

CONTENTS

Note from the Editor	1
AMIYA PROSAD SEN RAMESH CHANDRA PRADHAN	
Research Articles	
1. Brahmanizing Ayurveda: Caste and Class Dimensions of Late Colonial Ayurveda Movement in Upper India SAURAV K. RAI	4
2. Uttarkanda Ramayana and Mother Sita as depicted by Valmiki and Sankardev MAHESWAR HAZARIKA	10
3. To be One with the Gods: The Jagannath Cult and the Chritrakaras of Puri SHARMILA CHANDRA	16
4. Ethical Views on War and Peace: Perspectives from the Brahmanical and Buddhist Literature MALABIKA MAJUMDAR	23
5. Nature in Transition: Transformations in Nature Use, Beliefs, and Control in Khasi Hills in Pre-Colonial and Colonial Eras SRIJANI BHATTACHARJEE	30
6. Understanding the Religious Worlds of the Subalterns: An Analysis of the Synthetic Culture in Bengal SUDARSHAN BHAUMIK	38
7. Writing Cultural History of Early India: V.S. Agarwal and the Indigenous Concept of History SHUBHNEET KAUSHIK	45
8. At the Doorsteps of Democracy: Nomads and Their Political Space in Uttar Pradesh RAMA SHANKER SINGH	53
9. Representation of Indian Spirituality in the United States: Contributions of Swami Vivekananda and Paramahansa Yogananda SWETA KUMARI	59
10. Philosophy and Literature: A Discussion on the Two Contiguous Facets of the Concept of 'Truth' About Knowledge MOUSUMI GUHA-BANERJEE	67
11. Politics of Knowledge as a Cause of Unfair Development: Revisiting the Case of Niyamgiri KRISHNAMURARI MUKHERJEE	72
Book Reviews	
1. Gulam Murshid, <i>Bengali Culture Over a Thousand Years</i> , trans. Sarbani Sinha — AMIYA P. SEN	80
2. Jadunath Sarkar, <i>A History of the Dasnami Naga Sannyasis</i> AMIYA P. SEN	83
3. Sarbani Sen Vengadasalam, <i>New Post-Colonial Dialects: An Intercultural Comparison of Indian and Nigerian English Plays</i> AMARA KHAN	85
4. Promodini Varma and Anubhav Pradhan (Eds), <i>Kipling and Yeats at 150: Retrospective and Perspective</i> — CHETAN	87
5. Aroosa Kanwal and Aslam Saiyma (Eds), <i>The Routledge Companion of Pakisthani Anglophone Writing</i> ABHISEK GHOSAL	89

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Note from the Editor

Amiya Prosad Sen
Ramesh Chandra Pradhan

We are happy to offer our readers yet another issue of *Summerhill: IAS Review* (Vol. XXV, Number 2, Winter, 2019). This has been made possible by the kind and enthusiastic patronage of our authors and readers who have supported us through the year. We are especially happy that we have been able to elicit an interest in younger scholars who now make up the bulk of the contributions. This is, indeed, an encouraging sign. We would be remiss if we failed to mention the professional assistance that we have received from the concerned staff of the IAS and copy editors. But for their prompt help and support, matters may have been considerably delayed.

This number has 11 papers in all on a variety of subjects ranging from literature to indigenous forms of medicine, from the birth of new historical consciousness to anthropological studies of specialized craft communities. This reflects our attempts to keep alive the interdisciplinary nature of this journal.

In his paper on *Brahmanising Ayurveda: Caste and Class Dimensions of Late Colonial Ayurveda Movement in Upper India*, Saurav K. Rai deals with the interesting theme of how anti-colonial sentiments, urging a return of indigenous ways of medical diagnosis and healing as against the prevailing hegemony of Western medicine, also eventually leads to a transformation in the social character of the Ayurveda system itself. He persuasively demonstrates how, in the name of counter hegemony, there also occurs a move on the part of Hindu upper castes and Brahmanical culture to appropriate the indigenous medical system to itself. This was done by identifying the system with upper caste notions of purity and pollution, cleanliness, disease and healing. In this discourse, lower caste practitioners are shown to be themselves the carriers of disease and professionally incapable of effective medical diagnosis.

Mahaeswar Hazaarika's contribution ("Uttarkanda Ramayan and Mother Sita as Depicted by Valmiki and Sankardeva") is a critical and a comparative study of the

character of Sita as depicted in two well known works, the Valmiki *Ramayana* and *Uttarkanada*, an adaptation of Valmiki's work by the Assamese saint and reformer, Sankardeva. The comparison is based on the study of identical episodes from the two works in a comparative frame. Hazaarika shows with ample clarity how the characterization of the same figure from mythology varies significantly. Sankardeva's Sita in the *Uttarakanda* is only an ordinary woman, in all probability drawn from local life itself. She is chaste, spontaneous, given to freely expressing her emotions and reacting in the face of some personal crisis. The Sita in Valmiki, by contrast, is stoic, remarkably self-restrained, and closer to being a divine figure than a human.

Sharmila Chandra's "To be One with the Gods: The Jagannath Cult and the Chitrakars of Puri" is a historical-anthropological study of the community of *chitrakars* concentrated around Raghurajpur in district Puri (Odisha). Professionally, members of this community constitute a craft community who traditionally specialize in making *pata chitras* or scroll paintings which depict various motifs, the bulk of which is religious in character and related to the shrine of Jagannath and other attendant deities. Their everyday life and production patterns are both dictated by the local Jagannath Cult, overwhelming in its cultural, religious and ritual importance in Odiya life. The paper deals with the historical evolution of this community and their present day occupational habitus and norms of life.

Malabika Majumdar's scholarly paper titled "Ethical Views on War and Peace: Perspectives from the Brahmanical and Buddhist Literature" combines a survey of early Indian literature on the related themes of war and peace. The treatment here is essentially philosophical though also effectively relying on knowledge of contemporary literature. Majumdar examines, in some detail, the ethical questions confronting a ruler when forced to declare a war and its ensuing consequences. While wars were primarily instruments

of aggrandizement, there were also deep-seated moral questions related to it that our thinkers and law-givers were forced to reckon with. This paper, in particular, examines the complex question of *dharmayuddha* wherein it was not always possible to clearly take a side.

Srijani Bhattacharjee examines certain important environmental questions in a historical framework and pertaining to the tribal community of Khasis in the state of Meghalaya. Her paper, "Nature in Transition: Transformations in Nature Use, Beliefs and Control in Khasi Hills in Pre-colonial and Colonial Eras", is an intensive study of cultural and environmental strategies traditionally adopted by the Khasis and the changes wrought upon it by the arrival of an extractive colonialist system. Bhattacharjee discusses in some detail the traditional occupations among Khasis and how these were made to suit environmental concerns until productive mechanisms themselves were forced to change under an alien regime, which had a poor understanding of the delicate balance between nature and human production.

Sudarshan Bhaumik's paper is a combined narrative on certain concepts in religious culture such as eclecticism and syncretism and the social and historical evolution of certain quotidian religious cults in early modern and modern Bengal. In the paper titled *Understanding the Religious Worlds of the Subalterns: An Analysis of Syncretic Culture in Bengal* Bahumik draws upon and develops the concept of subalternity in the context of popular religious culture in Bengal and her intention is to demonstrate how popular religious cults carry elements of dissent and contestation against mainstream, upper caste culture. Alongside, she also tries to reveal how at the popular level, cultural and religious co-existence between Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims thrived until displaced by the working of the colonialist regime with its misplaced presumptions about indigenous culture. Her paper also demonstrates the dialogic nature of exchanges between upper class and lower class culture, each selectively appropriating certain elements from the other.

Shubhneet Kaushik's study of indigenous concept of history lays open a promising field of enquiry. The well-known novelist, Bankimchandra Chatterjee, had once prophesized that to survive in the alien and alienating world of colonialism, Indians needed to write their own histories. Kaushik's study titled "Writing Cultural History of Early India: V.S. Agarwala and the Indigenous Concept of History" brings home this point effectively. This is an extensive study of the writings of the historian, V.S. Agarwala, who chose to write also in Hindi about the early Indian literature and culture. The decision to write on early India, we imagine, has a deep rooted connection with the emerging nationalist discourse in India which was of the view that a true recovery of the

cultural genius of the Indian people was not possible when examined through the lens of Western history-writing. Western historical methods and its selection of sources was itself flawed since it carried certain naïve Orientalist presumptions. It is entirely possible though that Agarwala's enterprise was influenced by the sentiments of cultural revivalism that accompanied the birth of historical consciousness and history-writing in colonial India.

Rama Shanker Singh in his contribution, "At the Doorsteps of Democracy: Nomads and their Political Space in Uttar Pradesh", has outlined the life of nomadic tribes both in colonial and post-colonial India. He has shown that the colonial rulers had perniciously designated the nomadic tribes as 'criminal tribes' and subjected them to inhuman treatment. In colonial India, these tribes led a miserable life at the periphery of the villages. After Independence, these tribes were de-criminalized so that they could have a better social and professional life. Singh presents us with a factually rich account of lived lives in the villages, especially in Uttar Pradesh. He now finds them at the "doorsteps of democracy" because they now have the right to participate in the electoral process and demand their share of good life in India.

Sweta Kumari in her essay, "Representation of Indian Spirituality in the United States: Contributions of Swami Vivekananda and Paramahansa Yogananda", has discussed the role of Swami Vivekananda and Paramahansa Yogananda in spreading the message of Indian spirituality in the United States. Swami Vivekananda's participation in the World Parliament of Religions in 1893 was a turning point in history because he could draw the attention of the world and especially the people of the USA to the spiritual philosophy of India. He preached the message of Vedanta as a Universal Religion and Philosophy which could accommodate all mankind in its bosom. Sweta Kumari has also highlighted the contribution of Paramahansa Yogananda in spreading the message of Yoga and spirituality in the US. Paramahansa Yogananda established many centres of meditation and spiritual practices throughout the US and continued the work which Swami Vivekananda had started. Sweta Kumari's essay has succeeded in revealing how Indian spirituality found a second home in the US.

Mousumi Guha-Banerjee in "Philosophy and Literature: A Discussion on the Two Contiguous Facets of the Concept of 'Truth' About Knowledge" has discussed the deep relationship between philosophy and literature. She argues that just as there is a philosophy 'of' literature so also there is philosophy 'in' literature. Literature, according to her, is the aesthetic view of the sublime. This explains why literary creations embody the aesthetic values which are central to the literary

imagination. Philosophy brings into literature the awareness of aesthetic values like the Kantian “sublime” making literary creations the embodiments of truths about life. There is no literary knowledge which is bereft of the philosophical awareness of Truth and Beauty as values. Guha-Banerjee has creatively brought out for us the symbiotic relationships among literature, aesthetics and philosophy.

Krishnamurari Mukherjee’s paper titled “Politics of Knowledge as a Cause for Unfair Development: Revisiting the Case of Niyamgiri” is a thought-provoking paper on the politics of development that affects the

tribal community of Kondhs in the Niyamgiri hills of Odisha. The author brings out the social cost of economic development and the inequitable effects of modern capital intensive development on various segments of local population and the recurring inability of local communities to resist the encroachment on their natural rights.

We hope this issue of the journal will be of interest to readers across all disciplines, particularly from the Humanities and Social Sciences. We have also included five book reviews for the benefit of the readers.

AMIYA PROSAD SEN
RAMESH CHANDRA PRADHAN

Brahmanizing Ayurveda: Caste and Class Dimensions of Late Colonial Ayurvedic Movement in Upper India

Saurav Kumar Rai*

The emergence of cultural and political nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century India along with the racial discrimination and imperialist motifs inherent in Western medicine triggered medical revivalist/reformist movement around the same time. At the forefront of this medical revivalist movement was the organized efforts to make Ayurveda as a 'true' representative of 'time-tested' 'authentic' 'indigenous' healing culture of India thereby posing it as the 'rightful' claimant of the 'national healing system'. Nevertheless, this late colonial Ayurvedic movement was fraught with caste, class, community and gender oriented biases and predilections. The purpose of the present paper is to bring out the caste and class dimensions of late colonial Ayurvedic movement that unfolded in the Hindi heartland particularly the United Provinces (present day Uttar Pradesh).

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century India, an entire movement had come up to revive 'indigenous' healing systems, including Ayurveda, against the growing hegemony of Western medicine. However, it is noticeable that the attempt to revive Ayurveda as 'indigenous' healing system was not just about health and healing but also concerned itself with the emerging nation, society, community and religion at large. In this regard, what we see is the apparent 'brahmanization' of the mainstream Ayurvedic movement which attempted to purge low caste/class influences from within its fold. It was believed that over time, many 'lowly' practices had entered the field of Ayurveda through people who did not possess the 'required wisdom'. Thus, the movement for a rejuvenated Ayurveda striving for the restoration of its 'pristine' glory not only purged these supposedly 'incapable' low caste healers but also accused lower castes and classes for spreading many diseases. This paper tends to capture

these moments of caste/class assaults as manifested in the late colonial Ayurvedic discourse through a scrutiny of contemporaneous Ayurvedic journals, tracts, proceedings of the All India Vaidya Sammelan as well as advertisements of Ayurvedic products/drugs. In so doing, the present paper emphatically argues that the late colonial Ayurvedic movement and the associated health discourse was not an isolated discourse on science and medicine but deeply anchored in certain socio-political concerns.

Medical Revivalism and Creation of Caste/Class Hegemony

As K.N. Panikkar aptly remarks, '[T]he quest to revitalise indigenous medicine reflected a multi-pronged struggle for cultural hegemony, not only between the coloniser and the colonised, but also between the classes within the colonised society.'¹ In other words, the entire project to recast 'indigenous' medicine which was going on in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century cannot be studied by ignoring the paradigms of both caste and class. If we look closely, the Ayurvedic discourse of the time (c. 1890-1950) was highly casteist and reflected upper class biases. Lower castes and class and their 'unclean habits' were often held responsible for the spread of many diseases in contemporaneous Ayurvedic notions. For example, one of the texts entitled *Dadru Chikitsa* (devoted to the cure of dermatophytosis or ringworm), while acknowledging the scientific basis of dermatophytosis, went on to blame the dirty habits of the barber, washer man, etc. for its spread.² In fact, barbers were specifically attacked in this text and held responsible for the spread of not only ringworm, but also leprosy. This text also cites *Atharvaveda* to illustrate linkages between the barber and spread of skin diseases.

It should be noted that during this time, middle-class oriented health notions suspected servants and other lower classes of deliberately spreading skin diseases to their patrons. These were notions emulated by the Indian

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middle class from their colonial counterparts, who often articulated racial interpretations for the spread of disease.³ The Indian middle class simply replaced racial interpretation by one that emphasized caste and class.⁴ In the middle class/upper caste imagination, out of several other essentialized characterization of a particular caste, poor sanitary sense became one of the means to identify particular castes. Incidentally, lower castes and classes were indifferently seen as having unclean, insanitary, infectious and dirty habits. Ayurvedic discourses often reflected these middle class and upper caste notions.

Another Ayurvedic tract entitled as *Plague Darpan* (1916), based on the speech of Rai Pooran Chand delivered at the All India Vaidya Sammelan in Kanpur,⁵ came out with a very unique theory related to the spread of plague. According to Rai Pooran Chand, plague was caused by a kind of poison termed by him as '*pad sangharshan vish*'. As articulated, this 'poison' was generated due to the friction between the 'bare feet' and the ground and entered the earth. When this 'poison' accumulated excessively inside the earth, the plague epidemics broke out. The point to be noted here is that this 'poison' was generated because of the friction between the 'bare feet' and the ground. In contemporary society, Brahmins and upper caste people mostly used either wooden sandals (called *kharaun*) or leather shoes while walking, whereas the lower castes/class and women usually walked bare foot. Consequently, the indirect assumption was that these sections generated the plague specific 'poison', although Rai Pooran Chand did not refer to them directly.⁶

Even some of the Ayurvedic tracts on child care published during this period clearly reflected caste, class and gender predilections in their conceptualization of an ideal progeny. For example, one of the tracts entitled as *Su-Santati Shastra* stated the need to encourage couples to give birth to '*deshodharak veer, sudharma pracharak mahant ya sadhu, vidvan Brahman, veer Kshatriya, dani Vaishya, sevabhawi Shudra, ek patni vrat- dhari purush aur patiorata striyan*' ('Liberator of the nation, disseminator of the religion, scholarly Brahmin, brave Kshatriya, generous Vaishya, duty bound/attending Shudra, monogamous men and chaste/faithful women').⁷

In fact, similar caste concerns in these child care tracts can be located if one examines the Ayurvedic discourse related to *dai* (wet mother). One of the texts entitled *Santati Shastra* clearly stated that the wet mother or *dai* should always be of one's own caste and should never be from 'menial' castes. According to it, a Brahmin family should always have a Brahmin, a Kshatriya family a Kshatriya, Vaishya family a Vaishya, and a Shudra family should have a Shudra woman as wet mothers.⁸ In other words, it was believed that caste characteristics could be transferred through breastfeeding.⁹

Furthermore, even some of the advertisements of Ayurvedic medicines exhibited caste prejudices. For example, one of the advertisements of *Ayurvedokt Aushadhalaya*, Allahabad claimed that 'All kinds of medicines in this pharmacy are made *either by Brahmins or other superior castes* and instead of ordinary water we use nectar like water of the Ganges.'¹⁰ It was an outright manifestation of the adoption of notions of purity/pollution underlying caste hierarchy by the aforesaid Ayurvedic pharmacy.¹¹

Universalizing Tendencies and Purging of Subaltern Healers

Print, organization and mobilization were the three crucial factors which shaped an upper caste/middle class revivalist Ayurvedic discourse in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Ayurveda and its utility were debated and discussed on public forums and attempts were made to obtain for it the 'due' place and the necessary patronage that it 'rightfully deserved.' Simultaneously, this drive also sought to 'standardize' and 'universalize' the Ayurvedic healing system by doing away with the extant difference of opinions over treatment methods, training and approach towards the subject. In this regard, desperate efforts were made to give all the practising *vaid*s a 'corporate' 'unified' identity having uniformity of thought, opinions and ideals. Publication of several Ayurvedic journals and tracts, establishment of the All India Vaidya Sammelan and the United Provinces Vaidya Sammelan, institutionalization of *Dhanvantari Mahotsava*, etc. were part and parcel of this pursuit of creating an Ayurvedic discourse having universalising tendencies. All India Vaidya Sammelan and its provincial units were at the helm of this project to universalize and streamline Ayurveda. Established in 1907, the All India Vaidya Sammelan strived to cater support for Ayurvedic revivalism both from the government and the common public.

Incidentally, in its efforts to streamline the Ayurvedic discourse, not only were the practitioners of the 'other' systems targeted by the Sammelan, but the Sammelan also tried to purge a number of folk healers and lay practitioners ('subaltern *vaid*s') from within its fold. It was believed that in due course of time many people had entered the field of Ayurveda who did not possess the 'required' wisdom for this Vedic knowledge. They were more interested in reaping pecuniary benefits by offering some panacea or through patenting any useful Ayurvedic drug. Lamenting on this trend, Pandit Shaligram Shastri of Lucknow argued, "Now-a-days majority of people learn Ayurveda from the viewpoint of pecuniary benefits and many people have entered the profession who are

unable to understand the classical texts of Ayurveda in their entirety. These people neither comprehend the secrets of Ayurveda nor do they have enough wisdom to accomplish that. Right from the beginning, they remain in hunt of some useful 'nuskha' (formula) like that of *Amritdhara* and *Sudhanidhi*, so that they can patent it and become an abbot of some Ayurvedic establishment. These are self-proclaimed *kavirajs* or *vaid*s who bring utter disrepute to Ayurveda."¹²

According to the established *vaid*s, although such lay practitioners/subaltern *vaid*s did help in making Ayurveda popular, eventually they were unable to understand the 'profound secrets' of Ayurveda and their 'uncontrolled' presence would harm the prospects of Ayurveda in long run. In fact, Dr K.S. Mhaskar, in his article "Ayurveda ki Sadyah Sthiti" ("Contemporary State of Ayurveda"), went on to group these lay practitioners of Ayurveda with *mali* (gardener), *chamar* (leather worker), *nai* (barber), *dhobi* (washerman) and *burhi vidhwa* (old widows) as 'practitioners of Kali age'.¹³ According to Mhaskar, these lay practitioners by flipping through some of the Ayurvedic texts and through advertisements had brought themselves and Ayurveda into limelight. In the opinion of Mhaskar, although they had made Ayurveda popular and accessible to common mass, they were actually 'enemies' created by the Ayurvedic movement itself. They had been referred by Mhaskar as '*teesra dal*' or 'third party' which was very vocal in the Ayurvedic movement.¹⁴

The two significant ways to control the growth of these lay practitioners/subaltern *vaid*s were standardization or institutionalization of Ayurvedic training/education and the registration of *vaid*s. The Sammelan and its presidents constantly emphasized on the aforesaid two things. With an aim to standardize Ayurvedic training/education throughout India, the Sammelan, during its third annual session at Allahabad (1911), established an 'Ayurvedic Vidyapith' to promote Ayurvedic education and to prescribe the syllabus for the same. Incidentally, for the Sammelan, which was overtly dominated by the 'new' *vaid*s,¹⁵ standardized and systematic institutional training was also an essential pre-requisite to bolster its claim for the launch of the scheme of registration of *vaid*s and other 'indigenous' practitioners on the similar line of registration of the allopathic practitioners by the government.

However, to what extent such efforts of the Sammelan to wean out the lay practitioners were successful is debatable. The medical market continued to have such 'subaltern *vaid*s' in large number. In a letter sent to the editor of *Vaidya Sammelan Patrika*, Krishna Dutt Gupt lamented that there were many members from places like Aligarh, Ajmer, etc. in the Katni branch of the

Central Provinces Ayurveda Mandal¹⁶ who by funding the organization and by passing the designated exams got the high sounding titles of *Vaidya Bhushan*, *Vaidya Visharad*, *Bhisagacharya*, *Vaidya Shastri*, *Vaidyaratna*, *Chikitsa Chakravarti*, so on and so forth. Some of them, in fact, had received even honorary titles by giving fund of two rupees to the organization. According to Gupt, many of these *Vaidyaratnas* were originally grocery merchants, and some of them were engaged in grinding mills till recently.¹⁷

Brahmanization of Folk Healing Practices/Subaltern Therapeutics

Thus, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Ayurvedic discourse clearly reflected the caste and class biases. In fact, during this time, we see the Hinduization or brahmanization of Ayurvedic treatment as well. It was a complex process which saw, on the one hand, upper caste *vaid*s condemning the tribal and low caste methods of treatment, and on the other hand, they were appropriating some of these methods by Hinduizing or brahmanizing it. Here one needs to keep in mind that the caste and class leanings of the Ayurvedic discourse were part and parcel of this broader process of Hinduization or brahmanization of the Ayurvedic treatment. One cannot look at the Hinduisation of Ayurveda and its biases in isolation. The debate was not just over which healing system was worthiest for the claim of 'indigenous' healing system, but it was also over what were the practices which constituted that particular 'system of healing'. An integral part of this process was either deliberate silencing or ritual hijacking of the healing skills practised by people belonging to lower castes/class such as that of *dais* (midwives), *bhagats* (those healing snake-bites) and potters (practising rhinoplasty).

As for instance, while rhinoplastic operations had been mentioned in *Sushruta Samhita* (Sutra Sthana, Chapter XVI),¹⁸ evidences show that it was actually practised by potters. It is hard to ascertain that whether it was due to later demotion of the social status of those performing surgical operations or it was there right from the beginning;¹⁹ however, this was certainly the case with eighteenth century. *The Gentleman's Magazine* in October 1794 reported an instance of Cowasjee, a Maratha bullock cart driver employed in the English army in the Mysore war of 1792, who was captured by the soldiers of Tipu Sultan who cut off his nose and one of his hands. However, after remaining without a nose for twelve months, the *Magazine* reported, a new nose was put on his face by a man of 'Brickmaker caste' near Pune. The *Magazine* further claimed that such operation was not uncommon in India and had been practised from time immemorial.

It then went on to describe how the whole operation was performed as witnessed by Mr. Thomas Cruso and Mr. James Trindlay, two medical gentlemen from Bombay presidency.²⁰ Interestingly, the Ayurvedic tracts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century while boasting of the Ayurvedic knowledge of rhinoplasty as delineated in *Sushruta Samhita*, nowhere acknowledged the expertise that potters had over such operations.

Similar was the case with the treatment of snake-bites and midwifery. *Bhagats* and *dais* hardly figured in respectable terms in these tracts. So, while the Ayurvedic tracts made tall and often exaggerated claims of theoretical expertise in these areas of healing, the dominant practitioners of such areas were neglected, marginalized and often purged by ritually hijacking their healing skills. This ritual hijacking by adding Sanskrit chants to already extant practice was very much evident in the case of treatment of snake-bite. The treatment of snake-bite was largely the domain of low caste healers. This was largely because while treating snake bites one had to touch the body or even the feet of the patient (who could be even from a low caste), which was 'insulting' for the upper caste healers. However, over the late nineteenth and early twentieth century we see medical tracts coming up which not only urged the Brahmins to take up this job, but also provided the treatment of snake-bite with a 'ritualized brahmanical slant.'²¹

Conclusion

Thus, the Ayurvedic discourse of the period under discussion nowhere betrayed the social values/biases of the time; rather, it helped in consolidating them in many ways by providing scientific sanctity to such caste/class predilections. In fact, access to health care services was a luxury in colonial times and it was mostly the upper caste/class people who could avail proper treatment whether at the hands of western medical practitioners, or the *vaidis* or *hakims*. In such conditions, healing systems were bound to acquire caste/class characteristics and hierarchies in order to protect the social sensibilities of their clientele/patrons. Consequently, the entire movement to revive 'indigenous' medicine was loaded with caste and class biases as reflected in contemporaneous Ayurvedic discourse.

It also nuances our understanding of ways in which caste and class hierarchy manifests itself in subtle forms through various discourses. Incidentally, as argued in the very beginning, not only caste and class, the late colonial Ayurvedic discourse equally carried the gender²² and communal²³ predilections/biases. That is why, the contemporaneous mainstream Ayurvedic discourse was not just about plague, malaria, or any other disease;

rather, it was also about *purdah*, *brahmacharya*, language, caste, class, community, nation, and colonialism. The Ayurvedic practitioners of the time were actively involved not just in the 'reconstruction of a tradition' but also in reconstructing the society and the nation as a whole along specific lines.

Notes

1. K.N. Panikkar, *Culture, Hegemony, Ideology: Intellectuals and Social Consciousness in Colonial India*, New Delhi: Tulika, 1995, p. 175.
2. Pandit Ganesh Dutt Sharma, *Dadru-Chikitsa*, 1st ed, Benares, 1932, p 3.
3. For such kind of racial interpretation of diseases and sanitary habits by the colonial authorities and its effect on the Indian populace, on their lifestyle and on their dwelling places, especially in the aftermath of the 1857 uprisings, see Veena Oldenburg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow: 1856-77* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). Tremendous stereotyping was carried out regarding the sanitary habits, cleanliness and dwelling places of the Indians in the post-1857 Lucknow which, in turn, paved the way for racial division of space as well.
4. It is noticeable that naturalization of caste hierarchy by superimposing it over racial differences was one of the characteristic features of colonial construction of caste as exhibited through the writings of H.H. Risley, the British census commissioner. Risley emphatically argued that caste distinctions had a racial basis. According to him, upper castes were basically from superior races, whereas lower castes were racially inferior. The Indian middle class that comprised primarily of people drawn from upper castes was quick to endorse this newly constructed racial interpretation of caste. In this regard, H.H. Risley's decision to arrange the castes in terms of their social precedence in the census of 1901 gave further fillip to racialized notions of caste and subsequent formation of caste groups competing with each other to pose themselves higher in the caste ladder and agitating for the same.
5. Rai Pooran Chand was member of the All India Vaidyak Vidyapith and a member of the Commission appointed by the All India Vaidya Sammelan to enquire into plague, cholera, malaria and other epidemic diseases of India and their remedies. Plague, in fact, attracted the fantasy of many of the Ayurvedic practitioners towards the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century due to frequently occurring epidemics. The Ayurvedic practitioners, while acknowledging the utility of Dr Haffkine's serum in diminishing the incidence of plague attacks on the inoculated population, never considered this remedy absolute. In fact, in the world view of the Ayurvedic practitioners, there were several other factors creating congenial conditions for plague infection such as indigestion, over-feeding, fasting, irregular diet, lack of cleanliness, constipation, and even sleeping late hours at night and too much sleeping during the day. For some

- interesting insights on the Ayurvedic response to plague, see Natasha Sarkar, "Fleas, Faith and Politics: Anatomy of an Indian Epidemic, 1890-1925," PhD thesis, Department of History, National University of Singapore, 2011, pp 182-186.
6. Bimal Roy, in his cult movie, *Sujata* (1959) also portrayed an interesting corollary related to prevailing pseudo-scientific social notions regarding the linkage between the lower castes/untouchables and spread of disease or polluting substance. In this movie, a Brahmin Pundit has been shown advising one of the main characters that he should abandon the untouchable child (viz. Sujata) whom he had adopted as soon as possible as it was a 'proven scientific fact' that there comes out a kind of gas from the body of the untouchables which polluted the body, mind and soul of the 'noble' people.
 7. A.G.Vyas, *Su-Santati Shastra*, Mathura, 1929, p. 5.
 8. Ayodhya Prasad Bhargava, *Santati Shastra*, Benares City, 1923, pp. 252-54.
 9. Incidentally, by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century both colonial and 'indigenous' representations of child maternity and infant feeding fused with issues related to the health, strength and well-being of the caste, community and nation. For a recent intervention in this regard see Ranjana Saha, "Infant Feeding: Child marriage and 'Immature Maternity' in Colonial Bengal, 1890s-1920s," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 75th session, New Delhi, 2014, pp. 708-715. Saha has shown that how during the particular time span of 1890s-1920s, breastfeeding and artificial feeding of infants got entangled with broader discussions on the body, age of consent for sexual intercourse, conjugality, maternity, nutrition, midwifery, and high infant and maternal mortality rates in colonial Bengal.
 10. See page 16 of the pamphlet titled as "Bharat ki Unnati ka Vaidyak Pratham Anga Hai" in Pandit Jagannath Sharma, *Arogya Darpan*, Vol. III, Prayag, 1898 (emphasis added).
 11. One of the fundamental ideas underlying caste hierarchy is the notion of 'purity' and 'pollution'. The brahmanical idea of dualism suggests that everything in this world is either the manifestation of 'purity' or 'pollution'. Correspondingly, within caste hierarchy, Brahmins represent the 'purest' (and hence at the top of the hierarchy) and the untouchables or the outcastes represent the 'most polluted' beings. All other castes lie in between these two extremes in purity/pollution scale. For details on this theme, see Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*, Mark Sanisbury, Louis Dumont and Basia Gulati (trans.), Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.
 12. Pandit Shaligram Shastri, "Vedon me Tri-dhatuvad," *Vaidya Sammelan Patrika* 3, no. 8-9, (August-September) 1933, p. 156.
 13. Dr K.S. Mhaskar, "Ayurveda ki Sadyah Sthiti," *Vaidya Sammelan Patrika* 1, no. 12 (December), 1931, p. 284.
 14. Mhaskar, "Ayurveda ki Sadyah Sthiti": 279. The other two parties were the established *vaidis* and those practitioners of Western medicine who were recognising the merits of Ayurveda.
 15. The term 'new *vaidis*' refers to the newly emerged class of institutionally trained *vaidis* of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century who differed remarkably in their training and practice from the 'hereditary' *vaidis* of the preceding centuries. Earlier, *vaidis* used to learn their skills mostly through the institution of the family or through traditional *gurus*. At that time, 'khandani' (or hereditary) *vaidis* had more prestige in the society than those who had newly acquired their skills. However, under the hegemonic influence of Western medical system, 'new *vaidis*' of the late colonial period started privileging institutional training over the apprentice-based traditional study under a 'guru'. Not only this, these 'new *vaidis*' also dramatically reshaped and redefined the Ayurvedic system of healing through standardization, professional and pharmaceutical training. Consequently, 'hereditary' *vaidis* were gradually marginalized in structures of 'modern' Ayurveda.
 16. There were various provincial units of the All India Vaidya Sammelan each under the control of an Ayurveda Mandal of its own. Organizationally, all the Ayurveda Mandals used to function under the supervision of the Ayurveda Mahamandal which was a permanent standing committee and representative body of the All India Vaidya Sammelan. Ayurveda Mahamandal was founded during the third session of the Sammelan (Allahabad, 1911) to organize these annual gatherings, to formulate the norms of the profession and to keep an eye over Ayurvedic educational institutions.
 17. Krishna Dutt Gupt, "Bhartiya Vaidya Sangh Sadasya kaise hone chahiye," *Vaidya Sammelan Patrika* 5, no. 9 (September), 1935, p. 229.
 18. "Sutrasthana, Chapter XVI," *Sushruta Samhita*, Vol. I, Kaviraj Kunja Lal Bhisagratna (trans), Calcutta, 1907, pp. 152-154.
 19. Referring to such demotion of the social status of a medical practitioner from that of a royal surgeon to a barber and potter in the latter period, Susmita Basu Majumdar, on the basis of the study of epigraphs, argues that most of the physicians performing surgical operations had to look for alternative professions for subsistence and they mostly took the professions of barbers (as they already had surgical instruments which sufficed the requirements of the barbers' art) and potters (as besides making pottery the art of a potter also includes making clay models and the surgeons having a thorough knowledge of human anatomy could easily shape such models). See, Susmita Basu Majumdar, "Medical Practitioners and Medical Institutions: Gleanings from Epigraphs," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 69th session, Kannur (2008): 196-210.
 20. *The Gentleman's Magazine* LXIV, Part II (October 1794): 891-892.
 21. Biswamoy Pati, *Situating Social History: Orissa 1800-1997* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2001): 18.
 22. For gender biases/predilections of the mainstream Ayurvedic discourse of the period under discussion see Saurav Kumar Rai, "Gendering Late Colonial Ayurvedic

Discourse: United Provinces, c. 1890-1937," *History and Sociology of South Asia*, 10, no.1 (January), 2016, pp. 21-34.

23. For communal overtones of the late colonial Ayurvedic discourse, see Saurav Kumar Rai, "Invoking 'Hindu' Ayurveda: Communalisation of the Late Colonial Ayurvedic Discourse," *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 56, no. 3 (October-December) 2019.

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Uttarākāṇḍarāmāyaṇa and Mother Sītā: As depicted by Vālmīki and Sankardev

Maheswar Hazaarika

Sankardev's Uttarākāṇḍa

Sankardev¹ of the fifteenth-sixteenth century Assam felt the lack of the first and seventh books in the then extant *Rāmāyaṇa* of Mādhava Kandali (fourteenth century), whom the saint regarded as an unerring poet (*apramādi kavi*) and allotted the task of translating the first book to Mādhavadeva. He himself took up the task of translating the seventh, which, possibly, he had the privilege of examining elsewhere in Sanskrit. In so doing, of 111 cantos in the Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇa*, he rejected altogether the first 38 cantos relating to the stories narrating the birth of the monkeys and the *rākṣasas*. In rendering the remaining 73 cantos too he adopted an economy of expression which enabled him to complete the whole book in 763 verses only, whereas there are almost 1800 ślokas in total in the Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇa*. For instance, he passed over the cantos 60 to 72, 74 to 76, and so on. Thus, befittingly he felt that his *Uttarākāṇḍa* was just a gist of the original (*Uttarākāṇḍasāra*). The reason behind this downsizing was probably that he could feel some parts to be unnecessary or that they were interpolations, as is now considered by modern scholars who have studied the critically. This upholds the critical powers of the saint as early as the sixteenth century.

Episodes in Sankardev's Uttarākāṇḍa

It is stated that after Rama had ruled his kingdom for 10 thousand years, Sītā conceived and one day she described how she dreamt of living in the hermitage amidst the wives of the sages. She, therefore, expressed her desire to go to the hermit forest which eventually Rāma approved of. After some days Rāma heard of the subjects' doubt about the chastity of the Queen. It was rumored that

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as she had been alone in the kingdom of the *rākṣasa* king, this might have resulted in her loss of chastity. They wondered how Rāma could think otherwise. The king after much brooding over the matter called upon Lakṣmaṇa and secretly banished Sītā to the forest, which Lakṣmaṇa complied with. As she was lamenting, Vālmīki, with some of his disciples, saw her and took her to the hermitage, where she gave birth to the twins. They were brought up and educated in all the sciences by the sage himself. The sage taught them the *Rāmāyaṇa* and as they grew up, the sage sent them to wander about singing it in public and also to sing at the court of Rāma.

Rāma, on the other hand, arranged for a horse sacrifice on the banks of the Gomatī at the advice of his Minister Vasiṣṭha, keeping a statute of Sītā, beside him as was customary. In the original there is no such reference to a statute; here, perhaps, Sankardev was influenced by Uttararāmacarita of Bhavabhūti. He worshiped all the gods including Brahmā and Nārāyaṇa, who were present at the sacrificial place. The twins came up to the place and started reciting the *Rāmāyaṇa* with the permission of the king. They sang to the accompaniment of musical instruments the story of Rāma up to their own birth. Being aware of the identity of the twins and of Sītā's survival, the king seated them upon his lap. The king himself wanted to go and bring back Sītā, but at the advice of the ministers he sent Śatrughna, Vibhīṣaṇa, Suṣeṇa and Hanumat to bring her back, but Sītā refused to follow; instead, she reproached Rāma before them for his earlier ill behaviour toward her. The messengers came back unsuccessful. Vālmīki, after pacifying her, took her to the court of Rāma the next day keeping his promise to the messengers. He affirmed Sītā's chastity; but the king, though himself convinced of queen's chastity, asked her to prove it. Sītā, enraged and saddened at this, prayed to Mother Earth for transporting her to the nether-land. She then entered *pātāla* after much lamentation and pacifying the sons and bidding adieu to the mothers-in-law. Rāma, enraged by the incident, wanted to destroy the Earth but stopped the adventure at the gods' request. Sītā was, henceforth, glorified as the chief goddess of that land.

Vālmīki proposed the twins to continue their song with the future life of Rāma but they desisted at the words of the king to resume it the next day. They resumed as proposed and sang (in future tense) how Mother Earth pacified Sītā but at this the sage ordered not to continue. Rāma then ruled the kingdom unhappily amidst different types of disasters, and arranged for handing over of the charge of his kingdom to their sons. The mothers died. Then arrived Garga the priest of Bharata's maternal uncle. Bharata set out for killing the Gandharvas. Kāla came to Rāma and they together began to discuss something in secret keeping Lakṣmaṇa at the door with the words that Rāma would slain whoever enters during their discussion. Unfortunately, Lakṣmaṇa himself had to enter the house to save the family of the Ikṣvākus from the wrath of Durvāsas, who wanted to meet Rāma immediately. After satisfying the sage and his disciples with abundance of food, consequently Rāma had to desist from his dear brother's slain, but had to banish him from the kingdom, keeping the truth at the advice of the ministers, truth for which he has already suffered a lot throughout his life beginning from his banishment. Lakṣmaṇa went away. After abandoning Lakṣmaṇa, Rāma decided to leave the world and placing the sons and nephews on the thrones of the kingdoms already under their sway, he departed for the heavens along with the subjects.

Thus, it is seen that Sankardev has kept the main story of Rāma's life in the original intact without going into any detail. The stories he has accepted are the banishment of Sītā; birth of Lava and Kuśa and their reciting the *Rāmāyaṇa*, horse-sacrifice of Rāma, and Sītā's entering the nether-land; Rāma's deplorable plight after their separation; Rāma's abandonment of Lakṣmaṇa and his departure for heavens. These are inseparable events from the life of Rāma, and hence they cannot be regarded as interpolations in the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Innovation of Sītā's Character in Sankardev

The central character of Sankardev's *Uttarakāṇḍa* is, thus, Sītā, for whom the poet seems to have great respect and honour. Dr W.L. Smith in one of his essays has pointed out a peculiarity of Sankardev's Sītā. In his opinion, this is the first character in any literature that presents a woman speaking out against the atrocity of any man against any woman. In this respect it is not out of place to compare the character in the original and in Sankardev's innovation.

Banishment of Sītā in Vālmīki

In the original *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki, it is seen that at the time of leaving Sītā in the dense forest, Sītā comes

to know from Lakṣmana that she has been banished by her husband; that Lakṣmana has been asked by Rāma to leave her in the dense forest. Sītā is shocked after hearing this. In this state of deep shock and sadness she laments² and says:

"Wouldn't have I shunned my lives in the waters of the Jāhnavī just today, but, in that case, the family-line of my husband will come to an end.

(*'na khalvadyaiva saumitre jīvitam jāhnavījale/
tyajeyam rājavamśāstu bharturme parihāsyate'.*)"³

This saying of the would-be mother explains her sense of responsibility as a mother as well as of a wife to take care of the embryo even in distress. She knew from Lakṣmaṇa that she had been shunned by her husband just at the words of some wicked people, and that too without informing her in person; that she was going to be left in the dense forest, where all sorts of danger is probable. In such a situation too she did not utter a single word of reproach against her husband.

Banishment of Sītā in Sankardev

Contrary to this, Sankardev's Sītā says:

"You may now go back to the capital; you need not think of me when Rāma himself has turned me out. In case my womb is spoiled (along with my death) there will be an end to the royal family itself. So, let Rāma enjoy the unhindered kingdom; and let me die in the wilderness."⁴

In this speech she does not behave as in the original; she expresses her displeasure at her husband's behaviour like a common woman instead. It implies that she was, as if, not at all concerned with the womb, the trace of the family of a husband so cruel to her; she does not care if the womb dies along with her. It will be a loss to the king alone if his lineage ends there. Thus, her words do not have that high moral tone as is found in Vālmīki. No responsibility of a mother finds expression here. These words give evidence of her mindset as that of an ordinary woman-folk. And, therefore, this Sītā of Sankardev, perhaps, cannot claim to be worshipped as 'Mother' by the people. Thus, Sankardev does injustice to Mother Sītā as earlier depicted by the great poet.

Sītā's responsibility as an ideal Queen, mother and wife in Vālmīki

Another point to be noted here about Sītā in Vālmīki is that she does not blame her husband. Though feeling intense sorrow at her misfortune, she feels in the core of her heart that it was natural on Rāma's part to banish her if he had to perform his duty of a king to keep the

subjects pleased. She advises her brother-in-law to follow the king's order (*nideśe sthīyatām rājñāḥ*) and she sends her message to her husband, who has banished her to the wild forest, where there was every danger of her being attacked by the wild animals, with the following words:

“O, Lakṣmaṇa, please report my salute to the king who is firm in his duties that I know very well that ‘You are aware of my innocence and that I have been very kin in your welfare.... please behave your subjects as you do to your brothers. It is the supreme duty on your part, and doing so you may attain to the best of fame’⁵

It is not a trifle matter on the part of a woman in such a state to remain so firm and steady. It was possible only for a sage of Vālmīki's stature to depict such a character. The sage could understand that one's mundane happiness was of far lower value than the wishes of the people of a country and, hence, it was not bad on the king's part even to give up his own wife. This very idea of the king finds expression in Bhavabhūti's drama *Uttararāmācarita*, wherein Rāma declares:

“I don't feel pain if I have to give up my sense of love, kindness, happiness, and even the daughter of Janaka for pleasing the people”

(*snehaṃ dayāñca saukhyañca yadi vā jānakīmapi, āradhanāya lokānāṃ muñcato nāsti me vyathā*).⁶

And Sītā, an ideal wife following the high Hindu philosophy, gives support to this act of pleasing the people by carrying out the order of the king and, perhaps, not of the husband. That is why, even at such a moment of her distress, she does not forget to express her duty towards the elders and, so, asks Lakṣmaṇa to forward her respect to the mothers in law and other older ones. She was aware of a queen's responsibility to support the king in performing his royal responsibility even at the risk of her own life. Such ideals are not wanting in Indian literature, where a father does not hesitate to slay even his son for greater interest. Such is the case with Sītā. That is why Vālmīki's Sītā, an apostle of sacrifice, is worshipped as a ‘Mother’ by the Hindus.

In case of Sankardev's Sītā, on the other hand, no such respect and honour for the mothers-in-law, no instruction to her brother-in-law to abide by the orders of the king and no advice to the king to deal with the subjects as his own brothers is met with. The speech of the queen does not have any proof of her royal responsibility, but her hatred, her displeasure at her husband finds expression here. Sankardev deals with her as a wife only, and that too as an ordinary house-holder but not as a queen, nor as an ideal wife of the Hindu tradition.

Sītā's departure

Rāma's sending messengers in Vālmīki

In respect of Sītā's entry into the nether-land, it is found that the great poet Vālmīki has depicted her with a special attention. Having known that Sītā was alive, Rāma ordered and sent some messengers to enquire whether the sage had the permission and Sītā the consent to prove her purity, and they went accordingly to the sage in the vicinity. The sage gave his consent thinking that as Sītā was true to her husband, she would agree to prove herself free of guilt. Rāma was also sure that Sītā would surely succeed in the test and their reunion was sure to take place, and that was why he asked everybody to witness the test the next day.

Rāma's sending messengers in Sankardev

In Sankardev's *Uttarākāṇḍa* the description of the scene of Sītā's departure takes much time than in the original. In the original, the messengers Hanumat and others met the sage only to ask for his permission for Sītā's test, they did not meet Sītā. But here in Sankardev's work they met her and they were very sorry to see the deplorable plight of the lady. The words uttered to them by her in reply to their message are worth noticing. She said,

“Why do you pain me so much? I was forgetting the matters, and now you put on the fire by reminding all these. Is it possible that I shall go to enjoy the royal pleasures at Ayodhyā? Is it possible for me to look at Rāma's face? Shall I then go to be the wife of the son of the Raghus now? If I do so, then there will be no shameless lady than me. Nothing has been left for Rāma to do against me. Now I request you kindly not to say any more. For what reason should Rāma keep me at his residence after keeping me in the forest with a view to killing me along with the womb? I have been holding my lives only for the sake of the twins, for otherwise they shall become helpless with my death. O my son Hanumat, my refuge during the days of distress, do away with your sorrow for me. I don't feel sorry for what I have been suffering only due to my past deeds. Separation has taken place between Rāma and me. He drove me out only at the sayings of the wicked. Therefore, for me my husband is the god of death. Knowing me not to have died in the forest, he is going to kill me with his swords. Had I been aware of Rāma to be so cruel of me I would have killed myself in Lankā itself. I abstained from doing so only at your word. Otherwise, how could Rāma have behaved me in this way? Only a shameless lady will believe the words of such a Rāma. Please, don't repeat him to me any more. You all know my condition, and therefore, don't repeat any more, I swear.”⁷

Last day of Sītā in Vālmiki

Next day, Sītā, came up to the sacrificial place following the sage. Vālmiki declared the innocence and purity of Sītā and that she would give evidence of the same. Rāma informed that he had believed all that was said by the sage, and he himself also knew Sītā's conduct to be pure, but defamation of the people was much stronger and that was why he had banished her, but he would be happy if she proves herself pure in front of the people of the world. Sītā, without raising any objection, carried out his order and spoke out:

"If I have ever thought of a man any other than the son of the Raghus, then O, Goddess Earth, split open yourself so that I may sink to the bottom; if I have worshipped Rāma in mind and by deed, then O, Goddess Earth, split open yourself so that I may sink to the bottom; if it is spoken truly that I know none other than Rāma, then O, Goddess Earth, split open yourself so that I may sink to the bottom."⁸

A hole appeared as desired and Sītā descended through it, sitting on a divine throne provided by Mother Earth. Thus Sītā proves her chastity and purity forever. People had nothing to say against her conduct and character. Vālmiki is successful in his delineating the character of Sītā, as a spotless daughter, daughter in law, sister in law, wife, Queen and, above all, a Mother, the greatest Human-goddess in the world, so to say.

The last scene in Vālmiki

The last scene of Sītā is the one that of her departure. Here Vālmiki depicts her as following the sage Vālmiki like the Śruti following Brahmā; she was following him silently, with tears in her eyes, and looking down to the ground with folding hands. This short description of the woman suggests many things. Her folding hands may suggest her grandeur as an embodiment of *vinaya*; her slow gait, her calmness; the word Śruti may suggest her sacredness, her divine knowledge, her austere penance in the hermit places on the banks of the holy Ganges and so on and so forth. Free from any pain or happiness she appears as an embodiment of Divine Peace, and that is why she is revered by all those present there. Thus it is enough to suggest her mental condition with silence. This is befittingly the style of a great poet to resort to suggestion.

The last scene in Sankardev

Sankardev's description of Sītā in this scene, on the other hand, is detailed in style as is found in the dramas of Bhavabhūti. Our poet describes that Sītā did not look at anybody or raised her head, though her emotion mounted; did not reply to anybody, not even to the mothers in law,

whom she respected so much, about her wellbeing or otherwise she moved forward with great sorrow with her face down; following Vālmiki she looked as like Lakṣmī rising out of the churning of the oceans and going forward to accept Lord Viṣṇu as her husband. After the declaration of the sage about her chastity and purity and that she was going to prove her purity the subjects were eager to see it but, to their astonishment, they found her in such a mood of fury that she did not cast her eyes to the seat offered by Bharata asking her to be seated; did not give any reply to her mothers in law to their pacifications; tears flew incessantly out of her eyes; her heart could not become steady due to intense anger and she cast her eyes on Rāma frequently with frowning, at which Rāma had to turn back his eyes in spite of his sincere desire to look at her with love, and he had to stand still with shame and fear. She shone in such a way remembering her pains that nobody could look at her as she was trembling in sorrow and anger and looked like a flame of fire. Seeing this even Rāma was afraid of her; all gods and sages trembled in fear of Sītā's curse upon her husband. She then turning her back to Rāma addressed the gathering with these words with displeasure (U.R.7046-52):

"You people, you may blame me after hearing my words. You know well what type of wife of Rāma I am. I am like a servant of his although married to him. His father sent him to live in forests and I accompanied him and lived in banishment for long fourteen years with him. I was alone. And as I was not independent, he could not keep me safe and that was why Rāvaṇa abducted me. I wanted in shame to die in Lankā there, but this Hanumat stood as an obstruction; I waited for my husband, and he saved and brought me after killing that Rāvaṇa. He tested me by throwing me into the fire and yet he was not satisfied. He accepted me only on the instruction of his father told. I served my husband earnestly, because I know that the husband is the Supreme God for me. Husband is the penance, murmuring of mantra, sacrifice, yoga and meditation for me. I never think, in dream or when awake, of others. Yet he could not be satisfied with me, and treated me badly. Moved just at the defamation by the wicked he banished me unfairly. You please notice my husband's mentality, and notice how and why he treated me unjustly. If you wanted to give me up why didn't you do so earlier? You wanted to kill my sons in the womb itself. My body starts burning to describe the qualities of my husband. You wanted to take the responsibility of the sin of killing the mother along her sons. As you did not care to take that sin of killing the mother and sons, what more remained for you to do? Everybody praises such a Rāma as a good man but it is I that know Rāma to be the god of death. Have you heard of such a cruel husband anywhere? How can I think of looking at his face yet?"⁹

Saying so Sītā cried aloud in grief, her tears flowing incessantly. Seeing this, the subjects feared that something was amiss because the grief of mother Sītā was growing

more and more. Rāma's face took such an appearance that it seemed that rice grain would have become ākḥoi (fried grain) if put on his face. Then Sītā turned her face towards Rāma and began to speak in intolerable grief:

“Why did you give me up? If you knew that you would do so why then had you accepted me earlier? I would have died before if it was in my luck. Oh, how cruel is my husband Rāma that he did not keep in mind my deeds of a single day. His heart is surely made of stone and surely that is why he shunned me just at the words of the wicked. What enemy am I of you, what ill have I done to you that you have given me such a severe punishment? You have deceitfully placed me in the forest like a low man giving up his wife for nothing. This mentality of yours is worse than that of a Rākṣasa that doesn't have the fear of the sin of killing woman. Please state, who among your predecessors did commit such a sin? Without any guilt you have ordered such a punishment. It is sure that my ill-fame will remain in the whole world for people will think I am surely guilty, otherwise, why should have the husband punished in this way. What for have you brought me this time to put balm on the burn? You are as it were bringing a wild man to show him a court. How much would you punish me, already a dead one? Still your desire has not been fulfilled. If, despite this, I go to make a wife of myself at your house, then no other shameless woman would be there like me. I am the daughter of a king like Janaka, the first daughter in law of a king like Daśaratha, and a head Queen of a king like you, and that is why you have done such a deplorable plight of mine.”¹⁰

Saying so, she fell down on the ground and cried aloud. After sometime she started shouting again and said,

“No more shall I look at this husband of mine...O mother Earth, I was born in you. Please make a crack in you and hide in to it so that I don't have to hear the name of Rāma; if and I am a chaste lady and holding my good deeds then O Moon, O Sun, O air, O Earth, you please become my witness; if my heart is fixed at the feet of Rāma then O Earth give me a way immediately; if I am true to the vow of trust to the husband and if I know none other person than Rāma then let this our defamation of ours come to an end; I will not see the face of Rāghava anymore; O Mother Earth, make a crack in to you.”¹¹

Here, Sankardev adds the rendering in his own way of simplification the famous three verses of Vālmiki cited above as the last speech of Mother Sītā. Saying so she requested the Earth to make way for her and she entered the Nether-land after declaring her innocence

Conclusion

Sankardev's Sītā: an ordinary chaste woman

It is thus noticed that Sankardev's Sītā is an ordinary Assamese woman having no experience of any complexity. It was very natural on the part of any ordinary woman

to behave to the messenger in a way as described by Sankardev at a situation as referred to. Sankardev has that image of the common woman-folk in mind; and therefore, he has been successful in delineating the character of such a woman. It has befittingly been sketched by our poet. She expresses her emotion very aptly in conformity with the state of hers. She expresses what comes to her mind after seeing that her husband has sent messengers to retake her after giving a punishment unbecoming of a wife like hers, and that too deceitfully, not straightforwardly. It would have been different in case she were a single woman but she was then in an advanced stage of pregnancy, which was not unknown to her husband. It is, therefore, natural on the part of any woman to revolt against so much of atrocity from her dear husband, whom she loves so much and whom she had suffered for, for long fourteen years in exile, giving up all mundane happiness of the palace of the great empire of Ayodhyā. It was not only out of sex-related conjugal relation that she followed her husband on every step of her life, but it was her dharma as propounded by the sages of wisdom and knowledge that she followed and took him as the part and parcel of her life. Surely as a result of this austerity of Sītā that a husband is usually taken, even today, by most of the Hindu wives as dearer than her own life, dearer than herself. The characters of Bhadarī in Lakshminath Bezbaroa and of Satī Joymotī of Assam History etc. are instances in this case. She can sacrifice everything for the sake of her husband. It is not out of compulsion, nor for sexual conjugal relation that she loves her husband. Her love is associated with the divine sacrifice advanced by the Vedic sages, and forwarded to the posterity by way of tradition. That dharma Sītā observed for the welfare of the world, not for her family alone. But it was injustice, according to her, on Rāma's part to banish such a wife in that stage of advance pregnancy to leave in the forest. He could have straightforwardly asked her to go as she liked just as he had asked her at the time of her fire-test. Then he would not have been subjected to so much of censure from her. Sankardev feels very well Sītā's grief and expresses it in plain words. It was also for the benefit of the world that the saint has depicted the character in such a novel way.

Sītā revolted and pointed out the weak points of her husband, and it is not unjust for a wife to do so. A worldly wife is bound by the chain of her family relation, and if the husband behaves as he likes then it is sure for the family to suffer disaster; therefore, it is proper on her part to remind him his proper duty at proper time. Yet we see that she did not disobey Rāma. She proved her chastity and purity as asked by him and, as a result, she had to depart. Had she not departed she would not have been free from censure of the people, and would

have remained in doubt for ever as regards her chastity. It should also be kept in mind that Mother Sītā left the world when her twins had been grown up and there was no risk to them after their union with their father.

Sankardev's Sītā is great, she is great as a chaste lady. But one should keep in mind that this does not do justice to Vālmīki, who tried to draw a heavenly character of worldly Sītā. Sankardev has made that heavenly Sītā of high order a practical worldly one understandable to the common folk.

Vālmīki's a Divine one

Vālmīki's Sītā, on the other hand, besides having all the good qualities of a chaste lady, is unique in itself. She remains unmoved in all the disasters in her life; she endures all calamities with indifference, a quality praised throughout Indian classics, not alone for women but for man and woman alike. His Sītā does not burst out in fury, does not cry aloud in grief. She does not scold anybody for whatever mischief he or she commits. No sensual emotion can move her at all. The final sacrifice she offers without a word of revolt is the instance of her sublimity. This sublimity is altogether absent in Sankardev's Sītā. It is the great poet Vālmīki that is responsible for this act of Rāma. It is Vālmīki who makes a divine woman of a worldly one. Even though Sītā was human she has gone up to the plane of a divine lady, perhaps, not available in the heavens too. And it is for Vālmīki alone that mother Sītā remained the Mother Sītā for time eternal. Vālmīki's Sītā is a classic one.

Key to Abbreviations

R= Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki (Sanskrit)

U.R.= Uttarākāṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa of Sankardev in Saptakāṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa (Assamese)

Notes

1. Sankaradeva or Sankardev, sometimes spelt as Hunkordeb but pronounced by Assamese people as Xunkordev, was a poet, dramatist, lyricist, instrumentalist, social reformer, cultural activist and above all a religious preacher and also the founder of Neo-Vaishnavism in Axom, Kāmarūpa (both included in modern Assam) and Behar (modern district of Koch-Bihar in West Bengal).
2. R. 7.47.8-15
3. R. 7.48.8
4. U.R. 6716-17
5. R. 7.48. 11-15
6. *Uttararamacarita*, Act I.
7. U.R. 6990-98
8. R. 7.97.14-16
9. U.R. 7053-62
10. U.R. 7065-72
11. U.R. 7074-77

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To Be One With The Gods: The Jagannath Cult and the Chitrakaras of Puri

Sharmila Chandra*

A unique composite culture revolves around *Lord Jagannath*, the presiding Hindu deity of Odisha. A number of myths and legends, along with a variety of religious creeds and sects, have mingled together to give rise to the *Jagannath cult*. At the same time, a myriad of faiths, including Jainism, Buddhism, Shaivism, Vaishnavism and Shaktism was assimilated into this cult. *Lord Jagannath* is today worshipped along with *Lord Balarama* and the female deity, *Subhadra* in temples all over Odisha.

The artists' village of Raghurajpur occupies a unique site in the cultural map of India. Raghurajpur is located in the Puri district of Odisha, at a distance of 10-12 km from Puri town and about 50 km away from Bhubaneswar, the state capital. Originally a craft village, Raghurajpur became a heritage destination in 2002, for its outstanding artistry. In this village, each and every art form has a highly religious connotation. Although 10 different types of handicrafts are practised here today, the most authentic art heritage of the village lies in the *pata paintings*¹ executed by the *Chitrakara community* belonging to the *Kalakara caste*. It has been confirmed that the technique of *pata painting* here originated from the art of painting the Trinity and artistry in this village is highly impacted by the *Jagannath cult*.

The primary purpose of this paper is to ascertain the exact impact of the *Jagannath cult* on the life and works of the *Chitrakaras*² of the Puri district as a whole, and Raghurajpur in particular. Another objective is to assess the social attitudes of the *Chitrakaras* with regard to the *Jagannath cult*.

A thorough study of the various themes used in depicting the *patachitras* would help to understand the religious views and cultural inclination of the *Chitrakara community* of Raghurajpur.

Further, the study would help the researcher to analyse and understand the festivals associated with the Jagannath Temple.

The study area is confined to the village of Raghurajpur, the main seat of the *pata painters* of Puri district. This is the most productive area for *patachitras* in Odisha. The exact location of the village is on the southern bank of Bhargavi river, a tributary of the Mahanadi. In the north lies the *ashram*³ of Bhrigu. It is said that the *Nila Chakra*⁴ was created here. In the west is found the temple of *Kateswar Mahadeva*, known to have been established by *Lord Rama*. Thus, an atmosphere of holiness pervades the surroundings of Raghurajpur. A series of local temples run along the middle of the road. The *pata painters* dwell in a particular locality called '*Chitrakara Sahi*'.⁵ The *Chitrakaras*, at present, practise *patachitra painting* for which they are well-known all over the world, *talapatachitra*, i.e., palm-leaf engraving and etching, *bhitichitra* or mural painting,⁶ stone carving, wood carving, making cow-dung toys, coconut-painting, *tusser painting*, making *ganjappa*⁷ playing-cards and designing paper mache masks and other articles of paper mache. Besides, they are exponents of *Gotipua* – an ancient dance form. Most of the *Chitrakaras* of Raghurajpur bear the surnames Maharana and Mohapatra.

History of Chitrakara Community of Puri

The term, *Chitrakara* denotes a painter. *Chitrakaras* are a community of traditional folk painters who paint pictures on cloth, hence, their creations are known as '*pata*' – a term that probably originates from the Sanskrit word '*patta*'. *Chitrakaras* belong to an outcaste sect in the Hindu *varna* (caste) order. In the Brahmapurana,⁸ they have been identified as the children of *Viswakarma*, the Hindu deity of art and architecture and *Ghritachi*, *apsara* woman taken to be the spouse of *Viswakarma*. Thus, they belong to the *Nabhasakha*⁹ group. In the Brahmapurana, it has been said that all the members of the

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Nabashakha group, including the *Chitrakar*s (painters), *Malakar*s (garland makers and those engaged in *shola* craft), *Karmakar*s (blacksmiths), *Sutradhar*s (carpenters), *Kumbhakar*s (potters), *Sankhakar*s (those working on conch shells,) *Swarnakar*s (goldsmiths), *Tantubayas* (weavers) and *Kangsakar*s (those working on bell-metal) were cursed by Lord Brahma¹⁰ that they would be eternally engaged in manual labour. However, while other artisans could purify themselves, the *Chitrakar*s, the youngest of the lot, remained impure and in course of time, became the subaltern.

The *Chitrakar*s form a community tied not by any caste or religion, but by a common traditional bond. This bond exists in their profession — artistry, and their passion for painting. *Pata painting* is an inherited skill, handed down through a traditional teacher-pupil relationship. Traditionally these folk painters also fall in the category of performing artistes as they are wandering bards singing to their painted scrolls, narrating stories. But the Odishan *patas* are not scroll paintings and therefore, the *Chitrakar*s of Puri have never been wandering bards. Originally, in order to preserve the secrets of their painting process, the *Chitrakar*s were not allowed to marry outside their caste. In fact, they were forbidden to marry beyond *Atharanala*,¹¹ as they felt that the sanctity of their paintings and the identity of their craft would be vitiated through contact with people outside this boundary.

As in the case of all folk artists, the *Chitrakar*s have no formal academic training, nor do they indulge in 'fine art' or 'high art.' However, they are an exceptionally talented group of artisans. The *Chitrakara community* had been commissioned to paint the wooden images of the Jagannath Temple in Puri and to decorate the ceilings and walls of the temple, as well as the chariots for the *Rathayatra Festival*. Originally, the *Chitrakar*s were appointed by the kings of Puri to dedicate themselves to the *seva* (service) of Lord Jagannath, as the Jagannath Temple came up in the twelfth century A.D. This custom, according to the temple chronicle *Madala Panji*, was known as 'Niyoga' and was introduced by King Anangabhima Deva. The service rendered by the *Chitrakar*s, was totally voluntary. However, some have expressed the opinion that the *Chitrakar*s were paid in kind for their services. In any case, *pata paintings* were used to spread the Jagannath cult throughout Odisha in the fifteenth-sixteenth century and even thereafter. The Ganga kings of Puri popularized the Jagannath cult in the wake of the *Bhakti Movement*,¹² which swept the whole of Odisha at the time. Hundreds of *Chitrakar*s came to stay in Puri and offered to serve Lord Jagannath. As their numbers swelled, they could no longer be accommodated within the temple precincts. Soon they scattered themselves in the cluster of villages around Puri, namely Raghurajpur, Dandasahi and

Basudevpur, where they still reside, devoting themselves to the art work and are engaged in worship in local temples at other times.

The *Chitrakar*s of this area are divided into three main classes — *Atharaghar Chitrakar*s (*Chitrakar*s of eighteen families), *Choudaghar Chitrakar*s (*Chitrakar*s of fourteen families) and *Choyghar Chitrakar*s (*Chitrakar*s of six families). The first category is engaged in creating *Jagannath patas* while the second and third categories paint *patachitras* of *Balabhadra* and *Subhadra* respectively. Besides, it is said that in the remote past, some *Brahmins* were brought to Odisha from Kanauj and some of them took to *pata* drawing.¹³

At present, Raghurajpur is purely an artisans' village where the *Chitrakara community* predominates. Since Raghurajpur became a Heritage Village in 2002, the number of families in the village increased drastically. Whereas in 2002, there were 102 families in Raghurajpur, the number increased to 123 in 2005 and 128 in 2014. Primary survey in the field shows that while in 2003, 34 families practised *patachitra* painting, the number was 60 in 2014. It was gathered from interviews that while the older generation is engaged in agricultural pursuits, the present generation is taking up *pata painting* as a means of livelihood, which indicates that artistry is progressively becoming a lucrative occupation for the *Chitrakar*s. In fact, primary survey indicates that between 2005 and 2012, there was a marked increase in the number of *pata* painters, palm-leaf engravers and those engaged in other sectors of handicraft in Raghurajpur.¹⁴

The Cult of Jagannath

Legend has it that *Lord Jagannath* was originally worshipped by a *Sabara* (tribal) named Viswabasu. The *Sabar*s brought with them the cult of totem worship which formed the concrete basis of their tree worshipping cult. They worshipped their deity in Puri on the Blue Hill, hence, Puri is referred to as *Nilachal*. Later, this tribal deity came to be identified with *Lord Jagannath*. It has been pointed out by scholars that *Lord Jagannath* has a pre-Aryan, tribal appearance. The totem-like appearance of *Sri Jagannath*, as is represented on iconographic paintings, is suggestive of this.¹⁵ The icon of *Lord Jagannath* is represented as a carved and decorated wooden stump with a conspicuous absence of hands or legs. The face is symmetric with large, round eyes. The worship procedures, sacraments and rituals associated with the Lord are syncretic. However, in the course of time, the cult of *Jagannath* became Aryanised and *Lord Jagannath* came to be revered as *Purushottama* or *Vishnu*. The *Madala Panji* mentions that the temple complex has accommodated monasteries of different sects. Hence, *Lord*

Jagannath is a non-sectarian deity and the rituals and procedures of worship of this deity do not conform to classical Hinduism.

Some are of the opinion that originally, the inner sanctum of the Jagannath Temple was constructed with the purpose of housing only two deities — *Jagannath* and *Subhadra*. *Balabhadra* was a later addition. Therefore, at no point before the entrance to the inner sanctum can one get a full view of all the three images.

Some scholars refer to a Buddhist origin of *Lord Jagannath*. They say that the Triad represents *Dhamma*, *Chakra* and *Sangha*¹⁶. Some others have investigated into the origin of *Lord Jagannath* and have identified the Lord as a *Jain Tirthankara*.¹⁷

It is believed by some that in *Lord Jagannath* is manifested *Bhairav*, the God of Destruction. In this case, the Lord is held as the epitome of *Tantric*¹⁸ worship. The symmetry in iconography, the use of *mandala*¹⁹ and geometric patterns in its rites support the idea of *tantric* connection. *Lord Jagannath* is regarded as the consort of *Goddess Vimala*²⁰ by *Shaivite* and *Shakta* sects and the priests of the Jagannath Temple are *Shaktas* by faith. In this case, *Subhadra* is worshipped as *Goddess Durga* and *Balabhadra* as an incarnation of *Seshanaga*.²¹ On the other hand, most people believe that *Jagannath* represents *Lord Vishnu* and the 10 incarnations of *Vishnu* are derived from Him. Likewise, they are of the opinion that *Nilachal* encapsulates all the holy places — Dwarka, Mathura, Vrindavan, Kasi, Gokul. Puri is regarded as one of the four *dhams*.²² The Puri district is shaped like a conch shell and it is said that this is the conch shell held by *Lord Vishnu*. Because of the sanctity of the place, Puri came to be known as *Sankhakeshtra Puri dham*. Jayadeva, an ardent devotee of *Sri Krishna*, claims that *Lord Jagannath* appears in all the incarnations on earth. Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda*, in which he addresses the Lord as 'Jagadish,' is adored and read in every village of Odisha. Various fables related to Jayadeva and *Sri Jagannath* as well as the *Dasavatara* poems of the poet are recited in the temple of *Lord Jagannath* in Puri.

The Stages of Pata Painting: Themes, Techniques and their Relation with the Jagannath Cult

The creation of the *pata* paintings is a disciplined art form. The *Chitrakaras* maintain a rigidity in their use of colours, restricting them to a single tone. The traditional artist uses five main colours in creating his pictures. These five colours are drawn from natural resources — primarily vegetative matter and natural stones and are associated with the divine colours of *Sri Jagannath*, *Balabhadra*, *Subhadra*, *Sinhasana* (the throne) and the *Nila*

Chakra (the Blue Wheel) by the folk painters and saints of Odisha. These are called *pancha tatwa* — a name for the five ingredients. According to the colour conventions used by the *Chitrakaras*, white is used for *Balarama* and *Narasimha*²³ incarnations, *Shiva* and *Varuna*,²⁴ yellow for *Matsya*,²⁵ *Kurma*,²⁶ *Parashuram*²⁷ and Buddha incarnations, besides *Radha*, *Sita*, *Laxman*, *Brahma*, maids and other female characters. *Narayana* and *Yama* are coloured in black, blue is used for *Vamana*²⁸ and *Kalki*²⁹ incarnations and for painting *Lord Krishna*. *Agni*,³⁰ *Mangala*³¹ and the face of *Hanuman* are painted in red. Other colours, such as green and grey, are used for depicting *Varaha*³² and *Rama* incarnations, demons and snakes. The white, red and black colours represent the '*sattvika*' (pure), '*rajasika*' (royal) and '*tamasika*' (dark) aspects of the gods. The characters have their own colours according to the '*rasa*' or mood portrayed by them. For example, '*hasya*' or laughter is depicted in white and '*Raudra*' or furious in red, '*Adabhuta*' or strange in yellow and so on. *Sri Jagannath* has been described as *Jyoti Rupi*³³ for the divine light which *yogis*³⁴ could perceive in the Lord. It is said that the *pancha tatwa* or five colours are but the different manifestations of the *jyoti* and lastly merge into the Divine — a philosophy that has been envisaged by the folk artists of Odisha in their colour schemes.

The paints for creating the *patachitras* are fully prepared from indigenous materials. In bringing about the indigenous paints, the gum of *kaitha* tree is used as a base for making different pigments, on which diverse raw materials are applied to create diverse colours. In the book, '*Manashollash*,³⁵ it has been said that in the past, the *Chitrakaras* used to obtain the pure white colour by burning conch shells. Today, powdered conch shells are used to obtain white, while black is derived from lamp-soot or charcoal. In the *Puranas*, three distinct sources of red colour are mentioned — *hingula*, *alaktaka* and *gairika*. The *Chitrakaras* obtain red ochre from *hingula* by powdering the stone with the paste stone. The *harital* stone is ground with water for yellow. The *hingula* and *harital* thus prepared are formed into tablets and dried.

The green colour is obtained by boiling the juice of the green leaves, which is mixed proportionately with the gum of the *kaitha* or *bilwa* fruit. Sometimes, special types of green stones are used to make green. Blue is obtained from indigo or the *rajabarta* stone.

The canvas for *pata painting* is also prepared by the *chitrakara* himself and illustrates the sanctity of the activity. Tamarind seeds are soaked in water for three days and then heated in an earthen pot. The paste so extracted is given a sacred name — '*niryas kalpa*.' This tamarind paste is used to adhere two or more pieces of cloth together, which becomes a canvas. This is coated with powdered

soft clay stone. It is again mixed with tamarind paste and brushed on the canvas with a handmade brush. Finally the canvas, called the '*pata-astra*' or '*pati*,' is polished with a rough stone and then with a smooth stone, sea-shell or a piece of wood so that the surface becomes leathery and ready to paint upon.

The painters mix the colours in wooden bowls of dried coconut shell. The root of the *keya* plant is used for making the common, coarse brush. On requirement of finer brushes, mouse-hair is attached to wooden handles.

Life in Puri revolves around the temple of *Lord Jagannath*. The *Chitrakar*s of Puri and Raghurajpur had long been associated with painting the Trinity for the *Nava Kalevara* and other ceremonies associated with the temple of *Jagannath*. *Nava Kalevara* means 'Making of the New Body.' The ceremony is held every 12 years, when the Triad is repainted. Just as the soul casts away the old body and enters a new one, so also the dresses and ornaments of the deities are removed and the deities are adorned in their new dresses to be painted fresh, which signifies *Nava Kalevara*. For the *Nava Kalevara* ceremony, the *Chitrakar*s prepare the wooden image of the Lord secretly in a secluded room. After the completion of the work, the *Chitrakar*s tie up the wooden image with ropes and thereafter, they cover the ropes with a holy cloth, which they name *Sri Kapada*. This cloth is affixed to the ropes by a paste called *Khadilagi*,³⁶ which they themselves prepare. The *Chitrakar*s treat the *Daru* (wood) as bone, the *Aswalagi* (paste) as flesh and the *Sri Kapada* (cloth) as skin. After colouring the idol, the *Atman* or *Brahma* (soul) is inserted into it in a secret worship ceremony. For all these reasons, the image of *Lord Jagannath* is given the name 'Daru-Brahma'.

According to Eschmann, the *Nava Kalevara* ceremony is a tribal custom analogous to the practices prevalent among primitive tribes such as Saoras³⁷ and Khonds.³⁸

Also the Trinity is newly painted for the *rath yatra* (chariot festival) every year, before which the three chariots of *Lord Jagannath*, *Balabhadra* and *Subhadra* are decorated by the *Chitrakar*s. Floral designs, swans and different figures are used to decorate the wheels. Again, painting the idols is frequently necessitated as the colours are washed off by the water used during the daily worship. Besides, the deities are repainted on several auspicious days of the lunar cycle such as *trayadosi*³⁹ and *chaturdosi*.⁴⁰

An important ceremony associated with the temple of *Lord Jagannath* is *Snanotsava* or the Bathing Ceremony. Every year, on the full-moon day of *Jaishtha* (May-June), also called the *Devasnana Purnima*, the deities are placed on a platform and holy water is poured on them, after which they are said to become sick for a fortnight and are

confined inside the *Anasara Ghar* or secluded chamber. In reality, the colours are washed away during the holy bath and the deities are repainted during this short interval between the *Devasnana Purnima* and the *rath yatra*. During the transition period between these two festivals, when the deity is kept in the secluded chamber, the Trinity is represented in three different *patachitras* and worshipped secretly, with offerings of fruits and coconuts, by a successor of Viswabasu Sabara, the tribal chief who first worshipped *Lord Jagannath*. This *patachitra*, prepared by the *chitrakar*s, is called the *Anasara Pati*. It is quite different in appearance from the classical images of the deities. In this painting, the deities are represented with full hands and legs in *padmasan mudra*.⁴¹ The totem-like appearance is completely done away with. *Lord Jagannath* is represented as *Narayana*, with four hands holding the *sankha* (conch), *chakra* (wheel), *gada* (club) and *padma* (lotus). *Balabhadra* is depicted as *Sesha Deva Ananta*⁴² and holds *sankha*, *gada*, *hala* (plough) and *mushala* (club or pestle). Likewise, *Subhadra* is represented as *Bhubaneswari*, holding *sarpa* (snake) and *ankush* (goad) in her two hands, the other two hands depict *abhaya* and *varada mudra*. Sometimes, instead of *sarpa* and *ankush*, *Bhubaneswari* holds two lotuses. At the entrance of the temple, near the *Singhadwar*, *Patitapaban* is also represented in a *patachitra*. This is called *Dadhivamana Pati*.

Preparation of the *Anasara Pati* starts on the auspicious day of *Akshaya Tertiya*. On this day, the *Chitrakara* receives a piece of cloth, meant to be the canvas, from the temple administration, on which he works for several days. In order to preserve its sanctity, women are not allowed to touch the painting. When the *Chitrakara* completes the work, the family priest comes to his house and performs a *puja*. On the next day, a priest from the *Jagannath Temple* arrives with a garland, accompanied by men carrying a *ghanta*, (gong) a *chalti* (ritual umbrella) and a *kahali* (pipe). Another *puja* is performed. Then, in a ceremonial procession, the *Anasara Pati* is carried to the *Jagannath Temple* by the *Chitrakara*.

The concept of the *Anasara Pati* started during the reign of King Anangabhima Deva, who ruled Odisha from 1190 A.D. to 1198 A.D. The pictures of the Divine Triad are known as the *Srikshetra Pati* or *Sri Jagannath Pati*. The source of origin of *pata painting* in Odisha is the presentation of the Trinity in three painted *patas* by the folk artists of the temple. All these evidences point to the fact that the relationship of the *Chitrakar*s with *Lord Jagannath* and His cult is more than structural and is associated with ritualistic performances.

The same ingredients that are used to paint the Trinity, are used by the *Chitrakar*s in creating their *patachitras*. Also there is a strong resemblance between the techniques

employed in painting the Trinity and the techniques of *pata painting*. This makes it obvious that the tradition of *patachitra painting* in Raghurajpur originated from the concept of painting the Trinity and is hence, strongly related to the *Jagannath cult*.

The *Chitrakar*s also base the themes of their *patachitras* on religious connotations. The traditional *patua* still clings to the themes based on *Vaishnavism*. Each of these themes has deep-rooted mythological stories that abound in the social and religious life of the inhabitants of Puri and Raghurajpur. The most popular one is the *Sri Jagannath Pati*, centred around the Trinity. These represent the holy Triad in the temple, the Triad on the Chariot during *rath yatra* and the Triad in the *Anasara Ghar*. In these paintings, Lord Jagannath is represented in a variety of dresses called *Vesas*. These *Vesas* include *Gajanan Vesa* (elephant-faced Jagannath), *Raj Vesa* (the dress of a king), *Suna Vesa* (Golden form), *Bonobhaji Vesa* (picnic attire), *Rajrajeswara Vesa* (dressed as the Supreme King), *Thiakiya Vesa* (adorned in *keya* flower), *Krishna Balarama Vesa* (in the attire of *Sri Krishna* and *Balarama*), *Radha Damodar Vesa* (dressed as *Radha* and *Damodar*), *Gaja Uddharan Vesa* (as rescuer of an elephant), *Banka Chuda Vesa* (decoration with a twisted hair-do), *Padma Vesa* (lotus dress), *Kaliya Dalan Vesa* (standing on the hood of a serpent), *Harihara Vesa* (dressed as *Vishnu* and *Shiva*), *Sadha Vesa* (ordinary dress), *Chandan Vesa* (dressed in sandal oil and flowers), *Lakshmi Narayan Vesa* (dressed as Goddess *Lakshmi* and *Vishnu*), *Raghunath Vesa* (dress of Purushottam Ramchandra), etc.

The second category includes *patachitras* on *Raslila*⁴³, *Vastraharana*,⁴⁴ *Rama-Ravana Yuddha*,⁴⁵ *Krishna* playing on the flute, *Aghasura*⁴⁶ and the like – some of which are of life-size.

The third category includes *Tapoi*⁴⁷ and *Goddess Mangala*, *Nava Gunjara Vesa* of *Krishna*, *Malu-Vaidya*,⁴⁸ etc. The concept of *Nava Gunjara* is mythical. The story goes thus - *Krishna* appears before Arjuna in a strange form to break his penance. In this form, the body of *Krishna* consists of several parts of human beings and animals. The head is that of a cock, the neck is of a peacock, the hump of a bull, the tail is that of a snake and the waist of a lion. Three of the legs are those of a tiger, horse and elephant and the fourth is a human hand holding a lotus. Sometimes, instead of lotus, a mirror or *chakra* (wheel) is seen.

The fourth category encompasses all Hindu gods and goddesses such as *Saraswati*, *Lakshmi*, *Durga*, *Dasha Mahavidya*,⁴⁹ *Kali*, *Bankeswari*,⁵⁰ *Tara*,⁵¹ *Bhairavi*,⁵² *Chandi*,⁵³ *Chamundi*,⁵⁴ *Chhinnamasta*,⁵⁵ *Vishnu*, *Bhairav*, *Parvati*, *Ganesh*, *Parashuram* and so on.

There is yet a fifth category which displays *Kandarpa Ratha* (Number of damsels arranged in the form of Cupid's chariot), *Kama Kunjara* (Nine damsels arranged

in the form of an elephant) and sixty-four amorous postures.

The other most popular forms are the *patas* based on different episodes of the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, the *Puranas* and the *Kavyas*. Others are *patachitras* on the *vratas*⁵⁶ and different modes of worship. Some *patas* revolve around the Gajapati Kings of Puri. Another popular subject is the conquest of the kingdom of Kanchi by Purushottamdeva, the ancient king of Puri.

The theme of *Kanchi-Kaveri* is a favourite subject of the *Chitrakar*s. It shows *Jagannath* and *Balabhadra* mounted on horseback, with *Manika* (the milkmaid) standing before them. Apart from painting *Kanchi-Kaveri patas*, the *Chitrakar*s paint this scene on the top left-hand corner of *thiā-bandhiā pata*.⁵⁷

In *pata paintings*, the borders are highly decorated with winding creepers and floral motifs. Procession of animals such as geese, deer, elephants, swans are also found on the borders. This kind of ornamentation in *pata paintings* owes its origin to the temple sculpture of Odisha in the medieval period.

In the early days, the *Chitrakara community* was highly austere and observed strict rituals during painting. During the course of the assignment, the *chitrakara* had to be fully vegetarian and had to sleep on the bare ground. He also had to put on a new *dhoti* during that time every day. After the painting was over, a *Mahasnana* (Grand Bath) had to be taken by the *Chitrakara* with the chanting of *mantras* (holy chants). After that, the paintings were placed in front of the deity along with other offerings. Subsequently, these paintings were preserved at the temple store. These rituals are no more observed now, but the sanctity of *pata painting* still remains in Raghurajpur village.

However, the caste system in Raghurajpur is not at all rigid and irrespective of caste, all are engaged in painting. Almost all the inhabitants belong to the *Jagannath cult*. Perfect communal harmony prevails in the village.

The *Chitrakar*s of the Puri district were highly patronized by the Ganga kings, the rulers of the Bhoi dynasty and the Suryavansi Gajapatis. During the reign of Narasimha Deva, they were appointed to paint the ceilings and walls of the *Jagannath Temple*. During the reign of Mahaliya Mukunda Deva, *pata-art* found expression on the walls of *Jagmohan*⁵⁸ of the *Lakshmi Temple*, the *Gundicha Temple*⁵⁹ and the *Jhulan Mandap*.⁶⁰ The *patas* depicting the Kanchi expedition of Purushottama Deva are found on the walls of *Sri Jagannath Temple* and this is considered as one of the oldest of the *patachitras*.

More importantly, the socio-economic conditions of the *Chitrakar*s of Raghurajpur have been strongly tied up with the *Jagannath Temple* of Puri since the temple came up in the twelfth century A.D. The *Chitrakar*s have never

deviated from their passionate attitude towards *patachitra painting* and their attachment to the *Jagannath cult*. Each *Chitrakara* clan in Raghurajpur owns a family sketchbook which is handed down from generation to generation and is worshipped along with the family gods.

Conclusion

The *Chitrakaras* and their art works not only owe their origin, but also their sustenance to the Jagannath Temple of Puri. In the initial stage of the construction of the temple, the *Chitrakaras* settled around the temple, which is, till today, visited by pilgrims from all over the world. Puri is regarded as *Srikshetra* by all Hindus. The *Chitrakaras* came to be recognized with the service of *Lord Jagannath*, the theme of their paintings revolved around the *Jagannath cult* and the pilgrims formed their main clientele. These pilgrims were eager to take back to their native land some kind of a souvenir from their place of visit. Often, they would purchase the *patas* which were sold around the temple premises. As the *patas* were sold to the pilgrims who sojourned in Puri to offer worship to the 'Lord of the Universe,' these *patachitras* came to be known as '*Yatri Patis*' or pilgrim paintings. The business associated with the *Yatri Patis* was the first step towards the popularization of the *patachitra* and the establishment of the *Chitrakara community* of Puri, Raghurajpur and Dandasahi.

Notes

1. Folk paintings on cloth
2. Painters
3. Hermitage
4. The Blue Wheel is the most auspicious symbol in the cult of Jagannath.
5. The word, '*sahi*' means 'alley'. In Puri district, there are a number of localities called *sahis*, inhabited by communities practicing different professions such as fishing, painting, etc. *Chitrakara Sahi* is one such locality belonging to the *pata painters*.
6. Mural painting is a traditional art of Raghurajpur. This art was especially promoted by INTACH in the late 1990s to give the village a heritage look. INTACH was assisted with funds from NORAD in this matter.
7. *Ganjappa* is the local term for *ganjifa* — a game of cards.
9. Choudhury, Dulal (ed.) "*Banglar Loksamaskriir Biswakosh*" (in Bengali). Kolkata. Academy of Folklore Press. 2004, pp. 384-386.
10. The group of nine children to which *Viswakarma* and *Ghrītachi* gave birth. These children are engaged as manual labourers. They belong to the artisan community.
11. The Hindu God of Creation.
12. The religious boundary of the Jagannath Temple.

12. The *Bhakti Movement* was a movement propagating love and respect for *Lord Krishna*. It was propagated by the *Vaishnavas*. This movement spread all over India in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and had a long lasting effect. It was punctuated by songs and poems written in praise of *Lord Krishna*.
13. Basu, Anita, "*Odishar Patachitre Jagannath Sanskriti*." (in Bengali). Kolkata, Gangchil, 2018.
14. Chandra, Sharmila, "*The Patuas of West Bengal and Odisha: An Evaluative Analysis*." Himalaya Publishing House, Mumbai-400004, 2017, p. 82.
15. Mohanty, B. (1984). "*Pata Paintings of Orissa*." New Delhi, Publications Division.
16. The three jewels of Buddhism.
17. *Tirthankaras* were regarded as preachers of Jainism. There were 24 in all *Tirthankaras*. Mahavira was the 24th and the last *Tirthankara*.
18. The word '*tantric*' is derived from '*tantra*'. *Tantra* is a particular practice prevalent in both Hinduism and Buddhism. *Tantrism* follows principles of non-Vedic worship and centered mostly on the *Shakti cult* and to some extent on *Vaishnavism* and *Shaivism*. The modes of worship associated with the *tantras* are very rigorous.
19. Spiritual and ritual symbols. These symbols are used for meditation in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. They represent the cosmos.
20. A form of *Goddess Durga*.
21. A form of *Lord Shiva*.
22. Sacred places intensified with holiness.
23. The fourth incarnation of *Vishnu*.
24. The God of Water.
25. The first incarnation of *Vishnu*.
26. The second incarnation of *Vishnu*.
27. The incarnation of *Vishnu* with the axe in hand. It is said that *Parashuram* slayed his own mother with the axe.
28. The dwarf incarnation of *Vishnu*.
29. The tenth incarnation of *Vishnu*.
30. The God of Fire.
31. A form of *Goddess Durga*.
32. The third incarnation of *Vishnu*.
33. Embodiment of Light.
34. People who maintain contact with God through meditation.
35. A text written by the Chalukya king Someshwara II.
36. Gum made out of soft clay stone.
37. A tribe which inhabits the Koraput and Malkangiri districts of Odisha. This tribe is remarkably adept at painting folk motifs.
38. A virgin tribe dwelling in the forests of Chhattisgarh, MP, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand and West Bengal.
39. The thirteenth day of the lunar cycle.
40. The fourteenth day of the lunar cycle.
41. Sitting position on a lotus.
42. A hooded serpent. This serpent is said to hold the Universe.
43. Love episodes of *Radha* and *Krishna*.
44. An episode in which *Krishna* stole away the clothes of the maidens when they went to bathe in the Yamuna river.
45. Battle between *Rama* and *Ravana*.

46. A demon slain by *Lord Krishna*.
47. The only sister of the *Sadhavas* – the seven brothers belonging to the merchant class of Odisha.
48. The patient and the doctor.
49. Ten forms of the *Goddess*
50. A form of *Goddess Kali*.
51. A form of *Goddess Kali*.
52. A *Mahavidya* Goddess.
53. A form of *Shakti*.
54. A form of *Goddess Kali*.
55. One of the *Dasamahavidyas*, a form in which the Goddess severs Her head and drinks Her own blood.
56. Religious vows for the fulfillment of one's desires, usually taken by women.
57. A very significant *patachitra* of ancient times. This *patachitra* shows all the important features of the Jagannath Temple. It is almost extinct now.
58. The second chamber of the temple.
59. The temple to which the chariots travel with the deities on the day of *rath yatra*.
60. The structure constructed for the swinging of *Radha* and *Krishna* on the occasion of *Jhulan Purnima*.

Ethical Views on War and Peace: Perspectives from Brahminical and Buddhist Literature (600 BCE to 600 CE)

Malabika Majumdar

Introduction

The discussion intended in this paper is to make an ethical estimate of the views on war and peace after recounting incidents from certain ancient Indian textual sources. These include a few portions from the works of the Brahmanical priestly thinkers and also some excerpted ideas drawn from the Buddhist literature. Both these sources cover a period ranging between 600 BCE and 600 CE.

The choice of this time-frame is significant as it records an expansion of our knowledge base which begins with the rise of Buddhism around 600 BCE. Buddhism as a philosophy rose to popularity for its unorthodox views that undermined the authority of the *Vedas*. In another direction, this philosophy is worthy of our attention for its upholding of the ethical ideal of *ahimsa* as the *paramah dharma*. Buddhist emphasis on such virtuous conduct had over a period of time generated a reasonable influence on Brahmanical thought so much so that settlement of disputes through wars were governed by some reasonable ethical ideal. In this context, it may be said that the *jus ad bellum* principle went beyond the idea of 'annihilation' of the enemy. Wars fought with a prescriptive ideology attempted to authenticate the good by vanquishing the evil force, or in some special context it meant 'resolution of conflict' to establish the ethical balance between *dharma* and *adharma*.

Some Ethical Theories Relating to War and Peace

A general remark on the ethical estimation of war and peace will not be out of place in this context. For both war as well peace, ethical evaluation emphasizes on certain pre-defined parameters based on sanctioned rules.¹

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Though used in conjunction, the features of war and peace are so distinct that acquiescence in the case of war differ considerably from the approbations that justify pacifism, and hence they cannot be inter-changeably used.

Ethics and War

In ordinary circumstances, transgression of moral and humanitarian values that abrogate right to life is abhorred. Nonetheless, these sanctions are removed when the legitimacy for such violent behaviour comes from a *bona fide* political authority. However, when confronted with the question '*why should*', we enter the domain of philosophical justifications. The commonest and the most realistic way of justifying wars would be the 'consequential gain' it leads to. Consequentialism may not be a perfect ethical ideal, and the idea of 'greatest or greater good' though heuristic in nature, it is based on logic of the 'principle determining uncertain expectation'² This is a prudent way of calculating the preferred happiness/gain made in a war over the unhappiness it produces through destruction as a liability. A value relativist may argue that there is no fixed definition of determining these gains. The goal-post may shift prudentially when losses and gains are determined strategically.

De-Ontic Logic as Applied to War and Peace

The de-ontic thinkers offer *prima facie* argument that dislodges realism. In their moral reasoning, maintaining peace becomes the principal obligation of the political authority. At the same time, we cannot insist upon permanent pacifism very rigidly. Even Kant, who wrote a text on *Permanent Peace*, could not consistently uphold this view. In the *Doctrine of the Rights*, he upholds that the state is entitled to resort to violence when the first move is made from the opponent side.³

A new kind of logical situation arises from the dilemma that persists between the duty to remain a pacifist and the

obligation to engage in a war to resolve injustice or to fight in self-defence. We surmise that these two duties have a contrary relation with each other. Peace is otherwise preferred, but its inhibition may as a last resort result in a war. By this logic, wars born out of natural necessity and even as a utilitarian measure are not adequate benchmarks for *jus ad bellum* principle.

It is best then to take up cases of redemption or saving from a greater evil as a de-ontic justification for a war. Likewise, a fair degree of weightage can also be given to retributive form of justice. And yet not fully so, for very often the 'duty to' in these cases would be evaluated by *post ad bellum* principle too. Justifications of this sort has a limited use of de-ontic ideal as there is a tendency to introduce utilitarian motives through the back door.

War in Early India and its Ethical Evaluation

While theorizing on the ideas on war and peace as expounded in our ancient texts, it is possible to draw many parallels that match the general discussions mentioned above. We have realistic and pragmatic views on war as well as those that seek justification for the re-establishment of the status and glory of *dharma*. Buddhism is probably the only school of thought that overtly takes up the cause of peaceful co-existence and yet we see it as a failed opportunity for converting the same into a social theory.

Our recorded history begins with the early tribal formation in the Rgvedic period.⁴ From accounts of the Vedic texts, we discover innumerable accounts of intra-tribe warfare. Most of these were fought as part of natural necessity to generate surplus in the form of spoils of war. To satisfy the needs of these pastoral societies, women and cattle as wealth were looted from the enemy.⁵ At the same time historians have also discovered that the tribal heads in order to sustain the tribe, undertook some peacetime welfare measures as well, these included distribution and sometimes re-distribution of the spoils of war. The pragmatic device through which such concepts as *loptrā* (loot)⁶ operate bears some complexity of this nature. An even more complex idea which crops up in several passages of the Rig Veda is the epithet *Vrijanasya raja* attributed to the king⁷. The term has two parts *Vrijana*⁸ and *raja*⁹ connected by the genitive case ending. Its significance lies in describing the prudential role of the king. R.S. Sharma explains that the king here is described as "slayer of the enemies (*vrijana*) and the captor of their wealth (may also be signifying *vrijana*) and the distributor of the same among his people".¹⁰

It is difficult to judge whether the meaning *Vrijanansaya raja* directly expounds the idea of the king as the distributor of the booty captured through war. Nevertheless by

implication we trace from other subsequent relevant texts in the later Vedic period that kingship historically had been attributed with dual duties. In Kautilya's *Arthashastra* too we find that the king's duty includes *danda*¹¹ (controlling external enemy and errant subjects) and *niti*¹² (welfare measures as a peacetime activity). The king was expected to prudentially balance between duty to wage a war as a measure for gaining surplus (*alabdhalabha*) and well arranging the gained wealth (*labdhapalana*).¹³

Buddhist Virtue Ethics

The Age of the Buddha and the counter-emphasis on peace happened presumably some 300 years before *Arthashastra* was composed. Interestingly, Buddhism was in opposition to the Vedic idea of *vrijanasya raja*, a sophisticated version of which we can trace in *Arthashastra*. The Buddha's challenge was to conceive a *single duty* for those in command and that was to be charitable, moral and self-sacrificing¹⁴. This idea stands alternative to making a gain through war. Enmity, the Buddha thought, bred further enmity.¹⁵

The sermon that was called the *Turning of the Wheel of Law* formed the nucleus of the Buddha's teachings. It incorporated the idea of virtuous well-being through an ethically discerning path and yet surprisingly, we can trace no collective initiative of such an ethical formulation as applied to the society. The Buddha's primary objective was to create a cluster of monastics bound by virtuous ethics. The enterprise for this (*upaya*) was directly connected to monastic welfare. The significance of morality here was that as means it was more wholesome than making a eudemonic gain, and was geared to assist in attaining *nirvana*.

The Buddha viewed the *dukkhasamudaya* (a collection of irritants or avarices which are causes of suffering), as pathological conditions which could be treated through *dukkhanirodhgamini patipada*¹⁶ (measures for removing the *dukkhas*). It is through behavioural transformations that taints and avarices such as irritants, anger and selfishness could be restrained.¹⁷ In the *Dhammadayad Sutta*, the Buddha said that the evil that leads to these unwelcome behaviours were the result of greed and hate¹⁸. Nirvana could be attained only after the aberrations were removed.¹⁹ The beauty about this type of virtue ethics is that the knowledge is realized through sensitive practice, using karma as its pathway.²⁰

The spiritual orientation in Buddhism does not blend happily with the ethics agenda of virtuous well-being that it put forth as an alternative to Vedic ritualism. The Buddha himself was known to have remained silent on metaphysical issues and instead instructed his followers to abide in the norms of virtuosity, which happened to

be *dana punna* (could also be replaced by the term *panna*) and *shila*.²¹ Two questions are raised in this context. A combination of these three may suggest that the Buddha was treating ethics the utilitarian way. For, if *punna* is the end, then *dana* and *shila* becomes its instrument. There is, however, an explanation that *punna* does refer to conduct that is good and not an end that is trans-moral.²² The word *panna* (noetic pathway) is often also found in combination with the word *dana* and *shila*. Even so, the *telos* factor cannot be overlooked for ethics becomes the instrumental to knowledge (end).²³ Damien Keown is of the view that morality is a stepping stone when it is associated with *punna* that leads to nirvana. Alternatively, its linkage with *panna* makes it instrumental to knowledge²⁴

Keown further suggests three separate possibilities that emerge from the dichotomous relation between *panna* and *māgga*. One, ethics is extrinsic to *nibbāna*. Two, it is dispensable and subsidiary to *panna* and three, it is intrinsic to *nibbāna* and equal in value to *panna*.²⁵ We may say that in the first and the second case, ethics become the means and the gain is teleological. Nevertheless, it is impossible to calculate the eudemonic gain made by the Arhat in terms of quantum of *utils*. Whatever may be the *telos* factor engaged as goal of ethics, it is certainly not for any material gain but for gaining immeasurable happiness.

The best instance of Buddhist value of *ahimsa* applied in practice in the secular world can be traced from the policies of King Ashoka (268-232 BCE). Ashoka's discourse against war, as traced from his Rock Edicts is a respite from the ruthlessness displayed by his forefathers. He expatiated in his Rock Edicts the value of *ahimsa satya aparigraha*. Having committed a blood bath in the Kalinga war, he was repentant about it.²⁶ The 13th Rock Edict of Ashoka²⁷ is by far the most important document from our point of view. Here, Ashoka expressed a new idea of conquest by *dhamma* in lieu of subjugating the opponent through war and violence. By extending the message of *dhamma* beyond his territory, which included far away countries like Syria and Macedonia, he succeeded in creating new allies for himself.²⁸

A careful study of Ashoka's views reveals that his idea of *dana, punna and shila* was not above utilitarian concerns. His ethics was geared to transform attitudes relating to *dhamma* and *adhamma* to some pleasurable result in earthly life and in heaven. Ashoka seems to have subscribed to this view as he gained in years, for he writes in his 3rd Pillar Edict, "this is important for my happiness in this world; that on the other hand, for the next."²⁹ Alongside this motivated use of Buddhism, we come across some other criticisms that the early Buddhists were not consistent about pacifism. The Buddha had preached that "enmities are never ceased by enmity in this world,

only by non-enmity (*karuna*) did they cease. This is the ancient law."³⁰ However, some of his followers among the laity compromised with this ethical ideal.

The scholars often find it difficult to justify the war that king Pasenadi (brother of Bimbisara) of Kosala fought against his nephew Ajashattu, even after formally adopting to a Buddhist way of life. Pasenadi was first defeated and routed from his kingdom by Ajatashattu. In the second phase of this battle, Pasenadi defeated Ajatashattu. Buddha, regretting the consequence of the first phase of the battle, said, "victory breeds hatred; the defeated live in pain. Happily, the peaceful live on giving up victory and defeat."³¹ And yet, he defended Pasenadi's victory on grounds of defensive counter violence, which could be seen as a karmic result from aggression. Such responses occurred whether or not they were justified.³²

The early teachings of the Buddha, when collected as canon some five hundred years after his death,³³ contained certain ambiguities about their chronologies as well as certain 'more wordings' that got incorporated over the years. It was on grounds of 'more wordings' that scholastic views on Buddhism split into the Theravada and Mahayana thinkers. The role of ethics in Mahayana thinking is ambiguous. Taking advantage of the liberal outgrowth, Mahayana thinkers challenged the role of ethics in Theravada that decided *dāna punna* and *shila* for accruing personal merits alone in this world and thereafter. On the other hand, Mahayana view adjusted *dana* and *shila* within the gamut of *pannā*. Hence, there is an integral relation between ethics and the metaphysical end with a proviso that the relief from the state of *dukkha* is for mankind *en mass*.³⁴ It could be for this reason that Mahayana Buddhism laid more emphasis on *Maitri* and *Karuna* as the delivering agencies through which the quantum of *dukkha* in general is reduced. It is with an altruistic motive the Arhats try to spread the message of *maitri* and *karuna* and though it has a teleological end, yet these are not prudential measures.

War and Peace as an Exercise in Social Engineering

The recorded history that reveals the influence of Buddhist ethics sermonizing peace and its impact of *Arthashastra* seems rather unclear. Though some fledgling groups of Buddhist monks resided in the periphery of the Mauryan city, they could hardly deter the Mauryan kings for making gains through warfare.³⁵ Nevertheless, there is a casual mention in *Arthashastra* of *sadharanadharma* which includes *ahimsa* as a virtue.³⁶ This could be the outcome of Buddhist influence or it could be a case of shastric redaction incorporated into this text after *Manusmriti* and *Dharmashastra* were composed a few centuries later.³⁷ In this text, *Varnashrama vyavastha*³⁸ and *svadharmā*³⁹ are

more seriously mentioned and these even the king has no right to abrogate.

Arthashastra emphasized more on the engineering aspect of state craft which essentially related to the development of the technique for its efficient running.⁴⁰ This seems to be a common theme of many similar texts on statecraft written at different points of time. Kamandaki's *Nitisara*, written in the Gupta period, *Panchatantra* of Vishnugupta and Narayana's *Hitopodesha* have also reverted to the logistic issues of social engineering overriding the ethical concerns relating to the 'ultimate good of man'.⁴¹ In these texts, the king is a *vijigishu* (desirous to win a war), hence wars have a natural place among other kingly duties such as *danda* and *niti*.⁴² Kamandaki mentions these as *tantra* and *āvāpa*, which the king uses mainly for a selfish end.⁴³ Its scope is, thus, narrow for it takes up even acts of benevolence (*dharmasādhanam*)⁴⁴ for making the subjects subservient to his vanity and self-aggrandizement.⁴⁵

In *Arthashastra*, the king is synonymous with the state. *Prajanam sukhe sukhi*. He has been described in this passage as the *rajarsi* who promotes *yogakshema* of his subject.⁴⁶ This again is a peacetime activity of the king and forms part of his *svadharma*. The teleological clause in this *sutra* states '*svadharma sandaddhanahi pretya cheha cha nandati*' (by pursuing the *svadharma* alone the king after his death is glorified)⁴⁷ As an overlord, the king's *dharma* is to be just, impartial and lenient (*rakshana* and *palana*)⁴⁸ as well as a promulgator of criminal justice (*danda niti*)⁴⁹

The text has certain deeper complexities which form the larger context of its characteristic. The king's magnanimity is countered by his ruthlessness when it comes to applying the laws of retributive justice or while overpowering the external enemy. This dichotomous character reminds us of the Vedic description *vrijanasya raja* attributed to the king. The primary purpose of this shastra as Kautilya defines, relates to the notion of *vritti* (economic activity) such as production and trade.⁵⁰ These have to be nurtured for retaining the existing size of the cake. Nevertheless the economy through profit-making effort alone could increase in size (*rakshitatvovardhani*). A third alternative was to reduce the economic and political strength of the enemy.

Texts like *Panchatantra* and *Hitopodesh* are replete with stories of war and intrigue. These texts typically stand for relativism, pragmatism and utilitarianism. It is self-interest that overrides all other ethical consideration for making friendly treaties.⁵¹ A typical story where friends and foes are not pre-positioned appears in *Hitopadesha*. Here, an alliance between a crow and a deer can be seen to argue, thus, "No one is anybody's friend or foe; it is the *vyāvahāra* that makes friends and foes."⁵² The other possibility of war happening is through surreptitious deals. In "Loss of Friends" (*Panchatantra*), we find

diplomatic relations between two kings snapping and resulting in acrimony, whereby subordinates engineer moves, and the king helplessly plays into the hands of such machinations.⁵³

War in the Name of Establishing Dharma

The rules relating to *dharma*, or rightfully establishing the norms of conduct both in ordinary parlance and in kingly behaviour came to be recognized sometime during the post-Ashokan period. Was it a sharp contrast from the realistic and the pragmatic values perpetrated in the *Arthashastra* which highlighted the objective "*prithoya labhe palanecha*"?⁵⁴ The popular conception of the duty of the king in the Epic Age seems to give the impression that their *svadharma* was rather de-ontic as it was geared towards protecting those who were under their protection. Thus *yuddha* would often be seen as bringing the enemy to books and thereby restore the balance between *dharma* and *adharmā*. The enemy was identified as trouble-shooters for the king and for his subjects.

Two reasons are offered generally in favour of *dharmayuddha*, one because it is a war against evil and second as opposed to *kutayuddha* of the Asuras, the ethical justification comes from the fact that war is the last option chosen after all measures of peaceful negotiations come to an end.⁵⁵ Our epics are generally linked to a de-ontic idea called *dharmasādhanam*. It is the end as well as the means for waging a just war. Having said so, a careful analysis reveals certain anomalies. This happens to be so because there are no uniform guidelines for moral behaviour, hence rules for this noble cause are relativistic and quite culture specific.

One reason for this could be that *dharma*, when applied to *yuddha*, is linked to *kshatriya dharma* in a nuanced way. The latter differs primarily from the exegetic obligations undertaken by the *shrotriya brahmans*. Nor does it fit perfectly within the social ordering of *varnashramadharmā* which Manu describes as, *dharma rakshati rakshita*. The *dharma* of the king was though part of the *varnashramā* system, it had a distinct *svadharma* which was to establish the *rule of law* by force or stratagem. By shastric dictation, the king was a benevolent ruler who was also an exploiter. Manu describes the royal duty as *Vakavaccintayedarthan... vrikavaccavilumpeta* ⁵⁶. 'Rajdharmā Anusasanam' that forms a part of the Shantiparva of *Mahabharata*,⁵⁷ believed that kingship was a give and take relation between the ruler and his subject.⁵⁸ Hence, a limited measure of exploitation and extortion was permissible.⁵⁹

A further point about this *dharma* was that it did not behove a king to be *ahimsak*. In the *Mahabharata*, Kunti's (mother of the Pandavas) admonition to her pacifist son Yudhisthira, is very clear on this point. She conveys her

message through Krishna that *yajñadi* practices of the Brahmins are not to be counted as *kshatriya* duty rather war was his primary duty.⁶⁰ Manu had been cited as saying “*yuddha* is the *dharma* of the *kshatriya*, it alone takes them to heaven and spreads fame in society.”⁶¹ Thus, wars for survival or of self-interest and treaties for self-protection even though the alliance was unholy, may benefit the *dharma* of the king.

One last point in this context is that clash of *dharma* values or what may be termed as *dharmashankat* situations tended to undermine the universal character of *dharma*. In *Bhaktikavya* or *Ravanabadha*,⁶² *dharma* depended on *vritti* (culture characteristic) and likewise, it was not predefined. Rama’s encounter with Maricha was a debate about *vritti dharma*. Maricha says that the *dharma* of the *rakshas* was to slay the brahmins and oppose Vedic *dharma* which countered the *vritti* of Rama, which was to protect the former.⁶³ Mallinath, comments that Maricha’s definition of *dharma* means “*nija atmiyo nityayoh*” (culture specific *dharma*). To this Rama’s reply was “*vyatiste tu mamapi dharmah*” (my *dharma* is the reverse of this) He then elaborated that the *vrittivyapara* of *rajanya* was to slay those who were slayers of those who were on a spiritual path and sought protection from the king.⁶⁴

Similarly, the *yuddha* that occurred between Rama and Ravana in the *Ramayana* also has a conflicting *dharma* basis. Ravana, smitten by Sita’s beauty approached her in Asoka Vana, (her residence in confinement) by saying “*svadharmar rakshasam bhuru, sarvoarthaiba na sansayah/ gamanam va parastrinam haranam sampramathyaiba va.*”⁶⁵ Subsequently, Rama fights this war to win back his wife. The ethical value of this war is thus negligible, except that there is a clash of interest arising from differences of perspective. The real *dharmashankat* happens through Divine dictation. The gods have pre-declared Ravana to be the evil force and so remind the repentant Rama at the end of the war about his divine duty, “*vadartham ravanasya pravishito manushim tanum*”⁶⁶

The interesting point is that in both the epics *dharmashankat* situations are *ex post facto* decided. The reason for going to war differs from context to context and hence, the *dharma* norms governing their justification are neither *a priori* nor universal. In the Kurukshetra war for instance, *dharmashankat* arises from a controversial claim made to the throne of Hastinapur by two sets of cousins, the Kauravas and the Pandavas. The controversy is more legal than ethical. The legal problem arises because Yudhishthira who is the first-born of king Pandu, by primogeniture law should be the heir apparent. However, Pandu abdicated his throne and soon died. Yudhishthira was then a minor and so, Dhritarashtra ruled as regent. Dhritarashtra’s eldest son, Duryodhana also laid a legal claim to the throne. Negotiations failed and as

a last choice, a war ensued. This decision, being a much deliberated choice, appears to satisfy the principle of *jus ad bellum*. And yet, some questions remain. For instance, to what extent is war of mammoth proportion justified to settle a family dispute? Besides, the battle involved several kings who were not directly a gainer and yet their losses outweighed their gains. Third, a reality check reveals that loss of life and property estimated at the end of the war was disproportionately high making even the victorious Pandavas remorseful. Unfortunately, these are not listed as *dharmashankat* situations, though such collateral damages would not pass the acid test of *jus post bellum* principle.

Last but not the least, if we make an assessment of the intentions behind this war, the ‘ought’ question appears to be fraught in controversy. Duryodhana’s motive for going to war was selfish and born out of a sense of jealousy and it deserved no moral approbation. For the Pandavas, retribution was the motive for waging a war, mainly as an avenging tactics was witnessed from the discussion in Vanaparva.⁶⁷ Yudhishthira had wagered and lost his kingdom and glory in a treacherous game of dice organized by Duryodhana. The family had to retreat to the forest and face humiliation. Gambling (*kitava*) is generally condemned in the Rig Veda⁶⁸ and Yudhishthira’s weakness for this game is surely blameworthy. And yet, his resolve to wage the war came only after his cousin refused to part with even a pin prick of land without a fight.

Notwithstanding this restraint, Pandava motives were not de-ontic nor did they declare the war to be a *dharmayuddha*. In fact, this term does not appear in the *Mahabharata*. Rather, the clarion call *dharmartha yuddhasva* was given by Krishna in *Shrimadbhagavatgita*. As a mentor of reluctant Arjuna, Krishna advises the former to wage this war to re-establish the *dharma* ideal.⁶⁹ Gita’s *dharmayuddha* concept raises two sets of *dharmashankats*, one relates to *sadharanadharmar* of *lokasangraha*. This discerning judgment is an attempt to establish peace and harmony through temperate behaviour.⁷⁰ This comes closest to the norms set by the Buddha. In contrast, there is the *svadharmar* paradigm by which Arjuna is asked to fight (*yuddhaya yujyasva*)⁷¹. The second *dharmashankat* situation is born out of the despondency of Arjuna that he was about to violate the *kuladharmar*⁷² and its consequences would be grievous. Krishna, on the other hand, reminds Arjuna that destroying one’s enemy who are *atatayis* (law-breakers) was his *svadharmar*⁷³ or *kshatriya* caste duty.

These two *dharmashankats* are unique because they are not cases where the stake holders with conflicting interests are fighting, rather the impasse is created because of conflicting duties, one general and the other specific. The second problem arises from Arjuna’s inability to judge. Is

it a spiritual lacuna or is it giving into an ethical dilemma? Krishna believes it to be the former and instructs him accordingly, that the soul is invincible *nainam chhindanti shastrani*⁷⁴ etc. Besides, the Lord as destiny personified (*kaalo'hm*) has already destroyed the enemy, *mayai vaite nihatah purvameva/nimittamatrambhavaSabyasachi*.⁷⁵

The mysteries of these metaphysical truths are infinitely deeper than mundane concerns that we have about right and wrong. Ethical views, however profound, do become problematic here because they are a 'free-rider' on the spiritual view. Free-ridership in ethics is generally discouraged because it diffuses the responsibility of the crime. Krishna's metaphysical pronouncement virtually gives license to kill with impunity.

The second problem in this context relates to the structural compulsions of *svadharma* (the caste duty) and behavioural compulsions of morality with which this war is fought. A Kshatriya's *dharma* to fight is an imperative and yet, it is a social or a religious duty and not an ethical preoccupation. On the other hand, moral sense directs us towards the intent of the action. The inter-meshing of these two creates certain analytic difficulties such as we find in Krishna's argument, "*athachet tvamimam dharmyam sangramam nakarishyasi/tatah svadharmam kirtinche hitoa papamavapsyasi*"⁷⁶ It is not clear whether *paap* resulting from *akirti* is to be censored because there has been a dereliction of caste duty or because Arjuna has failed to cash in on an inevitable opportunity of acquiring every means of attaining mortal and heavenly happiness⁷⁷

Another vital question relates to the much advertised passage on *nishkamakarma* and its de-ontic value⁷⁸. This passage immediately follows the utilitarian motive to fight this war. It is only a reminder that pursuing a war of this stature *jaya* and *ajaya* as consequences should not be dwelt upon, rather the inclination to fight alone will reduce the *paap*. We now learn to separate action from its consequences. This sets the tune for the ensuing dispassionate action theory that forms the *summum bonum* of the *Gita's* ethical view. It is in this context that Krishna advises Arjuna not to be tempted by the result of the action.

Conclusion

The discovery of this de-ontic ideal to wage a justified war had inspired some colonial thinkers to wage a *dharmayuddha* against the British colonial rulers. However, this ideal of *nishkama* way of waging a war may still fall short of pacifism advocated by the Buddhists. Khantipalo, a Mahayana commentator, argues that the uselessness of war as a way of solving conflict has been summed by the Buddha when he says "thus by way of *karma*, he who plunders is plundered."⁷⁹ Generally

speaking, Buddhism as a philosophy has displayed the efficacy to be resolute in pursuit of non-violence and non-anger even towards one's enemies. The most significant point about the fundamental humanistic ideas like *maitri* and *karuna* is that it can be universalized. Unfortunately, the caste boundaries of *dharmayuddha* dictations fail to achieve this goal.

Notes

1. Helen Frowe, *Ethics of War and Peace*. Routledge, 2015. p. 1
2. Stevan P. Lee *Ethics and War: An Introduction*. CUP, 2012. p. 26
3. Brian Orend, "Kant's ethics of war and peace", *Journal of Military Ethics*, London: Routledge, July 2009. p.162-163.
4. Ram Saran Sharma, *Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India*. Macmillan India. 2007 (2nd ed) p. 45.
5. Sharma p. 46
6. *Rig Veda*. V. 61.5
7. *Rig Veda*. I.73.5; VI.60.13; IX.61.11
8. M.R. Kale, *Higher Sanskrit Grammar* Motilal Banarsidas. 1995. Appendix II. p. 126. Kale refers to the root verb *vrij* which means to shun, to abandon, to exclude. The word *vrijana* is the noun form derived from *vrij*. The formation thus is *Vrij + anat* (of which *t* is elided), meaning sin, or a person with villainous disposition. Monier Williams explains *vrijana* in the sense of exclusion. Thus seen in the context of possession, *vrijana* would signify unenclosed land/wealth or in exclusion of what the tribe possesses. It can also refer to the people who are outside the perview of law.
9. By applying the genitive case to *vrijana*, the meaning would be that the king is the controller or perhaps the owner of the *vrijana*. This may refer to the power attributed to the king to apply force on detractors or acquire by force other's wealth.
10. R.S. Sharma p. 50; also *Rig Veda* IX.97.10
11. R.P. Kangle *The Kautilya Arthashastra*, vol. I. University of Bombay. 1960. Book I.4.3 "*Anvikshiktrayivartanam yogakshemosadhano dandah*"
12. R.P. Kangle. *The Kautilya Arthashastra*, vol. I. I.4.3
13. *The Kautilya Arthashastra* vol I I.4.4 "*alabdhalabhartha labdha parirakshani rakshitavivardhanai bridhasya tirthe pratitapadani cha*"
14. Damien Keown, *Nature of Buddhist Ethics*. Macmillan Press Ltd. London, 1992. p. 4
15. Edward Conze, et al (eds and trs) *Buddhist Texts Through the Ages*. Oxford (1964)"Vinaya Pitaka" 1.349
16. Bodhi Bhikkhu Gotama, et al (eds & trs) *The Middle Length of the Discourse of the Buddha. A Translation of Majjhima Nikaya* Simon & Schuster. 1995. 4.31
17. Bodhi Bhikkhu Gotama, et al (eds & trs) *Majjhima Nikaya Part One Mulapannasapala "Sabbasava Sutta" II.1-22,*
18. *Majjhima Nikaya Part One "Dhammadayadsutta III. 8-16, p. 100*
19. *Majjhima Nikaya Part One Mulapannasapala I.27, p. 87*

20. *Majjhima Nikaya* Part One "Dhammadayadsutta III.8, p. 100
21. C A F Rhys Davis (tr.) *The Dialogues of Buddha* (3 Vols.) London PTS 1921 Vol I "The Dighanikaya " i. 187
22. Keown, *Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, p 4
23. Keown, *Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, p. 7-8
24. Keown, *Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, pp 8-12; also David J. Kalupahana *Ethics in Early Buddhism* Motilal Banarasidass 2008, pp 10-29;
25. Keown, *Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, pp 88-89
26. Romila Thapar, *History of India* Vol. 1. Penguin. Hammonds worth. England. 1966. p 168
27. Romila Thapar, *Ashoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*. p. 146
28. Thapar p. 167
29. Thapar p. 175
30. John Murray (tr.) *Dhammapada*, London: Wisdom Publications, 1954. p. 3-6
31. Murray tr. *Dhammapada*. p.201
32. Bhikkhu Sujato (?) (tr.) *The Connected Discourse of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Samyuktha Nikaya* Vol I, London: Wisdom Publishers, 2000. p. 185
33. Thapar, *History of India* Vol. 1 Penguin Hammonds worth, 1966. p. 67
34. Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, 2000 p. 40-46
35. Thapar, *Ashoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*. pp. 136-138
36. Kangle, *The Kautilya Arthashastra* Vol. I. University of Bombay. 1960. I.3.13 P 22 "sarveshamahimsa satyam sauchyamanusuyamanrishansasyam ksham cha"
37. Patrick Olivelle (annotated and tr), *Kautilya's Arthashastra: The King, Governanance and Law in Ancient India*, p. 18
38. *The Kautilya Arthashastra* I.3.4-11. pp 21-22
39. *The Kautilya Arthashastra* I.3. 14-17. p. 22
40. Amartya Sen, *Ethics and Economics*, OUP, 1999. P. 5
41. Amartya Sen, p. 4
42. Kangle, *The Kautilya Arthashastra* Vol I I.4.3; also I.6. 1-2
43. Raja Rajendralal Mitra (ed.) *The Nitisara of Kamandaki*. The Asiatic Society, Calcutta. 1861. Sarga VII. p.134-150
44. *The Nitisara of Kamandaki*, Sarga VI p. 128
45. *The Nitisara of Kamandaki*, Sarga VIII p. 151
46. Kangle, *The Kautilya Arthashastra* Vol. I 8.2.12
47. Kangle, *The Kautilya Arthashastra* Vol. II 7.1
48. Kangle, *The Kautilya Arthashastra* Vol. I 8.2.12; 3.10.46; 1.19.33; 3.1.41; 3.2.24
49. Kangle, *The Kautilya Arthashastra* Vol. I 8.2.12
50. Kangle, *The Kautilya Arthashastra* Vol. II 4.1
51. Arthur W. Ryder, tr *Panchatantra*. Delhi: Jaico Publishing House, 1981. p. 25.
52. R. Kale (ed. & tr.) *The Hitopadesh of Narayana*, Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas, 1989. p. 17; In the same text we find that wars are fought for pragmatic reasons of acquiring land alliance and gold, p 85; In *Mahabharata* too we find references are made to pragmatic alliance. The story of the rat making friendship with the cat is oft quoted; Ram Narayan Dutta Shastri (ed. & tr.) *The Mahabharata* (Vol V.), Gorakhpur: Gitapress, Shantiparva, CXXXVIII. .
53. Ryder Tr. *Panchatantra* p 64. The passage describes six expedients which includes war and peace. When a mistaken policy governs them, then the subordinates can take advantage of this situation
54. Kangle, *The Kautilya Arthashastra* Vol. I 15.1.1-2
55. Kaushik Roy, *Hinduism and the Ethics of Warfare in South Asia from Antiquity to the Present*. CUP. 2012. p. 26; also Richard Sorabji and David Rodin (eds) *The Ethics of War*, OUP, 2006, p. 140
56. S.N. Sharma (ed. & tr.) *Manusmriti*, Delhi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, 1998 ch. 7.106
57. *Ramnarayan Shastri* (ed and tr) *The Mahabharat* (Vol V), Gorakhpur: Geeta Press, Eighth Reprint Shantiparva, ch 67.20.8
58. *The Mahabharata.*, Vol. V. Shantiparva, ch 67 23-24
59. *The Mahabharata.*, Vol. V. Shantiparva, Ch 56; ch. 87&88.1; also ch. 88.5
60. Vol III Bhagavadyanasandhi Parvodyaya Ch. 133. Vidura Upakhyana
61. *Manusmriti* Ch. 55 4559 and also Ch 20
62. Shri Bhatti *The Bhattikavya or Ravanabadha, with Commentary by Mallinath* Vol I Cantoes I-IX Govt Central Book Depot " Admo Dvijam devayajinnihanmah/ kurmah puram pretanaradhivasam/dharma hiyam Dasharathe nijo no/ naivadyakarishmahi vedavritte" II.34
63. Bhattikavya II.35 " Dharmo'sti satyam tava rakshasayamanyo vyatiste tu mamapi dharmah/ brahmadrshasteyenal rajanyavrittidhrita kar mukakeshu"
64. Bhattikavya II.35 "rajne'apatye jatigraham"
65. Valmiki *Ramayana* Vol. V. Sundarkanda V.20.5. Ravana states that stealing wives of other men is indeed the svadharma of the rakshasas
66. Valmiki *Ramayana* Vol. VI. Yuddhakanda VI.117.28 " to destroy Ravana you have entered this human form"
67. *Mahabharata* Ch III.7-8 *Vanaparava Arjuno'bhigamanaparvodyaya*.
68. Rig Veda X.34
69. Swami Nikhilananda (tr & commentator), *The Bhagavadgita*, Ramakrishna Vivekananda, NY. 2004 (8th ed) Ch 4.7
70. *The Bhagavadgita* Ch. 2.55.64; also Ch 12.13-20
71. *The Bhagavadgita* Ch.2.38
72. *The Bhagavadgita* Ch1 30-34 Arjuna argues why kula should not be destroyed. In *Mahabharata* Ch V Udyogparva Yanasandhiparvodyaya it has been said 'Tyajet kularthe purusham' (the individual ought to be sacrificed for the sake of the family [like Krishna did when he killed Kamsa]) But the reverse is not permissible.
73. *The Bhagavadgita* Ch.2.31 &3.35
74. *The Bhagavadgita* Ch. 2 23 "the weapons cannot destroy the soul"
75. *The Bhagavadgita* Ch. 11.33 "I have previously already destroyed them, you just be the instrument of killing"
76. *The Bhagavadgita* Ch. 2.33 "It is being stated that if you do not perform dharmayuddha, you will receive an inglorious fate after death"
77. *The Bhagavadgita* Ch. 2.32-37
78. *The Bhagavadgita* Ch. 2. 38
79. Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics*. CUP. 2000. p. 251

Nature in Transition: Transformations in Nature Use, Beliefs and Control in Khasi Hills in Pre-Colonial and Colonial Eras

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Introduction

In recent years, traditional forest management practices have acquired importance and consequently received academic attention as a counter move to uncontrolled depletion of forest cover taking place around the world. The degradation of natural resources has been the outcome of rapid and large scale modernization, industrialization and commercialization boosted by concepts like Scientific Forestry. The latter is an eighteenth century German notion that emphasized utilization and manipulation of forests and its associated resources to meet human benefits and produce sustained economic yield from forests through scientific applications. The British colonial state in India found this to its advantage and used it to expand control over natural resources in various parts of the country. Thus, there emerged a system of colonial forest administration in India that emphasized on economic returns from forests through application of practices like fire protection, creation of plantations and demarcation of forest reserves, etc. The implementation of the new administrative structure over natural resources fundamentally altered indigenous forest use and management systems by restricting local access to forests. Such exercises continued over a prolonged period and directed towards commercial profits contributed to deforestation, destruction of biodiversity, death of aquatic species, shattering of habitats and the eco system in general. The rise in population proved to be an accompanying factor that hastened this process.

The increasing natural hazards that have come up due to large-scale exploitation of nature have raised issues like judicious use of nature, balance between development and nature preservation and sustainable use of nature, etc. The growing consciousness on the aspect has probed

social scientists in India along with environmentalists and others to ponder over traditional methods of forest management and preservation among the indigenous tribal communities with emphasis on the north eastern part of the country. North East India houses numerous tribal groups whereby the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland have predominantly 90 per cent of tribal population. In the remaining north eastern states of Assam, Manipur, Sikkim and Tripura, tribal communities range from 20 per cent to 30 per cent of the population.¹ The region is also rich in forests and biodiversity resources and is the meeting ground of temperate East Himalayan flora, palaeo-arctic flora of Tibetan highland, wet evergreen flora of South East Asia and Yunnan forming a bowl of biodiversity.² The tribes indigenous to the territory have had traditions of forest management and conservation mechanisms associated with their social, cultural, religious or economic life. For instance, traditionally, the Mizo community of Mizoram never killed Indian hornbills, tigers and pythons as they believed in taboos connected with them³. They also reserved certain parts within forests as homes for supernatural beings⁴. Similarly the *Adi* tribes of Arunachal Pradesh had religious beliefs associated with natural elements. The *Hollock* (*Terminalia myriocarpia*) tree is considered as the abode of natural spirits and its felling was considered immoral⁵.

Objectives and Methodology

This paper attempts to historically trace forest use, nature-based beliefs and conservation practices among the Khasi community of *Meghalaya* prior to the arrival of the British in the region. It also attempts to understand the role played by the natural environment behind colonial access in the area previously known as Khasi Hills. The paper endeavours to comprehend the impact and changes brought about by colonial intervention on Khasi indigenous nature utilisation, management and faiths.

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The study is based on government reports, primary and secondary literature, journal and newspaper reviews.

Traditional Nature Based Knowledge among the Khasis of Meghalaya

The Khasi tribe constitutes the largest tribal community of *Meghalaya*, one of the eight states of North East India. The origin of the community can be traced from the Mongolian overflow to India that include subgroups like the *Pnars* or *Syntengs*, the *Bhois*, the *Wars*, the *Khynriams*, and the *Lyngams*. According to P.R.T Gurdon, the *Khasis* descended from the *Mon-Khmer* race who originated somewhere in *Cambodia*⁶. Joseph Delton Hooker also suggested that the language of the *Khasis* is similar to Indo-Chinese especially the *Mon Khmer*⁷. The community follow a matrilineal structure where the clan is traced through the mother. The youngest daughter (*Ka Khadduh*) performs the religious rites and is the guardian of the ancestral property⁸. In the pre-British era, the *Khasi* inhabited area was a collection of small states locally known as *Hima* ruled by *Syiem*, the Khasi elected chief who was nominated by an electoral body that consisted of *Lyngdohs* (officials having secular and religious powers), *Myntris* (advisors to the Khasi chief at the state level), *Basans* and *Sirdars* (elected headmen of villages) and the headmen of the leading clans (*Kur*) based on matrilineal line. The *Syiem* supervised the overall administration of his state and was considered as the authority of moral law. He was assisted in his duties by the *Durbar* (the Khasi Assembly) consisting of officials and advisors to the *Khasi* chief⁹. The *Khasi Durbar* exercised supreme authority at the state level and dealt with issues like theft, adultery, damage to property, trespass, etc.¹⁰

Natural elements were associated with every aspect of Khasi livelihood and ceremonies. Bamboo splinters, leaves, gourd cells, betel nuts and leaves were essential for Khasi marriages and death ceremonies.¹¹ Shifting cultivation indigenously known as '*Thang Shyrti*' was the common form of farming practiced by the people in forests.¹² Hunting was another occupation of the people that was associated with forests. Ceremonies connected with hunting formed an important part of the Khasi social framework. For instance, before proceeding for a hunting competition, the hunter broke eggs in order to ascertain if he would be successful or not and to which jungle he should proceed. An auspicious day was selected for the purpose and after the propitiation of forest deities, the hunters started with a number of dogs trained for the purpose. When the dogs picked up the smell, the hunters began the chase with loud shouts which ended after the animal was caught. Fishing was also a favourite pursuit of the people. An extract prepared from bark of a tree

named *ka mynta* and a creeper known as *U khariew* was mixed with water which helped in catching fishes.¹³ The people had knowledge about the different components of nature. They were familiar with 113 different varieties of edible plants found in forests.¹⁴ In this context Gurdon observed:

A Khasi loves a day out in the woods, where he thoroughly enjoys himself. If he does not go out shooting or fishing, he is content to sit still and contemplate nature. He has a name for each of the common birds and flowers. He also has names for many butterflies and moths. These are traits not usually found in India.¹⁵

The social and political organization of the Khasi society was deep associated with nature and its components. Traditionally forests and lands belonged to the people where the *Syiem* or the *Khasi* chief could act only as the guardian or custodian. The soil was considered as the mother of the community over which every child had cultivating rights.¹⁶ In the pre-British era, regular land tax was unknown to the people. The *Syiem* had no right to impose taxes on the original settlers of a land. Long-standing occupation of land was one of the criteria for conferring citizenship in pre colonial Khasi state.¹⁷ Thus, the people were not only attached to their lands for sustenance, it formed an essential condition for their social, political and economic existence. The people reserved patches of forests within villages for personal use where felling of trees for commercial and residential purpose was prohibited. Such forest reserves were also maintained to meet exigencies like famines and other natural calamities.¹⁸ The Khasi and the Jaintia tribe preserved giant monoliths in memory of their ancestors as symbol of reverence and respect. H.H. Godwin Austin, while observing such structures at the village Nougshai near Shillong, observed: 'They stand on the open spur just above the village and have been worked out the beds of the Shillong sandstone series, and some of the smaller blocks have been taken from the conglomerate beds.....'.¹⁹

Animism was vital to Khasi religious beliefs. Mother earth, water, moon and solar energy, the necessary requisites for human existence were worshipped. Some rivers and mountain peaks were considered auspicious. The river *Kenchiang* (known as *Jadukata* and *Punatit* in Sylhet presently in Bangladesh) was worshipped in Khasi Hills through an annual sacrifice of goats. The river *Kopili* was revered with annual sacrifice of human beings in Jaintia hills located in eastern part of Meghalaya.²⁰ Pigs and dogs were also sacrificed to goddess *Kopili*. Another water goddess named *Lenju* was also propitiated with similar offerings.²¹ The Khasi people believed in *Thlen* or a serpent spirit who attacked and swallowed passers-by on market days and therefore had to be appeased

with human blood. Such beliefs suggest the existence of human sacrifice in pre-colonial Khasi society. Mountain peaks such as the *Shillong* peak was revered as the abode of *U Shillong*, the God of Shillong. The Shillong deity regarded as the highest in *Khasi* religious pantheon was revered and offered sacrifices by the members of ruling families. Mountains considered as natural barriers were worshipped as saviour from external attacks and hence mountain deities were revered.²² The people believed in the existence of spirits in mountains, water, forests and rivers also.

Forests were sacred entities for the Khasi people. Certain portions of forests were kept out of human interference and preserved on religious grounds. The people believed that the guardian spirit *U Ryngekew* and *U Basa*, responsible for human well-being, resided in these forests and hence felling of trees or hunting of animals were prohibited there. Such forests were sacred groves locally known as *Lawkyntang*. As per Khasi religious faith, sacred groves were categorized into three types. The first type was known as the *Law Lyngdoh* under the administration of *Lyndoh*, the indigenous religious head. The second category was *Law Niam* where traditional religion was followed and the third category consisted of forests under the supervision of the village headman. It was believed that peace and tranquillity in villages depended on the appeasement of forest spirits. The village headman and the priest performed rituals and sacrifices in these forests to appease the guardian deities for the protection of the villages and the communities. Such forests preserved on religious grounds also contained timbers and natural products of considerable importance. W.W. Hunter observed that the sacred groves of Khasi Hills contained important tree types like oaks, chestnuts, *Magnolia Schima*, *Cinnamum*, *Prunus*, *Engelhardtia*, timber species like *Sal* (*Shorea robusta*) and rubber tree (*Ficus Elastica*).²³

Natural elements were indispensable in economic transactions. The people traded in natural products like *lac*, honey, *paan* or betel leaves, turmeric and nuts, etc. within the region and with the adjoining Indian state of Bengal. Indigenous honey from Khasi Hills enjoyed a great reputation and was traded even up to Calcutta.²⁴ *Lac* was also traded in Jaintia Hills and in the Khyrim territory that fetched enormous profits to Khasi traders. Trade was mostly through barter where the tribes in exchange of forest and mineral products procured regular requisites from cultivators and traders either from other hill states or from the plains. However, by the twentieth century, middle men appeared in the existing *lac* business who consumed profits. The Marwari merchants from the plains attended the markets frequented by the Khasis to purchase *lac* and exported them to Calcutta.²⁵ Natural

elements were essential source of Khasi folk medicine used for curing ailments like sprains, fractures, burns and dental problems. The people had wide knowledge about variety of medicinal plants and animal products available in the region. In a recent study conducted by the North Eastern Hill University Shillong, the total volume of medicinal plants and their products consumed per year is around 80 to 120 tonnes that involved a sum of Rs 2.5 crores per annum within the three districts of Khasi and Jaintia Hills.²⁶

Khasi folklore and legends revolved around natural structures like hills, rocks, caves, flora and fauna. The elements of nature are described in the legends as mother and son, husband and wife, or friend and foe, according to their natural characteristics to teach moral and spiritual lessons. They also contribute in an important way to Khasi rhetoric and idiomatic expressions. For example, a person with good reputation and respect is often compared to a flower called '*tiew pathai khubor*' which spreads a good fragrance around it. A boy who grows very fast and tall is compared to a tender bamboo plant. The 12 months of year in Khasi calendar are named according to their natural changes varying from season to season.²⁷ The justifications behind natural phenomenon like creation of earth, occurrence of eclipses and earthquakes etc, characteristics and colours of animals are described in Khasi folklore.²⁸

The Establishment of Colonial Administration: Impact and Role of the Natural Environment

The initial interaction between the Khasis and the British took place around 1765 when the English East India Company established control over Sylhet in East Bengal under the provisions of the *Diwani* of Bengal. The Khasis had trade relations with Sylhet plains that brought them into contact with the British. The Khasi region shared boundaries with Mymensingh and Sylhet in East Bengal on its southern sides. Some Khasi *Himas* also controlled *lands* in the Sylhet region of neighbouring East Bengal.²⁹ By 1824 the imminent Burmese threat at the frontier made the British realise the strategic importance of Khasi hills which according to them had to be incorporated within British Indian Empire to protect the *Sylhet* plains from possible Burmese incursions. The British suggested for the establishment of postal service between Sylhet plains and Khasi Hills and hence with this purpose David Scott, the Agent to the Governor General for the North Eastern Frontier of Bengal (1802-1832), proposed the construction of a road between *Pandua* in the foothills of Surma valley via the *Khyrim* territory to Assam.³⁰ The construction of the road established regular contacts between the British

and the Khasis in the subsequent years. The colonial access in the Khasi region was followed by treaties and agreements between the British government and the Khasi chiefs that culminated in the incorporation of Khasi and *Jaintia* states within British administrative ambit. This not only led to political subjugation of the region under the British but also resulted in colonial subordination of Khasi traditional institutions. The Khasi states were accorded semi independent status to the Khasi chiefs as mere feudatories or vassals under the British administration. The importance of Khasi *Durbar* was considerably reduced.³¹ The region because of its fertile soil, geography, rich natural and mineral resources and salubrious climate soon acquired the appreciation of the British. On 20 March 1874, Shillong located in Khasi Hills was declared as the capital of the Chief Commissioner's Province of *Assam*.³²

Climatic conditions did play a significant role in assigning political importance to Shillong by the British. In 1831, Cherrapunji that was previously known as *Sohra* was made the political headquarters of colonial administration in Khasi Hills. Initially the British authorities held perceptibly high opinion about the climate of Cherrapunji which they compared with other hill stations like Darjeeling and Mussoorie. The place was considered to be free from jungles and consequently from diseases like malaria, the disease which the British likened to associate with *Assam* forests.³³ Moreover the coal deposits available in the area could keep the British officials warmer during rains.³⁴ But soon the incessant rains and consistent mist that the place regularly experienced made British reconsider their decision about continuing with the area as the seat of administration in the region. David Scott expressed his unhappiness over the climatic conditions of Cherrapunji.³⁵ The journal *Science* in 1903 described it as the place having heaviest annual precipitation with 457.80 inches of annual rainfall in 1900.³⁶ In 1864, the headquarters was shifted to Shillong and the district of Khasi-Jaintia Hills was carved out. The region was placed under a Deputy Commissioner assigned with political authorities. In 1874, when *Assam* was made the Chief Commissioner's province, Shillong was made the headquarters of the entire territory.³⁷ The region soon developed as a favourite haven for the British which they fondly referred as *Shillong* plateau. It could secure the admiration of the British due to its geographical, topographical and climatic resemblances with Europe. The natural features of the region appeared so akin to Europe that the British equated it with 'European Scotland'. In this context C.B. Clarke observed:

In this marvellous plateau the subalpine and sub tropical forms overlap; at the very foot of the elegant palms may be gathered

the identical stag's horn mosses, which, in Britain is found only in mountain. On a fir tree much resembling a scrappy Scotch fir is seen growing the *Vanda Coercula*, the king of epiphytic orchids; a gnarled oak will carry a gigantic tropical laine....³⁸

By the 1800s, Christian missionaries arrived in Khasi Hills. David Scott with the assistance of Serampore Baptist Mission established a school at Singamari in 1831. He was convinced that Christianity would find an easy access in the region as the inhabitants did not believe in organized religions like Hinduism and Islam.³⁹ The Welsh Calvinistic missionaries established schools at Jaintia Hills and in the Khasi region in 1852. The missionaries propagated the message of Christianity among the indigenous people through the use of roman scripts.⁴⁰ There was spread of English education that drew the people towards Western culture and thoughts. Such initiatives on the part of the colonial government brought changes in Khasi nature based beliefs.⁴¹ This aspect was perceived as one of the factors behind the *Jaintia* rebellion of 1860. Jaintia hills that was located on the strategic position between Assam and Sylhet plains was the first to be brought under colonial administration in 1835. The annexation was apparently made as a punishment to the Jaintia king Rajendra Singh who was alleged to have barbarously sacrificed three British officers at the shrine of Goddess Kali. On this plea, the plains portion of the *Jaintia* kingdom was annexed by the British. The hilly part of the kingdom was surrendered by the king himself. The annexation was followed by imposition of house tax and income tax by the British government on the Jaintia people that enraged the inhabitants against the colonial administration that culminated into anti-British rising known as the *Jaintia* rebellion.⁴² Apart from the causes mentioned, the killing of a monkey in a sacred forest by a Christian converted *Daroga* named *Solomon Dehling* was also held as one of the factor that provided boost to the *Jaintia* rebellion.⁴³ The impact of Christianity over indigenous nature associated beliefs was more pronounced after Indian Independence. Alison Ormsby who has conducted a survey on this aspect at the *Mawphlang* sacred grove in East Khasi hills district of Meghalaya observed that rituals associated with reverence to nature and forest spirits in sacred forests have considerably lowered down. Faith on the forest deity '*Labasa*' in *Mawphlang* sacred forest has also significantly reduced. Converts to Christianity are found to fell trees for economic profits rejecting the reverence and beliefs associated with forest spirits and deities. Instances of sacred forests being sold in auctions are also found in some areas.⁴⁴

In order to strengthen colonial grasp over the region, the British government concluded agreements with Khasi chiefs on aspects related to defence, road connection

and construction of sanatoria, etc. though establishing imperial control over Khasi lands, forests, lime and coal reserves was also certain coveted agenda aimed to be materialized through the agreements.⁴⁵ The provisions of the treaties were framed in a fashion that made them appear advantageous to both the Khasi chiefs and the British.⁴⁶ For instance, the agreements between the British Political Agent and the Khasi chief Raja Shoova Singh of Cherrapunji on the use and excavation of coal mines in the region in early nineteenth century contained provisions that gave the government supreme authority over the coal mines under the chief with rights over coal excavation while the responsibility of revenue collection was handled by the Khasi chief himself. The agreement apparently permitted the people to excavate coal and cut stones without restrictions.⁴⁷ Such clauses made the Khasi chiefs believe that the colonial government considered their interests along with its own. David R Syiemlieh observed that the *Khasi Syiems* perhaps could not comprehend the implications of the treaties.⁴⁸ However such agreements between the chiefs and the British government injured the sentiments of the Khasi subjects who expressed resentment against the chiefs for entering into agreements with the British ignoring their emotions.⁴⁹ Inner Line Regulation of 1873 that was implemented to segregate the hills and plains of *Assam* on political grounds was not implemented in *Khasi Hills* considering its political importance. The availability of natural and mineral resources in the region, perhaps, proscribed the British from undertaking policies that would minimise its access over natural and mineral deposits found in the territory. The intensions of the colonial government however, were understood by some Khasi chiefs who protested against British intrusion over the Khasi areas. Way back in 1829-30 U Tirot Singh the Khasi Syiem of Nongkhlaw Hima revolted against British intrusion in the Khasi territory.⁵⁰ The revolt was suppressed by the colonial authorities who brought other *Khasi Himas* like *Mawmluh*, *Mawsmmai* and *Sohbar* under their control and appointed local headmen to administer the areas as representatives of the imperial government. Colonial usurpation of these regions enabled the British to establish control over the limestone deposits found in the areas which the government utilised for its profits.⁵¹ The internal administration of usurped regions was left under the control of the appointed Khasi chiefs who functioned on behalf of the colonial government.

The district of Khasi-Jaintia Hills created by the British for administrative convenience did not include all the *Khasi Himas*. It incorporated 31 *Khasi Himas* over which they exercised direct political control. The district comprised of entire Jaintia region, Shillong plateau and its adjoining catchment areas.⁵² The district, thus, created

apart from its Europe like geographical terrain, tree types and rich natural resources also attracted the British with its fertile soil that grew European crops like cabbage, cauliflower, radish and potato, etc. in plenty when introduced by the British in the region. Potato cultivation that was started in the area under the initiatives of David Scott soon became the largest exported product from the area to the adjoining territories of *Bengal* and *Assam*. It became the economic specialization of the Khasis who financially profited by trading the product with the neighbouring plains.⁵³ However, a large scale cultivation of potato soon resulted in extensive deforestation in Shillong plateau that became more pronounced after Indian independence.⁵⁴ Another natural component that attracted colonial attention was the *Khasi* pine trees (*Pinus Kesia*) that was indigenous to the region. The cones of the tree reminded the British of *Pinus insignis* found in England.⁵⁵ Hence with the installation of Shillong as the head quarter of Assam, the tree was planted as a green belt around the newly formed seat of administration.⁵⁶ Thus, *Pinus Kesia* exemplify the colonial epoch in the region.

Initiation of British administration over Khasi-Jaintia Hills was followed by application of colonial forest management over the region that categorized forests into reserved and unclassed under the Indian Forest Act of 1878. This led to minimisation of indigenous access in forests under governmental control with imposition of regulations on tree felling, hunting and fishing. The establishment of Shillong as the political head quarter of Assam in 1874 was followed by creation of forest categories like plantations, military cantonments and green blocks in the area.⁵⁷ Initially the criterion for forest reservation in the region was on climatic grounds that emphasized on protection of forests in the catchment areas as a measure to ensure regular water supply to the city of Shillong.⁵⁸ Such conservation agendas probably prompted the British to undertake sympathetic attitude towards preservation of sacred forests in the region. Perhaps the presence of *Pinus Kesia* in the sacred groves reminded them of English pine trees. Moreover, the government preferred not to mingle indigenous religious sentiments with colonial forest administration measures. Hence, emphasizing on the preservation of sacred groves, Lt Col. J.C. Haughton the Officiating Agent in North East India observed:

I agree that the government or the possessor of the land within named, as well as the Shillong lands, shall have the joint right of turning off all water adjoining the said land for use subject to such rules as the government may prescribe. I promise also as far as in me lies, to preserve the sacred groves whereon the water supply is dependent, and to punish any of my subject s found cutting the trees of the said

groves and to deliver up for punishment any British subject found so offending.⁵⁹

However, despite attempts to control nature in Khasi hills through various ways, the British administrators abstained themselves from interfering with the internal administration of the *Syiems*. Neither had they intruded with popular customary rights over lands and forests.⁶⁰ The indigenous chiefs with assistance of the *Durbars* exercised jurisdiction within their limits while the Political Agent handled magisterial functions.⁶¹ The government emphasized that since land was indigenous property held by individuals or families, customary rights related to it should not be interfered with. Thus, in matters like sale of lands within the community, indigenous decision was regarded supreme. Considering this, the government did not impose land tax on the people. The British however collected revenue through other sources like judicial fines, share on the duties from goods sold at *haats* (market place) and taxes imposed on iron, lime and coal mines etc under clauses of agreements signed with the chiefs. Such agreements placed the British in advantageous position where they could profit from indigenous resources without local resistances.⁶² The post independent government of India accorded importance to indigenous rights over lands and forests in Meghalaya created as a separate state in 1972 and Autonomous District Councils established in the region under the Sixth Schedule of Indian constitution. Till 1972 the region functioned as a district of Assam.⁶³

Conclusion

Thus nature-based beliefs and knowledge did exist among the Khasi community of Meghalaya in pre-colonial times. Such faiths mostly of social, cultural and religious character contributed to nature conservation in the region through rites, taboos and rituals. The people enjoyed indigenous rights over soil, lands and forests which were neither hindered nor abrogated by traditional chiefs or institutions who only acted as guardian of lands that customarily belonged to the people. The colonial access and assignment of political importance to the region that was decided largely by climatic and geographical factors did not directly intrude into the customary land and forest rights of the people. Rather it established control over indigenous natural and mineral resources in a tactful manner that outwardly appeared advantageous to both the Khasi chiefs and the colonial government though assigned the latter with supervisory powers over the former. Elementary structure of forest administration that was implemented in the region divided government forests in reserved and unclassified and laid regulations on forest use that outwardly did not impinge on

indigenous forest rights except in government controlled areas. The British administration seemingly professed for the protection of sacred groves and punishments for persons who would damage them. But propagation of Christianity that accompanied the colonial administration in Khasi Hills did bring changes in Khasi faiths associated with nature. The deviations were reflected in the beliefs of Christian converted Khasis who did not nurture faith in sacred groves and forest spirits. The change was more evident after Indian independence. Hence colonial intrusion in Khasi lands and forests was materialized in a discreet manner.

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Understanding the Religious Worlds of the Subalterns: An Analysis of Syncretic Culture in Bengal

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Debates on multiculturalism in the Western democracies have often fuelled discussions of minority history. After the Second World War, writing of history has increasingly become entangled with the so-called 'politics' and production of 'identity'. Therefore, necessity often arises in all democracies to include in the history of the nation, histories of the indigenous and the ethnic groups who had been previously left out from it. In the 1970s, such studies came to be known as 'history from below'. Among other things, such studies have also focussed on the belief patterns of the indigenous groups, who have been recently referred to as 'subalterns'.¹

Religion may be treated as a platform through which one can understand the mentality of the subalterns. The present study is an attempt to understand this particularly in the field of religion. The so-called 'lower orders' of Bengal mainly connect themselves with popular religion, while contesting with the hierarchical structure and ideology of castes, which has been vigorously contested in the realm of popular religion, and is often defined through a process of exclusion as the 'other' religion. In this paper, we would illustrate this by closely examining the concepts, rituals and the epistemological shifts over time in a number of minor religious sects that developed in Bengal since the late eighteenth century as a part of the continuing tradition of *bhakti*.²

This paper considers the works of some of the renowned scholars who have revealed deep understanding on the subject. One of the foremost among them is Partha Chatterjee, who in the inaugural number of the '*Subaltern Studies*' series in 1982, demonstrated how religion deeply influenced communal identification in agrarian contexts, both as a weapon of dominance wielded by a Hindu majority and a tool of resistance for mobilizing Muslim peasants. We may also consider the writings of Sumit Sarkar such as his treatment of the '*Kalki Avatar*' scandal

in early twentieth century Bengal and its reception in the Bengal public sphere. Sarkar takes religion to be crucial for understanding Subaltern militancy as in his essay discussing Gandhian civil protest in Bengal. Also important are Shahid Amin's study of how Gandhi became a divine, miraculous figure in Gorakhpur in the 1920s and to Ishita Banerjee Dube's study on *Mahima Dharma* and its relation with the cult of Jagannatha.

For several centuries, Bengal has been the site for diverse races, creeds, religions and cultures. Unlike northern India, Bengal witnessed less hegemonisation by Brahmanical influences. In the first place, there was the relatively flexible indigenous society, where caste practices were not rigid. In the *Candimangalkavya*, ritually defiled *Candals* are described as rightful dwellers of the city and not treated as outcastes. Niharranjan Ray has argued that the caste system was not as rigorous in Bengal as it was in the Aryavarta. This was because of the late process of Aryanization and the prolonged existence of a more liberal indigenous tribal culture, which constantly interacted with the orthodox *varna* culture and diluted it. As the settled agricultural economy expanded in pre-colonial Bengal, linkages between caste and class became more visible with those providing physical labour lose their status to those who refrained from it but nevertheless controlled land such as Brahmins, Kayasthas and Baidyas. These three *jatis* were the traditional *ujchajatis* (higher castes) of Bengal.³

The dominant caste ideology could also be noticed in its obvious influence on tribal communities which lived at the periphery of the settled *varna* society. A constant interaction between the two cultures transformed both. While the *varna* system in Bengal became less rigid, the tribes also went through a process of *Hinduization* which the pioneer Bengali anthropologist Nirmal Kumar Bose has described as 'Hindu method of tribal absorption'.⁴

The dominance of Brahmanical religion was further contested by Buddhism and the advent of Islam. With the emergence of certain Buddhist dynasties like the Palas,

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between the eighth and twelfth centuries in Bengal, the Kambojas in northern and eastern Bengal, in the tenth century and Chandras in eastern and southern Bengal, between the tenth and eleventh centuries, Brahmanism was greatly challenged. With the spread of Buddhism in Bengal, the degeneration of the Buddhist monks began to be noticed. Buddhism now came to be associated with Tantricism. This trend, however, had already been started from the time of Lord Buddha. The *Caryapadas* composed during this period, embodied the religious tenets of *Sahajiya* Buddhism, a later day offshoot to Tantric Buddhism. A good number of Tantric scholars of Buddhism and the authors of the *Dohas* and *Caryapadas* flourished during this period.

Due to Tantric influence and the work of the Siddhacharyas, sexuality became a part of religious culture. In his novel *Bener Meye*, Haraprasad Sastri depicted how eleventh century society of Bengal revolved round this *Siddhacharyas*. In fact, though Buddhism was losing its ground, the Pala rulers tried to maintain a balance between Brahmanism and Buddhism.⁵ During the twelfth century, Bengal came under the rule of Senas who were followers of Vaishnavism. Consequently, there was a new emphasis on the Vaishnava cult of Radha and Krishna. The immense popularity of the Radha Krishna songs gradually began to influence Buddhist *Sahajiya* thought. This resulted in the birth of a new sect called the Vaishnava Sahajiya⁶ which remained an obscure religious cult of Bengal, little known to the upper caste society of the modern age. The Vaishnava-Sahajiya cult was the outcome of the amalgamation of two religious cultures: Buddhist Sahaj-Jnana and Gaudiya Vaishnavism.⁷ The *upaya* and *prajna* of Buddhist *Sahajiyas* were transformed into Krishna and Radha, the ultimate state of *mahasukha* or supreme love. Therefore, an important part of this group's *sahaj sadhana* was the religious process of gradually transforming human love into divine or spiritual love.⁸

The next phase of Bengal's social history was highly significant. It was a transition period, while Brahmanical Hinduism increasingly became assertive and dominant in parts of Bengal. Buddhist and native ideas and practices, especially those focusing on cults celebrating the forest goddess, still continued to shape the religious culture of ordinary people. In the midst of this transitional period, Bengal came under the Muslim rule. Initially, Muslim rulers did not set about transforming the society; their principal goal was to consolidate their own political power in a territory which was almost entirely non-Muslim.⁹ The new rulers not only posed a serious challenge to the rigours of caste system but also propagated Islam.

As a consequence, people who belonged to the lower stratas of the society, especially the Sahajiyas, embraced Islam. They were considered to be the first *fakirs* of

Bengal. This led to the emergence of Sufis in Bengal.¹⁰ The earliest known Muslim inscriptions in Bengal dealt with the group of immigrant Sufis,¹¹ who had settled in Bengal and participated in community building activity, including forest clearing and cultivation.¹² However, Richard M. Eaton argues that men who entered the delta not as holy warriors but also as pious mystics or freebooting settlers. From the beginning of Indo-Turkish encounter with Bengal, one section of Muslims sought to integrate into their religious lives elements of esoteric practices of local *yogis*. Contemporary Muslims perceived northern Bengal generally, and specially Kamrup, lying between Brahmaputra River and hills of Bhutan, as a place inhabited by expert practitioners of yoga and of magic. This was noted by Ibn Batuta on his visit to Sylhet. The Sufis too were attracted to the yogic traditions of Kamrup. Within the very first decade of Turkish conquest, there began to circulate in deltaic Bengal, Persian and Arabic translations of a Sanskrit manual on tantric yoga entitled '*Amritkunda*'.

Brahmanical dominance in Bengal was further challenged the Bhakti movement launched by Sri Chaitanya during the sixteenth century. The movement offered an alternative to ritualistic Brahmanical religion, and provided a new egalitarian theological platform. It is to be noted that Bengal was already the home of several esoteric sects comprising the Kapalikas, Abhadhutas and Nath Yogis even before the success of the Bhakti movement.¹³

Towards a Syncretic Development: Subalternity and its Syncretic Culture

The failure of Gaudiya Vaishnava order to incorporate the lower strata of the society subsequently led to popular adaptations of Vaishnavism in the form of syncretic sects.¹⁴ The early radicalism of Gaudiya Vaishnav *sampradaya* was increasingly overshadowed by conservative social forces. It proved more attractive to the upwardly mobile peasant and trading castes, like the Sadgops or Tilis.¹⁵ Gradually, Brahman gurus, threatened by the ever growing number of low caste converts, began to surround themselves with privileges and re-introduced caste differentiation.¹⁶

While the mainstream Gaudiya Vaishnava order was thus appropriated, the more radical Sahajiya tradition continued to interrogate the ideology of *varnashram dharma* and the rituals of the Vedic Brahmanical religion.¹⁷ Thus, Sudra gurus, most of whom had no link, with the orthodox Gaudiya Vaishnava order, attracted lower caste men and women. Thus, the casteless Vaishnavs, the unclean Sudras as well as some tribes joined the Sahajiya cult.

The rise of religious syncretism in Bengal goes back to the *Caryapadas* (eighth-twelfth centuries). Sakti Nath Jha has argued that in the *Caryapadas*, a special language (*sandhya bhasa*) was used to express a particular type of spiritual practice (*sadhana*) centred round the body. In Bengali folk religion and literature, *sandhya bhasa* denotes intentional language or a language bearing multiple meanings. Similar *sadhana* flourished through esoteric *Vajrayana* of Nepal and was expressed in *Carca* songs. Subsequently, traces of this *sadhana* and literary tradition were found in the handwritten manuscripts of the practitioners of *sahaj sadhana*. This poetic language and associated *sadhana* figure in the songs of Lalan and other *sadhaks* of Bengal.

Akshay Kumar Dutta in his book *Bharatbarsiya Upasak Sampraday* connected the esoteric concept of four moons (*Cari candra bheda*) with body oriented sexo-yogic practices. This *sadhana* was conducted in strict secrecy for fear of social reprisals and cloaked by various symbolisms. In Bengal, tracts were written against Bauls, Auls, and similar groups based on their alleged use of such esoteric practices.¹⁸ However, Upendranath Bhattacharya has practically challenged the validity of the older view and has tried to establish the distinctive features of Baul religion.¹⁹

There were some striking similarities between the creeds of the early Sahajiyas and Bauls, which definitely points to a genealogical connection between them.²⁰ Without abandoning their native identity, both Hindus and Muslims could join such groups through initiation (*diksa, siksa, bheg or khilafat*) and *sadhu sanga* (seeking company of holy men). Thus, people of various socio-economic and cultural levels of society formed loose organisations centred round the guru.²¹ Finally, the Sahajiyas conceived of the Ultimate Reality as *sahaja*, also found in the songs of the Bauls. But the earlier Sahajiya cult, underwent a notable transformation in the hands of the Bauls. The Bauls belonging to the Hindu community were generally Vaishnavite in their faith, and those belonging to Muslim community were generally Sufistic and in both the schools, the emphasis was on the mystic conception of divine love.²²

Close to the Baul tradition, but somewhere at the borders between two organized religions of Hinduism and Islam, stood the *fakirs*, the most important figure among them in the religious history of Bengal, being Lalan Shah (1774-1890). In the Kustia region, during the early nineteenth century, he had effectively contested the hegemony of orthodox Islam and Hinduism and attracted through his popular songs, the attention of many Hindus and Muslims, irrespective of their social origins. Another *fakir* in east Bengal, known as Sahlal Pir, was more successful in his organized effort to interrogate

the established social hierarchies. He was born sometimes around 1700, in rural east Bengal and did not attach much importance to birth. Among his disciples, some of them remained householders and others became mendicants. Those who were converted and joined the ranks of casteless Vaishnavas came mainly but not exclusively from the lower orders of Hindu society, the unclean Sudra, *antayja* and untouchable castes as well as some tribes. Ramakanta Chakravarti has provided a list of 16 such castes whose main religion was Vaishnavism. They were Bhaiti, Bhuimali Dhoba, Dom, Jalia, Kaivarta, Pod and Namasudras.²³

The Pirs and other Popular Cults

Traditional animist, Buddhist and Hindu beliefs and the newly introduced Islamic beliefs (close to Sufism) quite often blended to give birth to a host of popular saints and pirs of a rather hybrid nature. Some were transformed from local godlings, while others were new, semi-historical figures.²⁴ It seems that the emergence of the semi-historical Aulchand at the end of the seventeenth century was in continuity of the popular tradition of invention of saints with common Hindu and Muslim characteristics that marked Bengali society following Muslim conquest in the thirteenth century. Aulchand's religious creed-originally called 'Satya Dharma' (the religion of truth) emphasized certain common features that characterized contemporary cults and sects. Eventually, it lost its original name and came to be known instead as 'Kartabhaja' (meaning those who worship their master, the 'karta' or the Master—here suggesting the guru).²⁵

Around 1756, Aulchand came to Ghoshpara and initiated a Sadgop with landholder Ramsaan Pal and 21 other disciples, who constituted the 22 original followers of the sect or the '*bayish fakir*', as they were known. Eventually, Ramsharan emerged as the 'Pope' of the sect and according to the legends, it was believed that he had acquired miracle working powers of curing diseases and giving life to the dead. But it was under his wife Saraswati Devi, also known as Satima and her son Dulalchand (1775-1832/33) that the sect grew in size and influence. It was Dulalchand who composed songs that encoded the theology of the Kartabhaja movement. The collection of these songs published in 1881 as *Bhaber Geet*, speak in the day to day commercial metaphors of the market-place, trade and transactions. In this work, Gaudiya Vaishnavism is referred to as the 'Big Company', controlled by rich kings and emperors and their greedy managers who exploited the poor porters. It was because of their greed that the Old Company became bankrupt and on its ruins grew up New Company. The metaphors in no uncertain terms draw parallels between religious oppression of the

orthodox school of Gaudiya Vaishnavism and political subjection and economic exploitation penetrated by the East India Company, which were integral to the lived experiences of the Bengali villagers.²⁶

The Kartabhajas represented a transformation of the Vaishnava–Sahajiya tradition under the new conditions of British colonialism. The sect emerged at a critical historical moment and geographical location—the area in and around Calcutta at the turn of the nineteenth century, the seat of colonial trade and finance. In Calcutta, the sect attracted the poor labouring classes which had recently migrated to the city from the villages. Like the wandering and minstrels of the Baul tradition, with whom they shared many close ties, the Kartabhajas conveyed their mystical teachings through the medium of music and songs. As Hugh B. Urban argues, it was in the context of nineteenth century Bengal amid the changing politics of early colonial rule and the rise of new indigenous reform movements that the Kartabhajas represented a fairly radical and controversial social order. They opened the possibility of an alternative social field beyond the usual burdens of caste, labour and trade. “What they offer...” as Partha Chatterjee comments, “...(was) a congregational space defined outside the boundaries of the dominant religious life, outside caste, society and injunctions of the Shariah.”²⁷

The establishment of the British colonialism exposed the Indian ‘little tradition’ to another religion—Christianity. In keeping with the tradition of acculturation in their religious beliefs and habits, some of the old Bengali syncretic sects often adopted and adapted the new practices introduced by the Christian missionaries. Thus, the Kartabhaja sect followed a set of 10 rules and fixed every Friday for a confession session by its members, reminiscent of the Biblical Ten Commandments and the Catholic practice of confession respectively. These syncretic religious sects occupy a special position in the history of Bengali popular religion creating a sub-caste of their own.²⁸

However the eclectic Kartabhaja theology could not satisfy the more radical Sahajiyas. Some of the dissidents from this group, therefore formed a number of deviant orders, one of which was Sahedhani sect that developed in Nadia district in the eighteenth century.²⁹ Like other minor sects, it too offered an eclectic epistemology constructed through the selective appropriation of aspects of Sufism, Sahajiya Vaishnavism and Christianity. In contrast to this, the Balahadi sect positioned itself more directly not just against Vedic Puranic orthodox Hinduism and its *varnashram dharma*, but also against the concepts of *parakiya* love. The sect derived its name from its initiator, Balaram Hadi, who was born around 1780 into the untouchable Hadi or scavenger caste from

Meherpur in Nadia.³⁰ Sudhir Chakraborty gives a list of 12 of his disciples all of whom were from low caste Muchis, Namasudras, Jugis, Hadis, Mahishyas and Muslims. The cult had three women followers described as ‘earning their livelihood by begging. Unlike the Sahajiya Vaishnava sects, the Balaramis did not have a guru disciple structure in their order.

However, Partha Chatterjee in his article “Caste & Subaltern Consciousness” has taken his gaze away from the educated leaders of the depressed classes, focusing instead on the consciousness of the people at the grassroot level. However, he also acknowledges the triviality or marginality of such insubordination which ultimately failed to affect or alter the system.³¹

The elasticity of Hinduism permitted its votaries to adore *pir* cults like *Satya Pir* (Hinduized as Satya Narayan) and Manik Pir, the god of cows³² The emergence of *Satya Pir* during the mid nineteenth and early twentieth century was equally significant in the development of religious harmony between the Hindus and Muslims. Literature on this cult emerged with regularity in late sixteenth century following the first known works of Phakir Rama, Ghanaram Chakravarty and Rameswara.³³ These literary texts written in praise of Satya Pir portrayed a folk society innocent of hardened communal boundaries. In 1664, the poet Sankarcharya identified Satya Pir as the son of one of Sultan Alauddin Hussain Shah’s daughter and hence a Muslim.³⁴

Sumanta Banerjee, however, argues that Sultan Alauddin and his successors encouraged the growth of an eclectic culture based on traditional indigenous religious beliefs and rituals as well as the lately arrived Islamic ideas and legends. Moreover, this was the period when translations of Sanskrit Epics into Bengali and the recording of floating popular legends and folklore in the form of manuscripts by Bengali poets were patronized by the court of the Sultans of Bengal. It was in this social background that one should try to locate the birth of Satyanarayan and Satyapir cults.³⁵ Richard M. Eaton gives a different observation. According to him, the emergence of the cult coincided chronologically with the growth of agrarian communities focussed on the tiny thatched mosques and shrines that proliferated throughout eastern Bengal.³⁶ The innovation of Satya Pir can also be seen as a manifestation of a consistent popular craving for a divine protector and benefactor. In the oral narratives, Satyapir, thus, helped the poor (Brahmans) to become rich and protected the enterprizers (the merchants) from adversities.³⁷ The emergence of *Satya Pir* during the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century was equally significant in the development of religious harmony between the Hindus and Muslims. Literary texts written

in praise of Satya Pir portrayed a folk society innocent of hardened communal boundaries.

The cult of Manik Pir had also been very popular both among the Hindus and Muslims. His devotees belonged to all classes of the rural society, but the subalterns were by far the most numerous. In terms of their religious affiliation, they were mostly Hindus, only few were Muslims. The majority of the Hindus belonged to the 'untouchable' *jatis*. Manik Pir was also considered as the protector of cows. Dinesh Chandra Sen is of the opinion that the reason behind the extraordinary respect paid to Manik *pir* by the rural agricultural Hindus, who were worshippers of cows, may be based upon the healing power that he possessed in regard to the diseases of their sacred animals. P.K. Maity observed that a large number of devotees (98 per cent of whom were Hindus) gathered for *puja* of the *pir*, at the dargah of Manik Pir in Tamluk (locally known as *Manik Pirer than*). Generating from multiple streams, disparate voices and overlapping textures, the domain of Manik Pir seek to impose a particular religious habitus on popular Hinduism and challenge Christian evangelism.³⁸

Deities Appear as Saviours

In contrast to the religious ideology of Kartabhaja, Balahadis and Matua, there existed in many parts of Bengal, where low caste people were becoming priests of Manasa, Candi, Siva and Dharmathakur. But at the same time the upper castes were also very much enthusiastic in the religious life of the 'marginalized' people. They had a belief that in times of distress these deities would appear as saviour. Sometimes the goddess, in order to establish her worship, among the people, instructed her followers to establish her as a recognized deity, and then, she would protect them from their distress and helplessness³⁹ which had been reflected in the narratives of the *Mangal kavayas*. Banbibbi or Dakshin Ray in the Sunderban delta, were still worshipped by the local people for protection from tigers which invade their villages. All over Bengal, Sitala, a goddess not to be found in any of doctrinal Hindu religious scriptures, continued to be worshipped by devotees, seeking protection from small pox.

Popular logic had created new deities in response to problems and crisis under British colonial rule. When cholera broke out for the first time in Bengal in 1817, the rural community invented and added Ola Bibi, the goddess of cholera to their divinities.⁴⁰ Cholera, as it had been said, was the 'classic epidemic' disease of the nineteenth century. David Arnold argues that the disease bore distinctive imprint of popular Hinduism. Cholera by contrast had not been extensively ritualized by the early nineteenth century. There was no equivalent technique of inoculation for which to invoke a goddess's blessings. Perhaps most significantly, cholera though certainly

present, appeared not to have been as widespread and as destructive as it became after 1817. Only in deltaic Bengal, the homeland of cholera, the worship of a specific deity of Ola Bibi called by the Muslims and Olai Candi by the Hindus became popular.

Before 1817, this goddess enjoyed far less popular devotion than Sitala, but she was thereafter extensively propitiated when cholera was most prevalent. The common response was to represent cholera as a new manifestation of the powers of an existing deity like Mariamman, Kali or Candi or as an entirely new deity known only by some descriptive titles as *jari mari* (sudden sickness) or *Kali mari* (black death). Belief in disease goddess gave rise to two related responses, one was the dressing up of a woman, often a young girl, to represent the goddess and the use of mediums to voice the goddess's anger and demands. Both acted as vital channels of communication between the deity and villages.⁴¹

Ola Bibi is not to be considered the Islamic version of a Hindu goddess. The goddess is the embodiment of indigenous concepts of health and protection. The simultaneous presence of Hindu and Islamic cultural elements in the narratives of the cholera goddess (Ola Bibi is an *avatar* of Vishnu and her pilgrimage is to Mecca) are unproblematic to Bengalis. There is no inter-community antagonism in the myths and ritual practice of the cholera goddess. However, the reasons for her sudden popularity at the time of the consolidation of colonial power in Bengal, is quite unclear. Bengali Muslims living around the Ganges delta were threatened by the disease just as the Hindus and the British were. The study of Ola Bibi, worshipped by both Hindus and Muslims, proves helpful for understanding the dynamics of negotiating health in subaltern contexts.⁴²

Regarding the worship of the deities like Manasa, Sitala, Candi, Dharmathakur, Siva and others there developed a local tradition of festivals through various customs and rituals and later become part of popular culture in the villages of Bengal. In this respect, a mention may be made of some of the popular beliefs such as worship of godlings of disease and local saints etc which did not conform to any particular religions of the Hindus and Muslims alike.⁴³

The Hindu *Raymangal* literature depicts the conflict between Dakshin Ray, a local Hindu chief and Ghazi assisted by Kalu, over the control of the active deltaic region of southern Bengal. It is significant that both Dakshin Ray and Ghazi were in their respective traditions, credited with command over tigers and crocodiles.⁴⁴ The result was a stalemate, which was resolved through the mediation of a personage who was half Krishna and half Prophet Muhammad.⁴⁵

Similarly, the cults of Bonbibi and Dakshin Ray were intimately tied to each other and to the environment where they evolved. *Dakshin Ray* was the protagonist of Hindu ways of life while *Bon Bibi* epitomizes the natural wilderness of the region and the expansion of Islamic faith among the non-farming folks of this region. According to Sukumar Sen, *Bon Bibi* was the Islamized concept of *Mangal Candi* or *Bon Durga* although the cult had a prior existence since the early medieval times.⁴⁶ Another deity of significance in forested area of Sunderbans is the Banbibi–Narayani deity complex. It ensured security for a large number of people belonging to the unclean caste Hindus as well as Muslims. The Muslims preferred the term Banbibi for this mother deity and the Hindus sought refuge in Narayani who is but another manifestation of some Mother-deity.⁴⁷

Even some versions of the Manasa legends dealt with the conflict with the new Muslim rulers, referred to jointly in the Bengali text as Hassan – Hossein. The conflict was of epic dimension and ended in the comprehensive destruction of the Muslim forces and the surrender of their king, Hasan. Peace was thus restored, the dead were revived and they all became Manasa's votaries. This episode is historically significant as it deals with an early literary account of the role of Muslims in expanding agriculture in Bengal.⁴⁸

Conclusion

Based on the above discussion, this paper tries to present a new version of Bengal's social history, by arguing that the *jati* order in Bengal was far from being a rigidly reified structure but one which had room for spatial and social mobility. The key features of the study have been the subaltern denizens of rural Bengal, who in their emotional world remained torn between Tantric Hinduism, Tantric Buddhism, various local brands of Saktism and local folk traditions. The point of argument lies in the fact that though being distant from the world of the social elites caught within the boundaries of institutionalized Hinduism defined in terms of strict Brahmanical in junctions, did over time find an opportunity to be assimilated and incorporated within the hierarchical social system of Bengal.

Brahmanical culture was forced to come to terms with the little tradition through the recognition and adoption of local Bengali language. However, the cultural monopoly of the Sanskritists had already been undermined in pre-Islamic Bengal by the Mahayana Buddhist *siddha* writers, critical of Brahmanical ritualism, formalism, pedantry and pride of birth. The Buddhist *siddhacharyas* set in motion a process which was carried farther, on the one hand, by the patronage to Bengali literature by the sultans and, on

the other, by the authors of *mangalkavyas*, glorifying their respective deities.

The minor religious sects were seriously interrogating the hegemony of the Brahmanical dharma, particularly its hierarchical ethos. However, despite sustained protest, the hegemony of the Brahmanical religion or legitimacy of the *varnashramadharma* could not be effectively subverted. It can be stated that an important aspect of the social and cultural history of Bengal is that this phenomenon of continual contestation toned down the nature of domination of Brahmanism and reduced the intensity of the oppressive features of the caste system. The subordinate groups at the bottom accepted it as it also provided a space for their existence. In this context it is necessary to recall M.N. Srinivas's analysis of the ritual idioms of Coorg and the dynamics between Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic Hinduism.

Furthermore, this paper has tried to present a counter argument to the dominant intellectual version on Islamization of rural Bengal conditioned through the growth of Sufi saints, institutionalization of the dargahs of pioneering *faqirs* and militant Muslim saints identified with the ghazi tradition. This may be seen in the context the Hindu Bengali society which gave birth to its cultural mediators entrusted with the task of bringing their great and little traditions closer.⁴⁹

Notes

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3. Sekhar Bandopadhyay, *Caste Culture and Hegemony*, *op. cit.* pp. 17-22.
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5. Sri Satindra Mohan Chattopadhyay, *Banglar Samajik Ithihaser Bhumika* (in Bengali), *op. cit.* pp. 29-31.
6. Rajeshwari Datta, "Religious Aspect of Baul Songs of Bengal", *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 3, May 1978, pp. 445-455.
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14. Shashibhusan Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, op. cit p. 165
15. See for details Hitesh Ranjan Sanyal, *Social Mobility in Bengal*, Papyrus, Calcutta 1981, and Hitesh Ranjan Sanyal, "Trends of Change in the Bhakti Movement in Bengal" Occasional Paper, No 76, *Centre for Studies in Social Sciences*, Calcutta 1985.
16. Ramakanta Chakravarti, *Vaishnavism in Bengal*, op. cit. pp. 321-22, 333.
17. Shashibhusan Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, op. cit. pp. 51-53, 166.
18. Saktinath Jha, "Cari Candra Bhed ; Use of the Four Moons," in Rajat Kanta Ray (ed.) *Mind , Body & Society: Life & Mentality in Colonial Bengal*, Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 2001. pp. 65-102
19. Shashibhusan Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, op. cit. pp. 160-161
20. The songs and *Dohas* of the earlier Sahajiyas, are characterized by a spirit of heterodoxy which is likewise a feature of the songs of the bauls. See Ramakanta Chakraborty, *Vaishnavism in Bengal*, op. cit. p. 351
21. Rajat Kanta Ray, *Mind , Body & Society : Life & Mentality in Colonial Bengal*, op. cit. pp. 65-102
22. Shashibhusan Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, op. cit. .pp. 160, 166
23. Sekhar Bandopadhyay, *Caste, Culture and Hegemony*, op. cit. pp. 85-86
24. Sumanta Banerjee, "From Aulchand to Sati Ma: The Institutionalization of the Syncretic Kartabhaja Sect in 19th century Bengal," *Calcutta Historical Journal*, Vol. 6 No 2. 1994. p. 30, 34; also see Dinesh Chandra Sen, *Banga Bhasa O Sahitya* (in Bengali) (1st ed. 1896), reprint Paschim Banga Rajya Pustak Parisad Calcutta 1986, Jagadish Narayan Sarkar *Banglaye Hindu- Muslim Samparka* (in Bengali) Bangiya Sahitya Parisat. Calcutta 1388 (B.S.)
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37. See Munshi Abdul Karim's introduction to Ballav's *Satyanarayaner Punthi* (Bengali) in *Bangiya Sahitya Parisat Patrika* 1322 B.S. (1915) quoted in Girindranath Das *Bangla Pir Sahithyer Katha* (in Bengali), op. cit. p. 447.
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40. For details see, "Early Bengali Literature and Newspaper", *Calcutta Review*, Vol. XIII, No 25, 1850, p. 141.
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43. Barun De, ed. *West Bengal District Gazetteers, 24 Parganas*, op. cit. pp. 163, 176.
44. Asim Roy, *The Islamic syncretistic tradition in Bengal*, Princeton University Press, 1983, pp. 52-54, 71. 73, 78-80, 208-210.
45. Kaiser Haq, *The Triumph of the Snake Goddess*, London: Harvard University Press, 2015, p. 32.
46. *Bon Bibi's Jahuranama* was composed presumably towards the late eighteenth century. According to local specialists in social anthropology, this cult had grown with time into a regional status. See Susan S. Wadley, "Sitala: The Cool One", *Asian Folk Lore Studies*, Vol. 39 No 1 (1980), Nanzan University, pp. 33-34.
47. For details see, T.K. Niyogi, *Aspects of Folk Cults in South Bengal*, Director Anthropological Survey of India 1987.
48. As cited in Kaiser Haq, *The Triumph of the Snake Goddess*, op. cit. p. 48.
49. Asim Roy, *The Islamic Syncretic Tradition in Bengal*, op. cit. p. 71.

Writing Cultural History of Early India: V.S. Agrawala and the Indigenous Concept of History

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Introduction

In the nineteenth century, the spread of print culture and the growing impact of modern Western education led Indians to participate in the process of the knowledge production. Scholars like Rajendra Lal Mitra (1824-1891), Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-1894), V.K. Rajwade (1863-1926), R.G. Bhandarkar (1837-1925), Akshay Kumar Maitreya (1861-1930) challenged the idea of colonial historians that Indians lacked historical sense. Institutions like the Bharatiya Itihas Samsodhak Mandal, Deccan Vernacular Translation Society, and Varendra Anusandhan Samiti devoted their attention to collect the historical documents, manuscripts, epigraphs and related material. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya had referred to this process as 'talking back'; when Indian intellectuals while asserting the civilizational unity of India, 'talk back to their colonial masters in refutation of disparagement of ancient Indian civilization by colonial historians.'¹ History writing also received attention from intelligentsia of the North India as a discipline to reflect about the past. Starting from Raja Shiv Prasad (1823-1895) and Bharatendu Harischandra (1850-1885), intellectuals in the Hindi public sphere paid enough attention to history and history-writing. In the twentieth century, scholars like Gaurishankar Hirachand Ojha (1863-1947), K.P. Jayaswal (1881-1937), Munshi Devi Prasad (1847-1923), Bisheshwar Nath Reu (1890-1966), V.S. Agrawala (1904-1966), and others further contributed to the ongoing process of reconstruction of the past. This essay analyses the significant contributions of historian V.S. Agrawala to the evolution of the historian's craft in India.

Vasudeva Saran Agrawala was an Indologist with a deep interest in literature, history, art, and architecture. Born in a village of Meerut district of the United Provinces,

Agrawala completed his M.A. from Lucknow University in 1929 and his Ph.D. and D. Litt., both from Lucknow University in 1941 and 1946 respectively. In 1931, he was appointed as the curator of the Mathura Museum. Nine years later, he became the Director of the State Museum, Lucknow. In 1946, Agrawala took charge of the Central Asian Antiquities Museum at Delhi as Superintendent for Museums under the Archeological Survey of India. And in 1951, he joined Banaras Hindu University as Professor in the Department of Art and Culture. Agrawala wrote voluminously on the social and cultural history of early India, on the Puranas and Vedic texts, on Indian art and architecture, on archaeology, inscriptions, and coins.²

Agrawala's interest in cultural history was reflected in most of the early essays that he wrote on the various aspects of the cultural pasts of early India. These essays were first published in Hindi journals like *Madhuri*, *Veena*, and *Nagari Pracharini Patrika*, etc. In the fourth decade of the twentieth century, Agrawala was also associated with the *Janapadiya Andolan*.³ The *Janapadiya Andolan* was the brainchild of Banarasidas Chaturvedi (1892-1985), the editor of Hindi journal *Vishal Bharat*. In this context, following a resolution passed at the Haridwar session of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan held in 1942, a committee was formed with the objective of 'studying the culture, geography, language, literature, flora, and fauna of a region (*janapad*) and to further enrich the vocabulary as well as the literary resources of Hindi.' The members of this committee were Vasudeva Saran Agrawala, Jainendra Kumar (1905-1988), Devendra Satyarthi (1908-2003), Banarasidas Chaturvedi, Chandrabali Pandey (1904-1958), and Rahul Sankrityayana (1893-1963). Agrawala was exchanging letters with Banarasidas Chaturvedi since 1940, regarding the study of *Janapada*. In these letters, he not only emphasized the importance of such studies, which Banarasidas Chaturvedi had initiated but also laid out the detailed plan for pursuing such studies.⁴

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Understanding Janapadas: Bridge between Region and Nation

V.S. Agrawala took inspiration from the Prithvi Sukta of the *Atharvaveda* which declared the land as the mother (*Mata bhumi putroham prithivyah, 12.1.1-63* [‘I am the son of Mother Earth’]). His deep involvement with the activities of the *janapadiya andolan* also led Agrawala to write a couple of essays on the Prithvi Sukta and its significance.⁵ He even titled the collection of these essays as *Prithvi-putra*, which was first published in 1949. For him, being the son of the earth/soil (*Prithvi-putra*) was more of a spiritual and religious experience. In his essays on cultural history, Agrawala insisted on exploring the intricate relationship between the land, the people, and their culture (*bhumi-jan-sanskriti*). Agrawala prepared a detailed five-year plan for the study of the language, culture, social customs, religious beliefs and traditions of the different regions (*janapada*) and the villages of Hindi speaking areas. For him, this was a necessary step in the direction of making Hindi the national language of India because he believed that the culture of these regions was part of the national consciousness (*Rashtriya Chetna*). This attempt, Agrawala believed, would immensely enrich the reservoir of Hindi and would certainly act as a bridge between different regions. Agrawala named this plan ‘*Janapada Kalyani Yojana*’. He proposed the following activities during the five years of the plan:

Year 1: Focusing on the literature of the region, collecting folk songs, folktales, ballads as well as other samples of the regional literary culture; compiling and editing this collected material

Year 2: Studying the regional variants of Hindi language (*janapadiya bhasha*) relying on the methods of philology, giving special attention to etymology, phonetics, vocabulary.

Year 3: Study of the regional geography, local histories, archeology, and craft.

Year 4: Natural resources of the region, including flora and fauna, soil, minerals, agriculture.

Year 5: Studying the culture of a region, religious belief, and faith, social customs, fairs, and festivals.

This plan also suggested that eight committees be formed to collect information regarding various subjects, including language, dictionary, and glossary (*Bhasha Samiti*); geographical description of a region, place names, river and other physical features (*Bhugol ya deshdarshan Samiti*), birds and animals (*pashu-pakshi Samiti*), trees and plants (*Vriksha-vanaspati Samiti*); village/folk songs, folktales (*gram-geet Samiti*); popular customs, traditions

and rituals (*jan vijnana samiti*); history and archaeology (*itihās-puratattva samiti*); agriculture, craft, and minerals (*khaniy padartha aur krishi udyog samiti*).⁶ An annual report would present the details of material collected in each year. Agrawala also suggested publishing the collected information in journals devoted to the regional culture and heritage like *Madhukar*, *Brajbharati*, and *Bandhav*. In this regard, Agrawala viewed the works of philologist R.L. Turner and Irish linguist George Grierson (1851-1941) on Nepali and Kashmiri language respectively, as a model for studying the dialects of the Hindi belt.⁷ He particularly mentioned the works of Hungarian-born British archaeologist Aurel Stein (1862-1943).⁸ In his letters to Banarasidas Chaturvedi, Agrawala time and again insisted on collecting the words, sayings, and stories, etc. from the regional languages and dialects.

Agrawala found the insights from subjects like comparative philology and linguistics especially useful for studying the *Janapadas*. In his famous essay titled ‘*Janapadiya adhyayn ki aankh*’, Agrawala opined that *Janapadas* carried forward the tradition of thousand years in a continuum and that the villages are sons of the earth in the true sense (*sachche artho me Prithvi ke putra*). Even Emperor Asoka’s rock edict and ideas expressed in them inspired the protagonists of the *Janapada* movement; e.g. V.S. Agrawala approvingly quoted these lines from one of the rock edicts: *Janapadasa ca Janasa Dasane Dhammanusathi ca Dhammapalipucha ca* (‘visits to the people of the rural divisions (*janapadas*), instruction in Dhamma and discussions and questions on Dhamma’). Study of the *Janapadas* and their language and culture was even seen as the part of nation-building and national reconstruction. ‘Study of the *Janapada*’, Agrawala argued, ‘is the vanguard of national programme’ (*Janapadiya adhyayan rashtriya karyakram ka haraval dasta hai*).⁹ Human beings and human society was at the focus of the study of the *Janapadas*. For enriching Hindi language, Agrawala proposed a translation scheme, which included the translation of the classic Sanskrit texts into Hindi; translation of Pali, Ardha Magadhi and Prakrit texts; Tanjur and Kanjur; translation of the Avesta and ancient Iranian texts; translation of the travelogues of Arabic travellers as well as historical texts written during the Sultanate period and the Mughal period; translation of the travelogues of European travellers; and translation of modern world literature into Hindi. The *Janapadiya* movement became the centre of controversy later when some Hindi enthusiasts started opposing it claiming this movement was aimed at dividing the Hindi speaking area.¹⁰ They even objected to the use of the term ‘*vikendrikaran*’ (decentralization) by the protagonist of the *Janapadiya* movement, Banarasidas Chaturvedi.¹¹ Due to this controversy, in November 1943, Banarasidas Chaturvedi resigned from the *Janapada*

Committee formed by the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, and gradually the *Janapada* movement lost its direction.

Agrawala even characterized the nation (*Rashtra*) as the *Kalpavriksha* (a mythological, wish fulfilling tree) which was the connecting thread between the past, present, and future. This *Kalpavriksha*, Agrawala argued was immortal and infinite, and intimately related with national consciousness and also represents the condition of national life. Agrawala was so attached to the idea of the *Kalpavriksha* that he titled the collection of his essays on ancient Indian culture, particularly of the Vedic age, as the *Kalpavriksha*. The living part (*pranvant paksa*) of knowledge systems of the past societies always attracted Agrawala. Understanding the inner meaning of the Veda, *dharma*, and culture was essential for him as it was related to the elements of life. He even devoted himself to understand the cultural metaphors of the Vedic Age.¹² Knowing one's own culture was essential, but that did not mean, Agrawala remarked, the exclusion of other cultures. Assimilating the ideals of one's culture would lead one to know about the other cultures and would lead to develop respect and sympathetic attitude towards other cultures. Reflecting on the interrelationship between the nation and culture, Agrawala suggested that one should be rational while dealing with culture. In his view, only those elements of Indian culture should be adopted which are relevant for the development of the nation and could contribute to the enrichment of the national life. Agrawala viewed the meeting of the old and new cultures as a 'hope for humanity'.

Itihas-Darshan: Philosophy of History

In a long essay titled "*Itihas-darshan*", which was published in the *Madhuri*, Agrawala thoroughly examined the philosophy of history.¹³ Agrawala in this essay held that each culture had its specific notions of the past as well as the idea of history. Therefore, these specificities, which vary according to time and space, should be kept in mind while writing history. Agrawala also elaborated the scheme of the calculation of time which was prevalent in early India, including *Kalpa*, *Manvantar*, and *Yuga*. Defining the Indian concept of time in sharp contrast to the Western notion of time, Agrawala argued that early Indian society had no concept of unique events or linear time, as the time was calculated in cycles. He pointed out that the early use of the word 'itihas' was very different from the modern idea of 'history'. Emphasizing the comparative study of different cultures of the world, he criticized the Eurocentric nature of the popular texts written on the world history.

In this essay, V.S. Agrawala approvingly cited Oswald Spengler's monumental work *The Decline of the*

West and praised his ideas about history, culture, and civilization. Spengler challenged Eurocentric history and developed the notion which viewed every culture as a living organism. While dealing with eight 'high cultures' of human civilization, namely, Babylonian, Egyptian, Chinese, Indian, Classical (Greek and Roman), Arabian, Western, and Mexican (Aztec/Mayan), Spengler also tried to identify each culture's birth, growth, decline, and death. But Spengler's views on Indian culture and its conception of history were quite problematic. Strangely, Spengler reproduces the colonial stereotypes about India in his dealing with Indian culture, which he tends to see as 'ahistorical'. 'There is,' argued Spengler, 'no pure Indian astronomy, no calendar, and therefore no history so far as history is the track of a conscious spiritual evolution.' His views on Indian philosophy are no different than his views on Indian history:

The world-consciousness of Indian man was so ahistorically built that it could not even treat the appearance of a book written by a single author as an event determinate in time. Instead of an organic series of writings by specific persons, there came into being gradually a vague mass of texts into which everyone inserted what he pleased, and notions such as those of intellectual epochs, played no part in the matter. It is in this anonymous form that we possess the Indian philosophy – which is at the same time all the Indian history that we have – and it is instructive to compare with it the philosophy-history of the west, which is a perfectly definite structure made up of individual books and personalities.¹⁴

Agrawala in his essay on the philosophy of history and concept of time in Indian tradition relied solely on the Vedic sources, Brahmanas, Smritis, and Puranas and did not even mention the Buddhist and Jain historical traditions and their notion of time. While rightly criticizing the Eurocentric nature of modern history writing and the exclusion of concepts of history prevalent in other cultures, Agrawala commits a similar mistake by not taking into account the Buddhist and Jain historical traditions and the concept of time embedded in Buddhist and Jain texts. While various notions of time like cosmological time, generational time, and linear time existed in the Buddhist tradition like the Puranic tradition, but their context is significantly different from the Puranic tradition.¹⁵ The Buddhist and Jain conceptions of the past are not just remarkably different from the Puranic notions of the past, but as Romila Thapar pointed out:

They [Buddhist and Jain chronicles] are different in many ways – in their genres, in the initial languages used, and, more importantly, in the intentions of the authors. There is a concern for a reasonably acceptable chronology and a well-defined ideological purpose in the historical account. These historical traditions are an alternative to the Puranic.¹⁶

India as Known to Panini: V.S. Agrawala and Paninikalin Bharatvarsas

In 1955, V.S. Agrawala published his celebrated book, which was a cultural and historical study of Panini's *Ashtadhyayi*. The writings of Radha Kumud Mookerji (1884-1963), who also happened to be research supervisor of V.S. Agrawala in Lucknow University, were the inspiration behind this book and it was an extended version of the two-volume dissertation that Agrawala submitted to Lucknow University. Exploring the rich reservoir of the *sutras* of Panini as well as using the diverse sources like Vedic Samhita, *Brahmanas*, *Sutras* (*Srauta*, *Dharma*, and *Grihya*), *Pratishakhya*, *Mahabharat*, Pali texts, *Jatakas* and *Agama* literature, Agrawala provided a vivid picture of the social life in early India. The *sutras* of Panini, Agrawala opined, should be treated as authentic and reliable historical evidence like rock edicts and coins.¹⁷ Though *Ashtadhyayi* was a text on *Vyakarana* (Grammar), and Panini was a well-known grammarian, but Agrawala through his detailed analysis of the text showed us that Panini gave us valuable information regarding contemporary Indian society, its social institutions and social structure, geography, economic condition, education and literary culture, religious ideas, and philosophy, polity and governance, etc. Similarly, Panini's text and the word roots that Panini collected in his work are equally crucial for a comparative study of the Indo-Aryan languages and their dialects. Panini believed that it is the common people who create and give shape to a language.

Panini's *Ashtadhyayi* mentioned the places from Central Asia to Kalinga (present day Odisha) and from Sauvira (present-day Sindh) to Assam. Panini was familiar with the oceans, and he also mentioned the names of the rivers like Suvastu, Sindhu (Indus), Vipasha, Uddhaya, Bhidya, Devika, Sarayu, Ajirvati, Sharavati, Charmanvati, etc. Panini also provides us information about the prevailing social system like Varnashrama, Gotras, and kinship. Agrawala argued that Panini's period (circa fifth century B.C.) was also a period of social crisis for the Vedic culture and social structure of the Aryans which had to incorporate non-Aryans like Mundas, Nishadas, and Shabars as well as the foreigners like Scythians and Greeks among others.¹⁸

Due to the importance of auspicious time for performing rituals, time reckoning in early India was already quite developed. Panini informs us about different units of calculating time like *ahoratra* (day and night), *paksha* (fortnight), *masa* (month), *shanmasa*, *varsha* (year), *ayan*, etc. A day (*divas*) was further divided into *muhurtas* and based on the location of the sun in sky divided into *Puroahna* and *Aprahna*, while the night (*ratri*)

was divided into *Purvaratra* and *Apararatra*. The time of transition when day and night meet together was known as *sandhivela*.¹⁹

The *Ashtadhyayi*, Agrawala revealed, also gave a vivid description of flora and fauna of early India. In addition to the art and craft, Panini gave immensely rich information about the commerce and trade, agriculture. On the basis of the ploughshare that they possessed, Panini categorized the farmers into three categories, namely, *Ahali* (farmers who do not have a ploughshare of their own), *Suhali* (farmers who had a good ploughshare), *Durhali* (farmers with old ploughshare). Agrawala also described the education system which was prevalent in Panini's time, the relationship between teachers and students, the curriculum and rules of teaching and study. Both Panini and Patanjali had mentioned the women who studied in the Vedic *charans* (*ashramas*). These women scholars also studied the philosophical subjects like Mimamsa. The regular female students were known as *Adhyetri* and their residence was called *Chhatrishala*. The contemporaries of Panini were familiar with the art of writing.

Religious ideas of the later Vedic age, rituals and sacrifices, religious beliefs and practices of those times were also the subject of interest for Panini. And on these topics, Agrawala argued, Panini provides us rich and authentic historical description. From *Ashtadhyayi*, we came to know about the philosophical ideas (*darshana*) of materialist thinkers and philosophers like Puran Kassapa, Makkhali Gosala and the Lokayata and Ajivikas. Commenting on the polity and administration during Panini's period, Agrawala noted that both state (*Rajya*) and federation (*sangha*) were the prevalent political systems in that period. The whole territory of a *janapada* was known as *Prithvi* and the ruler of that territory was called *Parthiv*. A larger territory than *janapada* was called *sarvabhumi* and its ruler was known as *Sarvabhaum*.²⁰ The king was also known as Bhupati ('the owner of the land'). In the monarchical rule (*Ekraj shasan*), the king was superior, but he also had a council-of-ministers (*mantri parishad*) to help him. These councils were further organized into three councils related to social, political and educational matters, namely *samajik parishad*, *rajnaitik parishad* and *vidya sambandhi parishad*. *Charan*, *Gotra* and *Janapada* were three important educational, social and political institutions respectively.

Regarding the period of Panini, scholars like R.G. Bhandarkar and D.R. Bhandarkar (1875-1950) had opined that he lived in the seventh century B.C., but Agrawala was of the opinion that Panini was born two centuries later in the fifth century B.C. To support his view, Agrawala compared the language of *Jatakas* and Panini's *Ashtadhyayi* and showed a remarkable similarity between them. Agrawala also agreed with scholars like Theodor

Goldstucker (1821-1872) who were of the opinion that the language Panini used in his text was the spoken language of the literate class of that period.²¹

Kadambari and Harsacarita: A Cultural Study

Banabhatta, who was contemporary to Harsha (606-648 A.D.), gave a lively and vivid description of his social and political milieu in his masterpiece *Kadambari*, which he referred to as *Katha*.²² Apart from familiarizing us with Bana's contemporary society, *Kadambari* also informs us about the social life in the cities like Ujjayini and marketplaces as well as trade and commerce; about art, architecture, painting and literature; ideas of kingship, courts, palaces and royal etiquettes; Council of ministers; temples; flora and fauna, etc. V.S. Agrawala compared the narrative structure of *Kadambari* with the plan of the royal palace of that time and argued that like those palaces which were divided into four parts namely *Mukhmandap*, *Rangmandap*, *Antaramandap* and *Garbhagrih*; *Kadambari* too was divided into four similar parts. While elaborating the deeds of king Shudraka, Banabhatta also laid before us the ideal of kingship which was prevalent during his period.²³ Agrawala also showed that *Kadambari* gave us useful insight regarding the religions and sects, religious beliefs and practices, and superstitions prevalent in the seventh century.

Seventh century A.D. was a remarkable and watershed period for music, language, literature and art, as it marked the beginning of the *ragas* and *raginis* in music, beginning of Apabhramsa language and also the emergence of Apabhramsa style of painting. Bana also informs us about the instruments used for measurement of the time, namely, *chhaya/dhupghadi* (sun dial) and *nalika/jalghadi* (water clock or clepsydra). Similarly, while describing the education of the characters of *Kadambari*, Bana also gave us a detailed description of education and curriculum including *vyakarana*, *mimamsa*, *nyaya*, and *dharma*. *Kadambari* also gave us an account of the sports and leisure activities like *dyutkrida* (gambling), *chaupad*, *vina*, *paheli* (puzzles), *tripadi*, *patrabhang*, etc. Comparing the *Kadambari* with the *Harsacarita*, Romila Thapar points out:

The *Kadambari* acts as the structural opposite of the *Harsacarita* – in that the royal biography is the text on the court and settled society (the *grama*), whilst the *Kadambari* is a fantasy based on the court poet's perception of the forest (the *aranya*).²⁴

Before embarking on a cultural study of the *Kadambari*, Agrawala had studied another famous historical text of Banabhatta, the *Harsacarita*. Agrawala's book *Harsacarita: Ek Sanskritik Adhyayan* was first presented as a series of lectures organized by Bihar Rashtrabhasha

Parishad in March 1951. In the introduction to the first edition of this book, Agrawala laid out a detailed plan for a comprehensive study of Banabhatta's corpus. This included publishing an authentic version of both *Kadambari* and *Harsacarita* with commentary in Hindi; literary study of both these texts; historical analysis of the cultural material available in these texts; preparing a glossary based on these texts.²⁵ Bana had distinguished between *Kadambari* and *Harsacarita* by calling them *Katha* and *Akhyayika* respectively. While the *Katha* is a work of fiction and imagination, the *Akhyayika* is based on historical events. With his detailed examination of *Harsacarita*, Agrawala present before us an elaborate picture of the North Indian society of the seventh century A.D. Agrawala not only examined the literary style of Bana as reflected in *Harsacarita* but also familiarize us with Bana's view on literature and his literary predecessors. Regarding art and architecture, Agrawala showed that in the *Harsacarita* we found valuable information not only about the life of Harsha and his family but also about Bana's own life. Further, the *Harsacarita* not only adds to our knowledge about the architectural plans of the houses and palaces, but also provides historical information about music and dance, costumes of the king and his *samanta* as well as about art of printing and dyeing of clothes. The *Harsacarita* also provides us insight into the war strategies, the organization of the army including elephant army (*Gajsena*) and cavalry.²⁶ Apart from the political events, Bana also throws light on the cultural aspect of his contemporary society, such as the rituals of marriage and death, the religious sects, and lives of forest dwellers and Harsha's encounter with the forest dwellers as well as about flora and fauna of the Vindhya region. According to historian V.S. Pathak, in the *Harsacarita*, Banabhatta had shown the achievement of royal glory in five stages: beginning (*prarambha*), efforts (*prayatna*), hope of achieving the end (*praptyasa*), certainty of achievement (*niyatapti*), and achievement (*phalagama*).²⁷ The *Harsacarita*, as Romila Thapar points out, 'spans various contexts and questions some of the assumptions of a *carita*, making it thereby more of a historical document than just a literary form.'²⁸ Commenting on V.S. Agrawala's study of *Harsacarita*, D.D. Kosambi pointed out:

Harsacarita by V.S. Agrawala (Patna, 1953) gives valuable collation with archeological data from sculptures, but suffers by taking the *Sukraniti* as descriptive of the Gupta administration. That work [*Sukraniti*] mentions gunpowder (including the formula) and firearms five separate times, hence belongs to the late Muslim period as its editor and translator B.K. Sarkar (Allahabad, 1925) has shown.²⁹

After working on *Harsacarita*, V.S. Agrawala edited and wrote a commentary on Vidyapati's *Kirtilata* and Malik

Muhammad Jayasi's *Padmavat*. Agrawala's commentary (*samjivani tika*) on the *Padmavat* was published in 1955 by Sahitya Sadan (Jhansi), which was owned by famous Hindi poet Maithilisharan Gupta.³⁰ Agrawala dedicated his commentary on the *Padmavat* to famous literary critique Acharya Ramchandra Shukla (1884-1941), who had edited the first edition of the *Padmavat* in the Nagari script, which was published by Kashi Nagari Pracharini Sabha in 1924. In 1925, Agrawala read this edition while he was in his graduation and also attended a talk delivered by Ramchandra Shukla on the *Padmavat*, which left a lasting impression on Agrawala.³¹ For preparing his critical edition of *Padmavat*, Agrawala had consulted various manuscripts of *Padmavat* including one which was available at Rampur Museum; this manuscript was written in Arabic script with commentary in Persian. Agrawala praised the *Padmavat* as one of the best *prabandh-kavya* in Awadhi language.

In *Padmavat*, Jayasi presented a brilliant, imaginative account of love, which he held as the eternal truth of human life. Before the arrival of Jayasi, the literary culture of Awadhi was enriched by poets like Mulla Daud, Ishardas, Kutuban, Chanda, Burhan, Baxan, and Sadhan. Mulla Daud had written his famous work *Chandayan* in Awadhi in 1370 A.D.³² Malik Muhammad Jayasi wrote *Padmavat* during 1527-1540 A.D. Jayasi was not only influenced by Persian romances (*masnavi*), but he also inherited the tradition of *prabandh-kavyas* of Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Apabhramsha. Spiritual ideas and symbolism of different religious sects like Sahajyana, Nathpanthis, Nirguna and Sufis had deep influence over Jayasi's thoughts and his literary expressions.³³ Agrawala also differed with earlier editions of *Padmavat* edited by Ramachandra Shukla and Mataprasad Gupta.

Towards an Aesthetics of Indian Art

V.S. Agrawala's keen interest in the art and architecture of India, as apparent from his studies of *Kadambari*, *Harsacarita* and numerous essays that he contributed to the Hindi journals on this theme, eventually led him to write a comprehensive history of Indian art covering the period from pre-historic age to the period of the Andhra Satvahana (*circa* third century A.D.).³⁴ In this chronological history of art, he studied the special characteristics of art in a succession of the historical period including pre-historic age; Indus valley civilization; Vedic Age and historical importance of the symbols attached to Vedic Age in the context of the history of Indian art; art during the Mahajanapada period; symbols inscribed on the punched coins (*ahat mudra*) and their meaning; art during Sisunaga and Nanda dynasty; Mauryan art; Sunga art; caves of Udayagiri and Khandagiri and Buddhist Viharas,

Chaityas; Sunga and Kushana art of Mathura region; Gandhara art; Stupas of Andhra Satvahana period; Indian terracotta art; and symbols and icons in the art of the Sanskrit age. His deep interest in the art of Kushana and Gupta period began when he was attracted by aesthetic and historical significance of the Mathura sculptures and terracotta, while he was the Curator at Mathura Museum from 1931 to 1940. Deeply influenced by the incisive work of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (1877-1947), V.S. Agrawala viewed Indian art as the representative of the imagination and brilliance of the Indian people.

To understand Indian art, argued Ananda Coomaraswamy in his famous work on Indian Art, one has to understand Indian society as a whole, not an individual artist: 'To understand at all, we must understand experiences common to all men of the time and place in which a given work is produced.' Emphasizing the idea of anonymity in Indian art, Coomaraswamy noted: 'The Indian artist, although a person, is not a personality; his personal idiosyncrasy is at the most a part of his equipment, and never the occasion of his art.' Art was part of daily life and inherent in everyday activities of the people. In the Indian context, viewing art as an intellectual act, Coomaraswamy opined:

Art is primarily an intellectual act; it is the conception of form, corresponding to an idea in the mind of the artist. It is not when he observes nature with curiosity, but when the intellect is self-poised, that the forms of art are conceived. The artist is not a special kind of man, but every man is a special kind of artist, or else is something less than a man.³⁵

Like Coomaraswamy, V.S. Agrawala too sincerely felt that the Indian art should not be evaluated the standards set up by the Western art critics, rather one needs to develop a different sensibility to evaluate Indian art and to grasp its inner meaning. For Agrawala, the realization of the inner meaning of artwork was more important than just evaluating and narrating its outward appearance. He also tried to use those original terms for the art in his analysis which were used in the contemporary literature of Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit and other texts.³⁶ For grasping the cultural meaning of the art which was part of the cultural consciousness of India once, Agrawala relied on the inter-relationship between art and literature and held Indian art as the mirror for Indian philosophical thoughts, religious ideas, and Indian culture. The literary background of this historical process is evident from Panini and Jataka to Hemchandra. Thus, to find the true meaning of an artwork or a poetic work one should understand its four elements, i.e., *rasa*, *artha*, *chhanda*, and *shabd/rupa*. While discussing the Gandhara School of art, Agrawala also focused on the exchanges between Indian art and Iranian and Greek art. He also paid attention to

the development of the ornate style of Indian art and the process by which it acquired its meaningfulness as an art form.

To conclude, through his insightful historical works V.S. Agrawala, not only enriched our understanding of early India, but he also contributed significantly to the craft of history writing in India. Focusing on various aspects of land, people, and culture (*bhumi-jan-sanskriti*), Agrawala tried to bridge the gap between regionalism and nationhood. Through an in-depth historical analysis of the region, its socio-cultural and economic aspects, rituals and customs, language and literature, and further linking it with the spirit of the nation, Agrawala tried to grasp the national consciousness in its totality. His works not only present the living and vibrant parts of the Indian knowledge systems but also engages with the cultural metaphors and their deeper meanings. While critiquing the Eurocentric nature of the philosophy of history, Agrawala also conceptualized an indigenous concept of philosophy of history (*itihas-darshan*). This conception showed greater empathy and appreciation towards the historical consciousness of non-European societies.

Notes

1. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, *Talking Back: The Idea of Civilization in Indian Nationalist Discourse*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011.
2. For an exhaustive list of his works, see *Prof. Vasudeva Saran Agrawala: A Bibliographic Survey of his Published Works*, compiled by Jagdish Chandra, New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1994.
3. *Aaj*, May 25, 1943.
4. See, V.S. Agrawala to Banarasidas Chaturvedi, July 25, 1940 and January 11, 1941, letters published as the Appendix (*Parishist*) in V.S. Agrawala, *Prithvi-putra*, New Delhi: Sasta Sahitya Mandal, 2009 [1949], pp. 145-147.
5. See, Agrawala's essays 'Prithvi-putra'; 'Prithvi-sukta – ek adhyayan'; 'Bhumi ko devattva pradan' in *Ibid.*
6. See, Agrawala's essay 'Janapadiya Karyakram' in Agrawala, *Prithvi-putra*, pp. 64-69.
7. While R.L. Turner's dictionary of the Nepali language titled *A Comparative and Etymological Dictionary of the Nepali Language* was published in 1931, George Grierson's *A Dictionary of the Kashmiri Language* was published in 1916. Agrawala was also impressed by Grierson's work on the languages of Dard region, which was titled as "The Iranian Hindukush dialects called Munjani and Yudghi". Agrawala also mentioned a technical glossary published by the Anjuman-i Taraqqi-i Urdu titled *Farhang-i Istilahat-i Peshevaran*.
8. V.S. Agrawala to Banarasidas Chaturvedi, May 18, 1943, in Agrawala, *Prithvi-putra*, pp. 147-150.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
10. Chandrabali Pandey, who was a member of the committee

- formed to study the literature of Janapada, in an essay written in 1943, criticized the idea of Janapadiya andolan. See, "Sammelan aur Janapad", in Chandrabali Pandey, *Rashtrabhasha par vichar*, Varanasi: Kashi Nagari Pracharini Sabha, 1957, pp. 185-188.
11. For the details of this controversy and Agrawala's defence of the Janapadiya movement, see his letters to Banarasidas Chaturvedi, June 8, 1943; June 11, 1943; August 23, 1943; November 18, 1943; and November 22, 1943, in Agrawala, *Prithvi-putra*, pp. 150-161.
12. See, Agrawala's essays "Vedic Paribhasha me sharir ki sanjnaen"; "Parikshit ka sarp"; "Chyavan and Ashvinikumar", in V.S. Agrawala, *Kalpavriksha Prachin Bharatiya Sanskriti ka darshan karane wale nibandh*, New Delhi: Sasta Sahitya Mandal, 1998 [1953], pp. 91 ff.
13. V.S. Agrawala, "Itihas-darshan", *Madhuri*, Vol. I, Part 1, pp. 41-65; see also V.S. Agrawala, *Itihasa-Darsana*, edited by P.K. Agrawala, Varanasi: Prithivi Prakashan, 1978, pp. 3-35.
14. Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West: Form and Actuality*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1926, p. 12.
15. For a detailed discussion of the time reckoning in early India, see Romila Thapar, *Time as a Metaphor of History*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996.
16. Romila Thapar, "The Buddhist Tradition Monk as Historians", in Thapar, *The Past Before Us*, Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2013, p. 380.
17. V.S. Agrawala, *Paninikalin Bharatvarsa*, Varanasi: Chaukhambha Vidyabhavan, 1955, p. 7.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 173 ff.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 384.
21. In 1861, Theodor Goldstucker wrote a book on Panini in which he tried to answer the literary and chronological questions related to Panini and his text *Ashtadhyayi*. See, Theodor Goldstucker, *Panini, His Place in Sanskrit Literature*, London: N. Trubner & Co., 1861.
22. According to the *Agni Purana*, there were five categories of prose literature (*gadya kaavya*): *Akhyayika*, *katha*, *khandkatha*, *parikatha*, and *kathanika*.
23. V.S. Agrawala, *Kadambari Ek Sanskritik Adhyayan*, Varanasi, 1958, p. 16.
24. Romila Thapar, "Historical Biographies: The *Harsacarita* and the *Ramacarita*", in Thapar, *The Past Before Us*, p. 494.
25. V.S. Agrawala, *Harsacarita: Ek Sanskritik Adhyayan*, Patna: Bihar Rashtrabhasha Parishad, 1964 [1953], see Introduction.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 39-44, 129-133, 159-161.
27. V.S. Pathak, *Ancient Historians of India: A Study in Historical Biographies*, Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1966, pp. 27-28.
28. Romila Thapar, 'Historical Biographies', p. 506.
29. D.D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1956, p. 315, fn 1.
30. Agrawala was very close to Maithilisharan Gupta and was an admirer of Gupta's famous work *Bharat Bharati*. See, Agrawala's essay, "Sahitya-sadan ki yatra", in Agrawala, *Prithvi-putra*, pp. 90-97.

31. Mataprasad Gupta also edited a critical edition of *Padmavat* in 1952, which was published by Hindustani Academy.
32. V.S. Agrawala, *Padmavat [Malik Muhammad Jayasi krit Mahakavya] (Mul aur samjivani vyakhya)*, Jhansi: Sahitya-Sadan, 1955, pp. 42 ff.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
34. V.S. Agrawala, *Bharatiya Kala (Prarmbhik Yug se Tisari shati isavi tak)*, ed. Prithvikumar Agrawala, Varanasi: Prithivi Prakashan, 1966.
35. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Introduction to Indian Art*, Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1969 [1913], p. 79.
36. Agrawala, *Bharatiya Kala*, see, Introduction.

At the Doorsteps of Democracy: Nomads and their Political Space in Uttar Pradesh

Rama Shanker Singh

The democratic system of political participation in India has strengthened the weaker sections of society. Using the right to vote, they have silently revolted. Wider public discourse and considerable academic writing on the subject is available. Work on the politics of backward castes of India is substantial (Beteille, 1992). While on the one hand, scholars of Dalit consciousness have explained the ways in which Dalit politics prepares its base in written and oral forms (Narayan, 2011) and on the other, little thought has been given to the lives and politics of nomadic communities in the political sphere. There is practically no discussion on how nomadic and de-notified communities are creating their political space, and the manner in which they have tried to change their lives and forge political possibilities. Using a historical perspective, this essay aims to investigate the participation of nomadic communities in Uttar Pradesh in contemporary democratic processes, and their daily negotiations with state. It aims to analyse the ways in which, over the last three decades, socio-political changes have connected these communities to India's wider political structure through the Panchayati Raj institutions.

A People Dishonoured by History

Critical writing on nomadic and de-notified tribes in those areas where there has been unrest in response to oppression, discrimination and exclusion is well known. Mahashweta Devi and Ganesh Narayan Devy are significant figures who have given voice to this unrest. In February 1998, in the Puruliya district of West Bengal, a young man from the nomadic Sabar community, named Boodhan, was beaten up and murdered in police custody on allegations of being a thief. Following this event, protests broke out across the country. A play called *Budhan Bolta Hai* (Boodhan Speaks) was written about the

victim's custodial death and staged in different parts of the country. Being placed on the same level of suffering, pain, disgrace and stigmatization, the peoples of nomadic and de-notified communities across the country considered it a document they could relate to (Devy, 2006; Devy, 2002)

To fully understand this sentiment from the real world of nomadic and de-notified communities, one needs to understand the process of state-formation in pre-modern India and its colonial history, in which a coalition among the powerful classes of society and the state was formulated (Devy 2002).-It is this coalition that has led the police and landlords of the area to consider the nomadic communities as thieves and untrustworthy people. State and society have both colluded in this.

It is an established fact that anthropology in colonial India was essentially a project to procure and manage information about Indian social life. Even senior police officers were appointed as anthropologists. Data, thus, produced became the basis for the marginalization and stigmatization of many communities, especially in the periphery of mainstream society (Dirks 2015) Their dignity was snatched from them and they were ousted from history. Explaining the colonialist basis of this ousting, Meera Radhakrishna has called these communities as 'people dishonored by history' (Radhakrishna 2001).

British colonial rule subjugated different communities of India on different levels. It classified its 'subjects' through different categories. It reproduced information acquired from colonial anthropology as normative knowledge (Singh 2015). In this imagination, peoples residing in forests were represented in census registers, anthropological studies and administrative details as communities devoid of political sense and civilization. Following their own historical experiences of capitalist agriculture and the Industrial Revolution in Britain, where non-farming communities were either forced to go to the cities, derided, or both, the English set up agrarian production as the norm in colonial India, and the non-farming communities of the forests were stigmatized, and

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their traditional attachment to the forests and pastoral lands destroyed (Guha 1999).

While writing the history of modern times, historians have noticed how due to state-sponsored irrigation projects and the making of landed property regimes, pastoral life systems were marginalized (Sarkar 2014). There was a special category of land termed *shamilatdehor* 'community land' in the land system. Animals grazed on it. But the colonial regime forcefully excluded the pastoral and nomadic communities from the rural imagination.

In 1871, the Criminal Tribe Act was passed. This act was implemented in the north-western border provinces, Punjab and Awadh. It gave the police administrative control over nomadic communities. About 200 communities in the country were declared 'criminal communities' under this Act (Devy 2013). These communities had to register themselves at the nearest police station and obtain a license for grazing in specific areas. They could not go out of their designated area without the permission of the police. If they changed their habitation, information had to be supplied and permission requested. If a member of a community was not present for more than a year in his settlement without police permission, he had to suffer three years of harsh prison time (Radhakrishna 2001). Even special reform camps were established for them so that they could be suitably 'corrected':

One effect of this was that when, under pressure, nomadic peoples started settling down, the places where they settled were immediately and directly brought under police scrutiny. It did not take much time for these settlements to get stigmatized in general. In this way, through the aegis of the Act, a 'lower' and despised social space was created. The local landlords were not only required to assist police in the registration of nomadic communities but also asked to keep these registered communities under surveillance (Radhakrishna 2001).

In the social and legal fields, this was a collective tragedy for the nomadic communities. The Criminal Tribe Act was expanded in 1921 and many other communities were taken under its purview. Interestingly, by the time the Census of 1931 concluded, a provision on 'Exterior' or marginalized castes was added. It argued that the marginalized castes of Eastern India were self-dependent and could not be called poor in any way (*Census of India*, 1988). Though they were very much a part of the rural landscape of the country, they did not attain the distinction of a formal, legitimate category and instead came to inhabit a negative position within the normative schema. At this time when they were being thus (de) categorized, their lived experience was otherwise. For example, the *Chidimars* (or Bird-catchers) came to markets of villages or towns happily to sell birds. The *Nats* used to sell charms-amulets and entertained people

(Majumdar 1944). Even though they were itinerant, they were attached to the villages organically.

Post-Colonial Questions of Social Justice

Today the population of nomadic and de-notified communities is estimated to be between six crore (Devy 2006) to 10-12 crore.¹ After 1947, when the Constitution of India was drafted and all peoples were given the right to and equality in casting vote, these communities were given the status of de-notified tribes (1952). Ironically enough, they were freed from one derogatory identity but still remained bound by another. In 1959, the Habitual Offender Act guided the attention of the police towards these de-notified communities, re-creating conditions for their continued marginalization. While many marginalized sections of society have benefitted from affirmative action, the continuance of the colonial taxonomy with regard to social groups has ensured that the de-notified, nomadic tribes do not come in any category which could be provided reservations in government jobs. Both in the colonial period and for a long time afterwards, these communities managed neither to develop a political constituency nor a leadership that could redress the lack of legitimate skills required to participate in the modern system of state entitlements. However, more recently, and for some time now, a different category of nomadic tribes be made and they be given reservation accordingly has been demanded by representatives of nomadic communities, intellectuals and social workers working with them in 2002. They were observing the 50th anniversary of the 1952 law of de-notification of Criminal Tribes. India's former Prime Minister V.P. Singh was present here as well (Gupta 2015). This pressure bore fruit and the state's attention turned towards them, the first exercise being that of mapping the subject anew. According to the report of the National Commission for Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes, headed by Balkrishna Renke (constituted in 2003), a huge number of the de-notified tribes were found to be living in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Of these, 38 communities were registered as nomadic and 57 as de-notified.² Later, in April 2014, a delegation of these communities met Narendra Modi when he was campaigning in Allahabad for Lok Sabha elections and submitted a memo demanding reservations.³ When his government came to power, a commission headed by Bhikhuji Idate was constituted to look into this question afresh. Its mandate was to make a list of de-notified and nomadic tribes of every state and to suggest ways for the betterment of their lives.⁴ The report of the commission is now out. After meeting and consultation with the representatives of different nomadic and de-notified tribes of the country, the Commis-

sion has said once again that these are the 'poorest of the poor, most marginalized and most downtrodden communities who are subject to social stigma, atrocity and exclusion'. The commission has recommended a Constitutional amendment so that Scheduled Notified/ De-notified/ Semi-Nomadic Tribes can be added as a third category after Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Act.⁵ In its report it recommends that the government should provide strong legal protections and constitutional safeguards, including the extension of the Protection of Atrocities Act to the Notified/ De-notified/ Semi-Nomadic Tribes by creating a separate Third schedule as 'Scheduled De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes'.⁶ More recently NITI Aayog has backed the idea of setting a permanent commission for these communities on the lines similar Commissions for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes.⁷ The Renke Commission had already advocated this in its report but little had come out of it. However, the new political assertiveness of these communities is what I am interested in here. This assertiveness is making political parties to think about them.

Nomadic Communities of Uttar Pradesh

To map these changes I have chosen two districts of Uttar Pradesh. Through purposive sampling, I have taken as my case studies of two *gramsabhas* and three temporary settlements from Gonda District, and one *gramsabha* from Allahabad District. The two *gramsabhas* of Gonda district in focus in my work are those of Sisai and Parsada in Belsar Block. Of the three temporary nomadic settlements of Gonda, two settlements are located in Baisanpura and Khadura villages, and the third is situated in a glade close to the Paraspurlocal market. In Allahabad, I have chosen the Tendui *gramsabha* from the Bahadur Block. Fieldwork for this project was carried out in the period 2014-17 and it reveals that the experience of democracy among these communities has been chequered and not singular or fixed.

The *Nats*, *Chamarmangtas*, *Pattharkats* and *Mahavats* make up a larger portion of the nomadic communities of Uttar Pradesh. One similarity among them is that they trade in buffaloes and work with herbs and roots. The *Chamarmangtas* additionally beg for a living. The *Pattharkats* make and sell grind stones or *sil-lodha* as well as honey extraction from forests. The *Nats* and *Mahavats* have traditionally been good trainers for wrestlers. In recent years, the spread of gym and gun culture, and energy-boosting medicines, have made old-style wrestling and skills in wielding *lathis* (sticks) unattractive, leading to a gradual decline of these nomadic professions

(Narayan 2013). *Mahavats* women clean ears and teeth in rural areas. They also take care of pregnancies of the cattle of the peasant communities. In the past few years, the entry of government veterinary hospitals villages has affected their work too. Rural (and urban) society still holds on to colonial perceptions about de-notified and nomadic tribes being thieves and criminals. If they manage to save some money and wear better clothes, they are looked upon suspiciously. The socio-cultural environment arising out of government record-keeping has solidified this mistrust. In recent decades, beset with a loss of livelihood, these communities in Uttar Pradesh have stopped being mobile and have tried—settling down permanently. Locally powerful castes have been instrumental in this process, and have facilitated, under their control, the settlement of these communities in open and barren lands in the villages. Even in the 1970s, P.C. Joshi had complained that there was no study to show how this was fashioning a new relationship of dominance/subjugation between these classes (Joshi 1975).

It is at this juncture that these communities are entering the world of election-based democracy. Talking on the politicization of communities, Rajani Kothari has argued that the social and numerical base of oppressed communities should increase in such a way that they could register their effectual presence in established or new associations. Without this, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) would not have real representatives and they would stay under the dominance of upper castes and their mafia groups in the villages (Kothari 2005). While the slogan of '*jiski jitni sankhya bhari, uski utni hissedari*' (the larger the numbers, the greater the share) fills the larger communities with enthusiasm, it hinders the progress of smaller socio-political groups like my subjects (Singh 2015). Badri Narayan has shown in his work that number-based politics has given political strength to only a few communities and a large section of society has been left behind (Narayan 2016).

Rajni Kothari had written about caste system in Indian society after Independence that the process of politicization of castes has made economical protections, protector-dependent relation, caste councils, and relationships important in power-based system of caste. Understanding the difference between powerful castes and rising castes, he has shown how these groups tried to assimilate those castes who were kept away from the system of power (Kothari 2005). We can use this insight of Rajni Kothari to understand political actions, local experiences of democracy and dynamics in Uttar Pradesh. We can try to see how this locality gets attached to larger political spaces of the country. For this I have first tried to underline the condition of nomadic and de-notified people in PRI. Thereafter, I have tried to see how within

the local power dynamic and hierarchy of caste, PRI has opened a window to acquire power for communities at the periphery.

I begin with the Sisai *gramsabha*. In my fieldwork, I found that almost all old *Mahavats* emphasize that they used to work as elephant tamer with some king or landlord. Though they were settled in this village for a long time it was only in the 2005 UP Panchayat elections when their voter identity card was made and they were included as valid benefit holder in this small political space. There are total 1312 votes in this *gramsabha* which is made up of different castes settled in different areas. There has been no popular naming of areas of *Mahavats* and they are settled on the 'cartographic margin' of the village. Their settlement is still devoid of basic requirements which state and central governments otherwise provide their 'weaker citizens' like India Marchand pumps, Indira Awas Yojna or toilets. The settlement has a vote of political value. *Mahavats* and other candidates who contest the election for village head or wishing to contest know this. That's why a kind of consolidation is forged amongst *Mahavats* who provide them entry into politics. Politics acknowledges this and then uses for its own benefit the already present and rising loyalties to empower itself and forging consolidation (Kothari 2005).

It is not just the democracy which figures in their desire. They are also adding a new chapter in traditional power relations of the village. Of the Dalits in this *gramsabha* are *Kori, Pasi, Dhobi, Chamar and Nai*. OBCs like *Bhujwa, Lohar, Barai, Badhai, Yadav, Loniya, Gharku* and *Saaim-Muslim* are also included. Upper caste communities have the most of the land. In the last two decades, youngsters of some backward communities and Dalit families who have gone to work in oil and gas pipelines in foreign countries, have earned enough to buy lands in the villages. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act has come and education is coming. Compared to last three-four decades fewer families now go to work in farms of upper castes. When *Mahavats* were first settled in public land of the village some big farmers thought that they would get cheap labourers. In 2016, in a *gramsabha* close to Sisai *gramsabha* two buffaloes of a farmer went missing one night. The farmer alleged that the *Mahavats* were behind this. He informed the police. Police arrested two *Mahavats* and they were incarcerated. In that situation a powerful family in Sisai *gramsabha* helped them get bail. When I talked to a *Mahavat* youngster he said that only the right to vote protects them.

This power of vote has protected them and changed the traditional structure of power relations. Here we can turn to another *gramsabha*, Parsada. Population of this *gramsabha* is 4000 and total voters are 2550. People of *Brahmin, Kurmi, Muslim-Nai, Pasi, Maurya, Dhobi, Yadav,*

Loniya, Bhujwa, Mahavat and Pattharkat castes are included in this. *Mahavats* and *Pattharkats* tell us that they were settled in that village since beginning while older people of other castes say that they started settling here sixty or seventy years ago. In this *gramsabha* a *Patharkat* by the name of Harishchandra won the Panchayatiraj election in 2015. The important thing was that while the number of this community is around 125 in the *gramsabha* they got 529 votes. This shows that other communities voted for the winning candidate in this *gramsabha*. In Uttar Pradesh, *Pattharkat* community earns its livelihood by cutting stones and making household items. Other than that another means of their income is to collect and sell honey. They hunt fox and rabbit as well. That apart, they have also started working in local brick chimneys to carry bricks. They are owners of small but permanent properties by the roadside. They are not unwanted in the village anymore and have the popularity to win elections. To get access into this arena of democracy they have had to forge a place in the public consciousness of the village communities.

Muslim Nats in Allahabad

Muslim *Nats* are found in the districts of Varanasi, Allahabad, Barabanki and Jaunpur. This community is divided in six sub-communities. Their names are: *Aman, Goleri, Mahavat, Rari, Siyarmarauva* and *Turkta*. *Goleris* make monkeys and bears dance. *Amans* beg. *Raris* are magicians and *Siyarmarauvas* hunt and eat jackal. *Mahavats* used to control elephants (Singh 2005). While in Sisai and Parsadavillages powerful castes are consecutively Thakur and Brahmin, in the *gramsabha* of Allahabad, Tendui, progress-belt Bahadurpur Patels are in powerful position. There are 2950 votes in this *gramsabha*. Most votes, 500, are that of *Kurmis*. After that Muslim *Nats* have 400 votes, *Yadavas* 200, Muslims 250, *Gadariya* 250, Bind 100 and Kumhar community has around 175 votes. *Chamar, Pasi, Khatik* and *Dhobi*, included in Scheduled Caste, have consecutively 850, 100, 80 and 50 votes. There are some people of other castes as well.

The *Nat* community has settled in Bahadurpur *gramsabha* permanently since 1900. When consolidation happened in 1968 in this *gramsabha*, some more lands came to it. Work has been done to see what changes have occurred in villages and farming communities of India. Some sociologists have tried to redefine their field⁸. Still, no work has been done on the topic to see how consolidation in UP has re configured rural power relations and given rise to new changes. In the matter of redistribution of *gramsabha* lands that have come through consolidation enough power has come in the hands of *grampradhan*. Using it they can make their supporters in the

village and change the rural power structure determined by land. *Mukhiya* in Bahadurpur gave some lands to this community so they could work in his farms. PRI has changed permanent power dynamics in this *gramsabha* as well. Despite the hegemony of *Patels* their voice for other communities has softened because they want votes of Muslim *Nats* in elections. On the other hand, Muslim *Nat* community wishes to elect their representative as well. A person of Muslim *Nat* community had lost *grampradhan* elections in 2005. A person of this community had said somewhat angrily to me that if his people won *grampradhan* elections then they will definitely get lease on some empty lands of the *gramsabha*.

V

Nomadic and de-notified communities in modern UP are finding their place in the grounds of democracy. They are winning local elections, losing it or affecting it while at other places their position isn't strong. We return back to Gonda district. I have focused on even those groups in this district who are still on the move and in wait of a permanent settlement. In reality, many nomadic communities move about the villages of UP like fish in water. People who have reached in mainstream do not pay heed to their numbers, presence, language, dialect and tone (Singh 2015). They keep migrating from one place to another and stop when they find any open place or banyan or holy fig tree. Their concern remains to get the support of at least one powerful person of the village. This person provides them work either at farms or other places in lieu of money, grain, husk for cattle or other important things such as cane etc. for hut. Nomadic people make contact with others slowly after settling in the village. Those communities that rear buffaloes prove to be useful to farmers, for August to November is the pregnancy period of the buffaloes. In return they take money or grains. They keep such buffaloes that do not get pregnant with them in exchange of some amount or through other oral contract. They return the buffalo to its master once it gets pregnant. This process goes on for weeks and a kind of trust is established with the farmers.

Even amongst themselves, nomadic communities maintain movements and try to empower themselves. The family settled in Bardhai market close to Paraspur in Gonda district is attached to Khadaura *gramsabha* some 14 kms away. Sannam lives with his wife, children and son-in-law in Bardhai market. His sister Sunita lives with him too. Sunita is married to Mangesh. Mangesh is a dancer in a *nautanki* group. Sunita said that she had come to her sister-in-law in Paraspur after which she would travel to Khadaura. The *Grampradhan* of that place has promised to make her voter card. Her brother-in-

law, Gopal, a member of a *nautanki* group was already in Khadaura. This *nautanki* group is run by Nanku of Khadaura *gramsabha*. Nanku belongs to Lodh caste and has a powerful hand in the politics of village. He gives work to the family of Gopal and Mangesh in his *nautanki* company and in return, this family will cast their vote as directed by Nanku. This way a relation exists controlled by political power in this temporary settlement. Sunita hasn't cast her vote yet. She hopes that when her voter card would be made, her problems would be solved, that is, she will get all those benefits government had given to poor people. This way the politics of promise is also inspiring nomadic people to settle. For this settling it is important that they connect with people and get involved in their lives.

This way people of nomadic communities especially *Nats*, *Pattharkats*, *Mahavats* and *Chamarmangtas* search for a chance in rural space to settle. In this direction PRI has brought a bigger chance for nomadic communities. After getting included in voter list of a village the right to vote in Lok Sabha or Vidhan Sabha comes on its own and they get connected with political soul of the nation. Actually through kinship nomadic communities forge a cultural alliance. Kins not only help one another but they also act as guarantor of their character and behaviour. I have found that when it is asked of them that how long they have been living there they say that they have been living there for long and in the close by village or town stays their kin whom the *pradhan* or important people of that village know. By saying so they wish to cast off the fear inside them which has been discussed in the last section of this article and which English rule and its successor Indian state had instilled in them.

Just 6 kms off Paraspur in an open *bagh* of Baisanpura village, a group of around 50 people live. All of these are from *Chamarmangta* community. Their number here is stronger that is why they appear emotionally strong compared to other nomadic families of Paraspur but their physical condition is the same. In the name of property they have buffaloes, dogs and poultry. Along with begging and labour these people dance in weddings. They wish to settle somewhere around the village permanently and even asked me for help and guidance in the matter. An old woman of this settlement observed that whoever had a piece of land tried to encroach a bit more. But those who did not have any land could not do so and had to be constantly on the move. Though a lot of nomadic communities are illiterate they do know the power of letters.

In post-colonial countries, a report has an important place. Report is the soul of governance. Every person's data is in government's records. Weaker sections feel that by coming into records they will get the benefits

which government provides its citizen. A woman of Chamarmangta community close to Paraspur market had said to me that I recorded her words carefully on paper—*ee kagadva sarkar tak pahuchay detyo tav bahut miharbani hot. Hamhu ke ghar duar mil jaat. Kagad sarkar ke ghare tak pahuchay dihyo.* (I would be grateful of you if you could send this paper to the government. I could also get a house. Please send this paper to government). People standing on the periphery of democracy still hope that government will hear their voice one day.

Notes

1. The Renke Commission report of 2008 had arrived at a rough estimate of their population being between 10-12 crore. <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/niti-aayog-nod-to-panel-for-denotified-semi-nomadic-nomadic-tribes-5270427/> 05/08/2018
2. [http://socialjustice.nic.in/writereaddata/UploadFile/NCDNT2008-v1%20\(1\).pdf](http://socialjustice.nic.in/writereaddata/UploadFile/NCDNT2008-v1%20(1).pdf) 25/ 05/2016 .
3. *Dainik Hindustan*, 5 May 2014, Allahabad.
4. <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=114573> 02.07.16.
5. <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/denotified-nomadic-tribes-may-come-under-sc-st-act-dalit-5157803/> 03/06/2018.
6. Notified/ Denotified/ Semi-Nomadic Tribes
7. <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/niti-aayog-nod-to-panel-for-denotified-semi-nomadic-nomadic-tribes-5270427/> 05/08/2018
8. <http://www.epw.in/review-rural-affairs> 06/ 07/2016 .

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Representation of Indian Spirituality in The United States: Contributions of Swami Vivekananda and Paramahansa Yogananda

Sweta Kumari

The nineteenth century America witnessed an unprecedented growth in philology, while Indian philosophy had found its place in American Academia. For almost a century, American scholars such as Ralph W. Emerson, Henry D. Thoreau, Wilt Wiltman had read, debated, and interpreted Hinduism, the ancient texts and the religious practices of India. But the actual representation of ancient Indian spirituality and its meaning became possible only when spiritual leaders from India reached America. To understand the foundation of Indian spirituality and practices in the United States, the place of two important figures must be examined—Swami Vivekananda and Paramahansa Yogananda. These two personalities were the pioneers in sowing the seeds of Indian spirituality in the American soil. They presented a unique way to explain religion and the spirituality of ancient India that the West had never encountered before. Both monks had charisma and brilliant minds that enabled them to gather thousands of people to their presentations in America. They were not only well educated but were also formally trained for the monastic order of the Hindu tradition under two great masters of India at that point in time and had broad views of all the world's religions.

Swami Vivekananda had been trained under Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, a renowned spiritual teacher, and mystic in Dakshineswar, Calcutta (now Kolkata). Sri Ramakrishna was also an admirer of Islam and Christianity and considered them also as different paths that can lead one to God.¹ Paramahansa Yogananda was trained under Swami Sri Yukteswar, a monk possessed of a great wisdom and intelligence and also a profound astrologer in Serampore, near Kolkata. He had a keen interest in the scientific innovations that were happening in the West. Sri Yukteswar had, in fact, already written a book in 1895, *The Holy Science*, in which

he drew a parallel between the teachings in the Vedas and the teachings of the Holy Bible.²

Trained under these renowned Masters, Swami Vivekananda and Paramahansa Yogananda were well-equipped to represent ancient Indian spirituality in the United States. People in the West, particularly in America, had witnessed huge material advancement, even though religion and economic growth had always moved side by side in America. Because of their charisma and profound understanding of spirituality, these two spiritual giants initially drew thousands of Americans who belonged to various Evangelical Christian sects.

This paper focuses on the first encounter of America with these spiritual gurus from India. It explains why people in America were receptive to these leaders from the very beginning of their stay in America. There will also be an emphasis on the insight they provided to the West, their interest in explaining a 5000-year-old continuous spiritual tradition. The paper also spells out some of the peculiar features of America which compelled these spiritual masters to choose America as the platform to introduce their worldwide mission. Instead of dealing in depth about the message that yoga had for Americans, it will examine the speeches, writings, and the organizations that they established. A section will discuss the importance of the World Parliament of Religions in introducing Hindu philosophy and yoga to the United States. The objective of this paper is to show how the approach of these gurus and their organizations was ecumenical, not evangelical. While Swami Vivekananda focused on the introduction of Hinduism through a Vedantic approach, Paramahansa Yogananda introduced a full-fledged yogic philosophy, along with spiritual practices and meditation techniques which were derived from Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* and the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Why America?

It is also important to understand that the early spiritual leaders from India found America to be the most fertile

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ground in the world to disseminate their teachings. This in a way portrays the uniqueness of the United States in contrast to other nations of the occidental world. The receptivity in nineteenth century America towards Indian philosophy was one such important development. Since its foundation as a beacon of freedom for the modern world, once it broke off from the imperialist power of Britain and declared itself independent in 1776, America became an inspiration for other colonies, including India, which longed to throw off its British oppressors.

The first amendment of the American Constitution gave respect to all religious denominations, giving them space, legality, and the right environment to grow without the interference of the State.³ This model of "faith neutrality" was one of the milestones for freedom of religion and democracy in the modern world.⁴ This faith neutrality also gave all religious denominations an opportunity to develop, but it was attached to a condition of performance. If a denomination was unable to satisfy the spiritual needs of certain people, then they were free to move to other denominations or religious practices. But if a religious or spiritual practice was capable enough to deliver "the spiritual goods" and people were happy, then it was welcomed and had a good future in the United States.

During this same period, India was undergoing a religious and a spiritual transformation. Movements like Brahmo Samaj had initiated the Hindu Renaissance, which was consolidating Hinduism into one unified form. It was also bringing reforms to eradicate orthodox and superstitious elements from Hinduism that had sprouted over the course of time and degraded religion to a very low level. In 1861, Kriya Yoga, the highest form of Yoga was revived in India by two saints, Sri Mahavatar Babaji and Sri Lahiri Mahasaya, for its worldwide dispensation.⁵ Teachers like Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Sri Yukteswar Giri were very enthusiastic about the spiritual and material progress of the West and envisioned a bridge between the material development of the United States and the spiritual development of India. The writings of Indian reformists such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy had gained acceptance and appreciation among the Unitarians and the Transcendentalists in 19th century America. All these factors combined to make the United States the first choice among spiritual leaders as a testing ground for the teachings and spiritual practices of ancient India.

The World Parliament of Religions and Breaking of Stereotypes

As a result of the growth of philology and comparative studies of various religions in America, curiosity about

the world's major religions increased exponentially. The modernization of transportation, especially ships and ocean liners, made travel to foreign lands much more convenient. These advancements had set the platform in America to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of America in 1893 in a very unique and magnificent manner.⁶ Under the administration of John Henry Barrows, the General Committee of the Congress of Religion, later named the World's Parliament of Religions, was organized for the World's Columbian Exposition. More than three thousand invitations were sent to various religious leaders across the world in 1891. Few responded.⁷ It was to be a one of a kind of religious event in the history of mankind. Some of the major objectives of organizing this event were:

1. To bring together in conference, for the first time in history, the leading representatives of the great historic religions of the world.
2. To show to men, in the most impressive way, what and how many important truths the various religions hold and teach in common.
3. To promote and deepen the spirit of human brotherhood among religious men of diverse faiths, through friendly conference and mutual good understanding, while not seeking to foster the temper of indifferentism, and not striving to achieve any formal and outward unity.
4. To set forth, by those most competent to speak, what are deemed the important distinctive truths held and taught by each religion, and by the various chief branches of Christendom."⁸

These objectives demonstrated the impact of the advancement of comparative religious studies in America in the nineteenth century. This was due to a great extent to the works of various scholars, including the Unitarians and the Transcendentalists, who advocated a universal form of religion. They had studied oriental religions to get a holistic understanding of the world's major religions. The parliament gave formal recognition to the existence of other religions, other than Christianity.

There were a number of issues that emerged during the organization of this event. As the points of view among intellectuals about these religions were divided, so were the reactions to the invitation of the World's Parliament of Religions. Many Evangelical churches, including the Presbyterian church to which the chief architect of this event, John Henry Barrows, belonged, boycotted the event. The Archbishop of Canterbury also rejected this idea by making claims of Christianity being the only true religion.⁹ But overall, the invitation, various scholars and religious teachers of various countries welcomed the invitation for this event. Scholars like Max

Muller expressed their enthusiasm for the organization of such a spectacular event. Although Christian leaders got the maximum representation in the Parliament, nine other great religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, Judaism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shintoism, and Zoroastrianism—got a global platform to speak about their religions. The event was organized to find out the commonalities among these religions of the world, but at the same time the deeper agenda was to reaffirm Christian Supremacy over others.¹⁰

This event proved remarkable as the outcomes were not completely in accordance with what the organizers had thought. The Asian religious leaders presented their religion in a way that rejected Christian supremacy. The Asian ways of looking towards the religions were as different paths leading to the same Supreme God. This surprised the primarily Christian audience. These religious leaders made a deep impression not only in the mindset of America but on the whole West. One such prominent personality was Swami Vivekananda. He lauded Hinduism for being the most ancient religion, as well as for being very progressive.

Swami Vivekananda's address to the "Sisters and Brothers of America"

Swami Vivekananda made a very strong impression on America and all of the Western world through his first introductory speech at the World Parliament of Religions. There were certain qualities of Swami Vivekananda that made the audience driven towards Indian spirituality. On 11 September 1893, with his first sentence, in which he addressed the audience as the "sisters and brothers of America," he got a huge round of applause from the audience. His opening remarks had enough impact to make the audience attentive towards this Hindu monk. He was one of the fascinating speakers of the event, possessing deep spiritual insight, fervent eloquence, and a colorful personality as he elucidated Vedantic interpretations of India's spiritual culture.¹¹ The people of America and the rest of the modern world were astonished by this narrative. His speeches made a significant impact on many American minds.

The Native Version

Until Swami Vivekananda introduced Hinduism and its spiritual legacy to America, whatever was known about India was known only through secondary sources that were mixed with a lot of assumptions. All the scholarly works that were done in order to study Hinduism in the nineteenth century were very much segregated. Every scholar was in a way picking and choosing from Hindu

and Buddhist texts as per their understanding or their convenience. The reforms that took place in India in the nineteenth century in order to revive Hinduism had to a great extent unified the ideas of Hindu philosophy.

Taking charge as the spokesperson of ancient Indian spirituality and the wisdom of the *Vedanta* and *Bhagavad Gita*, Swami Vivekananda gave a detailed explanation of the legacy of Hinduism, calling it "the most ancient order of monks" and the "mother of all religions."¹² The past few centuries had witnessed a Christian dominated world that was functional through various missionary activities and colonization. In this scenario, hardly anybody in the Western world had heard the voices of ancient Indian wisdom. They had never thought that the religion and spirituality of a colony could be so powerful and have such a rich legacy. Vivekananda explained how Hinduism had emerged from revelation in the form of Vedas and despite the emergence of so many sects in due course of time, it had retained its relevance by assimilating them.¹³ He thoroughly explained the concept behind the idol worship in India and also rejected the idea of Hinduism being a polytheistic religion.

Inclusivity

Tolerance and acceptance were the underlying themes of the World Parliament of Religions. Swami Vivekananda emphasized them in order to explain Hinduism. In fact, he did not hesitate in designating Hinduism as the harbinger of these concepts. He said: "I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth."¹⁴ This was still the nineteenth century and there were still exclusionary laws existing in the United States that did not treat people of different faiths equally. Vivekananda took exception to them: "As the different streams having their sources in different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee."¹⁵

A Non-Proselytizing Stand with Strength:

In his concluding speech at the World Parliament of Religions, Swami Vivekananda took a firm stand against the practice of religious conversion. He directly targeted the missionaries who were proselytizing people around the globe. He questioned their lack of understanding about the real goal of a religion and their lack of sensitivity toward the other great religions of the world. He said, "But if anyone here hopes that this unity will come by the

triumph of any one of the religions and the destruction of the others, to him I say, "Brother, yours is an impossible hope." Do I wish that the Christian would become Hindu? God forbid. Do I wish that the Hindu or Buddhist would become Christian? God forbid."¹⁶ He advocated that real progress in this regard can be done by assimilating each other's religious spirits while maintaining one's own religious individuality.¹⁷

Vedanta Society and the Epistemology of Vedanta

Swami Vivekananda established the first organization in the United States that was based on Vedantic teachings and meditation. This was the first formal set-up in America about the teachings and practices of ancient Indian spirituality based on Vedanta.¹⁸ The first branch opened in the New York City in 1894 and was known as the Vedanta Society of New York.¹⁹ The title of his Vedanta society enshrines a verse from Rig Veda: "*Ekam sad, vipra bahudha vadanti,*" which means, "Truth is One, sages call it variously."²⁰ Swami Vivekananda also wrote a number of books which explained the practicality of Vedanta. He explained the four different forms of Yoga, namely, *Jnana Yoga, Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, and Raja Yoga*. Swami Vivekananda accepted the importance of Hatha yoga, but he said it was important primarily in making one's body fit so that it can aid in one's spiritual progress. He put more emphasis on the meditational aspect of yoga.²¹ Although Swami Vivekananda's stay in America was very short and he passed away in 1902, his work had a deep influence in broadening America's mindset in understanding India's ancient legacy.

Swami Rama Tirtha and Shri Yogendra

Swami Rama Tirtha, another advanced yogi from India and an expert on Vedanta, visited America in 1902 during his world tour from Tokyo to Toronto. Although his stay in the US was limited to just one-and-a-half year, he had a deep influence on those with whom he came into contact.²² Like Swami Vivekananda, he envisioned the benefit that both East and West could harness from each other. He advocated the practicality of Vedantic teachings. He explained the concepts of perfect morality and total abstinence. He described how by "... keeping the body in active struggle and the mind in rest and loving abstinence means salvation from sin and sorrow, right here in this very life."²³

While Swami Rama Tirtha stressed the actual practice of Vedantic teachings, Shri Yogendra, a Hatha yoga expert who visited America in 1919, laid primary importance on spreading awareness about Hatha Yoga, which he felt could help people in the West keep physically fit.

Unlike Swami Vivekananda, he did not focus much on the spiritual aspect of Yoga. Instead, he laid more emphasis on its physical healing dimensions.²⁴ Invited by certain New York socialites who were enthusiastic about the natural cure, he demonstrated many *asanas, pranayamas, and siddhis* as a part of yogic purification of the body, which completely astonished them. His demonstrations—like the swelling of the lungs, control of body temperature, and the generation of electric stream from his fingers—got coverage in the *World Magazine*.²⁵ Shri Yogendra was able to form the 'Yoga Institute of America' in 1920 in New York. His experience in America was not very satisfactory, for he found it very difficult to make Americans understand this new philosophy. After teaching and explaining Hatha Yoga for almost three years on the East Coast, he returned to India in 1922.²⁶

Paramahansa Yogananda's Arrival and the Formal Establishment of Yoga-Meditation in America

Swami Vivekananda successfully planted the seeds of Vedanta and meditation in the American minds. Swami Rama Tirtha complemented the works of Swami Vivekananda and Shri Yogendra made an attempt to introduce Hatha Yoga in America. But yoga in its full-fledged form had yet not been established in the United States. In 1920, Paramahansa Yogananda arrived in Boston to participate in the International Congress of Religious Liberals. Paramahansa Yogananda's arrival was a landmark in the establishment of Yoga meditation in America. For he brought the teachings and practices of Raja-Yoga, the "royal" science of Yoga to America. He not only brought the yogic teachings from India, he also picked out key yogic principles underlying the scriptures of other religions, particularly the *Holy Bible*. His teachings were a complete package of the eightfold path of yogic science, including the highest form of Yoga meditation, known as the *Kriya Yoga*. The seeds of yoga that Paramahansa Yogananda planted in America were a combination of the physical, psychological, and spiritual aspects of Yoga. What Swami Vivekananda did for the first-hand introduction of Vedantic philosophy and overall Hinduism, Paramahansa Yogananda did for Yoga meditation.

His first lecture at the International Congress of Religious Liberals was published in the form of a book called *The Science of Religion*. His lectures drew a large number of Americans who later became his lifelong followers. There were various elements in his maiden speech and his following lecture tours across the United States that were unique and impactful. His teachings helped Americans understand the Yogic philosophy and its practices.

A Universal Definition of Religion

Paramahansa Yogananda also provided a psychological definition of religion, describing it as an inward experience and not merely the objective definition generally given for religion which is based on theology.²⁷ This was not a conventional explanation of religion. Separating the notion of religion from dogmas, he reduced the differences among various religions as the result of different geographical locations and other extraneous circumstances.²⁸ These factors affected intellectualism and mentality of the various nations which in turn determined the formation of various religions of the world.²⁹ He explained that it was not possible to have the same religious customs and traditions from country to country. He described sectarianism as the result of man's limited understanding of the deeper esoteric meaning of religious doctrines and the tendency to stick rigidly just to their exoteric meaning.³⁰ Connecting religion with the goal of life, which was bliss and this bliss was nothing but God, he defined it as "the permanent removal of pain and the realization of Bliss, or God."³¹ This was a very unusual definition of religion. Religion to him was not a divisive force which was based on certain dogmas; rather it was something that could be experienced and was the ultimate goal of every human being.

The Religious Methods

Paramahansa Yogananda not only defined these terms but he also explained the various religious methods through which these concepts could be realized. First, he explained the evolution of the spiritual self through the enhanced development of the thought process. In India, the highest form of this intellectual method, known as *Jnana yoga*, was practiced in order to attain self-realization and to reach the tranquility of the spirit beyond thought and bodily sensation.³² Secondly, he explained the devotional method which includes all forms of prayers and worship. He said that this method depends upon the depth of the prayer. Thirdly, he explained the scientific method of meditation, describing it as a state of conscious sleep in which one is practically able to control the sensory organs and interiorize oneself. Finally, he shared the most important aspect of his teachings, which was the scientific method or the yogic method. Instead of using a Sanskrit verse, he quoted Saint Paul's words in Corinthians, 15: 31, "I die daily." In his yogic interpretation, he described St. Paul as having attained a high spiritual level where he was able to control his body and mind.³³ This was very exotic way to explain an Eastern spiritual practice by correlating it with the Bible.

Yoga as Universal

Paramahansa Yogananda took on the task of proving how Yoga was for all human beings, irrespective of their place of origin. He did not simply take the system of Yoga and describe it only through Hindu philosophy. Rather he explained the elements of Yoga that were present in all religions, even if those religions originated in different times and places. He took a step-by-step approach in order to make people understand the roots of all religions, which was nothing but finding God. He elucidated that Yoga had the ability to make man perceive the truth behind all religions.³⁴ He made people in America understand that the techniques of Yoga were for all. It was not limited to the people of the East or to a particular religion. Instead, it was for all mankind, whether they were Easterners or Westerners.³⁵ In his lectures, he consistently showed the commonalities that lie behind all religions. He showed how the teachings in the Bible and in the Hindu scriptures, like the *Bhagavad Gita* and Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, had the same deep meaning, even if outwardly they seemed completely distinct from each other. This was his key to make Western minds receptive towards his teachings.

Another important element of his teachings were the Yogic and meditation techniques which he taught. They drew large numbers of people towards him who wanted a direct experience of God. He also emphasized that Hatha Yoga was an essential prerequisite to keeping the body and mind healthy and preparing it to practice the meditation techniques of Raja Yoga, which allowed followers to attain the highest goal of Yoga science, which was God-Realization. As he said, "Anyone who has established God in his soul temple is a yogi. He can say, with me, that Yoga is for the East, North, South, and West—for all people, that they may follow the byways of theology to join the highway of Yoga. The right road leads to the palace of God's bliss. He who once reaches there shall go no more out."³⁶

Yoga Needed for a Balanced Modern Life

Paramahansa Yogananda emphasized the need of Yoga in the modern life. He stressed the need of complete development of body, mind, and soul that was possible through a balanced life. He explained that it was important for Americans to simplify their lives. He cited the example of Henry Ford's proposal of a five-day work-week, arguing that this was needed for people to relax and get out of the city environment so that they could devote that time to their personal development.³⁷ This personal development could be achieved by knowing the 'art of living.' This 'art of living' could be nurtured especially

on children by giving equal attention to learning the skills to earn money and on learning the methods of spiritual growth. Americans knew how to make money and they were also religious for most of them attended sermons and masses. The difference that Paramahansa Yogananda made was his emphasis on the methods that could practically enhance the spiritual progress of a person. And this method was Yoga meditation. He said that sermons can temporarily inspire the minds of children, but concentrating the mind through meditation can give everlasting results.³⁸

Lecture Series across the US and the Foundation of Self-Realization Fellowship

Paramahansa Yogananda received huge ovations from the audiences wherever he spoke. He got invitations to deliver lectures at different parts of the country. In the midst of it, the first centre of Self-Realization Fellowship was established in Waltham, Massachusetts, near Boston, in 1922. Finally, in 1925, the international headquarters of SRF was founded in Los Angeles.³⁹ This was the first organization in America that was fully dedicated to the dissemination of Yogic teachings and practices. Some of the 'aims and ideals' of this organization were as follows:

1. To disseminate among the nations a knowledge of definite scientific techniques for attaining direct personal experience of God.
2. To reveal the complete harmony and basic oneness of original Christianity as taught by Jesus Christ and original Yoga as taught by Bhagavan Krishna; and to show that these principles of truth are the common scientific foundation of all true religions.
3. To point out the one divine highway to which all paths of true religious beliefs eventually lead: the highway of daily, scientific, devotional meditation on God.
4. To liberate man from his threefold suffering: physical disease, mental inharmonies, and spiritual ignorance.
5. To unite science and religion through realization of the unity of their underlying principles.
6. To advocate cultural and spiritual understanding between East and West, and the exchange of their finest distinctive features.⁴⁰

Between 1924 and 1935, Paramahansa Yogananda travelled across the length and breadth of the United States to address audiences, attracting thousands of people. For instance, one of his lectures at the Philharmonic auditorium in Los Angeles was attended by 3000 people, fully packing the auditorium.⁴¹ His popularity got him an official invitation to the White House by President Calvin Coolidge in 1927. This was a first—a Hindu spiritual guru being invited by the President of the United States

to the White House.⁴² Along with the lectures, Yogananda also wrote many books, including the spiritual classic, *Autobiography of a Yogi*, and interpreted religious scriptures like *The Bhagavad Gita*, *The New Testament* and *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, in a yogic way. Through his interpretations of these books, Paramahansa Yogananda explained the common elements contained in all these sacred books of various religions. He also compiled his teachings in the form of lessons that could be mailed to students who joined his organizations for home study.⁴³ This was a very innovative idea at the time and it made the followers more connected to his teachings and the practices, even if they were not able to come to the SRF temples. This was one of the important reasons behind the wider spreading of the teachings of Self-Realization Fellowship in America and worldwide. He was the first Hindu monk who spent his whole lifetime in the United States to promote yoga meditation. And even after his passing in 1952, his organization, Self-Realization Fellowship, continues to grow in numbers and strength.

Non-Evangelical Foundation of Yoga Meditation

The establishment of Yoga and meditation was accomplished with a very non-evangelical approach. What started with Swami Vivekananda's impeccable speech to introduce Hinduism and the spiritual legacy of India was sealed with a formal structure under Paramahansa Yogananda. But the success of these two spiritual leaders in establishing ancient Indian spirituality and yoga in the United States was largely based on their non-evangelical, all inclusive approach. They did not preach conversion from one religion to another. Instead they acknowledged all religions to be true and all leading to the same goal. The organizations that they formed were also based on same ideology. According to the Encyclopedia of America's Religious History, "Like the Vedanta Society, the SRF emphasizes commonalities rather than differences between Hinduism and Christianity. Its approach, however, is more practical and less philosophical emphasizing the therapeutic and material benefits of Hindu yoga."⁴⁴ Their explanations added to the works done by the scholars of the nineteenth century. They also fulfilled the lacunae that were hindering the Westerners to have an objective understanding of this philosophy and its practical aspects. They also pointed out the flaws that prevailed in the Christian Missionaries. Swami Vivekananda directly attacked the attempts that the Christian missionaries were doing in India by erecting huge Churches in India instead of helping the poor.⁴⁵ Similarly, Paramahansa Yogananda also mentioned the presence of a large number of prosperous and powerful congregations in the name of Jesus Christ that were more

focused on the outward physical worship of Christ, but not much on deep prayer and meditation. This he termed the 'indoctrination of Churchianity.'⁴⁶ But this does not mean that they were against Christianity. In fact, they were staunch believers of the teachings of the *Holy Bible* and both drew several parallels between Hinduism and Christianity. Thus, it can be inferred that the introduction of yoga meditation was not evangelical in nature. In fact, it's inclusivity and features like practicality, self-experience, and scientific methods attracted many Americans towards it.

Later Advancements

With the passage of time, a number of spiritual leaders arrived to the United States. Eventually, the norms for immigration were by the US government under the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson when he approved the Immigration and Naturalization Act, 1965. Also, known as the Hart-Celler Act, this law abolished the previously existing quota system based on national origin in the United States.⁴⁷ After the passing of this act, the influx of Yoga and other religious teachers from India increased tremendously. The 1960s and 1970s were a time of cultural revolution; America's youth were feeling the need of spiritual upliftment. This consisted of two groups that followed two opposite ways in order to achieve this goal. One of the groups, deviated towards psychedelic drugs, imagining that the hallucinations provided by these drugs led them to a different consciousness. The other group came into touch with the Eastern ways of spiritual techniques like yoga and meditation at that time. In fact, many from the former group later joined the latter. The prominent gurus who made their mark in the 1960s and 1970s and whose organizations have been successful include Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and his Transcendental Meditation, Swami Muktananda and his Siddha Yoga Dham Associates (SYDA) foundation and Swami Satchidananda: Swami Satchidananda, a disciple of Swami Sivananda and his Integral Yoga Institutes.

In the present times, there are many other influential gurus who have arrived in America to teach ancient Indian spirituality and Yoga and meditation. Some of them also formed their organizations or centres. Few of them include, Swami Kripalvanandji or Bapuji and his Kripalu Centre and Kripalvananda Yoga Institute, Mata Amritanandamayi (Amma), Amma Sri Karunamayi, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and his Art of Living, and Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev and his Isha Foundation. In all these advancements, the contributions of Swami Vivekananda and Paramahansa Yogananda play a crucial role in the establishment of the roots of Indian spirituality in the

United States and turning thousands of Americans towards it.

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Philosophy and Literature: A Discussion on the Two Contiguous Facets of the Concept of 'Truth' About Knowledge

Mousumi G. Banerjee

The Philosophy 'of' Literature and the Philosophy 'in' Literature

I certainly feel myself to be in a perplexing condition of an angst given the fact that there already exists a sizeable oeuvre of writings on the philosophy of literature and a demonstration of such a relationship in varied literary and performative works and representations. Any attempt to begin a discussion on the very category of 'literature' is, more often than not, confounding since it has been looked at and approached in different ways that include conceptualizations like 'criticism', 'metacriticism', 'literary criticism', 'critical theory', 'critical philosophy', 'literary history', 'literary theory', 'poetics', 'hermeneutics' and so on. Again, literature has also been analysed from multifarious vantage points including those of the social, sometimes the sociological, the historical, the political, the cultural, the psychological, the psychoanalytical, the linguistic, the rhetorical and the stylistic. Now, the question is, how do we identify the 'philosophical' amidst the interplay of these approaches. Is it a question of a hidden essence or an issue of methodology? Or, in other words, is it essentially metaphysical or architecturally formalist? Beyond all the above-mentioned considerations, it, perhaps, implies an attempt to comprehend and grasp the nature of reality around us and, in this supreme task, literature serves to somewhat reify nature in all its possible manifestations. Whether we talk about science, history, the human mind and its functions, it is that intrinsic value that underlines everything.

Having said that, I would now try to look at the two distinctive categories here — the philosophy 'of'

literature and the philosophy 'in' literature. The evident prepositional interpolations are sometimes more baffling than what they seem to be in actuality, since they could have certain implications that are not only different, but also wholly oppositional. Philosophy 'in' literature would largely encapsulate the philosophical explorations that any good piece of literature is expected to allow, for instance, it is not difficult to identify strains of existentialism in the literature of Sartre and Camus, mysticism and, sometimes, disillusionment in Blake's poetry, pantheism and the worship of Mother Nature in Wordsworth's work, a philosophy of human destiny in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* or a notion of divine providence and a celebration of eternal goodness in Milton's *Paradise Lost* and so on. On the other hand, when we speak of the other category, that is the philosophy 'of' literature, we usually mean the innate idea of universality that a creative piece of writing or, for that matter, any other imaginative form of representational art is grounded in or imbued with. It somewhat also entails a search for the 'ideal' through the 'reflectional'. As Albert William Levi, in his authoritative *Literature, Philosophy and the Imagination*, precisely puts it:

Speculation about the ideal has its own rules. Like empirical research, it strives after unification, although it lacks the discipline of the principles of experience. Nevertheless, says Lange [F. A. Lange], only in "creation" in the narrower sense of the word, in *poetry*, is the ground of reality consciously abandoned. In thought, form may have an edge over content, but in poetry it is completely dominant. "The poet in the free play of his spirit creates a world to his own liking, in order to impress more vividly upon the easily manageable material a form which has its own intrinsic value and its importance independently of the problems of knowledge."¹

In other words, a very important faculty of the mind, called 'intuition', is at work whereby the poet or, for that matter, any creative persona, brings his subjectivity to bear on this world of objects, that he seeks to give an expression to. Again, 'literary expression' demands a

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specialized faculty by which the objective of creative writing is achieved. It is, both semantically and stylistically, different from the 'expression' or the 'language' of other non-literary discourses. To put it simply, the former aims for a metaphysical perception of natural phenomena and the latter seeks to arrive at a materialistic understanding of the experience of man and the world. But, however dichotomous the standpoints may seem to be, it may admittedly be said that both endeavour to cognitively achieve not only a mere semanticity, that is often positivist, but also a significant point of ethicality, that is not only ideological but also irreducible, imperishable and universal appealing to the inner depths of humanity, whether through 'figurative representations of the entire truth'² or through positivistic experimentations of the material reality. The interesting note in this is that both entail imaginative freedom and epistemological formulations. Hence, when we are trying to identify the very idea of philosophicality in literature, in particular, we need to bear in mind the 'synthetic activity'³ that the authorial mind undertakes. Also important here is to take a cognizance of the fact of what Aristotle meant by his theory of the tragic 'catharsis'. As Levi quotes in this regard:

"The more freely synthesis exerts its function, the more aesthetic becomes the image of the world." The imagination turns even the shapelessness of fact and the uselessness of suffering into a world of art.⁴

We, therefore, may say that on the face of such apparent antinomies between scientific understanding and imaginative perception, both the 'cultures of the mind' entail anthropomorphic as well as anthropocentric conceptualizations about the universe along with a search for truth, and both 'breathe the atmosphere of mutuality, of a magnanimity which envisages science and literature as a kind of dual monarchy jointly sovereign for men's minds and sensibilities'.⁵

Truly contextual to the discussion so far would be to talk, not so much in profuse details though since that does not presently constitute the general objective of this project, about Kant's *Critique of Judgment* being in a conceptual disagreement with his *Critique of Pure Reason*. In the latter work, Kant sounds to be paradoxically metaphysical when he claims a positivistic culmination of metaphysics itself, the feasibility of which is something that he himself is sceptical about. In the former, he envisages a 'logic of illusion', something that is starkly in contradistinction with 'pure reason'. While it is seldom possible to say whether Kant's formulations – concerning 'the scientific, the moral, and the poetic activities of the mind'⁶ not to be independent and non-identical functions – could be considered as an outré generalization or not, we have

to say that 'his general account of the imagination is too restricted, too confined in its position as a mere instrument in the service of scientific knowledge'.⁷ The expression 'judgment', perhaps, implies the only category by which a certain distinction between the realms of science and the literary arts can be discerned from the Kantian perspective. Two chief ideas that can get us somewhat closer, if not directly to the phenomenon of literature, but at least tangentially to the understanding and appreciation of literature and the arts, are 'pleasure' and 'purposiveness'. For Kant, 'intuition' was a very important idea since he felt that the 'purposiveness' of the world or, for that matter, nature originates from our 'Reflective Judgment'.⁸ This 'purposiveness' of nature, for him, was 'a transcendental principle of the faculty of Judgment'.⁹ Of course, this is an instance of the signatorial Kantian terminology since another conceptual equivalent would be 'the myth-making faculty' in man, as was envisaged by Bergson and Cassirer.

The apparent contradiction between the claims and postulates of scientific understanding and judgmental perception, the former trying to 'make a connected and unified experience out of our perceptions of nature'¹⁰ and the latter being about the power of 'Judgment' to read 'into nature' the same connections, leads to the antinomial objectivity-subjectivity supposition. What we derive from Kant, in this regard, is that the faculty of judgment lies deeply rooted in 'creative imagination' which is 'as worthy of respect as is the Understanding itself'.¹¹ Again, such imagination cannot be taken to perform a purely 'synthetic' function that seemingly leads to the unification of all perceptions, thereby constructing human experience from a cognitive stance. The formation of a structure of knowledge cannot only be brought about by cognition of the natural phenomena. Such cognitivism may lead to a scientific understanding of phenomena but may not be able to bring about an aesthetic conceptualization of nature and the world that potentially fosters in a moral awakening. In fact, it would not be proper to consider the first two Critiques, that is those of Pure Reason and Practical Reason, in separation from the third, that is that of Judgment, since the imagination on which the faculty of judgment rests is 'the capacity of a finite, discursive intelligence to work up the material of experience from its diverse elements into something which can be known or judged'.¹² It is an intrinsic human potentiality from which not only is judgment produced, but also is literature generated. Literature, therefore, is the resultant of that 'productive' imagination which is transcendental in nature. Though ideas are drawn from the world of nature, they are synthesized not only cognitively, but also, more significantly, imaginatively, before an aesthetic understanding of nature and experience is achieved.

Hence, literature needs to be productively conceived or 'imagined' and it is not, for that reason, a merely 'reproductive' formulation of the mind. The phenomenal world is, then, an ideological or an *a-priori* or a Platonic given which is, thereafter, brought to undergo the process of synthesis in order to conceive of a literary experience. A text draws its materials from the empirical conditions of man but this does not imply a non-existence of that transcendental or 'the original unity of apperception'.¹³ The author has to bring his intuition into play on universal phenomena before he goes on to creatively interpret human experience. His writing is, hence, mediated by his own perception and interpretation of life and its situations. The imagination performs an activity that helps the author to create a supra-real world in which he often makes human subjects participate, as in fiction. But poetry may be more subjective and introspective so far as the poet's perception of an idea or a set of ideas is concerned. He often expresses the world through metaphors and metonymies – an activity that entails an intense sublimization of objects that are, at once, available to our direct or primary level of perception. This process of metaphorization results from the transcendentalizing faculty of poetic imagination that allows the poet to go beyond the limited nature of immediate perception and construct a new form of knowledge of the world and its objects. This creative mediation is of supreme significance for literature since it does not merely record experience, but rather attempts to develop a firm system of values that all humanity is universally tied with. What Crowther states about human creativity, in his *The Kantian Sublime*, is worthy to mention here:

... we feel an authentic astonishment at what human creativity can achieve. This harmonious tension between what is perceptually overwhelming and what is nevertheless known to be artifice provides ... the basis for one aspect of a specifically artistic sense of the sublime ...¹⁴

Literature, perhaps, then seeks to provide that 'unbounded expansion of the concept'.¹⁵ This is, perhaps, the greatest 'cognitive' benefit to be derived from nature, since our aesthetic delight is derived not only from 'instruction' but from that expansion of our mental horizons. Hence, philosophy lies in the birth of a hitherto unconceived vision that leads the reader to have 'a juster, clearer, more detailed, more refined understanding'¹⁶ of life and the world. The reader comes to perceive the author's compassionate view of humanity and has a glimpse of that truth which is wholly different from the 'truth' of the scientist. Different authors may have different means to reach that truth, but it is essentially that point of sublimity that they aspire to achieve. This truth may best be understood by an empathetic

involvement with a certain text, since the text is no longer a mere source either of information or of 'inferential knowledge about something',¹⁷ but rather becomes the source of knowledge that can be acquired only by means of a realization of 'living through'.¹⁸ This very process of 'living through' develops a 'refined awareness' and a 'moral insight' perhaps no other experience can offer, and therein lies the philosophical worth or value of a creative work of literature:

The value of a work of art as a work of art is intrinsic to the work in the sense that it is (determined by) the intrinsic value of the experience the work offers... It should be remembered that the experience a work of art offers is an experience *of the work itself*, and the valuable qualities of a work are qualities *of the work*, not of the experience it offers. It is the nature of the work that endows the work with whatever artistic value it possesses; this nature is what is experienced in undergoing the experience the work offers; and the work's artistic value is the intrinsic value of this experience. So a work of art is valuable as art if it is such that the experience it offers is intrinsically valuable.¹⁹

Literature as an Aesthetic of the Sublime

Any attempt to consider literature as a philosophical, a cultural, an artistic and an ideological artifact would entail a corresponding consideration of a literary text as an 'aesthetic' product that is able to disseminate manifold kinds of pleasure quintessential to the underlying value that the work is imbued with. By dint of this artistic worth – though here I am not going into what exactly comprises such a worth – a piece of work and, more particularly, a piece of text, does intrinsically allow for an aesthetic assessment that, in its turn, is a test of its worth. I would, here, bring into context what Berys Gaut says in his article 'The Ethical Criticism of Art':

In the narrow sense of the term, aesthetic value properties are those that ground a certain kind of sensory or contemplative pleasure or displeasure. In this sense, beauty, elegance, gracefulness, and their contraries are aesthetic value properties. However, the sense adopted here is broader: I mean by "aesthetic value" the value of an object *qua* work of art, that is, its artistic value.²⁰

What, perhaps, is more significant in such an aesthetic assessment of a work of art is the content or, to be precise, the nature of employment of a specialized use of language within a textual structure, and not necessarily the form, of a given text. A certain level of internalization or, in other words, a close association with the value of the text is, more often than not, demanded. A kind of an identification on the part of the reader or the literary critic or the art critic is necessary for him to see into a work of art. This identification may not only be limited to an appreciation of the aspect of performativity of the

language, that may be constitutive of rhetorical figures of speech, poetic imagery, rhyme patterns, uses of metre or any other nuanced linguistic feature, but also of the 'holistic grasp of its achievement'.²¹ Holism is especially true in the perception of artistic works since there are no pre-determined or explicitly definable categories by which a definitive standpoint can be taken when we go on to analyse the aesthetic value consisting of categories that are neither generalizable nor, for this reason, universal, since they do not possess an 'intrinsic aesthetic value'.²² They rather need to be put to a kind of an 'aesthetic use' by means of artistic expression that lends them the perceivable quality of aestheticity. The only, somewhat general, terms that can be used would be the 'depth' and 'breadth' of a work of art:

The profundity of any artistic interpretation and evaluation must, in turn, be regarded as a function of the "depth" and "breadth" we predicate of the artist's normative insight... The greatness of a work of art can be determined only by reference to *both* of these complementary criteria.²³

Artistic imagination that is able to bring about a human import in a work is, in the most obvious sense, able to give birth to a humanistic piece of writing with a potential aesthetic efficacy. Such a kind of writing would, for certain, be mediated by the artist's own sublime interpretations of the human condition. But, somewhat contrarily, we also do realize that 'Whatever the world of aesthetic contemplation may be, it is not the world of human business and passion: in it the chatter and tumult of material existence is unheard, or heard only as the echo of some more ultimate harmony...'²⁴

The topology of a work of art is, thus, metaphysical and complicated since the artist might have 'imagined everything and projected it into the painting'²⁵ and, equally diverse, are the forms of subjectivity of the literary critic and, hence, he comes to see the truth that constitutes the fundamental essence of the work in inconceivably and indiscriminately heterogeneous ways:

One person is more pleased with the sublime; another with the tender; a third with raillery. One has a strong sensibility to blemishes, and is extremely studious of correctness: Another has a more lively feeling of beauties, and pardons twenty absurdities and defects for one elevated or pathetic stroke. The ear of this man is entirely turned towards conciseness and energy; that man is delighted with a copious, rich, and harmonious expression. Simplicity is affected by one; ornament by another. Comedy, tragedy, satire, odes, have each its partisans, who prefer that particular species of writing to all others. [It is plainly an error in a critic, to confine his approbation to one species or style of writing, and condemn all the rest. But it is almost impossible not to feel a predilection for that which suits our particular

turn and disposition. Such preferences are innocent and unavoidable, and can never reasonably be the object of dispute, because there is no standard, by which they can be decided.]²⁶

The aesthetic in art is, in essence, indicative of a silent appraisal of its beauty – a form of appreciation that needs a specialized training and perspicacity. The critic discovers meanings, from a work, that do not remain confined to seemingly limited textual contours. He constructs a world for himself – a space that is not only the dwelling place of his subjectivity but is also a trans-semantic ideality where he, in his turn, comes to create an onto-theology of his own that perhaps helps to posit a better world. The necessary element of ethicality, therefore, lies in these refined perceptions, in a Kantian sublimation of immediate sensations. It comprises the experience of the critic – the result of his distinctive confrontation with the text and the corollary of a unique synthesis between his 'empirical consciousness'²⁷ and his intuitive apperceptions. The work, then, allows for a spontaneous receptivity in developing an epistemological urge to see beyond 'empirical circumstances of individual[s] or social life'²⁸ on which the work primarily bases itself. The critic comes to cognize beyond his 'finite consciousness'²⁹ and 'the peculiarities of human thought'.³⁰ The work enables the creation of a new world in which an aesthetic contemplation transcendentalizes into a moral and ethical consciousness. Art enables, in this way, a 'categorical imperative', 'starting from primitive animism up to theological supranaturalism or mystical ineffability',³¹ to be enacted by the practical, aesthetic and 'cultural human being'.³² Art becomes a domicile for a multiplicity of 'transcendent functions of reason', by way of the critic's 'spiritual activity'³³ in search of 'the inconceivable mystery'³⁴ of all conscious phenomena.

All art, therefore, have a teleological implication, in the sense that it is the implied 'telos' that counts for the hermeneutic urgency of a text along with its ontological, yet metaphysical, reality. The aestheticity lies both in the mind of the critic and at the core of the artist's work that only seems to have a corporeal boundary to it. It may also be taken to lie beyond, perhaps sometimes not even in the work itself, but somewhere outside or beyond its spatio-temporal reality – somewhere in the consciousness and in the psyche. In this sense, a work of art may not be a conscious reflection of the psyche, but a rather subconscious one. But, the work comes to possess a mind of its own consisting of the subconscious reflections of the artist and, hence, the artist himself becomes his work. It is this event of 'becomingness' that lends the work its life, its organicity, its ontology; the aesthetic is its theology – the 'transcendental essence'. The work evolves to take the shape of an aesthetic phenomenon after it has been conceived, represented and, thus, reified. But, its value

lies in the negation of its reification, its tendentiality to impel, or even compel, the critic to remain in pursuit of the very sublimely concealed imaginaries that, when perceived, may usher in a 'cultural consciousness',³⁵ in a new world-view and a new 'ideal of humanity'.³⁶ Hence, the 'inner life forms'³⁷ are no longer the Kantian 'thing in itself', but rather are metaphysical illusions which the 'logos' cannot capture, incarcerate and perform. But, again seemingly contradictory though it may be, the ontology of the 'logos' – however elusive – cannot not be considered before 'seeing' or 'knowing', or coming to 'know', the metaphysics at work. The 'well-tempered whole'³⁸ of the work is rendered corporeally insubstantial, but is rather heightened by enlightened thinking to be the site for the formation of discursivity. Hence, the transcendental of a work lies in its future discursivity as well or, in other words, in the epistemological alleys and avenues it leads the critic to traverse, in the very element of its beyondness in relation to the conditions that occasioned its existence. The text becomes the site for the 'totality of all values of reason in an absolute unity',³⁹ whereby 'empirical consciousness' is transformed into a 'cultural and aesthetic consciousness'. The text is a piece of 'enlightened reason' and we, as critics of literature, can see it only by means of 'our little world of knowledge, willing, and formation'.⁴⁰ There is no fixed or definite law that can guide us to a formulaic proposition concerning the aesthetic value of a text which is a complex and heterogeneous structure within the domain of which various kinds of cognition are at work:

... like the world of art, the world of empirical, spatio-temporal existence, and likewise the world of ethical values, is not "encountered" immediately, but rests on principles of formation that critical reflection discovers, and whose validity critical reflection demonstrates. Thus, art is no longer isolated among the kinds of consciousness; rather, art is that which presents the "principle" of these kinds and their relationships in a new sense.⁴¹

Notes

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13. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
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Politics of Knowledge as a Cause of Unfair Development: Revisiting the Case of 'Niyamgiri'

Krishnamurari Mukherjee*

Introduction

Practices of development fuelled by the spirit of resource-intensive industrialization have undoubtedly bolstered India's economic growth. However, they have also negatively implicated the lives of a significant section of the Indian citizenry — the *adivasis* or indigenous peoples. Such forms of development practice have not only threatened them with displacement but also with cultural genocide. The case of 'Niyamgiri' from the eastern Indian state of Odisha proves to be one among a plethora of instances exemplifying the same.

If empirically-minded critiques have argued that economic growth has not entailed egalitarian distribution of benefits of that very growth, normatively-oriented ones have stressed that certain practices of development have resulted in serious normative violations. Although, both these critiques offer important insights into the problem, they have not been able to address an important aspect of development – its epistemological dimension.

By analysing the case of Niyamgiri, I argue that resource-intensive practices of development in India such as mining negatively affect the lives of *adivasis* because such politics of development is premised upon a politics of knowledge, which affects knowledge-practices upheld by them. This, in turn, exacerbates the social exclusion of *adivasis* making their existence extremely precarious.

The following analysis progresses over three sections. In Section 2, I briefly adumbrate the dominant vision of development that fuels India's major development practices. In Section 3, I present the case of Niyamgiri showing how resource-intensive practices of development negatively implicate the lives of the *adivasis*. In Section 4, I problematize the overarching vision of development

of India by arguing that the politics of development in India proves to be unfair for certain sections of the society because it is premised upon a politics of knowledge.

The Dominant Vision of Development in India: A Brief Outline

The fountainhead of India's dominant vision of development can be traced to the years following the independence of the country. Primarily envisioned and articulated during Jawaharlal Nehru's tenure as independent India's maiden Prime Minister, development as modernization was considered to be the sole remedy to impoverishment that prevailed in the country. For all practical purposes, development as modernization implied development as economic growth.

For the architects of independent India, economic progress was a precondition for the promotion of "national dignity, private profit, the general welfare, or a better life for the children".¹ Capital-intensive industrialization was a non-negotiable imperative so that the country could swiftly become economically self-sufficient. Institutions like the Planning Commission were created to chart India's story of development. If the First Five Year Plan "emphasized a more prominent role for the Indian private industry and agriculture", the Second Five Year Plan "witnessed the ascendance of heavy capital intensive industrialization, largely within the public sector".²

However, despite some early success, the Indian economy stared at a serious economic crisis towards the close of the twentieth-century. By 1990-91, economic slowdown had reached a tipping point. Public debt had risen up to 76 per cent of India's GDP.³ Even, "the current account deficit in the balance of payments...was more than 2.5 per cent of GDP"; and "debt-service amounted to 21 per cent of current account receipts".⁴ The dismal economic situation prompted the then Congress-government to restructure the Indian economy so as to overcome the impending the financial crisis.⁵

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The Indian economy was deregulated on the premise that liberalization of the economy would attract a greater quantum of private-cum-foreign investment, which would lead to accelerated rates of economic growth. With the restructuring of the Indian economy, market forces became the main harbingers of development. Industrial policy witnessed the greatest change. Industries reserved solely for the public sector such as mining, minerals, oil and the like were opened up to the private sector.⁶

Thus, even though there have been noticeable changes in terms of how to bring about development in the country, the paradigm of development defined as economic growth has remained constant. The case of Niyamgiri proves to be an inevitable outcome of such an understanding of development.

Revisiting the Case of Niyamgiri

The Niyamgiri hills located in the eastern Indian state of Odisha is a part of the eastern highlands of India. It traverses the districts of Rayagada and Kalahandi in the south-western part of the state. Niyamgiri is home to the Kondh community of indigenous people or *adivasis* as they are referred to in India.⁷ They are considered to be “among the few peoples in India still classed as a Primitive Tribe”.⁸ The *Dongria Kondhs* being a hill-dwelling tribe inhabiting the upper reaches of the Niyamgiri hills, whereas other sub-groups of the Kondh community for example, the *Kutia Kondhs*, *Desia Kondhs*, *Majhi Kondhs* occupy its foothills. They speak the ‘Kui’ language, which does not have any written script.

The Kondhs “retain worldviews and practices that go back to millennia, and embody forms of knowledge and relationships with nature that have been lost to many of the so-called civilized peoples”.⁹ They exemplify “everything that the Indian state and urban educated folks would call ‘backward’: an absence of literacy, simple levels of technology, shifting cultivation, animism, lack of schools and hospitals, *kachcha* paths to their villages, no electricity and so on”.¹⁰

Agriculture practiced in the form of shifting cultivation is one of the main customary occupations of the community. The villages have a “demarcated territory” wherein, shifting cultivation is practiced.¹¹ Alongside agriculture, the Kondhs depend upon the forests of Niyamgiri for their livelihood by procuring and selling “minor forest produce”.¹² Moreover, the Kondhs rear animals for purposes of agriculture, ritualistic sacrifices as well as for consumption.¹³

The Kondhs are also known for their art of weaving. The Kapdanganda shawls exemplifies a rich heritage of the Kondh community. Woven mostly by the unmarried Kondh women, the shawls symbolize “their heritage

and ethnic identity”.¹⁴ The off-white thread that is used to weave them “is procured from the Domb community, a local Scheduled Caste community, by bartering harvested crops”.¹⁵ The different motifs that are depicted in the shawls represent the visceral relationship, which the Kondh community shares with the Niyamgiri hills.¹⁶

Niyamgiri’s thick forests have a wealth of “rare medicinal herbs”, which the Kondhs “use to treat a range of ailments”. The medicinal plants also prove to be a vital source of their livelihood. Susanta Dalai, a development professional who works with the Dongria Kondhs, argues, “Uncultivated plants have multifunctional roles, which add diversity to local food system, reinforce local culture and contribute diversity to farming systems. They are equally important for ensuring food, nutrition, social and economic security”.¹⁷

Another characteristic feature of the Kondhs is that they are animistic. Animism is the belief that all plants, animals and objects have spirits. For the Dongria Kondhs, the Niyamgiri hills is not just their home more importantly, it is also the abode of *Niyam Raja*. “The Dongria Kondhs who believe that they are the descendants of the *Niyam Raja* or *Neba Raja*, also worship him”.¹⁸ It is *Niyam Raja* who provides them with all that they require and desire: meat from wild boars for consumption purposes as well as sacrifice for ritualistic practices, fruits such as mango and jackfruit, fresh air, and clean water from streams.

Apart from *Niyam Raja*, the Kondhs worship *Dharani Penu*. “She is recognised as the creator of the world and is venerated as she sustains life”.¹⁹ She “resides in every Dongria village” and “is represented by three long pieces of stones posted upright and another two pieces of stone placed horizontally over it”.²⁰ Furthermore, every village entrance has “a small square piece of earth, enclosed by four bamboo posts...and covered on the top by perforated umbrella made of leaves” representing another God – “Jatrakudi Penka who protects the village from drought, epidemics and other natural calamities”.²¹

The Kondhs’s way of life gains more significance when their intrinsic relationship with their immediate ecosystem comes to light. “More than 100 streams flows from the Niyamgiri hills and most of the streams are perennial”. The main rivers of the region are Vamsadhara and Nagavali, of which the former is referred to as the ‘Life Line’ of Kalahandi district.²² It is because of this reality that DongriaKondhs refer to themselves as *Jharnia* or “the protectors of the many streams of Niyamgiri”.²³

I highlight these characteristic features of the Kondhs and of Niyamgiri in order to establish the fact that these peoples exhibit a way of life that is “known for their harmonious, sacred and symbiotic relationship with nature”.²⁴ They articulate a conception of life that is starkly different from urban ways of existence. But, what

could be the reason for such variance? A chief reason for such variance is that the epistemological frameworks upon which they conceive of their way of life prove to be distinct and antithetical to their urban counterparts.

However, such a distinct way of life came to be assaulted and threatened with obliteration by the imperatives of economic development. Apart from being home to the Kondhs, Niyamgiri is rich in mineral resources. It has huge quantities of bauxite. The government of Odisha aided by the altered economic context of the country and in order to meet the objectives of economic development facilitated Vedanta Resources Limited, a United Kingdom based mining company to mine the bauxite ores available in the Niyamgiri hills.

Mining as a form of industrialization is deemed to ensure rapid economic growth, which it was thought would fuel social development. Bhakta Charan Das, a former Member of the Indian Parliament, had stated in 1996 that the "Government of India and the Orissa Government should take a keen interest to set-up at least a large alumina plant because" of heavy deposits of bauxite "in Niyamgiri and Sijimalli of Kalahandi district" and he justified such a project on the grounds that "a minimum of 40,000 people can be sustained out of the different kinds of earnings."²⁵

Vedanta had first set up an alumina refinery plant in Lanjigarh, Kalahandi located around the foothills of Niyamgiri in the early 2000s. Thereafter, in 2004, Vedanta signed a memorandum of understanding with the Government of Odisha to mine the bauxite deposits available in the Niyamgiri hills.²⁶ The bauxite ores would provide Vedanta's Lanjigarh plant with unabated supply for manufacturing aluminium.

The alumina refinery in the Lanjigarh block of Kalahandi district also threatened the Kutia Kondhs and the Majhi Kondhs who lived in the foothills of Niyamgiri with displacement.²⁷ It destroyed the Kinari village, "displacing over a hundred Majhi Kondh families to a settlement known locally as 'the rehab colony'. This is a walled compound of concrete houses, circled with barbed wire. Residents have no farmland, and although some work as labourers for Vedanta, most survive on hand-outs".²⁸

In a self-published report, Vedanta offered the following justifications for their projects in Niyamgiri. "In a region where inhabitants have witnessed virtually no major development interventions since Independence, the Lanjigarh Project is regarded by the local population as presenting a significant opportunity for progress and growth".²⁹ Furthermore, the report also argues "that the state's mineral wealth represented the most viable route to achieving rapid economic improvements".³⁰

The crux of Vedanta's justifications brings to light

a key issue pertaining to the theory and practice of development. What is development or when it is needed is more often than not authoritatively imposed by such people who are deemed to possess expert knowledge. They are the ones who can claim to know what the people on the ground need or want. This top-down mechanism of authoritative allocation of values pertaining to the politics of development signifies the manifestation of a politics of knowledge. This politics of knowledge in turn delegitimises all such forms of epistemological practices that prove to stand in the way of development.

Vedanta's assault on Lanjigarh had alerted the hill-dwelling Dongria Kondhs. They did not want to suffer the same fate as their foothills cousins and had resolved to fight overtures to mine the Niyamgiri hills. "The fight against Vedanta was for our homes and our God God *Niyam Raja*" asserts Ladho Sikaka, a male Dongria Kondh elder of the Lakhpadar village located in the recesses of the Niyamgiri hills. On a separate occasion, he offered a much more nuanced justification for the Dongria Kondh's anti-Vedanta, anti-development struggle:

See what has happened in Lanjigarh. When the Company (VAL) was not there, the Kui folk (the Kutia and DesiaKondh communities inhabiting the foothills of Niyamgiri) were like us, we lived like brothers. You could identify them as Kandha (Konds). But when the company came, everything changed. Land was lost, culture was lost, and identity was lost. Now, they are labourers. They were kings, owners over their own land before. Now you cannot make out who is pano, who is kandho, everything is mixed. What is the use of that kind of development? We will at the end become labourers.³¹

Landi Sikoka, a female Dongria Kondh elder makes the same argument albeit in a more rudimentary manner, which nevertheless possesses an intuitive appeal: "Try throwing a currency note at the hen – it won't even peck at it. Of what use is such money? One whiff of wind can take away all the (currency) notes, but if you take away our forest we will not be able to survive".³²

Two observations—one specific and the other generic—emerge from the abovementioned assertions. First, the life practices of the Kondh community are "still predominantly non-monetised".³³ And, the Dongrias "spurn wage-earning, as they feel it denigrates the self-esteem of a self-sufficient community such as theirs".³⁴ Secondly, to reiterate a point made earlier, the epistemological frameworks that govern the life of the Kondhs are incommensurate to knowledge-practices upheld by majority of the Indian populace. Since India's politics of development is largely geared towards achieving macroeconomic standards for example, economic growth; the little cultures of India and their concerns such as the Kondhs are often overlooked by the enterprise of development.

The struggle of the Kondhs echoed beyond Niyamgiri and soon “an assemblage of resistance” emerged “out of interactions between Dongria Kondh, civil society organizations, corporations and government”.³⁵ As a result, the Niyamgiri Surakshiya Samiti (NSS) led by Prafulla Samantara and Lingaraj Azad came into being launching a social movement against the development project.

The NSS organized the Dongria Kondhs’s struggle for justice by taking the fight to Vedanta on various fronts: from long-drawn legal battles to protest marches and sit-ins. It was even successful in convincing powerful international actors such as the Norwegian government and the Church of England for withdrawing their support to the mining project.³⁶

Prafulla Samantara, one of the primary faces of the Kondhs’s struggle against Vedanta, states that mining projects do not ensure development for the *adivasis*. “The Dongria Kondhs are not acquainted with modern education and the skill-sets that such education provides. Hence, they will not be able to acquire any benefits from the mining project”.

According to him, one of the many ways in which actual development could be brought to the lives of Kondhs was through education in their own language that reflected their societal imperatives. “The villages in the Niyamgiri hills do not have any primary schools and the schools present near the foothills do not teach in the language of the Kondhs. Real development can only happen when schools are established in the villages of the Kondhs across the hills, where, they will be able to get formal education in their own language”.

Kalpavriksh’s study on Niyamgiri in 2016 vindicates such arguments as well. Although there were state-government run residential schools in Parsali and Chatikona, very few Kondh children attend them as they are situated far away from the pristine climes of Niyamgiri. Moreover, the Kondh children “do not understand and cannot relate to the syllabus since the medium of instruction is Odiya as opposed to *Kui*, the kondh language”.³⁷ The consensus among the Kondhs is that they are not opposed to formal education, but such educational institutions must be centrally located in their terrain and that the medium of education has to be in their own language.

A community of indigenous peoples such as the Dongria Kondhs is marked by very specific economic, kinship, religious, material-cultural systems. The mining project in the Niyamgiri hills sought to threaten all such features with complete erasure. The resistance put up by the affected community of indigenous peoples against the development project reified their stand vis-à-vis the dominant paradigm of development: the Dongria

Kondhs “cannot be seduced with money or belongings. Their value systems are entirely different, centred around nature and human dignity”.³⁸

The struggle for justice championed by the NSS was fundamentally about ensuring that a certain section of the Indian society is not denied their fundamental right to lead a life that they have chosen for themselves, a way of life that they believe in and one which ensures their self-respect and dignity just because they happen to be a numerical minority.

In 2013, the Supreme Court of India directed the villages that were affected by the development project of Vedanta to undertake a referendum regarding its viability. Although more than hundred villages spread over the Niyamgiri hills qualified the criteria of having been affected by the mining project, the Government of Odisha allowed only 12 such villages to exercise their votes. To the dismay of the pro-development lobby (the state government and the multinational mining giant), all the twelve villages unanimously rejected the mining project.

The case of Niyamgiri proves to be a departure from the established norm, where a minority community’s rights and interests could not be sacrificed at the altar of development. However, ever since the Kondhs vetoed the mining project, several attempts have been made in the recent past by the pro-development lobby to overturn the verdict. Furthermore, since development is viewed as the panacea for almost all problems plaguing the Indian society it becomes extremely difficult to ascertain whether the victory of the people of Niyamgiri would be an everlasting one:

There is no doubt that the current demand for industrial growth and development, based primarily on the extraction of minerals, water and forest resources is obliterating indigenous communities and their habitats. The model of economic development being followed worldwide has resulted in glaring inequity, is entrenched in structural violence against certain communities and the natural world and is slowly obliterating the diversity of societies, cultures and livelihoods that exist around the world.³⁹

Through the exposition of the case of Niyamgiri, I strove to argue that certain practices of development prove to be unfair for certain sections of the society (for example: the *adivasis*) not just because they have been left-out by the existing patterns of resource distribution; not also because the overarching vision of development have produced serious normative violations.

Such practices of development prove to be unfair because they are premised upon a politics of knowledge. Such politics of knowledge is not only not accommodative of epistemological diversity, but also one that delegitimises all such epistemological frameworks that do not adhere

to the dominant paradigm. In the following section, I will theoretically vindicate the above assessment.

Politics of Knowledge as a Cause for Unfair Development

Development is dependent on knowledge. As Anna Malavisi puts it, "Understanding what development is relies on knowledge; decisions about development policies and programs are based on a certain knowledge; often the knowledge of some can be deemed to have a higher epistemic authority and, hence, credibility than the knowledge of others".⁴⁰

Let us analyse the case of Niyamgiri in light of such insights. The practice of natural resource-intensive industrialisation such as mining betrays an inherent epistemological bias towards modern science and technology and their application for achieving development. Such a vision of development is reified by the fact that "humanity's history with minerals is one of growing drumbeats of demand stimulating ever more elaborate dances of supply".⁴¹ Vedanta's justification for their aluminium refinery at Lanjigarh as iterated in the preceding section reifies such a viewpoint.

What kinds of implication do such epistemological biases have for the practice of development? The way in which development is defined and practiced in India has the power to delegitimize other epistemological frameworks that are not upheld by the majority. In the case of Niyamgiri, the refinery-cum-mining project was given more priority even if it came at the cost of knowledge-practices upheld by the Kondhs.

The case of Niyamgiri shows that the "epistemology of development" is based upon a specific epistemology "embedded within a particular social imaginary".⁴² Such an underlying premise of development "excludes other epistemologies" for example, "those from poorer countries or of those living in less advantaged situations", herein exemplified by the Kondhs.⁴³ The hierarchy that is created by the manifestation of such politics of knowledge is actually "where the power begins".⁴⁴

Knowledge-practices upheld by the Kondhs being steeped in their specific traditions do not adhere to the standards set by modern science. They are treated merely as superstitions or false knowledge-claims by the hegemonic epistemological framework that fuels the enterprise of development. As a consequence, they are regarded merely as impediments to development. But how is the politics of development justified?

Development practitioners in India essentially uphold that the notion of development, being "embedded in the older idea of progress", represents "an unfolding of potential" whereby it is conceived of as "a purposeful

improvement on the old".⁴⁵ Such a "vision of the developmental state" is engineered "to cast India in the mould of mainstream modernity and would brook no obstacle in this path".⁴⁶

Incidentally, that vision of development has a modular form in contemporary Europe and North America, which it seeks to emulate. It was put in motion "to prove a point to the dominant structures in the international arena that India had the capacity and potential to be as advanced in science and technology as any other 'developed' nation".⁴⁷ Simply put, development entailed catching up with the West.

The epistemological bias betrayed by the overarching vision of development evinced by India bears the imprint of Social Darwinism. According to it "the history of human civilization as a series of connected economic stages described as hunting-gathering, pastoral, agricultural and commercial or industrial".⁴⁸ However, as Debal Deb suggests such an evolutionary understanding of the phenomenon of development is flawed both in terms of its interpretation and its application.

In Darwinian evolution, there exists no perfect model, and evolutionary superiority cannot be attributed to any organism or individual in terms of strength or size. This fundamental feature of Darwinism was missed by social theorists of the 19th century, who reproduced current prejudices about social evolution with an aura of scientific authority. The misreading of Darwinian view of evolution and its misapplication to social evolution gave birth to Social Darwinism...⁴⁹

A key implication of the Social Darwinist account of development relevant for the present purposes proves to be the following: aboriginal inhabitants or indigenous peoples for example, the Kondhs of Niyamgiri are deemed to represent "primitive stages of human evolutionary history".⁵⁰ Primitive ways of life are considered to be hurdles in the path of progress that needs to be surmounted. A lack of industry is equated with "the lack of industriousness", which in turn justifies "the progressive encroachment of industrial development upon the pre-industrial".⁵¹ Vedanta's intervention into the terrains of Niyamgiri was justified by the same logic.

If such forms of reasoning proved to be of foundational importance for colonialism, they have certainly played an equally important role, albeit in a different manner for the onward march of postcolonial nations. Similar justifications have been used by postcolonial India to exploit natural resources in terrains inhabited by the *adivasis* not only to legitimize its developmental aspirations but also to reify its majoritarian national culture.

Consequently, can such a vision of development be really deemed to be fair? Even if one were to argue that such practices of development are just by the standards

of political economy, a case could still be made against such a claim. It could be argued that such practices of development are essentially unfair because the very vision of development from which they emanate is premised upon a politics of knowledge.

A politics of knowledge creates an epistemological hierarchy, whereby, certain knowledge-systems and practices originating from them are accorded legitimacy at the expense of others. The same can be discerned in India by the nexus between the politics of development and modern science and its applications. As Ashish Nandy puts it, in "the name of science and development one can today demand enormous sacrifices from, and inflict immense sufferings on, the ordinary citizen".⁵²

The practice of development in the form of mining is a clear instance of science and technology being employed to ensure modernisation and economic progress. But mining is an intrusive industrial process, which not only destroys "the pre-existing natural order" but also "the livelihood and cultural practices of surrounding communities".⁵³ The mining project in Niyamgiri implicated the lives of the Kondhs in the very same manner. The disequilibrium that it generated in the region not only reveals an antithesis of cultures, but more significantly the clash of two distinct epistemological frameworks that sustains them.

If in the chosen case, the pro-development lobby (a developmental state and the mining company) looks at the Niyamgiri hills as a natural resource that needs to be exploited for economic development, the anti-development lobby (the Kondhs and the wider civil society that supports their cause) views the Niyamgiri hills as a foundational element that gives meaning to the life of the residents of the region. For instance, the Kondhs regard the Niyamgiri hills as the abode of their deity *Niyam Raja*, thereby, attaching a sacred meaning to it.

Vandana Shiva argues that the "treatment of nature as a resource which acquires value only in exploitation for economic growth has been central to the project of development".⁵⁴ The reconceptualization of nature as natural resources also entails the transformation of the "relationship of people to nature". A relationship "based on responsibility, restraint and reciprocity" becomes one of "unrestrained exploitation".⁵⁵ How does such an argument play out in the chosen case? Niyamgiri, which is sacred to the Kondhs, becomes desacralized; cultural ties are rechristened as economic relationships. In the process, the crisis inherent to the politics of development comes to the forefront.

The "organizing principle of economic development based on capital accumulation and economic growth renders valueless all properties and processes of nature

and society that are not priced in the market and are not inputs to commodity production".⁵⁶ Whereas bauxite ores available in the Niyamgiri hills are seen as paths to progress, its negative effects on the region are passed-off only as costs that a people must bear for future promises of development. The politics of development defined as economic growth renders the Kondhs's intrinsic relationship with Niyamgiri valueless.

India's paradigm of development proliferates certain invasive practices of development, which do not accord due recognition and respect to the way in which *adivasis* conceive of their lives. The case of Niyamgiri shows that the way in which members of the Kondh community envisages their lives, their relationships with each other, their immediate environment and the wider society is at odds with the epistemological framework that governs the politics of development in India.

Such practices of development not only threaten peoples such as the Kondhs with displacement, cultural genocide and more catastrophic consequences. Intrusive practices of development, exemplified in Niyamgiri by mining sought to completely exterminate how the Kondhs lived their lives: the way in which they practice their agriculture; their weaving; their medicine; their visceral relationship with their immediate environment; their faith in their Gods; even their native language.⁵⁷ Therefore, the chosen case proves to be an instance of unfair development because development being based upon a politics of knowledge engenders a life threatening politics for the Kondhs of Niyamgiri.

Conclusion

It is widely expected that India will soon graduate to a developed state from a developing one. Such a transition now seems to be only a matter of time. However, will that onward march be regarded as one that has been fair to the diverse ways of life it represents? The case of Niyamgiri proves to be instructive in that regard, it provides different vantage points to take a stock of the substantive and the procedural aspects of India's development politics.

Although the phenomenon of development might be perused from both empirical as well as normative premises, I have attempted to make an epistemological critique of the same through the case of Niyamgiri. In the process, the essay has attempted to illuminate a substantive concern regarding the politics of development in India, unless and until the dominant vision of development recognises and accommodates different epistemological frameworks present in its society it would continue to be an unjust enterprise.

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57. The Kui language spoken only by the Kondhs is an oral tradition, which would have faced gradual erasure due to the wrath of forced displacement. Displacement would have dispersed a tightly knit community and in such a case the Kondhs in their individuated capacities would have had to assimilate themselves with majoritarian cultural traditions leading to its eventual obsolescence.

Bengali Culture Over A Thousand Years.
Translated from the original Bengali by Sarbari Sinha.

Gulam Murshid

New Delhi. Niyogi Books. 2018. pp. 614+Preface and Acknowledgements, Selected Bibliography and Index.
INR 995/-

AMIYA P. SEN*

The book under review is an English translation of *Hazar Bochorer Bangla Sanskriti*, published from Dhaka in 2006, and which has been, by all accounts, a well-received and an extremely popular work. Its continuing popularity in part explains this translation; apparently, both the author and the translator decided that this entertaining and instructive work ought also to be made available to non-Bengali readers in a free and lucid translation. As a reviewer, I can only joyously uphold that decision.

The problem, however, with reviewing such books is that the translator's contribution is either somewhat understated or not judged at all, especially when there is no scope for comparing the original with the translated version. In such cases, a reviewer is never sure if a particular error of conception or articulation lay with the translator or the author. On the whole though, I would allow the translator the benefit of doubt for two related reasons. Assuming that a translator is not also an expert in the relevant field, factual errors are likely to go unnoticed. As far as conceptual problems go, the translator's job would have been met if only he or she was really to remain as faithful as possible to the original text, notwithstanding any suspected shortcomings.

Murshid's work comprises 14 chapters in all, covering a wide variety of subjects ranging from history, politics, social anthropology, the arts and architecture, women, music, sartorial manners and even food habits. Much of the material is derived from the author's previous works particularly on the development of Bengali language

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and literature and woman-related reforms. As can only be expected, Murshid is at his best when it comes to useful and insightful surveys of social, linguistic and literary developments in colonial Bengal. The work concludes with a chapter that claims to bring out the 'distinctiveness', somewhat simplistically I fear, of Bengali culture. I shall return to this question presently. As an overview of Bengal's history and culture between roughly the tenth and twentieth centuries, this book is breathtakingly comprehensive in its scope, copiously informative, engaging in its arguments and lucidly direct in its approach and articulation. This is a book that I would happily recommend to an informed and inquisitive college student and the interested general reader.

An underlying problem with this work, as I progressively discovered, was the ambivalence with regard to defining the concepts of 'Bengal' and 'Bengali' themselves. Now, if Bengal is taken to be a homogenized geo-cultural region one would have to say that such a formation exists no more. A once palpable linguistic and cultural unity has now been decisively overridden by the emergence of new political frontiers. W. Bengal and Bangladesh are now two distinct political entities, one a province within a federal formation and the other, a sovereign state in its own right. Each has its own political compulsions as the ongoing controversy over the National Registry in India clearly reveals. To me what also undermines this acclaimed unity is the term 'Bangladesh' itself, representing an appropriation of sorts, a category claiming to exclusively represent the Bengali habitat and 'authentic' Bengali culture. Here, it would be pertinent to recall that the term 'Bangladesh' was coined by President Zia ur Rehman, in lieu of 'Bengali' only so

that the Bengali-speaking population of W. Bengal may be excluded. Arguably, to call this territory East Bengal or else 'Purva Bangla' would have been more apt and innocent.

It is no less problematic to define Bengal or Bengali on the basis of a commonly spoken language. The problems here are manifold. First, I am not sure if the sheer multiplicity of dialects in the region allows for an undifferentiated 'Bengali' linguistic or cultural unity. Notwithstanding my roots in erstwhile east Bengal, I cannot understand a word of the Bengali spoken in Sylhet or Chittagong. In the Muslim dominated areas of W. Bengal, one way to distinguish the Bengali Muslim from the Hindu is still the former's preference for words like *pani* (for water), *phoophi* (aunt) or *apa* (older sister). Second, Bengali language spills over both geographical and political boundaries. There is an active Bengali diaspora now at work, both within the subcontinent and outside. I am given to understand that the Delhi-NCR region, with its significant Bengali presence, organizes Durga puja celebrations on a scale, visibly larger than any city or town in W. Bengal other than Kolkata. The *Probasi Bangali* (diasporic Bengali) has contributed no less to Bengali culture, of which the author himself is but a fine example. In the colonial period, the Western educated Bengali Babu was virtually the second colonizer and almost everywhere he went, there sprang up either a unit of the Brahma Samaj or else a Kali Bari (Kali temple). Third, throughout the work, the author treats Bengali culture as falling exclusively within the domain of two religious communities, the Hindus and the Muslims. On the other hand, if 'Bengal' and 'Bengali' were to be treated as more composite categories, it would have been only apt to also mention, however briefly, the several other communities that have made ethnic Bengal their home: Odiyas, Biharis, Armenians, Jews, Nepalis, Bhutias, Sikhs, Marwaris, Oswal Jains and the Chinese. Each of these communities, I imagine, has contributed towards a Bengali social and cultural world, tied as this is in a complex relationship with the politics, religion, trade or finance of the region. The Armenians, as I know, were once a significantly conspicuous community both in Dhaka and Kolkata and who in Kolkata had not heard of the fancy Chinese shoe-maker, the dentist and of the numerous, hugely popular kitchens offering Chinese cuisine? I hear there is even a Chinese Kali temple in central Kolkata which only speaks for the historical process of acculturation.

The author rightly complains of the relative neglect that Muslim contribution to Bengali culture has suffered in the hands of Hindu scholars and scribes (p.220). To an extent, surely, this was a legacy of Mill and Macaulay who instilled in the Hindu the fear and distrust of the 'tyrannical' Muslim. And, admittedly, there was also

the self-ascribed arrogance in Hindu literary icons who did not condescend to seriously consider the worth of his Muslim compatriot. On another level though, this appears to be largely a matter of preferences born in deep cultural familiarity. After all, who among Bengali Muslim scholars has undertaken serious studies on Hindu ritual or social institutions and customs? For a work that claims to be essentially a cultural history, Murshid's work on occasions deals excessively with the political (see in particular pp. 184-203). Also dubious are his sweeping generalizations as when he claims (p.243) that Bengali society was not very conducive for romantic love or that making a secret of romantic love was 'a typically Bengali trait' (p.245). In a culture deeply permeated by both Sanskrit erotic sensibility and the folk, this would be hard to defend, even for pre-modern times. However, the feature that worried me the most was the author's rather simplistic and far from nuanced treatment of history itself. For instance, in the context of changing Hindu-Muslim relations in colonial Bengal as manipulated by the British, it would have been only apt to point out how official policy towards Indian Muslims underwent three distinct phases: first, the phase ending with 1857 in which the British ruling class remained suspicious of the Muslim community but not unduly alarmed, the second, immediately following the uprising of 1857 when the Muslims were unjustly blamed for the uprising, forcing leaders like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan to issue apologetic pamphlets and finally, the post-1885 phase when the burgeoning success of the Hindu dominated Congress forced a radical revision in the British policy towards the Hindu-Muslim question.

Murshid's work abounds in errors of historical fact and inattention to detail, some of these quite surprising. On page 272, we hear of a split in the Brahma Samaj in the year 1872 whereas the Samaj split twice, in 1866 and 1878 respectively. On page 362, we are given to understand that the first Bengali novel was *Alaler Ghore Dulal* by Tekchand Thakur (Peary Chand Mitra); on page 364, however, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay is shown to be the 'first' novelist. This is bound to be confusing for an average non-Bengali reader. On page 170, the author claims that since the coming to power of the Sena dynasty, Bengalis were ruled for about a thousand years by 'outsiders'. Now the Senas, as far as I know, were migrants from Karnataka and certainly distinct from the Abyssinian, Turkish, Pathan or Afgan rulers in Bengal who arrived from outside India. On page 92, in what constitutes a naïve generalization, Murshid compares the cultural message of the Vaishnava mystic, Chaitanya, to that of Martin Luther in Germany. Such a tendentious reading did indeed emerge in the days of Hindu nationalism; today it stands disavowed and disgraced. *Brahma Sangit*, such

as composed by Rammohun or his spiritual successors, was not in praise of (the Puranic deity) Brahma (p.159) but the metaphysical Absolute, Brahman. Also, contrary to the claims made by the author, Rammohun could not have attempted to establish a monotheistic religion based on the Vedas (p.155) since the Vedas themselves allowed reverence to multiple deities. In truth, Rammohun knew very little of the Vedic Samhitas and more often than not, by the 'Vedas', he meant the Upanishads. There is an equally misleading assertion made in respect of Vidyasagar (p.163) to the effect that this reformer modelled his widow marriage campaign on the lines anticipated by Rammohun himself. In truth, while Rammohun did set a precedent for hunting up scriptural sanctions, he never considered marriage to be an option for upper caste Hindu widows. His preference, clearly, was for a life of ascetic widowhood. In the 1850s, ironically enough, the Hindu orthodoxy often cited Rammohun's preference to denounce Vidyasagar's justification of widow marriages. Finally, to Murshid's point about how the Western educated Bengali progressively imbibed a secular worldview, I would offer the counter example of Bankimchandra who, when writing his *magnum opus*, the *Krishnarittra*, argued that it was his Western education that had made possible a belief in avatars! Arguably, there as very little that was truly secular within nineteenth century Indian culture and it would be no exaggeration

to say that given the pervasive and hegemonic effects of colonialism on the Indian mind, religious hermeneutics became an important tool of self-reflexivity and self-expression.

Specifically in the context of Indian Bengal with which I am far more familiar, I can think of three critical questions that may be said to constitute the said 'distinctiveness' of Bengali culture. First, together with the largely Bengali speaking state of Tripura, W. Bengal has had the experience of long years of Left Rule. There is a political sociology at work here which calls for an explanation. Second, why is it that caste friction or violence in ethnic Bengal has been relatively lower than that historically experienced in the states of the south or Maharashtra? Notably, there have never been Bengali equivalents of Phule, Periyar and Ambedkar. Third, why is it that in W. Bengal, there is at least a functional acknowledgement of male civility vis-a-vis the female? In cities like Delhi, men nonchalantly grab seats reserved for women in public transport and are prepared to assault anybody, young or old, male or female, whoever dared point to their unreasonableness and incivility. In Kolkata, as I have been noticing over the years, male passengers might wistfully eye an empty 'ladies seat' in an overcrowded bus and yet refrain from occupying it. Could we think of a cultural explanation for this?

A History of the Dasnami Naga Sannyasis Edited with an Introduction by Ananada Bhattacharya.

Jadunath Sarkar
Delhi. Manohar. 2018. pp. 251+Index. Price: INR 1095

AMIYA P. SEN*

Ananda Bhattacharya can justly be credited with running a very useful scheme under which several rare texts from the colonial and pre-colonial periods are being reprinted with a contemporary introduction. For the colonial period itself, these include ethnographic and survey reports and several other monographs which remain invaluable as sources of historical information on select events and episodes from our history. The present work speaks of Dasnami Sannyasis, (the word "Dasnami" denoting 10 titles which later turned into different sub-orders) constituting the largest and most powerful monastic order in India who not only contributed to the anti-colonial resistance in the late eighteenth century but played an important part in the internal politics of the sub-continent going back by at least two centuries. The interesting quality about these Sannyasis is that they were able to reconcile two apparently contradictory pursuits: a pietistic religious life and a violent recourse to arms. The Dasnami Order, founded by Adi Sankaracharya, subsequently came to be divided between *shaastradhari*s, those specializing in scriptural knowledge and *astradhari*s, those who served as a militia and were regularly employed as mercenaries by warring states in late medieval India. Interestingly however, much less is known about the religious life of the Dasnamis, barring their sectarian identity as Saivites.

Jadunath Sarkar's classic study does not appear to carry a date of publication though the present edition puts this down as 1958. If accepted, this would place Sarkar in a long line of scholars who have critically

commented upon Sannyasi militias, starting perhaps with Jaminimohan Ghosh (1923, 1930), followed by Farquhar (1925) and Orr (1940). Major contributions to this line of work to succeed Sarkar are those by anthropologist G.S. Churye, in 1964, and historians Lorenzen and Pinch in 1978 and 1998 respectively.

Sarkar's work has 19 chapters in all. The first three chapters are devoted to the life and teachings of Adi Sankaracharya; chapters 4 to 8 are on the organization of the Dasnamis, the operative rules of conduct pertaining to the domesticated and sedentary *Gossains* and the warring Naga (literally, naked) militia who were recruited by *akharas* (literally, wrestling rings).¹ Chapters 10 to 17 are on prominent Naga leaders like Rajendra Giri and Anup Giri (alias Himmat Bahadur) and their successors. Chapter 18 is a useful account of the involvement of the Dasnami Gossains in trade, banking and civil administration while the concluding chapter, the work of an anonymous contributor, is a detailed description of one of the principal centres of Dasnami power and presence, the *Mahanirvani Akhara* near Allahabad.

I am not sure if the world of scholarship has taken adequate note of Bhattacharya's own researches in the field, beginning apparently in 2004-05. In 2014, he produced a full-length monograph on the subject (*Dasnami Sannyasis in Worldly and Soldierly Activities*) which does not appear to have received the attention that it deserved. In the work under review, Bhattacharya's lengthy introduction (backed by field-work) is not meticulously detailed but also clears certain commonplace misconceptions. First, he disabuses us of the notion that the well-known Sannyasi rebels of the eighteenth century Bengal were Bengalis in origin. In truth, as Bhattacharya alerts us, most of them

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were migrants from upper and central India. Their major field of activity too appears to be centred in the area now corresponding to Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab and Maharashtra. Only two districts in colonial Bengal reveal any significant presence of the Dasnami Sannyasis: Bagura and Mymensing and this presence too appears to have been dictated by trade, money-lending and revenue farming rather than military involvement, which relatively speaking, was far greater in north and central India (pp. 30-35). Bhattacharya also disagrees with the view originally expressed since the 1960s that in fighting the early colonial state, the Sannyasis had the backing of the peasants (p. 69). On the contrary, if Bhattacharya is to be believed, the Sannyasis, as revenue farmers are known to have mercilessly extorted the peasants (p. 54).

Bhattacharya's introduction also serves as a useful corrective on certain questions regarding historiography. For one, he reveals the methodological limitations in David Lorenzen who, allegedly, relies far too much on secondary sources and in Pinch, who excludes Marathi and Persian sources as sources of study. Sarkar himself is accused of doing just the opposite: focusing far too much on the Persian and Marathi sources to the exclusion of the British East Indian Company records. More importantly, Bhattacharya accuses Sarkar of deliberately playing an aggressive 'Hindutva' card by emphasizing their martial valour of the Naga Sannyasis and neglecting to pay adequate attention to their other secular activities (Preface).

I also noted, however, certain instances of oversight and carelessness on the part of the editor. On page 10, for instance, he puts Adi Shankaracharya as a tenth century figure, only to change it to the seventh century on page 25. He also needs to be reminded that contrary to his claim (p. 27), the *Dabistan* is no longer considered a work by Mohsin Fani. Moreover, on page 30, Dasnami Gossains are identified with settled and domesticated householders and on the next page with celibate ascetics. Finally, I was intrigued by his use of the expression "married sannyasis" (p. 10), which to me appeared as a contradiction in terms. On page 76, he calls *sannyasi* a 'socio-religious entity'. However, on one level, all historical existence is social and yet I was reminded of the fact that in the Hindu tradition, *sanyas* begins by acknowledging that one is dead to society.

I am happy to recommend this work to all students and scholars, interested in the rich, multi-dimensional and complexly ordered spiritual lineages of India. I have enjoyed reading this work and so, I trust, will many others.

Note

1. We are reliably informed by Bhattacharya that there are now 13 extant *akharas* in South Asia, seven of which are identifiable with the Saivite Dasnamis and three with the Vaishnava Ramanandis.

New Postcolonial Dialects: An Intercultural Comparison of Indian and Nigerian English Plays

Vengadasalam, Sarbani Sen

Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019. 243 pages.

AMARA KHAN*

Sarbani Sen Vengadasalam's *New Postcolonial Dialects: An Intercultural Comparison of Indian and Nigerian English Plays* is an engaging chronicle of the British rule in India and Nigeria. Whilst few other historians have trodden this ground before, Vengadasalam's ingenuity lies in the breadth of her visualization, which extends to the investigation of how Indian and Nigerian English plays while being situated in national traditions reframed their own cultural environment in transnational terms. Such a range allows her to draw comparisons and contrasts across theatres and nations in a unique manner. Any serious learner of the issue will require reading this book.

Vengadasalam presents an intercultural context to the literary inquiry in the Indian and Nigerian culture before and after the struggle for Independence. Vengadasalam argues that the intercultural use of dramatic forms by both Indian and Nigerian dramatists is not unintentional but depicts a tenacity to introduce an innovative form for modern Indian and Nigerian theatre. Vengadasalam substantiates her argument by giving examples from the plays by two Indian dramatists, Rabindranath Tagore and Badal Sircar and one Nigerian dramatist, Wole Soyinka. Vengadasalam reveals how the dramatists make the traditional folk forms of Indian and Nigerian drama modern in their presentation so that the local and traditional themes become appropriate and effective for a contemporary audience. She indicates that for the Indian plays, both Tagore and Sircar made use of stories from Indian mythology whereas Soyinka relied more on Yoruba mythology. She reveals in her book that traditional and mythological stories were employed by the Indian and

Nigerian dramatists to raise current issues such as that of postcolonial identity for their contemporary audience.

Vengadasalam takes a challenge to decide why theories of the continent cannot be applied to intercultural literature and, instead, frames her book across the world of possibilities released by this interrogation and supports her arguments by bringing in various major critical approaches such as postmodernism, post-structuralism, and Orientalism. She discusses various experiences grouped under the Commonwealth canopy and how as a result, different critical patterns emerged. Vengadasalam shows how the issue of interculturalism gains momentum when the play is tested in relation to the respective indigenous culture. She further discusses the role of aesthetic as a support for her argument on the significance of postcoloniality as a literary construct. She further highlights that just as the West's attempt to 'subsume the personality and uniqueness of the "colonized subject" to Western master-narratives in an attempt to homogenize cultural production was wrong, so was its attempt to exoticize the other in an attempt to push away what it felt threatened by'.

Vengadasalam develops an intercultural approach drawn from critical theory. She evaluates the texts of the plays focusing on the binary model of the 'orient' and the 'other' introduced by Edward Said. In keeping with her argument, she sees the child whose experiences are being narrated and the adult narrating as a child as a metaphor for the cultural gap and the play of power between the colonizer and the colonized. Throughout her analysis, Vengadasalam studies the shift of 'English' as the language of Britain and her royalty to 'english', a native dialect and a carrier of authentic intercultural experiences of the ex-colonies. In this framework, her analysis of the text becomes thought provoking as she highlights the

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usefulness of interculturalism as a literary tool because it expands itself in order to highlight a work's particularities and significances even while studying it against another. Vengadasalam suggests that the characters perceived in the select Indian and Nigerian plays as alienated, subjugated, oppressed, and deprived are representatives of a colonized nation that is struggling to either attain or regain its identity, and the textual references become the strength of her book. On the other hand, she discusses two Indian dramatists, Tagore and Sircar, but only one Nigerian dramatist, Wole Soyinka, to address the issue of interculturalism but the imbalance in the choice and presentation of dramatists leave the exploration undeveloped. Although Vengadasalam explores the plays in detail but the reader, being unfamiliar with the texts, finds it difficult to understand the discussion, as she does not provide short synopsis or introduction to the plays as an evidence for how she justifies her critique on the select plays.

Vengadasalam presents many reasons for considering interculturalism an authentic approach to studying Indian and Nigerian theatre. She quotes many critics not as a starting point for critical debate but to support her arguments that arts, specifically drama, does not obey the laws of political boundaries and it is the rapport with audience that is considered important. For this she endorses the Indian and Nigerian dramatists' approach of using any theatrical device they considered appropriate

whether indigenous or colonial. Her choice of quotations is, therefore, selective as it revolves around her central argument.

Vengadasalam's focus is helpful in emphasizing one of the main issues of a postcolonial study in terms of struggle of the dramatists to present the colonized concerns to the world by incorporating colonial theatrical and cultural practices with their mythological and folk forms. Yet she does not deliver sufficient evidence for how these traditional forms in relation to the modern ones are used by the dramatists to treat modern themes suited to their urban audience, therefore, implications of the issue merit further analysis. The book's weakness is the perplexing absence of any of British rule's constructive cultural impacts and no allusion to any key British advocate of Indian and Nigerian art, if there was any. While we know that Soyinka and Tagore had deep reverence and regard for many aspects of British influence on Nigeria and India, it however stays unnoted by Vengadasalam.

Reading the book expands knowledge of how biculturalism in the make-up and rearing of Tagore and Soyinka empowered them both to evolve a style of intercultural theatre that acted as an interface for the cultural interactions that colonialism engendered in their nations. The book is a significant, highly readable description of the Indian and Nigerian colonial and postcolonial experiences, which is a lesson in how literary and historical studies can enhance each other.

Kipling and Yeats at 150: Retrospective and Perspective

ed. Promodini Varma and Anubhav Pradhan

Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. 2019. pp. 274. ISBN: 978-0-367-37658, Rs. 995/-

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Despite their valiant attempt at drawing parallels between Kipling and Yeats, the two stalwarts of British literature, in terms of their politics, ideology, and literary output, Promodini Varma and Anubhav Pradhan, the editors of *Kipling and Yeats at 150: Retrospectives/Perspectives*, have only partially succeeded in their endeavour. The need to study the two authors together arises in their ability to raise pertinent and contemporary concerns around ideas of nationalism, tolerance, infiltration, independence, foreignness, communal hatred, hybridity and ethnic distinctions.

The book has 17 articles in all, grouped under four sub-sections focusing on specificities like literary influence, authors' social identification, and political affiliation. The first sub-section is titled "Influences and Legacies" and has four articles covering a wide range of themes. R.W. Desai's article, "Yeats and Kipling: parallels, divergences, and convergences", explains how the two authors were similar yet different on issues like aesthetic appreciation, imperialism, and spiritualism. Exploring their commonalities, Desai contends that Kipling and Yeats shared a common interest in Indian philosophy though holding contradictory positions on political philosophy. The second article, "Mowgli, the Law of the Jungle, and the *Panchatantra*" by Mythili Kaul, underscores the hybridity of the Mowgli stories and argues that they could have been inspired from the *Jataka Tales*. Kaul believes that Kipling was familiar with the *Panchatantra* through his father John Lockwood Kipling. The last article of this sub-section, "Songs of the Wandering Aengus: echoes of the political Yeats in Dorothy Salisbury Davis's *The Habit of Fear*" by Peter Schulman examines Yeats's legacy in contemporary literature. Schulman has studied the inclusion of Yeats by the American crime writer Dorothy Salisbury Davis in her book *The Habit of Fear*

(2014), a historical fiction. Ruth Vanita operates within the framework of Indian Philosophy to evaluate Yeats's poem "A Prayer for My Daughter", but her reading offers relatively limited scope.

The second sub-section, "Self and Society", has four articles reflecting on Kipling's and Yeats's construction of self and their reception and contribution to the Indian and British societies. Malabika Sarkar's essay "Yeats, Kipling, and The Haven-Finding Art" equates sea journeys with creative and artistic abilities. Sarkar argues that voyages have always been given tremendous importance in literature: from Classical Greek literature to British Romantic poets, voyaging symbolizes creative skills and Yeats seems to have taken it to new heights in his poetry. Madhu Grover explicates this in her essay "Transgressed Margins: Reading the 'Other' Kipling". She shows how Kipling's journalistic articles turned him into an outsider enabling him to capture the mysterious aspects of Indian society. Grover defines such acts of transgression as a threat to British ethnicity and culture. K.B.S. Krishna comments on the relevance of hybridity through the character of Kim, whose closeness with natives and his modern education makes him a better candidate to train for espionage than boys educated in British public schools. Krishna suggests that Kipling advocated a hybrid form of education at a time when England was introducing reforms in its education system.

The third sub-section, titled "Craft, Medium, Politics", has five articles by Robert S. White, John Lee, Prashant K. Sinha, Indrani Das Gupta, and Dominic Davies, focusing on themes like the influence of Shakespeare on Kipling's and Yeats's writing, journalism and poetry; Yeats's political vision; censorship, and networks of empire. Robert S. White has used the adjective 'chameleon' to describe Kipling owing to his ability to maintain differences and

diversities within continuity and consistency in his books. John Lee's article "The writer is indebted to *the Pioneer* and *Civil and Military Gazette*': Kipling, newspaper and poetry" delves into the role played by the two newspapers in the early phase of Kipling's literary career and the use he made of them to reach out to the public. Prashant K. Sinha has attempted to explain Yeats's political vision in his four plays, *The Countess Cathleen*, *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, *The Dreaming of Bones*, and *Purgatory*. Indrani Das Gupta elucidates different kinds of censorships imposed by the British government in India following the 1857 Rebellion. Das Gupta has studied the literary representation of censorship in Kipling's work with specific reference to the poem 'The Ballad of East and West' that initiated new imperial discourses on boundaries. Dominic Davies's article is a close analysis of the development of infrastructure like the railways, telegraph, and marine ships in Kipling's two early works, *The Light that Failed* and *Captains Courageous*. He explores the reformulation of literature in integrating improvements in imperial networks in the backdrop of developing transport and communication infrastructure.

The fourth sub-section, "Masculinity and/as Empire", has four articles primarily concentrating on the themes of heroism and masculinity. Alexander Bubb, Usha Mudiganti, Nanditha Rajaram Shastry, and Anubhav

Pradhan's articles have found place in this sub-section. Bubb examines how Kipling and Yeats endorsed activism and heroism through their writings in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Contesting the pervasive notion of masculinity, Mudiganti in her essay, "I am not a Sahib: Boys and Masculinity in Kipling's Indian Fiction", propounds that Kipling's children stories formulate a hybrid heroism. Drawing parallels between Hinduism's yogic concept 'Karma' and muscular Christianity, Shastry claims that Kipling collated the two concepts in his stories. The last article "Chaps: Kipling, Yeats and the empire of men" by Pradhan is an attempt to show youth as a common category between the two authors. Kipling and Yeats defined the category of youth within their operating spheres. Pradhan argues that Kipling expresses his faith in characters like Stalky to defend the empire, while Yeats redefines nationalism to accommodate the Irish freedom struggle and the Irish literary identity.

The book encourages academicians, scholars, and teachers to rethink and reimagine these two proponents of British literature. It not only provides an insight into the personal and professional lives of both the authors but also delves into histories, cultures, politics and societies of the Indian subcontinent and Britain. Notwithstanding the use of different approaches of interrogation, the book opens up new avenues and areas for further research.

The Routledge Companion of Pakistani Anglophone Writing

ed. Kanwal, Aroosa, and Saiyma Aslam

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The editors of *The Routledge Companion to Pakistani Anglophone Writing*—Aroosa Kanwal and Saiyma Aslam—are scholars who have made important contributions to the gamut of Pakistani Anglophone literature. Whereas Kanwal has recently authored *Rethinking Identities in Contemporary Pakistani Fiction: Beyond 9/11* (2015) to bring out varied formations of identity in the context of 9/11, Aslam has written *From Stasis to Mobility: Arab Muslim Feminists and Travelling Theory* (2017) to probe the interactions between Islamic feminism and travelling theory.

This critical compendium consists of 32 articles on diverse themes that pertain to Pakistani Anglophone literature. It is divided into eight broad sections with each section comprising well-informed articles contributed by distinguished scholars hailing from different disciplines. In an engaging 'Introduction' the editors have encapsulated the objectives and central arguments of this book. They rightly claim that the articles featured in different sections are meant to establish Pakistani Anglophone literature "... in historical awareness and history's continued impact on contemporary realities". In the paragraphs to follow a few representative articles are briefly analysed to lay bare the multiple dimensions of this anthology.

For instance, in the opening section, Cara Cilano ("*All These Angularities': Spatialising Non-Muslim Pakistani Identities*") has persuasively contended that as far as the spatialization of Islam in Pakistan is concerned, movements of non-Muslim minorities have to be taken into consideration along with that of Muslim majorities with specific fictional references. Her intention was to "... examine the fictive portrayals of non-Muslim characters' abilities to occupy and move through space with specific reference to significant events and dynamics in Pakistani

history. . ." Apart from Cilano, Muneeza Shamsie and Daniela Vitolo have made significant contributions to the opening section of the book.

The second section of the book is titled as "*9/11 and Beyond: Contexts, Forms, and Perspectives*" which is indicative of the fact that the articles included in this section explore varied manifestations and representations of 9/11 in different fictional narratives. In "*Global Pakistan in the Wake of 9/11*", Ulka Anjaria contends that the pejorative portrayals of Pakistan in different fictional works need to be contested with the references to select post-9/11 Pakistani fiction on the ground that Pakistan's position in the context of 'global' imaginary has been shifting since 9/11.

In the third section entitled "*The Dialectics of Human Rights: Politics, Positionality and Controversies*", there are five articles which deal with different interconnected issues concerning human rights. For instance, Shazia Sadaf has explored cases of human rights violations in Pakistani Anglophone literature in "*Divergent Discourses: Human Rights and Contemporary Pakistani Anglophone Literature*". Sadaf observes that contemporary Pakistani Anglophone literature gives room to human rights violations in different contexts, thereby underlining the new turn in this domain of study.

"*Identities in Question: Shifting Perspectives on Gender*", the fourth section in this anthology, consists of three perceptive articles which deal with the questioning of identities relating to gender. Among them, the striking one is "*Doing History Right: Challenging Masculinist Postcolonialism in Pakistani Anglophone Literature*" in which Fawzia Afzal-Khan questions the ways in which historical events in select novels written by male Pakistani writers are represented.

In the fifth section titled "*Spaces of Female Subjectivity: Identity, Difference, Agency*", both editors have included those articles which are detailed explorations of changing perspectives on gender. Aqeel Abdulla is one particular scholar who produces an insightful article on plural implications within sexuality, marriage and domestic violence in "British-Pakistani Female Playwrights: Feminist Perspectives on Sexuality, Marriage and Domestic Violence". Abdulla deals with the following British-Pakistani playwrights—Alia Bano, Nadia Manzoor and Emteaz Hussain—to substantiate her critical arguments on the proximity between gender and society.

In the sixth section, contributors have focused on the shifting perspectives on identity, space and mobility. For instance, in "Homes and Belonging(s): The Interconnectedness of Space, Movement, and Identity in British-Pakistani Novels", Eva Pataki analyses multiple layers of significance of both 'home' and 'belongings' conditioned by the overlapping of space, movement and identity. She critically examines a few Pakistani Anglophone fictional narratives to contextualize her investigations.

'*Unsettling Narratives*' is the title of the seventh section which consists of divergent articles. For instance, in "Post-Postcolonial Experiments with Perspectives", Hanji Lee divulges varied narratological techniques employed by Pakistani novelists to shed light on cultural, political and economic realities in Pakistan. Unlike others, Lee has theorized "post-postcolonial" to explore the new theoretical turns in post-postcolonial time.

In the eighth section titled "*New horizons: Towards a Pakistani Idiom*", there are five outstanding articles which deal with the complex constructions of national identity with references to culture, politics and globalization. In "Brand Pakistan: The Case for a Pakistani Anglophone Literary Canon", Aroosa Knwal and Saiyma Aslam have put forward convincing arguments to "... canonise Pakistani anglophone literature, not only in reaction to its (current) production and consumption but also in terms of its dialogical dynamics, operating in four frames of reference: the individual, the national, the regional and the global".

On the whole, this critical anthology is unquestionably a remarkable contribution stuffed with fresh critical insights. Articles included in this anthology not only reflect on various aspects relating to Pakistani Anglophone literature but also inspire enthusiastic scholars to take up several issues hinted in different articles. Indexing in the end of this critical anthology is suggestive of the fact that both the editors have spared no effort to produce a scholarly book. Selection of articles in this critical anthology also indicates that both the editors have chosen to include those articles which bear imprints of the contributors' originality, intellect, and expertise. That apart, the structure adopted for sectionizing diverse articles deserves critical acclaim inasmuch as it facilitates readers to be acquainted with several emerging ideas in the domain of Pakistani Anglophone literature.