya organised the Kumbh Melā, or that he organised attending groups of ascetics (Krasa 1965:181). However, there appears to be no evidence to support this belief. We will see that both the astrological determinants of the festival and also the notion that the Kumbh Melā occurs at one of four sites—which has an explanatory myth—were most probably invented in the mid-nineteenth century.

One of the widely known mythological stories in the Hindu tradition is that of the ‘Churning of the Ocean of Milk’ (*ḷṣrābdhi-manthana*) and the production of the Nectar of Immortality (*amṛta*).⁹ The story appears in both the *Rāmāyaṇa*¹⁰ and the *Mahābhārata*,¹¹ and later in more or less embellished variants in the *Agni*, *Viṣṇu*, *Brahmāṇḍa*, *Vāyu*, *Kūrma*, *Padma*, *Skanda*, *Matsya* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*-s.¹² It is famously represented in architecture—dating from the twelfth century—at Ankor Wat in Cambodia.

The *deva*-s (gods), defeated by *asura*-s (demons) and ashamed of their weakness, approached Viṣṇu, seeking rejuvenation and immortality. Viṣṇu directed them to the primeval ocean that contained the secrets of life and death. The gods enlisted the help of the demons to churn the cosmic milk-ocean, so as to extract various boons, especially the *amṛta*, contained in its depths. Mount Mandara—said in some accounts to be near Mount Kailāsa—was used as the churning stick. This ‘stick’ was supported on the back of the Tortoise King

⁷ The extinct Sarasvatī river is also said to emerge from underground at the *saṅgam* of the Gaṅgā and Yamunā rivers.

⁸ The three *vaiṣṇava nāgā akhārā*-s belong to the Rāmānandī order (see Ch. 2.1).

⁹ The popular legend appears in numerous Hindi publications; see, for example, Upādhyāy (n.d.). See Long (1976) for a discussion of the various versions of the myth and references.

¹⁰ *Bāla-kāṇḍa* 45.14–31. For a not entirely accurate translation of the Vālmīki text, see Sen (1988:71–73).

¹¹ II.15–17. For a translation of the text as contained in the Critical Edition, see van Buitenen (1973).

¹² For Purāṇic references, see Mani (1975:31–32). The *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* [*Bhāgavata Purāṇa*] (8.6–10) (for a translation, see Prabhupāda 1976) contains the most elaborate form of the myth (Long 1976:178).

(*kūrmārājā*), and around it was curled Vāsuki (the king of snakes) as a rope, whose head and tail was pulled by, respectively, the *asura*-s and *deva*-s, to churn the ocean. After many years of churning, fumes, gases and, finally, deadly poison was produced. To save the situation, Śiva drank the poison. Parvatī (or Viṣṇu) prevented him from swallowing it, and his throat turned blue,¹³ hence one of his epithets, Nīlakaṇṭha (blue-throat). Thereafter, fourteen extraordinary treasures were produced, including¹⁴ an aerial car (*vimāna puṣpaka*), Airāvata (the elephant), the Pārijāta tree (*erythrina indica*), a flying horse, a priceless jewel (*kaustubha*), the waxing Moon, Rambhā (one of the celestial dancers at Indra's court), five auspicious cows (Lakṣmī, Surūpa, Yamunā, Suśīlā and Saurabhi), Viśvakarma (the cosmic architect), and, lastly, Dhanvantari (the divine healer),¹⁵ holding a pot (*kumbha*) of *amṛta*, which was handed to Indra.

The *deva*-s and *asura*-s had previously agreed to share the *amṛta*, but the *deva*-s reneged at this point and kept the whole pot for themselves, fearing the invincibility of the *asura*-s should they drink the *amṛta*. The *asura*-s then snatched away the *kumbha* of *amṛta* from the *deva*-s. Nārāyaṇa, concerned about the consequences of this, assumed the form of an enchanting female, Mohinī, whose charms caused the *asura*-s to loosen their grip on the pot. The *deva*-s snatched back the pot and started drinking the *amṛta*. Rāhu (the ascending node of the moon), one of the *asura*-s, disguised himself as a *deva* in order to get a drink of the nectar. However, just as he began to sip the nectar, he was noticed by the Sun and the Moon who warned Nārāyaṇa. Nārāyaṇa cut Rāhu's throat with his discus, but Rāhu's head and throat became immortal and ascended to heaven, remaining the eternal enemy of the Sun and Moon. Meanwhile, Śukrācārya (Venus), the preceptor of the *asura*-s, alerted the *asura*-s to Mohinī's enchantment. The *asura*-s attacked the *deva*-s and a battle ensued. There are several different accounts of what followed.

Pertinent to the mythology of the Kumbh Melā is the story whereby Bṛhaspati (Jupiter), the preceptor of the *deva*-s, assisted. This particular version of the conclusion of the fight between the *deva*-s and *asura*-s

¹³ This part of the account, wherein gases and poison were produced, and Śiva drank the poison, is not in the *Mahābhārata*. (Simon Brodbeck kindly pointed this out.)

¹⁴ Accounts vary slightly on what was produced.

¹⁵ The 'patron saint' of the Indian medical profession.

underpins the mythology of the sacredness and linkage between the four sites. In this story, Bṛhaspati told Jayanta, the son of Indra, to flee with the *amṛta* and hide it from the *asura*-s. Jayanta took the form of a rook and, assisted by the Sun and the Moon, fled with the *kumbha*, pursued by the *asura*-s. A fight between the *deva*-s and *asura*-s took place for twelve days, and depending on the account: either the *kumbha* fell to earth at the four sites, Prayāg, Haridvār, Ujjain and Nāsik; or the sites were where Jayanta rested; or the *kumbha* was hidden at the four earthly sites and eight heavenly sites for twelve divine days (equalling twelve human years), when a few drops spilled *en route*, sanctifying the places. During the battle, the gods sent the Moon to prevent the pot from overflowing; the Sun to protect it from bursting; Saturn to prevent the contents being devoured by Jayanta; and Bṛhaspati to protect Jayanta from the demons, during which twelve-year period he was staying in the signs (*rāśi*) of Aquarius (*Kumbha*), Taurus (*Vṛṣa*), Leo (*Siṃha*) and Scorpio (*Vṛścika*), hence the origin of the twelve-year cycle of the Kumbh Melā and the determination of the timing of the Melā according to the position of Jupiter.¹⁶

Whereas the story of the ‘Churning of the Ocean’ and the fight between the *deva*-s and *asura*-s is told in a number of texts, including the epics and *Purāṇa*-s, the story of Jayanta and the spilling of the nectar at four places does not appear therein, notwithstanding current claims for the antiquity of the *melā*.¹⁷ The myth of the spilling of the

¹⁶ There are also other legends of the spilling of the nectar (Dubey 1987:121; Rai 1993b:43–44; Nandan 2002:3–4). In one, it is Garuḍa who, winning the pot after a battle with the demons, is carrying it to *devaloka* when the nectar drops at the sites. In another, Garuḍa brought the nectar from *devaloka* to release his mother, Vinatā, from Kadrū, the mother of the serpents (*nāga*-s). Vinatā was released but Indra stole the pot, and when fleeing the pursuing serpents spilt drops at the four sites. While the dropping of nectar is not found in the epic-Purāṇic tradition, Garuḍa’s bringing nectar to free his mother from the snakes is well known (MBh I.25ff.; Rām III.35.27; *Garuḍa Purāṇa* 1.240.26–28; *Skanda Purāṇa* 4.1.55–125).

¹⁷ Evidence occasionally cited in support of an ancient Kumbh Melā includes a reference in the *Vāyu Purāṇa* (2.15.47) to “*kumbha*” as a holy place suitable for performing *śrāddha* rites. Dubey (1987:120) believes that this reference does not refer to a Kumbh Melā but to a *tīrtha* named Śrī Kumbha on the Sarasvatī river. Bonazzoli (1977:107) observes that a verse from the *Atharva Veda* (4.34.7) that states, “I give four pitchers (*kumbha*), in four (several) places” (*caturāḥ kumbhāmśacaturdhā dadāmi*) has been taken out of context by some commentators who believe this verse indicates the antiquity of the Kumbh Melā. Sāyaṇa (fourteenth century) commented on this verse, but made no connection with either Prayāg or the Kumbh as a Melā, even though in his time *tīrtha-yātrā*-s were common. It seems that the

four drops of nectar, and astrological prerequisites,¹⁸ appear in two short texts—one referring to Haridvār and the other to Prayāg—both of which are attributed to the *Skanda Purāṇa*.¹⁹ The earliest publications of these ‘Purāṇic’ texts are by Giri (1909) and Gauḍa (1947).²⁰ However, they are not traceable in any other printed editions of the *Skanda Purāṇa* (Bonazzoli 1977:115), and appear almost certainly to have been interpolated, most probably around 1860, if Maclean is correct about the origins of the Kumbh Melā (see below).

According to these texts the location for the occurrence of the Kumbh Melā is determined primarily according to the position of Jupiter (*Bṛhaspati*), in its (almost) twelve-year cycle. Every twelve years the Mahā (‘great’) Kumbh Melā takes place at Prayāg. This is when Jupiter is in Aqarius (*Kumbha*) on both the Māgh (Capricorn)²¹ and Meṣa (Aries) *sankrānti*-s. Some Mahā Kumbh Melās are hailed as particularly auspicious, such as the 2001 Prayāg Kumbh, during which was an astrological alignment that had not occurred for 144 years. Periodically, the Ādhā/Ardh (half) Kumbh Melā occurs at either Haridvār or Prayāg, in six-yearly cycles, while every year the Māgh Melā is held at Prayāg. The Māgh Melā begins at *Makar Sankrānti* (on January 16th) and finishes on *Śivarātri*, ‘Śiva’s night’, the main festival for Śiva, held on the 14th day of the dark half of the month of Phālgūn (Pisces). The full Prayāg Kumbh Melā takes place when Jupiter (*Bṛhaspati*) enters Aries (*Meṣa*; Hindi *Cait*) and both the Sun and the Moon are in Capricorn (*Māgha*).²²

tradition of four Kumbh Melā sites was not current in Sāyaṇa’s time. For other spurious Vedic references, see Bhattacharya (1977:4).

¹⁸ There is, however, no clear reference to the astrology of the Kumbh Melā in any astronomical work (Bhattacharya 1977:2). See Roebuck (1992) for an introduction to Indian astrology.

¹⁹ It has also been claimed that the Kumbh Melā is referred to in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, but there is no reference in any printed edition. The astrological prerequisites have also been erroneously attributed to the *Śivasamhitā* (Bhattacharya 1977:3–4).

²⁰ Veṅṅirāma Śarma Gauḍa, *Kumbha parva mahātmya* (KM), Kāśī: Vyāsa Pustakālaya, Saṃvat 2004 (=1947 CE), pp. 16–17. This same text appears in Swami Shriramkrishnananda Giri’s *Kumbhaparvanimayāh* (KN) (ed. Sitarama Sharma), Allahabad: Bāghambarī Gaddī, Saṃvat 1965 (=1909 CE), which is translated and discussed by Bonazzoli (1977:111–115) and commented on by Dubey (1987:123–126) and Rai (1993b:44).

²¹ Also *Makar* in Hindi.

²² For further details (not always consistent), see Sarkar (1958:97–98); Sinha and Saraswati (1978:149–151); Dubey (1987:123–128); Rai (1993b:47–57); *Kumbh’-parva (viśeṣāṅk)* (2001:17–18); Purī (2001:167–178).

According to current mythology, the Melās are held when Jupiter is in one of four astrological houses: Aquarius, Taurus, Leo or Scorpio. However, as may be seen from the scheme below, this does not exactly correspond to practice (one of the *melā*-s at Prāyāg takes place when Jupiter is in Aries). The timing of the baths is also determined by how long Jupiter remains in each sign. The Melā at Prayāg is known as the Kumbh Melā, at Haridvār as the Meṣ Kumbh (as the festival coincides with the large bath for the *saṅkrānti* of Meṣa), and at Ujjain and Nāsik as the Siṃhāṣṭa (‘eight lion’) Melā.²³

Year	Place	Month	Astrology	Mela
0	Haridvār	Cait(ra) (Aries)	Jupiter in Aquarius (<i>Kumbha</i>), Sun and Moon in Aries.	Kumbh
3	Prayāg	Māgha (Capricorn)	Jupiter in Aries (<i>Meṣa</i>) [or Taurus (<i>Vṛṣa</i>)] Sun and Moon in Capricorn on the new moon day in Capricorn.	Kumbh
6(a)	Nāsik	Śravaṇa (Leo)	Jupiter in Leo, Sun and Moon in Leo (<i>Siṃha</i>).	Kumbh
(b)	Haridvār	Caitra (Aries)	Jupiter in Leo, Sun in Aries.	1/2 Kumbh
(c)	Ujjain	Vaiśākha (Taurus)	Jupiter in Leo, Sun in Aries [or Taurus], Moon in Virgo (<i>Tulā</i>).	Kumbh
9	Prayāg	Māgha	Jupiter in Scorpio (<i>Vṛścika</i>), Sun in Capricorn.	1/2 Kumbh
12	Haridvār	Caitra	Jupiter in Aquarius, Sun and Moon in Aries.	Kumbh ²⁴

Sinha and Saraswati (1978:149–151) and Rai (1993b:47–57) note that, historically, the Kumbh Melā fell strictly according to the cycle of Jupiter, which is 11.86 years, the retrograde movement taking

²³ The scheme for the timing of the *melā*-s is primarily based on the astrological configurations found in the dubious text of the *Skanda Purāṇa*, cited by Gauḍa (*op. cit.*, KM 8–21) and Giri (*op. cit.*, KN 7–9). Interpretations are not entirely consistent. See Bonazzoli (1977); Bhattacharya (1977:2); Sinha and Saraswati (1978:149).

²⁴ According to Gauḍa (*op. cit.*) there are alternative astrological determinants:

Prayāg	Māgha (Capricorn)	Jupiter enters Taurus on the new moon day in the month of Māgha, Sun in Capricorn;
Nāsik	Āṣāḍha (Cancer)	Jupiter, Sun and Moon in Cancer (<i>Karka</i>), on the new moon day (<i>amāvasyā</i>);
Ujjain	Vaiśākha (Taurus)	Saturn in Libra (<i>Tulā</i>), Sun and Moon in Taurus on the new moon day.

it one house further every eighty-four years. Thus, the Haridvār, Prayāg, Ujjain and Nāsik Kumbh Melās take place sometimes eleven, twelve or thirteen years after a previous *melā* at one or another of the sites.²⁵ The pattern of the dates (CE) of the *melā*-s during the twentieth century is irregular (Dubey 1987:127),²⁶ usually following a twelve year cycle, but with eleven and thirteen year intervals, in consort with the cycle of Jupiter. However, the Nāsik and Ujjain *melā*-s are either in the same year or a year apart.

Although it has been suggested that the mythology and astrology linking the four sites of the Kumbh Melā seems to be of relatively recent origin, there are a number of references to each site in the *Purāṇa*-s. The *Nārada Purāṇa* ([Part 5] *Uttarabhāga* 66.44) states that it is auspicious to bathe [every twelve years] in the Gaṅgā at Haridvār when Jupiter is in Aquarius (*Kumbha*) and the Sun is in Aries.²⁷ Hazra

²⁵ There was a dispute over this in 1956/7 and again in 1968/9 at the Siṃhāṣṭa Melā at Ujjain (Śarma 1980:10). On both occasions, the *daṇḍī*-s, Śaṅkarācāryas and others attended, but the *melā* was boycotted by the *nāgā akhārā*-s, who attended a *melā* held a year later, claiming that the *melā* should be held strictly every twelve years. There was also a dispute over when one of the Prayāg Kumbh Melās should be held, the Saṃnyāsī astrologers believing it should be in 1965, while the Vairāgīs (Rāmānandīs) believed it should be in 1966 (Lamb 1999:198). The solution and consequence was the enhanced funding by the government of the annual, month-long Māgh Melā, held at the same site, the two sects of *sādhu*-s attending in different years. On both occasions many millions of pilgrims attended. In order to show their gratitude to the government for funding both *melā*-s, the Rāmānandīs attended the following year, in 1967, a festival attended by over two million people. The Māgh Melā continues to be attended by the Rāmānandīs and their *akhārā*-s, but is not attended by the Daśanāmī-Saṃnyāsī *akhārā*-s.

²⁶ Haridvār	Prayāg	Ujjain	Nāsik
1915	1906	1945	1932
1927	1918	1957	1944
1938	1929	1968	1956
1950	1941	1980	1968
1962	1954	1992	1980
1974	1965	2004	1992
1986	1977		2003
1998	1989		
	2001		

²⁷ It may be noted that the twelve-year cycle of Jupiter also determines the date of several other religious baths in India, the largest besides the four northern *melā*-s being the twelve-yearly Mahāmaham Melā at Kumbhakonam, by the Kāverī river. This single-day festival is referred to as the Mahā Melā of the south, the last having been held on the full-moon of March 1st 1980 when around two million people attended. It is celebrated when Jupiter is in transit across Leo, and the moon is conjunct with the constellation *Maham*, when the sun is in Aquarius (*Kumbha*).

(1940:132) believes that this section of the *Purāṇa* is “comparatively late” (post-1000). The *Khulāṣṭ-ut-Tawārikh* (34b), a description of India under Aurangzeb, written between 1693 and 1695, informs us that every twelfth year, when Jupiter enters the sign of Aquarius and the Sun is in Aries, a large number of people come from far and wide to bathe at Haridvār (Rai 1993b:64). The text also mentions a yearly *melā* at Allahabad (Prayāg). Although a yearly festival at Haridvār,²⁸ which draws exceptional crowds every twelve years, is historically quite well attested, its origins are obscure.

Several of the *Purāṇa*-s recommend bathing at the *saṅgam* of the Gaṅgā and Yamunā in the month of Māgha, particularly on *amāvāsya*,²⁹ the fifteenth day of the dark half of the month. The *Anuśāsanaparvan* of the *Mahābhārata*³⁰ states that whoever bathes with a restrained mind, observing strict vows, at Prayāg in the month Māgha is cleansed of all sins and attains heaven. Perhaps the earliest unequivocal reference to a congregation of people at Prayāga during Māgha occurs in the *Narasimha Purāṇa* (1.1.24), a text dated by Hazra (1958:242) between 400 and 500. Another early historical record of a large gathering of ascetics at any of the sites may be found in the account by Hūang Tsang³¹ of his travels in India, between 629 and 645. From his account³² and from epigraphic evidence (Devahuti 1983:60, 176–181, 250), we have information of the presence of half a million people, from court officials to beggars, many thousands of *śramaṇa*-s, and a whole township of temporary structures at the *saṅgam* near Prayāga in 644, a gathering that lasted a month, which Hūang Tsang says is “age-old”. Bathing in the river washes away

The mythology surrounding the festival involves nectar oozing from a pot into a *lūṅga* of sand made by Śiva (see Subramanyan, 1980).

²⁸ According to the *Ā-in-i-Akbarī* (3.9), at Haridvār (Māyā) large numbers of pilgrims assemble on the 10th of the month of Caitra (March/April). (See Abul-Fazl 1972.)

²⁹ The *Prayāga-mahātmya-śatādhyāyī* recommends bathing there, and describes the benefits thereof. The *Matsya Purāṇa* is the earliest *Purāṇa* containing this *Mahātmya*, which appears subsequently in the *Padma* and other *Purāṇa*-s. Besides the *Matsya* (106.8; 107.7) and *Padma* (3.44.1), other *Purāṇa*-s also recommend thrice-daily bathing during Māgha at Prayāga: *Nāradya* (2.63), *Kūrma* (1.36.2; 1.38.2), *Agni* (3.10b–11a), and *Skānda* (4.1.7.62). See Bonazzoli (1977:84–101); Bhattacharya (1977:6); Dubey (1988:63).

³⁰ MBh XIII:26.36.

³¹ Or Hiuen Tsiang/Hwen-Thsang/Yuan Chwang.

³² See Beal (1884:230–234); Watters (1904:361–365); Cunningham (1963:327–329).

sins, and many visitors fast. Some ascetics are said to try to attain liberation by climbing a pole erected in the middle of the river, and staring at the sun. There also used to be a tradition of ritual suicide at Prayāga.³³ Since olden times, kings and noble families had come to the place to distribute gifts and goods in charity, hence the name of the area to the east of the river, *dān kṣetra*.³⁴ Hūang Tsang was in the company of King Harṣa Vardhana, the ruler of Kanauj, who was attending the sixth five-yearly assembly of the Buddhist *saṅgha*. Harṣa attended every five years, holding council, adorning a statue of the Buddha in a sumptuous way, performing religious rites and distributing alms to priests, men of standing, heretics, widows, orphans, the poor and mendicants. In one day, he is said to have distributed wealth accumulated over five years, much of it replenished subsequently by gifts from visiting nobles. Niccolau Manucci, who was in India from 1656 to 1717, also mentions (1990, Vol. II:76) a quinquennial festival at Allahabad. He observes that those who die from stifling by the crowd are not afforded the usual lamentations, as they die in a condition of grace and holiness, effected by the *īrtha*. Manucci also mentions that those who bathe must each pay six and a quarter rupees³⁵ to the Mughal king, who derives a handsome income.

It is also reported (De 1986:99) that Caitanya (1485–1533) visited the Prayāga Melā around 1515. Prayāga (Illahābās) is also referred to by Abu-l-Faẓl in his *Ā-īn-l-Akbarī* (3.9)³⁶ (16th cent.); he observes that suicide is respected here—but regarded as a sin elsewhere—and that although holy throughout the year, Prayāga is especially so during the month of Māgha. Thevenot, a European traveller, described the congregation at Prayāg in 1666–1667 of “troops” of *fakīr*-s—some good men, and some rogues—performing ablutions and various penances, including fasting, continuously standing, holding their arms above their heads and being buried alive (Dubey 1988:67). Mediaeval commentators such as Lakṣmīdhāra (late 11th–12th cent.)

³³ See Kane (HDŚ, Vol. 2:925; Vol. 3:939; Vol. 4:603–614). Before it was ordered to be cut down by Akbar, around 1584, jumping from a banyan tree near the *saṅgam* was a popular means of suicide (Bonazzoli 1977:144).

³⁴ The area is still so called, and pilgrims still receive alms there during *melā*-s.

³⁵ A small fortune at the time.

³⁶ Reference to the Blochmann (1997) translation.

and Vācaspatimiśra (c. 9th–10th cent.), refer to the efficacy of *māgha-snāna* at Prayāga, as does Tulsīdās (1532–1623) in the *Rāmcaritmānas* (Dey 1998:66).

Regarding Ujjain,³⁷ the *Skanda Purāṇa* (5.1.1.48.51, 5.1.2.61.39, 5.1.2.82.15–17) recommends bathing there, in the Śīprā, on the full-moon day of Taurus (*Vaiśākha*). The *Śīva Purāṇa* (1.12.22–23) and *Vārāha Purāṇa* (1.71.47–48) extoll the virtues of bathing at Nāsik, in the Godāvarī—also referred to as Gomatī-*tīrtha*—when the Sun and Jupiter are in Leo (*Siṃha*). The *Brahmā Purāṇa* (152.38–39; 175.83–84) refers to this event as the Siṃhāṣṭa Melā. There is a temple at Rāmghāt, on the Godāvarī at Nāsik, that is opened every twelfth year, when Jupiter is in Leo. According to Ghurye (1964:178), the earliest mention of the Nāsik *melā* occurs in the *Guru-carita*, a text from the end of the fifteenth century.

Although it can also be seen that these Purāṇic injunctions coincide with the timings of the *melā*-s at the respective sites, as previously noted, the linkage between the sites is not evident in the epics or *Purāṇa*-s.³⁸ Bonazzoli (1997:117)³⁹ believes that the Kumbh Melā (or Kumbh Parv) gets its name from a large gathering that used to take place at Haridvār every twelve years on the occasion of a particular conjunction of planets, one of which was Kumbha *rāśi*, and that the traditional bath at Prayāga for Makar *saṅkrānti* may have developed into the ‘Prayāga Kumbha Parva’. The name was applied to the other large festivals, even though no celestial body was in the *Kumbha rāśi* (‘sign of the zodiac’) at the time of their occurrence.

It is apparent that the current Kumbh Melā at Prayāg and the other three sites is a continuation of an ancient gathering of ascetics in those places,⁴⁰ but Maclean’s (2001; 2003) studies of the origins of the Kumbh Melā provide substantive evidence that the legend of

³⁷ Samanta (1997:17) states that there were three-yearly gatherings of Buddhists at Ujjain during the reign of Aśoka in the third century BCE, but gives no reference for the information.

³⁸ See also Ali (1983).

³⁹ See also Bhattacharya (1977:7); Rai (1993b:53–56).

⁴⁰ The festival of Śivarātri, celebrated all over India and Hindu Nepal, is another festival attended by many *śaiva sādhu*-s at *śaiva* holy places, such as Pāśpatināth in Kathmandu. Although there are references to the mythology of the ‘Night of Śiva’ in several *Purāṇa*-s (dating from the eighth to twelfth century), the origins of the festival are obscure (Long 1982:192). One of the earliest references to the festival in India is from 1141. However, one of the first references to *Śivarātri* in Nepal dates to 1773 (Michaels 1996:326).

the four sites and the astrological determinants may have been instituted around the middle of the nineteenth century. From Maclean's (2003:884–888) inspection of numerous historical documents, including government archives, tax legislation, Indian and British travel accounts, and newspaper reports, it is evident that before 1868 there is no mention of the word 'Kumbha', in any of its variant spellings, in connection with the annual *melā* at Prayāg, nor is there any indication that every six or twelve years the *melā* had a particular significance, either as an *ardh* or 'full' Kumbh Melā.⁴¹

The main agents behind the transformation of the site of the Māgh Melā into a site for one of the Kumbh Melās seem to have been the *paṇḍā*-s⁴² of Prayāg, the Pragvāls (*prayāg-vālā*-s) (Maclean 2003:879–884), who claim that their exclusive right to serve pilgrims at the *saṅgam* was established by Akbar, in a *farmān* ('charter') dated 1593. Their service to pilgrims for many generations had built up a network of contacts all over India, particular villages being the domain of particular Pragvāls. They had enjoyed some freedom from intrusion during Navābī rule, prior to the secession of Allahabad to the British in 1801. The British inherited the right to collect tax from visiting pilgrims—and their vehicles—which was implemented in 1806. The exorbitant tax (one rupee per pilgrim) levied by the British antagonised the Pragvāls, as impoverished pilgrims would have less money to give to them (Maclean 2003:881). By 1815 the Pragvāls threatened to cease officiating, causing concern amongst the British, who recognised the Pragvāls' substantial influence over the arrangements for the *melā* and their role in attracting taxable pilgrims. Although the Pilgrim Tax was abolished by 1840 (Maclean 2001:147), leading to increasing attendance, the British continued

⁴¹ During the early part of the nineteenth century there are references by British observers to the Kumbha Melā (with variant spellings) at Haridvār, which drew exceptional crowds every twelve years, but the Māgh Melā at Prayāg is referred to as a yearly event. The first mention that Maclean (2003:884–888) has been able to find in any document of a Kumbh Melā at Allahabad is in 1868, by the Magistrate of Allahabad, who reports that a "Coomb fair" will be held in January 1870, and that four years previously (in 1866) there had been an "Ad Coomb when the concourse was immense". Maclean believes that 1870 was the first time the *melā* at Allahabad was referred to as the Kumbh Melā.

⁴² *Paṇḍā*-s are Brahman priests who may be found in all major Hindu pilgrimage centres. They keep family records and, for a fee, guide pilgrims through religious rituals, including the ministering of rites for the dead. They are generally regarded as low-caste Brahmins.

to profit from the *melā*, taxing traders, barbers and others providing services. This was a source of increasing tension between the British and the Pragvāls. In June 1857, after the mutiny of the 6th Native Infantry, the Pragvāls joined the rebellion against the British, which was crushed. After their failed attempt at insurrection, the Pragvāls exerted every effort to rebuild their business. Due to the general turmoil in India, there was no *melā* in 1858, but in 1859 there was a small Māgh Melā (Maclean 2001:153). The Māgh Melā of 1860 was exceptionally well attended, the flags of the Pragvāls (used for the the purposes of identification by their clients) bearing anti-British symbols. That same year the Pragvāl Sabhā was formed and registered with the government. Its aims were to protect and preserve the rights of its members to conduct rituals and accept donations at the *saṅgam*.

Although the origins of the legend of the four sites, the twelve-year cycle and the related astrology are obscure, Maclean's analysis tends to the conclusion that the package of ideas was at the least actively disseminated, or most probably fabricated, around the middle of the nineteenth century, in an environment inhabited by several important groups of actors: anti-British Pragvāls, with an economic agenda to expand the fame of their *tīrtha*; and various *mahant*-s, *saṃnyāsī*-s and pilgrims, some of whom, in the context of the general uprising against the British and general issues of geographical and religious identity, may have been active disseminators of some of the legend currently pertaining to the Kumbh Melā. The *melā* became a symbol of religious identity, and the legacy of a decision by the British not to interfere with religious affairs. The institution of British rule in India at the end of the eighteenth century had effectively eroded the power and economic activities of the *akhārā*-s. The only great arenas remaining for displays of the power and religious prestige of *saṃnyāsī*-s and *akhārā*-s, and for the collection of alms and donations, were the Kumbh Melās, which remained relatively free from government interference; *sādhu*-s were allowed to go naked and display arms. The dissemination of legends highlighting both the antiquity and auspiciousness of the *melā*-s could not have but furthered *saṃnyāsī*-s' economic and religious agendas.

APPENDIX 4

SUBDIVISIONS WITHIN THE DAŚANĀMĪ *AKHĀDĀ*-S:
MARĪHĪ-S AND *DĀVĀ*-S

1. In the *Maṭheśvar Dharma Paddhati*, an oral tradition has been recorded (Sadānanda Giri, 1976:19), in which there is a list of 53 *maṭha*-s, which are as follows:

1. Śṛṅgerī. 2. Śāradā. 3. Govardhana. 4. Jyotir. 5. Sumeru. 6. Paramātmā.
7. Kuḍali. 8. Śaṅkheśvara. 9. Kāśyapa. 10. Kumbhon. 11. Puṣpagiri. 12. Virūpākṣa. 13. Habyaka. 14. Śivagaṅgā. 15. Koppala. 16. Śrī Saila. 17. Rāmeśvara. 18. Rāmacandrapura. 19. Avanti. 20. Hāli. 21. Bhāṅḍāgiri. 22. Dhanagiri. 23. Kevalyapura. 24. Mūla Beṅgal. 25. Śrī Saila.¹ 26. Khidrāpūra.
27. Narasiṃhadeva. 28. Maulavan. 29. Peṭhna. 30. Bhāṅḍāgiri. 31. Kāśī.
32. Tīrtharājpurā. 33. Tīrthahale. 34. Hariharpura. 35. Gaṅgōttarī. 36. Buddhagāya. 37. Tārakeśvara. 38. Dhumeśvara. 39. Goleśvar. 40. Kudapal.
41. Kairua. 42. Gohanda. 43. Anauvar. 44. Bhīmeśvara. 45. Oṃkāreśvara.
46. Mandhāta. 47. Gaṅgeśvarī. 48. Siddhanātha. 49. Cidambaram. 50. Siddheśvara. 51. Vimaleśvara. 52. Amarnātha. 53. Cinaur.

2. Sadānanda Giri (1976:21), Sinha and Saraswati (1978:263), and Purī (2001:53–76) present somewhat inconsistent accounts of the formation of the eight *dāvā*-s, comprising the *maṭhī*-s. According to Sadānanda Giri, they are:

- A. *Rāmdattī Dāvā* 1. Rāmdatta. 2. Durgānāthī. 3. Balabhadranāthī. 4. Jagjivanāthī. 5. Saṃjñānāthī.
- B. *Ṛddhināthī Dāvā* 1. Ṛddhināthī. 2. Brahmanāthī (Younger). 3. Pitāmbarināthī. 4. Jñānanāthī (Younger). 5. Jñānanāthī (Elder). 6. Aghornāthī. 7. Bhāvanāthī. 8. Brahmanāthī (Elder).
- C. *Dāvā of 4 maṭhīs* 1. Oṃkāri. 2. Yati. 3. Paramānandī. 4. Chāndābodhlā.
- D. *Dāvā of 10 maṭhīs* 1. Sahajnāthī. 2. Kusumnāthī. 3. Sāgarnāthī. 4. Pāraśnāthī. 5. Bhāvanāthī. 6. Sāgar Bodhla. 7. Nagendranāthī. 8. Viśvambharnāthī. 9. Rudranāthī. 10. Ratannāthī.
- E. *Vaikuṅṭhī Dāvā* 1. Vaikuṅṭhī. 2. Multānī (Keśo Purī). 3. Mathurā Purī. 4. Keval Purī. 5. Daśanāmī. 6. Tilak Purī (Meghnāth Purī). 7. Śyamsundar Ban. 8. Balabhadra Ban. 9. Rāmchandra Ban. 10. Śakhadārā Ban.
- F. *Sahajāvat Dāvā* 1. Sahaj Purī.

¹ This name inexplicably appears twice, also occurring as entry no. 16.

- G. *Dariyāv Dāvā* 1. Gaṅgā Dariyāv. 2. Bhagavān Purī. 3. Bhagavānta Purī. 4. Puran Purī. 5. Hanumānta Purī. 6. Nīlkaṅṭha Purī. 7. Jñānānāth Purī. 8. Manomeghnāth Purī. 9. Bodh Ayodhya Purī. 10. Arjun Purī.
- H. *Bhāratī Dāvā* 1. Narsingh Bhāratī. 2. Manmukund Bhāratī. 3. Viśambhar Bhāratī. 4. Padmanāth Bhāratī.
- In this scheme, the Purī, Bhāratī, Sarasvatī, Tīrtha, Āśrama, Vana and Araṇya *saṁnyāsī*-s belong to Dāvā groups E, F, G and H.

3. According to the *Daś nām vaṅṣ vṛkṣ*, a short text Hindi circulated amongst Daśanāmī initiates, the *maṛhī*-s are constituted as follows (see also Purī 2001:57–85):

4 *maṛhī*-s of Bhāratī: Viśva Bhāratī, Narsiṁh Bhāratī, Bāl Viśvanātha Man Maheśa Bhāratī, Manmukunda Bhāratī.

4 *maṛhī*-s of Van(a)s: Siṁhasan Van, Bhaṅḍārī Van, Sāropārā Van, Totārā Van.

16 *maṛhī*-s of Purī: Baikunṭhpurī, Kevalpurī, Keśavpurī, Multānī, Manpurī, Rāmchandrapurī, Rādhāpurī, Gurudevpurī, Punampurī, Gaṅgādariyāvpurī, Durgāpurī, Kāmnāthpurī, Daśanām Tilakpurī, Sahajpurī, Bhagavānpurī, Rāmpurī, Prayāgpurī (?).

13 *maṛhī*-s of Girī: Meghnāthī, Baikunṭhnāthī, Bhāvnāthī, Jñānnāthī, Śītalnāthī, Viśvanāthī, Rājānāthī, Harivānāthī, Durgānāthī, Pramathnāthī, Bholānāthī, Saheśvarnāthī, Ṛddhnāthī.

14 *maṛhī*-s of Girī: Āpārnāthī, Prabhānāthī, Bādalnāthī, Auṁkārīnāthī, Rudranāthī, Sāgarnāthī, Nāmendranāthī, Bodhnāthī, Kumustnāthī, Ratannāthī, Molānāthī, Maheśvanāthī, Modunāthī, Rāmanāthī.

4. In the sources of the Mahānirvāṇī *akhārā*, used by Sarkar (1958:58–59), 52 *maṛhī*-s are listed in the six groups, with the following divisions:

- A. *Girī* (Ānandbar section, Megnāth-panthī). 1. Rāmdattī. 2. Durgāpanthī. 3. Ṛddhināthī. 4. Brahmanāthī (Lesser). 5. Patambaranāthī. 6. Balbhadrānāthī. 7. Jñānnāthī (Lesser). 8. Jñānnāthī (Greater). 9. Aghornāthī. 10. Sañjnāthī. 11. Bhavanāthī. 12. Jagjīvanāthī. 13. Brahmanāthī (Greater).
- B. *Girī* (Āpārnāth-panthī). 1. Omkarī. 2. Paramanādī. 3. Bodhla. 4. Yati. 5. Nagendranāthī. 6. Sāgarnāthī. 7. Bodhnāthī. 8. Kumasnāthī. 9. Sahajnāthī. 10. Paśānāthī. 11. Marnāthī. 12. Viśvambharnāthī. 13. Tārānāthī. 14. Rudranāthī.
- C. *Purī* (Bhurbar section). 1. Bhagvān Purī. 2. Bhabvant Purī. 3. Gaṅgā Daryab. 4. Lahar Daryab. 5. Puran Purī. 6. Jarbhārat Purī. 7. Sahaj Purī. 8. Mani Meghnad Purī. 9. Bodha Ayodhya Purī. 10. Jñānāth Purī. 11. Arjun Purī. 12. Nīlkaṅṭh Purī. 13. Hameman Purī. 14. Vaikunṭhī. 15. Multānī. 16. Mathurā Purī. 17. Keval Purī. 18. Daśanāmī Tilak Purī. (The Purīs are usually only attributed with 16 *maṛhī*-s according to all sources but Sarkar.)

- D. *Ban* 1. Śyamsudar Ban. 2. Rāmcandra Ban. 3. Śaṅkhadhārī 4. Balabhadra Ban.
- E. *Bhāratī* 1. Narsingh Bhāratī. 2. Man Mukund Bhāratī. 3. Viśvām Bhāratī. 4. Padmanav Bhāratī.
- F. *Lāmā*. The Lāmā *maḥī/akhāṛā* has an uncertain status. According to Sadānanda Giri (1976:19), *nāgā*-s believe that the Lāmā *maḥī*, which in some lists is the fifty-third *maḥī*, is included in the Giri *dāvā*.

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