

Ka-Sa-Ha-Rakṣā

The name of the project is a bit unwieldy, but since the ERC demands an acronym in accordance with (mostly American) academic fashions, I thought it should at least be in Sanskrit. This has to be done very early in the application form and the process got somewhat out of hand at this point. Surely the ERC could not know that it makes no sense to ask a Sanskritist used to solving linguistic riddles to produce one. At the point where I could not change anything any more, I felt I had created a monster, a kind of multilingual acronym, which can only be fully understood by insiders.

Now, what is easy to understand, is that the artificial word *ka-sa-ha-rakṣā* expands into “Saving (*rakṣā*) the Kashmirian Sanskrit Heritage”. What I was counting on was that the pedantic Pandit would wonder why one would use this technique of abbreviation, but fail to produce an actual Sanskrit word,¹ since *kasaha* does not mean anything. I may be wrong, but I thought that this *doṣābhāsa* would be a nice test of the scholar of Tantrism, who would surely be reminded of the *mūlamantra* of the Śrīvidyā school. The text providing the full context of this allusion is of course, as to be expected in this project, yet unpublished, but will be part of the first volume of texts of Sāhib Kaul. Here is the text that was the inspiration:

¹ Other Indological ERC projects are abbreviated as *MANTRAMS* or *DHARMA*.

*om̐ aiṃ hrīṃ śrīṃ hasakhaphreṃ
hasarakṣamalavaya ūṃ
sahakhaphreṃ sahaṣṣamalavaraya ūṃ hsaum̐ḥ shaum̐ḥ*

You can see that the acronym is quite near to, but never identical with the syllables of this mantra. You may know that Tantric mantras are not supposed to be written down, this is why there are *mantroddhāras*, in which every syllable is referred to by a code word. Indian manuscripts and publications nevertheless do print them directly, *prakāśam* as it is called, but I wanted the expert to ponder why our acronym is not exactly the *śrīvidyāmantra*, and appreciate that I wanted to avoid it being spelt out '*prakāśam*'. By the way, the meaningless *bījas* are considered by Tantrics to be highly effective precisely because they have no meaning. I admittedly spoiled this aspect through forming an the acronym.

The mantra, by the way, is used in one of the texts that will be published in our series within a ritual adoration of the lineage of Gurus. There the following text has to be recited after the mantra:

*śrīmacchryamukakaulānandanāthaśrīpādukāṃ
śryamukāmbāśrīpādukāṃ pūjayāmi namaḥ |*

This version of the text is in fact a template, where the name of one's own guru has to be recited in place of *amuka*, N.N. However, in one manuscript the scribe failed to anonymise the text in this way, and involuntarily preserved the name of one of the Gurus in his lineages:

*śrīmacchrīvidyādharakaulānandanāthaśrīpādukāṃ
śrībhavānyambāśrīpādukāṃ pūjayāmi namaḥ |*

The text from which this was taken is the *Śyāmāpaddhati*, a ritual handbook composed by Sāhib Kaul. And the name *Vidyādharakaula* reoccurs as that of the Guru of a Mukundakaula, who wrote down a copy of Sāhib Kaula's *Kalpavṛkṣa* during the reign of Ranbir Singh in AD 1888. This is a small example how the study of new texts and manuscripts can help to reconstruct lineages of Kashmirian scholars.

And finally, the word *raṁṣā* in the acronym is a reminder that saving Kashmirian texts from oblivion is an urgent task that needs to be completed. In the same ritual handbook the protection mantras end in *raṁṣa huṁ phaṭ svāhā*, and according to Śāstric conventions we need Gaṇeśa to ensure a safe conclusion of the project, which leads us to the following logo:

Saving the Kashmirian Sanskrit Heritage

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ॐ क स ह रक्ष हूं फट् स्वाहा

