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**REASON AND RATIONALITY:
SOME LEAVES FROM INDIA'S INTELLECTUAL HISTORY**

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Distinguished Guests, fellow workers in history, friends and dear students:

I am extremely grateful to the Executive Committee of the Indian History Congress for bestowing upon me this honour. It is all the more gratifying to see the seventy-eighth session of this august body being hosted by the Jadavpur University, whose roots are in the National Movement. At the height of the Indian National Movement, Professor Krishna Chandra Bhattacharya, a son of the soil who went on to hold the prestigious George V professorial chair at the Calcutta University, had enflamed the intellectual ethos through his discourse entitled 'Svaraj in Ideas' delivered in 1928 to a meeting of students of the Hooghly Mohsin College (of which he was then Principal). It provoked me to identify the theme of the present Address, which I have great pleasure in dedicating to the memory of this intellectual giant.

When his first atomic explosion in 1945 succeeded, Robert Oppenheimer famously quoted the *Bhagavadgita* verse (XI.12) referring to the simultaneous rise of a thousand suns in the sky (*divi suryasrahasahasrasya bhavedyugpadutthitaa*). And when this keen student of Sanskrit literature was once asked by a senior Indian diplomat about what made him interested in this rich textual tradition, he is reported to have answered: 'Your ancestors asked the right questions, which we scientists are still struggling with' [Bajpai, 2017].

Yes, it does not belong to the realm of speculation; it is true that somewhat akin to the Weberian 'problem of meaning', Indian thinkers coming from varied social backgrounds grappled with the nuances of some very basic questions of human existence: Who am I? How and why do I die? Is my action right or wrong? Why should I act at all? What's more important – *karma* or *bhagya*; *dharma* or *artha*? How far am I free or why am I bonded? Aren't all human beings equal? What are the bases of social stratification? Can fighting a war conduce to peace and harmony? Is there any 'sacred language'? Is the earth flat or a globe? Who is a king? Who is 'the Other'? And above all perhaps the proverbial '*yaksha prashna*'.

From the many anonymous and named mythical seers of the *Rig Samhitaa* to the modern day Dabholkars, Pansares, Kalburgis and of course, Gauri Lankeshs – the list of searching questioners is almost endless. It would be a futile exercise to pigeonhole Indian thinkers. The inter- and intra-sectarian as well as inter- and intra-religious dialogues and debates through several millennia are eloquent manifestations of vibrant Indian dialectical traditions [Solomon 1969, 1976, 1978 & Tripathi 2016]. These enable us to see chinks in the notions of 'cultural essentialism' and the 'fetishisation of cultural purity' within any specific cultural/ethnic tradition. There is hardly any genre of the creative textual stream – *dharmashastra*, *arthashastra*, *kaamashastra*, *kaavyashastra*, *belles-lettres*, medical treatises and countless *darshana* and *aanvikshikii* texts in multiple languages – that has not contributed to the enrichment of curious-minded Indians [on the issue of the applicability and suitability of *darshana* and *aanvikshikii* for concepts of 'philosophy' and 'rationality', see Arindam Chakrabarti 1997: 259-278; Halbfass 1998: 262-286]. Questioning the prevalent social norms, expressing dissent, mocking at and even organising protests against symbols of power and authority were, in a sense, sustaining what Gramsci called 'organic intellectuals'. Be it the Buddha or Ramanuja or Jotiba Phule or the irreverent and irrepressible Periyar – every figure tended to blur the dividing line between the 'thinker' and the 'doer'. 

Terminology of Indian Dialectics

Reason, rationality and their various derivatives (as nouns, adjectives, verbs, etc) have a very rich vocabulary in our classical languages. Sanskrit lexicons provide *chicchhktikah*, *haitukah*, *hetuvaada*, *hetuvaadii*, *kaaranavaada*, *hetudarshanam*, *tarkashaktikah*, *upapattih*, *anumaanashaktih*, *anutarka*, *apoha*, *maniishaa*, *naiyaayika*, *nibandhana*, *tarkashaktih*, *taarkikah*, *uuha*, *vishamvad*, *vitarka*, *yuktam*, *yathaayuktam*, etc. Comparable formulations in Pali are equally numerous. Some of the prominent ones are *ahetuka*, *hetuvaada*, *nyaaya*, *nyaayaanugata*, *nimitta*, *sachetanatta*, *saviññyaanaka*, *takkana*, *takkiishtakkin*, *uuhana*, *vichaaranasatti*, *vichaarasilii*, *viimansii*, *yutti*.

The section devoted to *hetu-vidyaa* (the science of reasoning setting out rules of debate) in the *Yogaachaarabhuumi* (largely available in Tibetan and Chinese translations) of Asanga/Rishyasinga (c.350-420 CE) begins with the question, ‘*hetu-vidyaa katamaa* (What is the Science of Reasoning)?’ and is succeeded immediately with the question ‘*shabda-vidyaa katamaa* (What is the Science of Words)?’ The initial question is answered, ‘*pariikshaarthena yad vijnyaanam vastu* (the perception at hand by reason of careful consideration)’ [Wayman, 1958].

Long before Asanga, of the four *vidyaas* in Kautilya’s *Arthashastra* (I.2.1-12), *aanvikshikii* is ‘the light of all other disciplines, the methodology of all other practice, and the foundation of all moral virtues’. That it is the investigative reflective science which examines beliefs acquired through observation and testimony by the means of correct knowledge (*pramaanaih arthapariikshanam*) and critical enquiry, unquestionably proves that even the recognition of purposefulness of rational enquiry or action was part of a *theoretical* orientation of these ancient Indian thinkers [see also Halbfass 1988:262-286].

According to Akshapaada Gautama (first century CE), in order to achieve liberation you must have accurate knowledge of the means of knowledge, the object of knowledge, doubt, purpose, example, tenet, the components of a syllogism, hypothetical reasoning, the determination of a conclusion, truth-finding discourse, defensive debate, polemics, fallacies, tricks, retorts, and the conditions of defeat. There are very ancient words for the institutions of rational debate (*vaada*; the *Milindapañha* refers to *siddhi* as its synonym) and public problem-solving contests (*brahmodyas*, also called *brahma-samsad* or *brahma-sabhaa*; and *shastra-sabhaas*). Pali texts are eloquent about *kotuuhala/kotuuhalasaalaas* in the Ganga valley in urban centres; rules for conducting debates and ethics thereof safeguarding the interests of both the *puurva* (prima-facie view) and the *uttara* (the rejoinder) *pakshas* [see specially Asanga’s seven-fold formulation in Wayman 1958]; focus on inculcating contemplative culture through ‘pro’ and ‘contra’ arguments (‘*uuhaapoha*’, ‘*manana*’, ‘*yukti-vichaara*’); and finally, Yaajñavalkya includes *vaakovaakya* in his list of subjects of study. Both Charaka, the savant of aayurveda and Gautama’s system of Nyaaya not only use the term *kathaa* for debates and dialogues but also describe their ugly aspects such as *jalpa* (wrangling) and *vitandaa* (cavil) as two types of *vaada*. Dialogue conducted in accordance with the prescribed method of the Pali text *Kathaavatthu* is called a *vaadayutti*. It is as a rich account of presumptive reasoning in dialogue, and not so much for its ‘anticipations’ of formal logic, that the *Kathaavatthu* is a rewarding object of study [Ganeri 2001]. The twelfth century *Maanasollaasa* even includes *shastra-vinoda* amongst chapters on recreation [Solomon 1978:887-890]. In short, the popular Sanskrit saying *vaade vaade jaayate tattvabodhah* (true knowledge is acquired through multifarious debates) sums up the millennia old Indian dialectical tradition, which has been extensively documented [Solomon 1969, 1976, 1978; Tripathi 2016].

Notwithstanding its numerous nuances as a philosophic concept, as reflected in this rich lexical and definitional vocabulary, reason in the common people’s discourse stands for ‘application of argument and logic and the decision not to proceed with *a priori* premises as far as possible’. [Habib 1994/2007: 13]. Persistent questioning, entertaining doubts about almost everything and seeking explanations or determining the causality thereof are *condiciones sine quibus non* to exercise the faculty of reason.

Similarly, rationality is also a contentious concept in philosophy and social sciences and sometimes seen only in juxtaposition to religion, assuming perhaps that the latter is always irrational. ② Even at the risk of being too simplistic, rationality may be broadly seen as ‘the discipline of subjecting one’s choices – of actions as well as of objectives, values and priorities – to reasoned scrutiny’ [Sen

2002/2003 : 4-5]. Developing a rational temper is learning to reason about what makes life worthwhile, what we should really care about. A sort of dialectical relationship may be postulated between ‘rationality’ and ‘reason’. While the former pertains to culture, the latter has more to do with practice. That is to say, rationality is a cultural characteristic, whereas reasoning is the practice which creates that culture [personal communication from Professor Sabyasachi Bhattacharyya, August 29, 2017]. Notwithstanding the complex relationship between these two distinguishing traits of humankind (with some limitations), it needs underlining that neither rationality nor reason is a unique product of the post-Enlightenment modern West.

A point has recently been made that ‘reason and rationality have *always* played a central role in promoting prejudices against colour, caste, religion, sexuality, gender and other cultures’ and that ‘in this increasingly angry age, prejudice has become a matter of public entertainment...there are always good reasons to be a racist, colourist, communalist, casteist or misogynist. A decision not to give in to these prejudices is not a judgment of reason and rationality alone; it is also *an ethical judgment* which depends on how we allocate value to anything’ [Sarukkai 2017, *emphasis added*]. If truth is relative; if notions of ethics/morality and right/wrong are relative – subject to spatial and temporal contexts; would rationality/reason also be relative? Way back in 1978, Herbert Simon won his Nobel for his work on ‘bounded rationality’ as a factor in the decision making process, and Richard H. Thaler, the 2017 Nobel laureate in Economics, considers human behaviour’s ‘limited rationality’ as being central to economics. Then, there is also the question of tension between ‘rationality’ and ‘wisdom’ [Soni 2014]. We would, therefore, be well advised to keep in view the relative subjectivity of such ethical judgments, and perhaps also of reason and rationality, when making any kind of value judgment.

II

Heresy: Definitions and Manifestations

At a seminar on ‘The Tradition of Dissent, Protest, and Reform in Indian Civilization’ held in 1975, a leading philosopher [Pratap Chandra 1977] argued that ‘terms like protest, dissent, heterodoxy...deviation from the mainstream, etc. are irrelevant in the Indian context...(because there were no) intellectual straitjackets, monolithic structures, claimed monopolies of truth, ideological homogeneity or even direct or indirect demand for any of these’. The view was strongly contested, marked as it was by a neglect of the long and consistent history of heresy, and ignorance of the long tradition of non-conformity in India.

Like the terminological richness in the case of ‘reason’ and ‘rationality’, ‘heresy’ and ‘heretics’ too have prolific forms and expressions in Sanskrit and Pali. These would include: *michchhaamati*; *michchhaaditthika*; *añnyatitthiya*; *paasanda/paasandika* in Pali; and *vidharmmah*; *apathah*; *mithyaadrishtih*; *mataantarapraवेशah*; *devanindaa*; *naastikyam*; *paashandi*; *apathagaamii*; *vrishtih*; *svadharmmachyutah*, in Sanskrit.

George Zito had once lamented the neglect of a discussion of heresy in the sociological literature and some others too rued that the subject was ‘little understood’ [cited in Berlinerblau, 2001: 328-29]. Weber had once affirmed: ‘In the case of the Vedas the scriptural canon was established in opposition to intellectual heterodoxy’ [Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, vols. I and 2, ed. G. Roth and C. Wittich, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1978, Vol. I, p.459]. In a way, this provides a structural definition of heresy, which got amplified in the following well-known passage from Kai Erikson’s *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance* (Wiley, New York, 1966, p.6): ‘Deviance is not a property *inherent in* any particular kind of behaviour; it is a property *conferred upon* that behaviour by the people who come into direct or indirect contact with it. The only way an observer can tell whether or not a given style of behaviour is deviant, then, is to learn something about the standards of the audience which responds to it’. If the reader substitutes the words ‘heresy’ for ‘deviance’ and ‘orthodoxy’ for ‘audience’, then this comment will illustrate the relational approach (and the lines of correspondence between the sociologies of deviance and heresy). Put simply (and tautologically), heresy is something that an orthodoxy calls heresy [cited in Berlinerblau 2001:331-32].

The sect whose name is almost synonymous with heresy in India, the Chaarvaaka or Materialist, is guilty of no offensive behaviour, for it is simply a philosophical movement; but this philosophy condemns the Vedas as ‘a pious fraud’ [D.R. Bhandarkar, *Some Aspects of Ancient Hindu*

Polity, Benares, 1929:4]. Their point of view is summarised thus in the *Sarvadarshanasamgraha*: ‘The Veda is tainted by the three faults of untruth, self-contradiction, and tautology; the imposters who call themselves Vedic scholars are mutually destructive; and the three Vedas themselves are simply the means of livelihood for those devoid of wit and virility.’³¹

At one level perhaps, and in a broader sense, the antagonism/contestation between the braahmana (Sanskritik/Vedic traditions) and the shramana (non-Sanskritik/anti-Vedic traditions) may be seen as a manifestation of the aforesaid structural relationship of ‘orthodoxy’ and ‘heresy’/ ‘heretic’. Patañjali likened this to the proverbial rivalry between snake and mongoose. Contradiction of the Vedas remains the basis of heresy, from the ‘Hindu’ viewpoint. Medhaatithi describes *paashandin* as *baahyalingin* [an outcaste (Shaiva?) ascetic] and Kulluuka, too, calls them *vedabaahya-vrata-lingadhaarinah*, like the Buddhist monks and Jains, etc. However, this narrative misses a more substantive issue, viz., the roots of ‘heresy’ lie within the *Rig Samhitaa* – the earliest and one of the most revered Indian texts. There is long and persistent questioning within the Vedic tradition, sufficiently extensive to make us sceptical about there being a monolithic tradition at all.

Nearly four thousand years ago, the seers of the *Rig Samhitaa* envisioned a hymn (X.121) in praise of a deity called Ka. This hymn takes the form of a cosmogony and its refrain is a question: ‘Who is the god to whom we should do homage with our oblation?’ which is repeated in nine out of ten verses of the hymn [Jamison and Brereton 2014: 1592-94]. Similarly, the *Naasadiya Suukta*, another famous hymn of the same text, usually characterised as the Song of Creation (X.129) and also seen as ‘one of the oldest surviving records of philosophic doubt in the history of the world’ [A.L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*, 1963:247], is full of negations and questioning as epitomised in its first and the last verses [Jamison and Brereton, *ibid*: 1607-09].

Not everyone was convinced about exalted deities. There are pronounced indications of the existence of sceptics and free thinkers in the *Rig Samhitaa*, who denied Indra’s very existence and did not believe in his divinity; who mock at him [I.4.4-6 – these middle verses of the hymn, as Jamison and Brereton say (*ibid*. p.93), display some anxiety about the poet’s exclusive focus on Indra – ‘putting all his eggs in one basket’, as the English idiom has it] and mention his fear of Vritra (I.32.12, 14). A famous controversy over the sanctity of the Vedas appears in the *Nirukta* of Yaaska: ‘The Vedic stanzas have no meaning (*anarthakaa*)’, says Kautsa. ‘Moreover, their meaning is contradictory (*vipratishiddhaarthaa*).’ Kautsa appears in an ancient list of brahmin teachers and may have been a historical rationalist, says Max Mueller [*A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, 1859: 142, 181].

It is generally in the area of internal disputes that religions expose both their cherished preoccupations and also possible inconsistencies in their structure [Dundas 1985]. Early Jain heretics are known in Prakrit as the *pavayana-nihnaga*, ‘concealers of the doctrine’. Seven of these are listed at *Thaanaanga Sutta* 587 and many in the *Suuyagada* (2,6). According to tradition, they arose in Mahaaviira’s lifetime and the immediate centuries after his death, in fulfilment of the expectation that a continuing vein of dissent and contention would inevitably resurface at various times in the history of Jainism. With the exception of Jamaali, the first of these so-called heretics [Bronkhorst 2003; Dundas 2006], the ancient scriptural texts had very little to say on the subject of the *nihnava* [‘concealments’, ‘heresies’; for its original sense, see Brough 1950/1996: 77-78]. Nonetheless, strong doctrinal differences between heretics such as Jamaali and Aajivika Gosaalaka/Gosaala and Buddhist monks, and between them and Mahaaviira, stand out quite prominently. Gosaala says: Shramanas and braahmanas, sir, criticize each other: Their own side is (right), the opponent (wrong). We only censure a wrong view, (but otherwise) we do not censure anything. By no means do we criticize (a person’s) private qualities, but we (only) proclaim our own religious way...(Suuyagada 2.6.12-13) [cf. Bollee 1999 & 2006].

Jamaali stood both within and outside the normative Jainism – he continued to espouse the ascetic path and also attempted to reconfigure an aspect of the authoritative teaching on the issue of the problem of production of things or causality. He was, of course, severely castigated as *kusisse* (bad pupil) for the latter, and also condemned to be reborn as Kilibishaka gods, *who are the equivalent of the lowermost stratum of human society*. It needs recognition that Jamaali’s view was so strong it was kept in the realm of serious philosophic reflections by subsequent thinkers. It is from this point onwards (after Jamaali) that *anekaantavaada* becomes ‘a resolution of the paradox of causality’ [B.K. Matilal, *The Central Philosophy of Jainism (anekaantavaada)*, 1981:7, 19]. The story of Jamaali in the *Viyahapannatti* is the first expression (even though the term is not used) of *anekaantavaada* as a

doctrinal position on a par with positions held by other schools such as *satkaaryavaada*, *sarvaastivaada*, *ajaativaada*, *shuunyavaada*, etc. No wonder the early 17th century *Senaprasna* states that various heretics (*nihnava*) are still members of the Jain community (*svapaksha*).

The Buddha's evil and jealous cousin Devadatta led a breakaway from the monastic community on the question of the correctness of the 'middle way' preached by the Master, which viewed asceticism as an objectionable extreme. The 'heretic' Devadatta favoured an exclusively ascetic orientation of the path. Ray is emphatic about the historicity of Devadatta's schism and if the Chinese pilgrims are to be believed, the community formed by him was still in existence well into the Common Era [Deeg, 1999; Dundas 2006; Ray 1994: 168-173. See also Simson 2003 for narrative parallelism of the principle of 'characterizing by contrast' in the equation: Karna vs Bhiishma = Devadatta vs Buddha].

An analytical study of the *Arthashastra* and the *Kaamashastra* also shows how these texts challenge *dharma*, justifying dishonesty, violence, and adultery, among many other things. They get away with it in two ways: first, by providing a thin veneer over their antinomian thoughts with hypocritical praise of *dharma* at critical junctures. And second, by attributing many of their most diabolical suggestions to previous scholars (*aachaaryas*), whose texts (if ever they existed) no longer survive [Doniger : 2018].

Gramsci [*Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.12] had once postulated that the intellectuals, scattered throughout 'civil society', play a crucial role in stimulating consent. They tirelessly endeavour to inculcate the ideological imperatives of the hegemonic apparatus. And yet, he simultaneously raised the possibility of 'mass heresies' when he wrote, 'many heretical movements were manifestations of popular forces aiming to reform the Church and bring it closer to the people by exalting them' [Ibid.397]. Since the structural relationship of orthodoxy and heresy stands on relativisation – that orthodoxy is what it is, through its relationship to heterodoxy, and vice-versa – the border between mass and intellectual heresies is, as Weber would say, 'fluid', and we should not discount the possibility of mass heresies led by intellectuals. Dr B.R. Ambedkar's renunciation of the tag of 'Hindu', burning of the *Manusmriti* publicly, criticising even basic tenets of the Buddha and leading the conversion of half a million dalits (former untouchables) to Navayaana (neo-Buddhism) in 1956 could perhaps be called a case of such a 'mass heresy' in modern times.

Several scholarly writings, mostly based on narratives in the Puraanas, see the origin of 'heresy' in several myths where various gods of different religious and sectarian persuasions preach heresy to destroy *asuras* (demons), who derived their power from Vedic thought and rituals and, therefore, posed a serious challenge to *devas* (gods) [O'Flaherty 1971; R.S. Bhattacharya 1982; Dandekar 1995; Thapar 2009; Kunal Chakrabarti: 2016]. Often, the heresy taught to the demons is merely a vague sensualism (lax sexual behaviour, coveting others' wives) and materialism. Usually, however, the heresy is specifically identified with Buddhism or Jainism, each accused of social subversion [Thapar 2009] and invoked to rally the faithful in defence of *varnaashrama vyavasthaa* – the brahmanical social order.

The heresy of Jainism and that of the materialists are used by Indra who enlists the aid of his preceptor, Brihaspati to overcome his enemies. In the Daksha-Shiva myths the latter is declared a heretic for his opposition to sacrifices [*Skanda Puraana*, 1.1.1.20-40; *Shiva Puraana*, 2.2.26.14-27; 2.2.27.42-54]. Vishnu becomes incarnate as the Buddha in yet another myth in the *Skanda Puraana* [4.1.43-58], in which his motives are far from laudable. The narrative is meant to malign the heresy of the Buddha and facilitate Shiva's re-establishment in Kaashi.

III

Scriptural authority (Revelation) and reason

The word *veda* has been used to refer to certain texts, but its original meaning is simply 'knowledge'. Another term for the *Veda*, texts which constituted the knowledge which really counted, is *brahman*. A 'brahmin person' is a braahmana. The *Veda* had appeared among men through the mouths of such people, and in the Buddha's day (and long after) access to it still lay in the same quarter. The *Veda*, embodying true knowledge, was the source of all authority; but what the *Veda* said – and indeed what it meant – one could learn only from braahmanas. To deny the authority of the *Veda*, therefore, was to deny the authority of the braahmanas, and vice-versa. This denial simultaneously

meant the questioning of the social order nurtured and sustained by them.⁽⁴⁾ This is precisely what the Buddha did:

“O Kaalaamas, not by hearsay, not by tradition, not by customary, not by bookish authority, not by mere sophistry, not by an example, not by a grand form, not by the glamour of a philosophical view, not by grandeur, and not with the thought that one’s teacher should be respected. But O Kaalaamas, be guided by your own knowledge and conviction (*Anguttara Nikaaya*).

Similarly, when the Buddha said: *hiinam dhammam na seveyya ... michchhaaditthim na seveyya* [*Dhammapada* verse 167 (XIII.1)], he saw both the *hiina dhamma* and *michchhaaditthi* as something that one has inherited/received and one is being asked not to savour that. True *dhamma* and *ditthi* are that which emerges out of questioning such notions.

When the Buddha thus repeatedly expected his followers not to get overawed by the so-called hallowed ‘sacredness’ of religious scriptures; when he made a passionate plea: ‘Be a Lamp unto Yourself’ (*atta diipo bhava*), he was indeed striking at the roots of Vedic dogmatism, just as the Jainas had done through their *anekaantavaada* referred to above [for further details, Shrimali 2014].

This theme of scriptural authority/testimony and its juxtaposition to voices of reason and critical analysis has been an integral component of India’s intellectual history [Halbfass 1991]. The compilation of the Vedas, which may have taken place over a period of almost two millennia, seems to have marginalised rational and critical thinking and highlighted a highly metaphysical (read brahmanical) tradition as the signpost of Indian philosophy [Mohanty 1992]. No wonder, the questioning of Vedic authority has been one of the most distinguishing traits of almost all non-Vedic systems and even of some ‘vedic’ systems (Saamkhya, for example) for which (and not for their denial of the ‘God’) they have been branded ‘*naastika darshanas*’. The Chaarvaaka position has already been stated above. In the Buddhist epistemology, too, only perception and inference are admitted as sources of knowledge, and testimony is either rejected or reduced away. Nonetheless, the construction of such a dogmatic authority as ‘the Vedas’ needs some probing, given the heretical voices within its earliest text.

Tensions between scriptural testimony and reason were celebrated, partially resolved and allowed in part to remain unresolved by the ancient and medieval Indian thinkers. Recognising that Shankara did belittle ‘dry’ reasoning (*shushka tarka*), a detailed exposition of the notion of *aanvikshikii* asserted simultaneously that ‘not *all* Indian thought is blindly supportive of scriptural authority’. And, ‘far from being antagonistic, reason and scripture coexist peacefully together in coupling compounds strewn all over Vedaanta literature (e.g. *shruti-yukti, tarkaagama, shaastranyaaya*). After all, if you have conflicting Vedic texts, reasoning is your only basis of adjudication’ [Arindam Chakrabarti 1997:262-65].

Pollock had once argued [1985] that virtually all Sanskrit learning in classical and medieval India comes to view itself in one way or another as genetically linked to the Vedas, a process, which he preferred to call ‘vedicization’. As ‘knowledge’ *tout court*, as *shaastra par excellence*, as the ‘omniscient’ (*Manusmriti* 2.7) and ‘infinite’ text (*Taittiriya Samhitaa* 3.10.11.4 etc), Veda is the general rubric under which every sort of partial knowledge – the various individual *shaastras* – are ultimately subsumed. That perhaps accounts for the inclusion of the *gandharvaveda, aayurveda, arthashastra* in that by Kumaarila (well-known Miimaamsaa theologian of the seventh-eighth century), for whom the Vedic tradition *alone* is the source of all moral knowledge and the Veda was *apaurusheya* (authorless), *anaadi* (without any beginning) and *svatahpraamaanya* (of self-sufficient validity) [see also Pollock 1989].

The great debate between the Jains and the Buddhists on the one hand and the Miimaamsakas such as Kumaarila on the other centered round such questions as: what constitutes knowledge? Was the source of knowledge or *dharma* revealed by direct experience, or was it revealed by itself and codified in the non-personal Veda? Was revelation personal or impersonal? Was it located within man or outside of him? Was it directly attainable through the non-activity (*nivritti*) of self-realization (*aatmajñāana*) or indirectly accessible through a variety of [ritual and intellectual] activities (*pravritti*) [Qvarnström: 2006]. It is significant that revelationists in India, unlike those in Christendom, were contested not by monotheists but by the so-called ‘atheists’, who championed the cause of human

omniscience (*sarvajñataa*). Kumaarila decried them as ‘wolves in sheep’s clothing’ who were said to provide merely ‘the appearance of dharma’ (*dharmabhaasa*), and nothing more.

In response to Kumaarila, the eighth-century Mahaayaana Buddhist scholar Shaantarakshita and his Shvetaambara Jain colleague Haribhadra composed texts which argued that man was already in possession of everything knowable, including *dharmabhaasa*. Incidentally, long before that, the *Tevijja Sutta* of the *Diigha Nikaaya* is known to have preached the futility of the belief that a mere knowledge of the three Vedas leads to the attainment of reunion with Brahma. Such union is possible only through the Brahma Vihaaras. Drawing attention to some dissimilarities between the western and Indian views on this ‘Revelation vs Reason’ debate, it was suggested ‘unlike the Western controversy hinging upon fundamentally incompatible worldviews, the Indian controversy involved traditions that had mutually influenced one another and thus shared fundamental values, including a common cognitive universe and *lingua franca*’ [Dundas 1996; Deshpande 1993:9f]. However, as we shall see later, the question of a common *lingua franca* needs nuanced telling (see section IV).

A different kind of scriptures *versus* reason and rationality stand-off may be seen in the controversy over *virodha* or inconsistency in astronomical sciences in the 16th-17th centuries and the later encouragement provided by the *sabhaa* (intellectual circle) of Lancelot Wilkinson (the British Political Agent to the court of Bhopal, 1829-1841). The controversy centered round inconsistencies between the Puraanic and Siddhaantic cosmologies – in one the earth is flat with its seven concentric oceans and continents, while in the other it is a globe; in one it has a huge size, while in the other it has a manageably small size. Further Puraanic assertions, such as that eclipses are caused by Raahu; that night is caused by Meru blocking the Sun; that the Moon wanes because the gods are drinking the soma contained in it; that the Moon is higher in the heavens than the Sun – all these became issues of contestation by the *pundits* and *shaastris* of astronomical treatises, *viz.*, the Siddhaantas. The beginning of this intellectual trend may be located in Suurya’s *Siddhaanta-samhitaasaara-samuchchaya* of the 1530s. The authors of the *avirodha* (non-contradiction) texts, such as Yajñeshvara Sadaashiva Rode (who wrote *Avirodhaprakaasha* and *Virodhamardana*) and Kevalaraam in the 1720s in the employ of Amber’s Sawaai Jai Singh, and Nandaraam Mishra in the 1780s in southern Rajputaana, preferred to find the authority of their texts not in their reasonableness or persuasive argumentation, but rather in divine authorship.

Shaastris in Wilkinson’s *sabhaa*, such as Nrisimhadeva, Subbaaji Raamachandra (his Marathi work *Siddhaantashiromaniprakaasha*) and Omkaara Bhatta made a strong case for the Siddhantic astronomy. Strikingly, in their works much premium is given to reasoning from direct observation, especially as aided by technologically advanced instruments and use of many necessary principles of geometry, trigonometry and arithmetic, and the corresponding devaluation, within the sphere of what is observable, of textual authority. Subbaaji has not rejected the authority of scriptural sources, but he does assert that *pratyaksha* or observation is a legitimate means of gaining knowledge in its own right. He concludes his work with the assertion that even the statements of the *shruti*, when unsupported by logic and observation, can be wrong.

The Sanskrit astronomers of the modern period inherited intellectual traditions that were historically contingent, the result of ongoing debate, internal development, and reaction to external influences. A point on which Subbaaji exercises a particularly effective argument is Yajñeshvara’s suggestion that the astronomy of the Europeans should be rejected simply because it is the product of foreigners. The Sanskrit *shaastri* was in fact capable of functioning as a public intellectual, even in the 19th century, engaging from his own position the modernizing scientific teachings that were spreading around him [Minkowski 2001] forms the basis of our outlining of this issue.

Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of our Nation and perhaps one of the greatest humanists of the last millennium, is rightly renowned for his deep faith in ‘Truth’ (*satya*), Non-violence (*ahimsaa*), and of course in God, too. Equally abiding was his conviction in proclaiming ‘Why I am a Hindu’ [Gandhi, *CW*: XXXV, 1969, p.166-67: Faith does not admit of ‘telling’]. Notwithstanding his unflinching and uncompromising position on these matters, he is no less an exponent of the cause of reason. On the so-called ‘sacredness’ of religious scriptures and their relationship with reason, he never minced his words. Some sample illustrations are:

‘Let us not deceive ourselves into the belief that everything that is written in Sanskrit and printed in Shaastra has a binding effect on us. That which is opposed to trained reason, cannot be claimed as Shaastra no matter how ancient it may be...’[*Ibid.*,XXXV, 1969, pp.8,98-99]; ‘It seems to

me that we must test on the anvil of reason everything that is capable of being tested by it and reject that which does not satisfy it even though it may appear in ancient garb', and, 'to me it is as plain as a pikestaff, that where there is an appeal to reason pure and undefiled, there should be no appeal to authority however great it may be....' [Ibid., XLI, 1970, pp. 468-69], and so on.

Strongly contesting 'hero-worship or blind worship', he once said: 'The worst thing that can happen to boys in a school is to have to render blind obedience to everything that the teacher says. On the contrary, if teachers are to stimulate the reasoning faculty of boys and girls under their care, they would continuously tax their reason and make them think for themselves. Faith only begins where reason stops. But there are very few actions in the world for which reasonable justification cannot be found... Surely, a cause is greater than the man' [Ibid., XXXI, 1969, pp.46-47].

Finally, an interesting dimension of scripture *versus* reason relationship emerged at a time when Gandhi's influence in the Indian National Movement was taking grand strides. Krishna Chandra Bhattacharya (who later went on to hold the prestigious George V Chair, Calcutta University between 1935-37 after having lost it in the first instance when Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan got the preference for the 1921-32 stint) gave the discourse entitled 'Svaraj in Ideas', mentioned at the start of this paper, at a meeting of the students of the Hooghly Mohsin College in 1928. It was subsequently published in the *Visva Bharati Journal* (vol. XX, pp.103-114) in 1954. Briefly, it was an attempt towards intellectual decolonisation.⁶

Showing complete disdain for mechanical use of reason but not concealing the notion of cultural reverence – reverence for the traditional institutions through which customary sentiments are deepened into transparent ideals, Bhattacharya made a plea for freedom from what he called 'cultural subjection' and almost invisible 'intellectual slavery'. He situated his rationalism between uncritical absorption and detached scientism. The thrust of 'Svaraj in Ideas' was so provocative that the *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* brought out a special issue [Vol. XI, No.4, October 1984] for its discussion. Many of the participants in this symposium pitted cultural reverence against autonomy from tradition and autonomy of human reasoning [see also Halbfass 1988: 278-281]. Tradition was seen by many as quite and perhaps no less 'enslaving' than the foreign one. Autonomy consists in the ability to think for oneself independently of any tradition. The issue that turned out to be at stake was that of 'competing concepts of cosmopolitanism' [Ganeri 2017:722].

In an attempt to show the possibility of coexistence between 'reverence' and 'autonomy' Bhattacharya's notion of cosmopolitanism is identified as 'an immersive cosmopolitanism'. It is a subaltern cosmopolitanism insofar as it seeks to discover overlaps and concordances between a plurality of distinct Indian philosophical systems, rather than appeal to an outside objectivity that overrules reverence. This was perhaps something that had overlaps with the *navya nyaaya* ('new reason') philosophy, which had much to do with interactions between Islamic thinkers of the times of Akbar and Daraa Shukoh, and other religious philosophers, amongst whom Jains such as Yashovijaya Gani of Varanasi also played significant role. The 'new reason' had an extremely powerful presence on the intellectual landscape as both Daraa Shukoh and Yashovijaya shared extraordinary willingness to draw upon other intellectual cultures in the interpretation of their own. It is specially underlined, 'For Daraa this was the motivation for engaging in the translation of the Upanishads, while in Yashovijaya's case it is a prerequisite intellectual value for engaging in public reason. Their "idea of India" is one Tagore would have recognised' [Ganeri 2011:22-38; 2017:729-30].

Imagination as a source of knowledge

The aforesaid discussion of the relationship between scriptural authority and reason hinged on identifying valid sources of knowledge. At a philosophic level, specially for understanding the human mind, a case has persisted for several centuries about recognising possibilities of going beyond the *Shaastra*, *pratyaksha*, *bodhishjñāna* and *pramaana* – the scriptural authority, the direct perception, the mystic experience and the proof/evidence respectively. Thus, *anumaana* and *kalpanaa* or inference and imagination have often been identified as one of the sources of knowledge. In the contemporary world of history writing, when contrafactual history, post-modernist influences contributing to the blurring of lines between history and literature without any critical engagement, and above all, post-truth, are becoming strong flavours, imagination seems to be getting considerable space.

In November 2014, S.N. Balgangadhar delivered the 7th Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Memorial Lecture under the auspices of the Indian Council of Historical Research. Entitled “What do Indians Need: A History or the Past?” the lecture identified the subject of history and its pursuance as a ‘fetish’ because Indians should take pride in having the great Epics – *Raamaayana* and the *Mahaabhaarata*. These were considered enough to ‘understand’ the past. Similarly, in one of his three Daya Krishna Memorial Lectures (December, 2014) Arindam Chakrabarti dealt with doubt, indecision, choice and freedom, and clearly underlined that ‘imagination’ (*kalpanaa*), too, ought to be taken seriously as a touchstone of valid knowledge, *pramaana*, because many times the approach to truth is first made through imaginative leaps and only later substantiated using other epistemological criteria. Things can be imagined even if they are not known.

In his classic work *Discovery of India* (Ch. IV, Section XII: The Epics, History, Tradition, and Myth), Jawaharlal Nehru wrote: ‘Facts and fiction are so interwoven together as to be inseparable, and this amalgam becomes an *imagined history*, which may not tell us exactly what happened but does tell us something that is equally important – what people believed had taken place, what they thought their heroic ancestors were capable of, and what ideals inspired them. So, whether fact or fiction, it became a living element in their lives, ever pulling them up from the drudgery and ugliness of their everyday existence to higher realms, ever pointing towards the path of endeavour and right living, even though the ideal might be far off and difficult to reach... *Thus imagined history, mixture of fact and fiction, or sometimes only fiction, becomes symbolically true and tells us of the minds and hearts and purposes of the people of that particular epoch...*’ [*emphases added*].

David Shulman’s monograph *More Than Real: A History of the Imagination in South India* (2012) also acquires considerable significance in this context. Invoking a vast array of textual traditions embodied in Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam spanning over four centuries (fifteenth to the eighteenth), it refuses to see them in distinctive and compartmentalised linguistic silos, and shows their intimately interwoven character. Most importantly, Shulman demonstrates how India conceived of imagination as a causative agent: things are real because we imagine them.

Notwithstanding such leaps, we need to strike a note of caution. Accepting that imagination can be the trigger for some form of knowledge, ultimately it would still need to be tested on what Gandhi called the ‘anvil of reason’ and we need to ask if it can usurp the claim of being *svatahpraamaanya* (self-sufficient validity)? Perhaps, its substantiation would require *pramaana*. In the absence of that, it is likely to encourage mythifying history and the construction of what are designated as ‘Imagined Religious Communities?’ and ‘Syndicated Hinduism’ [Thapar 1989 and 1997].

IV

Language: An identity marker?

In modern day scholarship, there has been a trend to question the use of the appellation ‘Scriptures’ (implying a sense of ‘the Sacred’) for canonical texts of various South Asian religions. Perhaps, this has much in common with the long tradition of debate on the issue of scriptures/tradition *versus* autonomy of human reason that was undertaken by exponents of different Indian religions – especially, questioning of the *apaurusheya*, *anaadi* and *svatahpraamaanya* status of the Vedas by the so-called ‘heretics’ [as seen in section III; see also remarks on the theory of *shabdapramaana* in Mohanty 1992, 249-59].

Connected with this have been other important questions, *viz.*, is there a ‘Sacred’ language? And is language an important identity marker? The antiquity of these questions goes back to the times when the roots of ‘heresy’ were being laid. Those who were questioning the efficacy and even the ‘divinity’ of Indra in the *Rigsamhitaa*, were also being branded as *mridhravaachi* (speakers of false/corrupt language), and people speaking languages other than ‘Sanskrit’ are called *mlechchha* in the *Shatapatha Braahmana*. It is well-known that almost all the early ‘heretics’ such as Mahaaviira and the Buddha and their contemporaries spoke the languages of the people, variously identified as Paali, Maagadhii/Ardhamaagadhii (forms of Prakrit) – it’s a different matter that their characterisation as *muula-bhaashaa* (‘root language’ of all languages) and ‘*divyadhvani*’ (the ‘divine sound’) also came into being in later times. However, when the aforesaid language-related questions became subjects of keen debate amongst varied philosophical streams, after *circa* fifth century CE, the Buddhists, the Jains,

the Miimaamsakas, and the Naiyaayikas and grammarians became passionate participants in this debate that involved arguments, counter arguments, and even innuendos.

In the view of the grammarians and the Miimaamsakas, and later the Naiyaayikas, Sanskrit was the *muulabhaasha*, the ‘root language’ or ‘primary language’. Other languages were Apabhramsha, the corrupt and misused forms of Sanskrit. For Kumaarila, the Veda ‘alone’ constituted the most authoritative scripture and its language, therefore, was ‘sacred’. However, it didn’t deter the ‘naastika’ streams from taking head-on this stubborn insistence of the ‘aastikas’.

The Jain emphasis on the validity of local languages is clear from their concept of *bhaasaasatta*, particularly the category of ‘true’ speech that goes under the term *janapadasatya*, ‘the validity of local languages’, and maintains that all languages are equally capable of making known their meanings and must be seen to be equally valid in their own contexts. The term *janavayasatta* appears in the *Thaananga Sutta* (10.89). Indeed, the medieval Jain philosophers go to the extent of countering that if there is a root language that is a primary identifier of meaning, that language is not Sanskrit at all, but Prakrit [Granoff 1991]. The Buddhists were equally strong supporters of regional dialects [Norman 1997]. Not just that, Dharmakiirti argues in his *Vaadanyaaya* that all languages-- Sanskrit, Praakrit, Apabhramsha, Dravidian, Aandhran – function in exactly the same way to make known their meaning.

Even outside the realm of pure doctrinal works, in the genre of lyrical literary writings the use of a multiplicity of languages was admired by the Jains as a special skill. A study of the *Laghukaavya* Hymns of Jinaprabhasuuri suggests that there are strong similarities between Jain multilingual hymns (*Shadabhaashaabhishtuta* – ‘praised in six languages’) and courtly brahmanical traditions in which such compositions formed part of the requirement to earn the title ‘Jewel of the Court’ (*sabhaaratna*) [John E. Cort’s communication to Steven M. Vose. See Vose 2016]. Jinaprabhasuuri was invited by Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq (1325-51) to attend the ‘assembly of learned men’ – *pamdiiaagutthii* (in Prakrit; *panditagoshtii* in Sanskrit) at his Court in Delhi. The king ‘had him engaged in a debate [Prakrit *vaayagotthim*; Sanskrit *vaadagoshtim*] with scholars come [*sic*] from many distant lands’, from which Jinaprabhasuuri emerged victorious [*naanaadesamtaraagayapamdihim saha vaayagotthim kaaravittaa*’, Granoff 1992].

As Jainism extended its frontiers beyond the merely doctrinal, the attitude towards Sanskrit became more liberal. The Jains transformed their tradition into a school of learning that encompassed subfields as varied as aesthetics, logic, tantra, politics, and yoga. The Jain authors redefined Sanskrit, treating it not as a sacred institution connected with the brahmins, but a humanly shaped phenomenon. Jain scholiasts such as Hemachandra wrote their own Sanskrit grammars to replace the brahmanical system canonised by Paanini and Patañjali [Dundas 1996]. One can perhaps also recall in this context the debt owed by the *Manipravaalam* (literally, ‘ruby-and-coral’, actually a mixture of Malayalam and Sanskrit) literature of medieval Kerala (thirteenth-fourteenth century) to the *Kaamasuutra* of Vaatsyaayana. A verse of the latter says: ‘A language which is too Sanskritic would fail to communicate to an audience of considerable variety; and telling stories exclusively in the local tongue will be too pedestrian’ [cited in Veluthat 2014:156]. Bharata had suggested this strategy, which not only looked quite sensible and practical to Vaatsyaayana but was perhaps followed all over India.

V

Faith and Reason

It may not be an exaggeration to say that the discussion of the relation between *fides* (faith) and *ratio* (reason) is as old as the birth of religiosity in humankind, if at all we are able to locate it temporally and spatially. More often than not, it is viewed in antagonistic terms.

The issue came to a special fore at the height of the Ayodhya crisis (1980s and the early 1990s). The protagonists of the ‘Ram Janmabhumi’ (birth place of Lord Rama) had taken the position that it was a matter of ‘faith of the millions of Hindus’, not to be decided by the Nyaayaalaya (The Court, where the dispute had been pending since the 1940s). Incidentally, *nyaaya* has been one of the several terms in Sanskrit that stand for ‘reason’ and a distinctive school of philosophy called *navya nyaaya* (‘New Reason’) had come into existence in medieval times in India.

How can a religious person be rational, applying rules of logic, and at the same time irrational, making decisions based on faith? Are religious and non-religious belief systems structurally comparable, and if so, to what extent? The test that can perhaps determine the space of logic and reason in these systems would be the ability to modify and capacity to tolerate inconsistency and dissent. Not every religion fully admits that it accepts logic as an instrument of the enquiry into truth, but some do. Strangely, however, even within systems rejecting the usefulness of logic as a tool of enquiry into their revealed truth, in practical terms, rhetoric and argumentation creep in through the back door. Debates between *aastikas* and *naastikas* and, as we shall see later [section VIII], amongst various inter- and intra-religious/sectarian divides, leave little doubt about it. Equally significantly, intolerance towards serious questioning and open dissent is not unknown in non-religious systems, say, the philosophy of science, or modern day political ideologies, which are supposed to be rooted in rationality [Balcerowicz 2017].

As already shown, Mahatma Gandhi was an intensely religious person and was proud to call himself a ‘Hindu’. It is also true that he was inclined to believe in separate domains of ‘reason’ and ‘faith’ residing in ‘mind’ and ‘heart’ respectively [CW, XLI, 1970, pp.435-36]. And yet, his several pronouncements/writings emphatically underline complementarities between the two as well. Once, Hanumanprasad Poddar sought an explanation of *sanyamamayii shraddhaa* that was translated by Gandhi as ‘Disciplined Faith’ (perhaps ‘restrained faith’ would have been a more appropriate translation). In response, Gandhi wrote: ‘Finding no alternative expression I had used “disciplined faith”. But it does not express all I mean and at present no other expression occurs to my mind. *What is meant is that faith should not be ignorant, devoid of discrimination and blind*’ [Ibid., L, 1972, pp.79-80, *emphases added*]. He also talked about the limits of reason when confronted with temptation; ‘Reason is a poor thing in the midst of temptation... Reason appears to be on the side of those who indulge in drink and free love. The fact is that reason is blurred on such occasions. It follows the instinct. Do not lawyers ranged on opposite sides make reason appear to be on their side? And yet one of them must be wrong, or it may be that both are...There is no such thing as absolute morality for all times. But there is a relative morality which is absolute enough for imperfect mortals that we are’ [CW, LXXI, 1978, pp.45-46].

VI

Social churning/social dynamics

Contrary to the British Imperialist view of Indian society as static, mutations in social structure and social churning have been a constant feature. Even in the so-called egalitarian social formations, bands, clans and tribes were evolving. Ever since stratified social structures came into existence in India (from at least *circa* 1000 BCE onwards or maybe even earlier if contentions about the presence of varied and unequal social strata amongst the Harappans are accepted), there has never been any period in India’s long history of the last several millennia when the fundamental bases of such stratification have not been questioned. Such questioning took various forms and manifestations – birth in a particular stratum, the denial of basic necessities such as education and learning to the shudras and to untouchables (now euphemistically called ‘dalit’), cultural identity, access to social and political power, and above all, the need for recognition of social dignity. Voices of women questioning the drudgery of domestic life and oppressive patriarchal establishments also formed part of this churning. Reflecting on the contemporary social fabric of India, one can easily see uncanny similarities with these historical issues and the forces driving them. Be it the ever growing demand of women’s empowerment or the Lingayat (in Karnataka) seeking a separate and distinct identity instead of being seen as a mere component of the broader ‘Hindu’ frame, or the demands of millions of people belonging to the historically deprived social strata (now variously classified and designated as Scheduled Castes and Tribes, Other Backward Classes, dalits, etc.), for an equitable share in material resources and opportunities, as well as the recognition of their labour and social dignity.

Among the earliest manifestations of a serious questioning of the ‘brahmanical’ social order is perhaps that of the *Shatapatha Braahmana*, in locating the identity of *mlechchhas* not in terms of birth status but their cultural differences (language and burial practices) from the ‘aaryas’ and ‘daasas’. Notwithstanding doubts raised about the alleged radical social changes brought in by the

Buddha, and accusations that the caste factor entered his system through the back door, it would be difficult to deny that his contestation of birth as the basis of one's location in the *varna* order was quite remarkable for his times. The *Saamaññaphalasutta* of the *Diigha Nikaaya* provides the sarcastic outburst of a *daasa* (slave) of the Magadhan king Ajaatasattu, underlining the wide and unbridgeable gap between the master and the slave [Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha*, Vol. I, 1899:76-77]:

'Strange is it and wonderful, this issue of meritorious deeds, this result of merit. Here is this king of Magadha, Ajaatasattu, the son of the Videha princess; he is a man, and so am I. But the king lives in the full enjoyment and possession of the five pleasures of sense, a very god, methinks, and here am I a slave, working for him, rising before him and retiring earlier to rest, keen to carry out his pleasure, anxious to make myself agreeable in deed and word, watching his very looks. Would that I were like him, that I too might earn merit. Why should not I have my hair and beard shaved off, and don the yellow robes, and going forth from the household state, renounce the world?'

Such dissenting voices were not confined to the Buddha or the male members (*theras*) of his *sangha*. *Theriis* (*bhikkhunis*) also joined them. Some of them belonged to high families, including wealthy merchants. They either preferred not to get married, or when they got married to suitors of their choice (even a convicted thief or a servant in own household), they did not hesitate to get rid of them and opted to join the Buddhist *sangha* – sometimes after debating with leaders such as Saariputta, Moggallaana, etc [Roy, 2003/2010: 17-37 and 2015: 24-48; see also Blackstone 1998/2000]. Some important *theriis* of such disposition are Bhaddaa Kundalakesaa (verses 107-111), Pataachaara (verses 112-132, 178 & 218-19), Kisaagotamii (verses 213-223), Isidaasii (verses 403-450), Sumedhaa (verses 451-525) [verse numbers are from Hallisey: 2015].

'We generally do not see in the *Theriigaathaa* any explanations of the social suffering that befalls women and the poor as due to the karmic fruits of previous actions on their part. On the contrary, the poems of the *Theriigaathaa* often make us sympathise with the undeserved suffering of women and this quality was surely part of why the *Theriigaathaa* had the appeal that it did for modern Indian social reformers, like Rahul Sankrityayan and for dalits in the twentieth century who were drawn to Buddhism as an alternative vision of society and as well as offering the possibility of individual self-determination despite the oppressive social contexts' [Hallisey, 2015: xxxi-xxxii].

From Thiruppaan Alvar (c.8th/9th century), Nammaalvaar (c.9th/10th century – a shudra with brahmin disciples), Nandanaar (an untouchable, born in a Pulai community), Basavanna (who was uncomfortable with his own brahmin roots and lamented that he had his birth in this 'obnoxious caste'), Chokhamelaa (untouchable saint-poet of Maharashtra and a *vaarkari*, i.e., devotee of Vitthal affectionately known as Vithobaa, the deity of Pandharpur), Jani or Janaabaai (the serving maid of Naamadev the tailor, 14th century), Bankaa (possibly brother of Chokhamelaa's wife Soyraabaai), Soyraabaai (who called herself 'Chokhaa's Mahaari'), Nirmalaa (Chokhamelaa's sister) Kabiir, Naanak, Dadu, Ekanaath, Kanakadaasa (of Karnataka), Tukaaraam, Ravidaas/Raaidaas (c.1400-c.1700), Jotibaa Phule (1827-1890), down to the Babasaheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar represent a long and illustrious line of social dissenters [Zelliot and Mokashi-Punekar, 2005: *passim*]. Almost all these came from low social origins or sympathised with socially exploited classes and stood for anti-orthodoxy, anti-brahmanism, anti-caste positions, ridiculed vedic-epic-puranic textual tradition and by and large represented non-Sanskritik thought currents.

The twelfth-thirteenth century Karnataka Viirashaiva/Lingaayat movement, with the phenomenal contributions of Basavanna (born c.1125), focused on gender parity – women, no less than men, could worship Shiva and attain eternal bliss, irrespective of caste and community. Sacrifice of animals in the name of god was unacceptable. There was no hierarchy in society. The sacred thread was a symbol of insolence. Just as caste conferred no privilege, occupation inflicted no disability. Dignity of labour and an equal status for women were seriously advocated. This is Basava's *shivaachaara* [Parvathamma 1997]. The genre of writing called *vachanas* embody the essence of the Lingaayatas. Basava's biting critique of the brahmanical social order and his recognition of the dignity of labour is reflected in the following *vachana*:

I will prefer the man carrying a dead cow on his shoulders
to one who is carrying a sacrificial goat.

Another *vachana* says: ‘The Brahmin is the ass who carries the Veda as load’ [Aiyangar, 2008:418-427].

Women, such as Mahaadevii, known as *akkaa* (elder sister), Remmavve and Kalavve (both spinners by occupation) were no less zealous followers and practitioners of Basava’s *shivaachaara*. It is forcefully argued that in the Viirashaiva movement ‘even unmarried “deviant” women like Akkaa Mahaadevii and prostitutes like Gangaamma, Soola Sankavve and Vaijjakavve managed to create a sacred space for themselves’ [Ramaswamy 1996:27]. A typical *vachana* of *akkaa* Mahaadevii is:

People
Male and female,
Blush when a cloth covering their shame
comes loose.
When the Lord of lives
lives drowned without a face
in the world,
of what use is modesty?
When the whole world
is the Lord’s eye
What can you hide?
What can you cover? [Ramanujan, 1973:131]

A *vachana* by Remmavve, reminding us of a composition from the *Theriigaathaa*, uses the imagery of the spinning wheel to describe her spiritual experience as well as the situation of domestic violence in which she lived and worked. And Kalavve’s strong anti-brahmanical voice highlights the state of the Maadigas, one of the lowest of the untouchable castes in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh [Ramaswamy, 1996:53-56].

Movement akin to that of the Lingaayatas was undertaken somewhat later in the Tamil country between the 15th and the 17th centuries. Innumerable poems ascribed to dozens of poets collectively described as Siddhas (Tamil Cittar) heralded antinomian trends. These poets seem to be an offshoot of the pan-Indian Naatha tradition [personal communication from Professor Y. Subbarayalu dated July 31, 2017], that is now being defiled by Yogi Adityanath, the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. Some of the prominent Tamil Siddhas were Sivavaakkiyar, Pattinattaar, Akappeyaccittar, Kutampaiccittar, Paampaatticcittar, Kaalaiccittar [Zvelebil, 1975:237-243]. A recent assessment of these poets underlines, ‘It is not a good idea to lump these twilight figures together, especially since their voices tend to be highly idiosyncratic; but broadly we can see common traits such as hatred for caste hierarchies and orthodox rituals, a Yoga-oriented universalistic ethic, anti-brahmin sentiments and a generalised social critique’ [Shulman, 2016: 312; also 139-141 for Pattinattaar]. Sivavaakkiyar was particularly inspiring for the Periyar whose iconoclastic anti-brahminism and strong rationalistic appeals marked the Dravidian movement in the 20th century.

Are there kshatriyas in the Kali Age? This question led to a serious and long lasting debate between two points of view among the brahmins. The question was focused in the context of two main disputes that emerged in the last quarter of the 17th century. These were (a) the eligibility of Shivaaji for a royal consecration ceremony (*abhisheka*) and (b) the eligibility of the Chaandraseniya Kaayastha Prabhus to have an *upanayana*, for they claimed to be kshatriyas. For such questions, the practice amongst Maharashtra’s communities was to seek the guidance from authoritative persons from the centres of brahmanical learning like Paithan or Banaras. The perceived authority of person rather than argument swayed the final verdict and could even be upturned later. Thus, Gaagabhata’s decision in favour of the Chaandraseniya Kaayastha Prabhus and his acceptance of a fictitious genealogy of Shivaji establishing him a descendant of the solar race irked other local brahmins. Decades after Shivaji’s death, dispute arose again and the decision of Gaagabhata was challenged by Niilakaantha Shaastrii Thatte in Pune. Gradually, Thatte’s view gained popularity [Deshpande 2010; Tripathi 2016:237].

Strong voices of social protest against the brahmin-dominated caste hierarchy, reminiscent of the Buddha's exhortations, became quite pronounced in the late 19th and the early 20th century. Several writings of creative writers in Kerala were marked by harsh questions, pungent sarcasm and loud calls for action. The triumvirate of modern Malayalam literature notable for this social activism comprised of N. Kumaran Asan (1873-1924), Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyer (1877-1949) and Vallathol Narayan Menon (1878-1958) [see also Raghavan 1977: 372-381; and Vatsyayan 2016: 81-97 for non-conformism in creative arts, specially music]. Of these, Asan (born in the backward community of Ezhavas) was a disciple of Sri Narayana Guru (c.1854/56-1928), himself an Ezhava. Guru's call for 'One Caste, one Religion and one God for man' provoked many thinking minds [George 1977]. Thus, Asan's *Durvasthaa* and *Chandaalabhikshukii* (both composed in 1922) are marked by arguments, exhortations and indictments. Addressing the votaries of the Hindu *shastras*, the poet warns:

Change ye the laws yourselves, or else,
The laws will change you indeed.

The *Chandaalabhikshukii* invokes the old Buddhist lore⁶ – the Buddha's favourite disciple Ananda drinking water at the hands of a Maatanga girl, a *chandaala*. Asan makes the Buddha raise the following brutal questions:

*Tell me, does the brahman come from the tip of a creeper or from a cloud?
Or does he emanate like the sacrificial fire made without another fire?
Is caste found in the blood or is it in the bone or marrow?
Is the chandala woman's body infertile to the brahman seed?
Is the sacred thread or the tuft of hair or the mark on the forehead an adjunct of birth?
Does the brahman get his learning without being tutored?*

Continuing such a streak, Vallathol's *Sudharil Sudhan* is full of sarcastic ridicule. His castigation of both the Hindus and Muslims reminds us of Ekanath's sixteenth century *bhaarud* (drama-poem) entitled *Hindu-Turk Samvaad* in 66 verses [Zelliot 1982:171-195]. It is a hard-hitting, humorous, occasionally vulgar argument between a Hindu and a Turk (either an ethnic Turk or simply a Muslim). Interestingly, both call each other 'fools' in a rich variety of Hindi and Marathi ways. For all the mutual recrimination expressed in this imaginary debate, its conclusion is harmonious.

Women's voices:

At the *brahmodya* (debating conclave) convened by king Janaka, intense philosophical *shastraartha* took place between *brahmavaadinii* Gaargii Vaachaknavii and sage Yaajñavalkya in which the former persisted with so many terse and embarrassing questions that irritated the sage so much that he asked her to shut up lest her head be chopped off (*Gaargi maatipraakshiih, maa te murdhaa vyapaptat, Brihadaraanyaka Upanishad, III.6.1*).

The boldness of Gaargii can also be seen in Draupadii's conduct in the great *sabhaa* of the Kauravas where she was brought after her husband the *dharmaraaja* Yudhishtira had lost her in the famous Game of Dice, was being disrobed and publicly humiliated. Draupadi dared to ask the elders present, including Bhiishma *pitaamaha*, not only the complex question about the subtlety of *dharma* (*dharmashcha suukshmah*) but also 'whether her husband was authorised to stake her in the Game of Dice when after putting himself on stake, he had lost and become a slave himself' (*Mahaabhaarata II.60-61*). Thus were brought to the fore serious questions about men's attitude towards women, property rights, values and social norms. Further, 'by standing her ground and asking the question Draupadii is really revealing the dark side of the masculine code of both heroism and chivalry' [Shah 2012:47].

The *Mahaabhaarata* narratives recalling legends of Suvarchalaa [Shaantiparva, App.1, No.19] and Sulabhaa [Shaantiparva, ch.308; Shah 2012: 87, 167-68] not only bring out the loud and bold voices of women but also reveal their potential to challenge even celebrated intellectuals of the day. Though Suvarchalaa's husband Shvetaketu is reckoned amongst the earliest to have protested against the violence on women, yet she intensely questioned him on the complex relationship amongst

language, speech and reality and made him realise that the relationship between word and its meaning is not *aatyantika* (permanent and immutable). Sulabhaa, on the other hand, a revered teacher, humbled the pride of Janaka, whose arrogance about being a liberated soul was displayed in vulgar and licentious tone. His philosophic exchange with Sulabhaa forced him to ponder the question: ‘how am I any less liberated than her?’

Vaidehii (Siitaa) of Vaalmiiki’s *Raamaayana*, a docile woman in popular imagery, giving vent to a ‘woman’s impulse’ disapproves of Raama going to the Dandaka forest to protect seers from *raakshasas* and admonishes him for ‘unprovoked violence’. ‘How incongruous they are, weapons and forest, the kshatriya order and the practice of asceticism – it is all so at odds. We must respect the customs of the place. Wicked thoughts ... can come from handling of weapons’ [*Raamaayana, Aaranyakaanda*, 8.3,23-24,29 – Sheldon Pollock’s translation, Vol.III : 100-102].

‘Who is a *stree* (woman)?’ The modern day champions and adversaries of feminism may not easily believe that such a simple sounding question but full of serious implications was raised nearly two thousand years ago. Many Jain sects, including the Digambaras, Shvetaambaras and Yaapaniyyas incessantly debated the involved issues – specially the eligibility of women to achieve *moksha* or *nirvaana* (liberation). In the process, intensive discourse on the physiognomy of woman and questioning of stereotypes of comparative qualities attributed to men and women becomes available. Thus, seeing a woman in a man and vice-versa is made possible [Jaini 1991sh1992].

A recent study based on some Sanskrit texts spread over several centuries and of varied genres – such as the *Upanishads*, *Kuttanimatam*, *Suuktimuktaavalii*, the great Epics, Kaalidaasa’s *Abhijñaanashaakuntalam*, *Kathaasaritsaagara*, *Charaka Samhitaa*, *Giitagovinda*, *Dhuurtavita Samvaada*, *Yashastilaka*, etc – has retrieved several female voices of dissent, sarcasm and satire against the entrenched patriarchal social structure. ‘Women could articulate their desires and aspirations...the past was not just about the gagging of women and their subordination...but that there were many little windows opening out into the future, giving a tantalising glimpse of unfettered women’ [Shah 2017].

VII

Satires / sarcasm: political and religious

Down the ages, the one weapon that people seem to have exercised without any restraint or fear has been their ribald irreverence for the powers that be. No sphere of human activity was spared and no form of expression left untouched. The *raajaa*, *raajakumaara* or a feudal lord, the *darogaa*, the *mullaah*, the *pandit*, the collector, or the modern day politicians who masquerade as ‘representatives and servants of people’ have always been the butt of extremely sharp jokes, spoofs and caricatures. Satirical and sarcastic poetry, songs, dance and folk theatre in different languages have always been invoked by people to show their irreverence. As early as the *Rig Samhitaa*, the seers satirised brahmins who croak like frogs (VII.103.1-10) and priests greedy for gold (IX.112.1).

The *Mattavilaasa-prahasana*, a farce attributed to the Pallava king Mahendravarman I (early seventh century CE), was written with the object of holding up to ridicule the foibles and follies of Shaiva, Buddhist and Jain ascetics. The lampooning of these ascetics also makes for fascinating reading in another farce from this king, viz., *Bhagavadajjukiiya*. A Kaapaalika in the *Mattavilaasa* refers to the Jains’ useless and false philosophies and evil shrines, and he wishes to cleanse his mouth [with wine, anathema to an orthodox Hindu] for having mentioned them. In the *Shankaravijaya*, a Kaapaalika adopted the character of an ascetic as an excuse for throwing off all social and moral restraints.

Having seen the futility of War, Yudhishtthira proclaims his reluctance to assume kingship, and the desire to lead the life of an ascetic in forests. Both Bhiima and Draupadii ridicule him and the latter even suggested that her husband had gone insane and deserved to be bound up with the *naastikas* [Shaantiparva.14.33-35].

It’s not just the case of vedic and non-vedic streams ridiculing each other. Various gods of the so-called ‘vedic’ affiliation in many of the sectarian Puraanas use considerably violent and derogatory vocabulary, as if they were engaged in a competition to run down one another. Thus, the *Padma Puraana* (6.263.1-91) has a long passage telling us how Vishnu forced Shiva to create ‘heretical dharma’. ‘I was very upset about this, fearing that it would destroy me, but he (Vishnu) said, “Do as I say, for the sake of gods, and you will revive yourself by reciting my thousand names”’. Shiva then tells Paarvatii, ‘Thus I created this reviled sect of outcastes proclaiming the Shaiva, Paashupata, Vaisheshika,

Nyaaya, Saamkhya, Charvaaka, and Buddhist heresies by entering into various sages... I took the form of the Brahmin Jaimini and taught that senseless argument was the basis of the words of the Vedas... The six Puraanas of darkness, which lead to hell, are the Matsya, Kurma, Linga, Shiva, Skanda, and Agni; and the *shastras* of darkness are the Gautama, Baarhaspatya, Saamvarta, Yama, Saamkhya, and Aushanasa’.

In the third act of the seventh century play *Naagaananda* (based on the Buddhist legend of the self-sacrifice of Jimutavaahana) attributed to king Harsha, the viduushaka (a comic figure, generally a brahmin himself) and a vita (rogue, knave or bon-vivant), through their stupidity and vulgarity ridicule a brahmin. Raajashekhar’s viduushaka in his *Baala-raamaayana* stands out not only for his pointless jokes but also for tasteless antics. Apparently, the sophisticated society ‘did not disdain the shallow gaiety of the farce (*prahasana*) and the erotic monologue play (*bhaana*), which take for their characters debauches, rogues and vagrants and for their subjects shady and coarse acts...’ [Dasgupta and De 1962:488].

Kings and their hangers on were not just subjects of *prashastis*. Disguised criticisms of the *anyaapadesha* type and even more explicit ones are available in Sanskrit and other Indian languages. The *narmasachiva* envisaged by the *Dharmashastras* and the *viduushakas* in the plays discharged this duty. In Kerala, the *Chaakyaars* almost terrorised rulers in the *kuuttu* and *kuutiyaattam* performances. The *Mahishashatakam* by Vaancheshvara Diikshita *alias* ‘Kuttikavi’ (meaning ‘Boy Poet’), a *kaavya* of about one hundred verses ostensibly in praise of a buffalo, but in reality a political satire with clearly identifiable spatio-temporal specificity (Thaⁱⁱjaavuur in the late 18th century) is an example of political criticism. Most of the problems raised here – corrupt bureaucracy, decadent society, declining educational values, debauchery in the court, nepotism – almost everything sounds very contemporary [Veluthat, 2010: *passim*]. He has only contempt, bordering on intolerance, for institutionalised religion. The meaninglessness of sacrificial rites, pilgrimage and various yogic practices is the subject of one verse (v.36). The way in which Vedic scholars made a fetish of their experience (v.54), Maadhvaachaarya (v.55), Shriivaishnavas (v.57), the ways of *yoga* (v.56), the activities of a *yajamaana* in a sacrifice (v.58) – all this is subjected to the poet’s ridicule. Though a work of exceptional literary quality, it goes much beyond frivolous cynicism. As a serious political [kings of his time are called *vidyaayaam vishabuddhayo hi vrisalaasabhyah* – ‘vulgar urchins, who look upon knowledge as just poison’, (verse 3)] and social critique, it also looks like a work of a grand intellectual of the time who was perhaps also playing the additional role of a political activist.

The later Mughal emperor Faarrukh Siyaar (1685-1719; ruled from 1713-19) was also a butt of satire in the *Kulliyat-i-Ja’far Zatali* or *Zatal-naamaa* by Mir Ja’far Zatali, composed in *Rekhtaa* (a mixture of early Urdu and Indo-Persian) [Rajan Gurukkal’s Foreword in Veluthat, 2010]. Zatali’s prose and poetry delineates deteriorating social and political conditions of the Mughal state. The kings, princes and princesses, high and low nobles of the Mughal state – none was spared. Frank and graphic descriptions of corruption and vulgarity current at the time, and even savage and obscene satires/parodies of members of the declining political apparatus stand out in Zatali’s compositions [Ataullah, 2009: 447-454].

VIII

Integrating and Divisive Elements in Indian Intellectual History

Beginning from *circa* 600, the next thousand years were quite remarkable for the heights reached in the nurturing of the intellectual milieu. Since we have laid down intensive and persistent questioning and application of *hetu-vidyaa* / *hetuvaada* (science of causation) as the basic components of reason and rationality, one is struck by an exceptional ethos of the *vaada* tradition. The atmosphere of political turmoil and centuries of violent wars and conquests not only between internal and external centres of power but also amongst ‘indigenous’ forces led to frequent shifting of political frontiers. And yet, political adversaries had their counterparts in intellectual adversaries and hermeneutic pluralism. The strands of social churning – down almost to the present times – have already been seen above (section VI). From the point of other aspects of intellectual deliberations, this millennium witnessed struggles and debates amongst almost all religio-philosophical systems of the subcontinent, up to the threshold of what has been called ‘early modernity’ and ‘new historicity’ in the seventeenth century

[Pollock 2001].⁷ The issues at stake in these *vaadas* range from mundane concerns about food [Dundas 1985], clothing [Jaini 1991/1992] and behaviour of followers such as the struggle between domesticated (*chaityavaasi*) and peripatetic (*vanavaasi*) mendicants [Cort in Cort, ed. 1998:108, n.14] to high philosophic dialogues and consequent adjustments [Balcerowicz 2006]. Given such a long dialectical legacy, the history of Indian philosophy is seen as the history of the elaboration of the different systems conditioned by an ongoing critical questioning from their rivals, and by the confrontation with other issues that threaten their internal coherence [Bronkhorst 2001].

The participants in the varieties of debates taking place in these centuries invoked every tactic without any restraint – *tarka*, *vitarka*, *kutarka*, *chhal*, *jalpa*, *vitandaa* – everything is on display. If the ‘pretentious idiom of the Puraanas’ was a ‘surreptitious implantation’ of the so-called heretical ideologies and practices (essentially, of the Buddhists, Jains and Lokaayatikas), they were clearly directed against *shruti-smriti* and *varnaashrama* as a way of bringing about the speedy downfall of the community howsoever mighty that community might be [Dandekar 1995]; the Jains were resorting to displays of stability and adaptability as well as opposition and absorption as a strategy for survival and growth [Granoff 1994; Qvarnstrom 1998]. The identity and meaning of *paashanda/paashandin* (the most common term for a ‘heretic’) kept on changing. If the Buddhists were *paashandas* to the Vaishnavas and Shaivas at some stage, the Shaivas became the main adversaries of the Vaishnavas on another occasion [Thapar 2009]. Inclusivism *versus* exclusivism as a strategy was invoked by Vedantic sects, too.

Free and fearless expression of varying perceptions in inter- and intra-sectarian as well as in inter- and intra-religious dialogues leave us in no doubt that rigorous, methodical, sedulous argumentation is used to shape our thought, sometimes even without being dogmatic about it in a typically *anekaantavaadin* way. Though occasionally such dialogues and debates are couched in harsh, violent and even abusive language, yet these don’t ever seem to go beyond that. Asking for a ban on a creative work (book, theatrical performance, painting, film, etc) or even the head of authors of such works – as is now becoming quite a phenomenon on the specious grounds of ‘hurt religious sentiments’, was unheard of.⁸ If Bhattojii Diikshita wrote a commentary on the Paaninian system of grammar, Panditaraaja Jagannaatha came out with a strong rejoinder in his treatise under the provocative title *Manoramaakuchamardini* [Tripathi 2016:138]; and Naraharishesha’s *shuudraachaara-shiromani* drew Gaagabhatta’s rejoinder through his *Kaayasthadharma-pradiipa* [Deshpande 2010]. Titles of several such works containing violent descriptions like breaking, smashing, uprooting and denouncing the views of the other give us a sense of how hot these debates/disputes became [Deshpande 2011]. But Dharmakiirti, the great Buddhist logician, didn’t mince his words when he wrote: ‘*sandhaaya-sambhaashaa* (friendly debate) and *vigraahya-sa\bhaa4aa* (hostile debate) are known as *tattvabubhutsuvaada* (debate with the desire to seek the truth) and *vijigishuvaada* (debate with the desire of winning)’ [cited in Tripathi 2016:178].

Let us illustrate, in brief, some examples of the above-mentioned general traits and tendencies of the millennium. Rich information about non-Jain religions embodied in Jain texts of the medieval period bear witness to a religious system that highly valued the knowledge of other doctrines, both as part of its own philosophy, and as a means of survival and growth. One such text is Siddhasena Divaakara’s *Vedavaadadvaatrimshikaa* of the sixth century CE at the latest. Doctrinal contents range from Jain philosophy and religion to doxographical accounts of non-Jain systems, labelled as Vedavaada, Nyaaya, Saamkhya, Vaisheshika, Bauddha and Niyativaada. First, it seems to be the earliest known Sanskrit doxography within the Jain tradition, predating Haribhadra’s *Shaddarshanasamuchchaya*. Second, it is the earliest known Jain text to describe Vedaanta philosophy in a more or less systematic manner. Thirdly, it stems from a period of which our historical knowledge of Vedaanta tradition is fragmentary. The use of the term *Vedavaada* in describing (pre-Shankara) Vedaanta philosophy is noteworthy, if not unique, at least in comparison with the nomenclature employed by other doxographies from the same period [Qvarnstrom 2003].

As opposed to Siddhasena’s work, in some of the texts included in the Shvetaambara Jaina canon, the Puranic legends have been made fun of. It is also seen that characters such as Vyaasa, Krishna, Yudhishtira, etc. have been portrayed by the Jaina authors in an irreverential manner. The *Dhuurtaakhyaana* by Haribhadrasuuri (mid-8th century) is perhaps the most typical work of this genre. Jain disposition towards devotional schools, which were powerful social and political movements, took the form of both opposition (attack on Vishnu) and absorption (production of Jain Epics and Puraanas

that subjected the dramatis personae Raama and Krishna to Jain moral standards). The fact that Jain authors such as Hemachandra consciously adopted material from non-Jain sources, despite the obvious peril of being accused of heresy (*mithyaatva*) by the Jain community (*samgha*) as well as of undermining the stability and credibility of the Jain tradition, indicates the importance these authors ascribed to such a stratagem [Qvarnström 1998].

The intensity of debates reflecting contestations as well as mutual borrowings may be seen in the discourses on the very terse subject of typologies of *drishtaanta-aabhaasa* ‘fallacies of examples’ in the sixth-seventh centuries between the Buddhist Dharmakiirti’s *Nyaaya-bindu* and Jain Siddharshigani’s *Nyaayaavataara-vivriti*. And this was despite the fact that the two thinkers were not above sectarian prejudices [Balcerowicz 2006].

As further examples of the strategy of inclusivism *versus* exclusivism may be cited some inter- and intra-religious/sectarian debates between Buddhists-Jains and the Vedaantins (eleventh to fourteenth centuries) and amongst varied sects of the Vallabhites (sixteenth-eighteenth centuries). In the two allegorical plays in Sanskrit, *viz.*, *Prabodhachandrodaya* (PC) of Krishnamishra (eleventh century) and *Samkalpasuuryodaya* (SS) of Vedaantadeshika (thirteenth-fourteenth century), the former is addressed to the royal audience (Chandella king Kiirtivarman, c.1060-1100) and the latter is meant for the Shriivaishnava community.

PC unites brahmanical philosophical schools, including devotional sects of Vishnuism, Shivaism, Sauras, etc., against their opposition to ‘heterodox’ (*naastika*) schools. Thus PC is also a political allegory for the triumph of Vedic over non-Vedic traditions – a triumph achieved through strategic alliance of the various philosophical schools and devotional schools. This is a ‘big-tent’ view of Vedaanta. SS upholds an unapologetic exclusivism, rejecting worship of gods other than Vishnu and portraying philosophical schools such as Saamkhya and Vaisheshika as fighting on the same side as Buddhism and Jainism. Unlike *jñāna/prabodha* leading to liberation in PC, it is *samkalpa* (Lord’s will) for the same purpose in SS [Allen 2016].

PC’s inclusivism need not be taken in Hacker’s specific sense of ‘claiming for, and thus including in, one’s own religion what really belongs to an alien sect’ [see Allen 2016: 293, n.6 on ‘inclusivism’]; rather, it is being used in a broader sense to mean a willingness to see non-Vedaantic schools as allies rather than rivals. Vedaantic inclusivism is hierarchical. Krishnamishra’s inclusivism does not amount to an unequivocal embrace of non-Vedaantic schools. He adopts a position of full-fledged ‘exclusivism’ towards *naastikas*; full-fledged ‘inclusivism’ (or pluralism) towards the devotional sects, and ‘strategic inclusivism’ towards the brahmanical philosophical schools. There are two other important conclusions that have been put forward by Allen, *viz.*, PC provides evidence of an earlier (11th century) articulation of a unified proto-Hindu identity than what has been hitherto suggested by Nicholson and Lorenzen (c.1200-1500); and further, that it was not the presence of Islam that catalysed the formation of a unified Hindu identity; rather it was competition from Jainism and Buddhism which had vexed many a brahmanical thinker for centuries before the advent of Islam.

Somewhat akin to the strategising of the PC and SS is the case of the four-*sampradaaya* rubric, about which we hear as early as in the *Dabistaan-i-Mazaahib* (‘School of Religions’, section eighth). It mentions Vishnuite sects as: Madhu Achaaris or Brahma Sampradaaya, founded by Madhvaachaarya; Raamaanandis; Harbayaantis; and the fourth, Raadhaavallabhis [Mubed, 1998/1843: 175-184]. This rubric is intended to show how the theological and initiatory lineages established by Raamaanuja, Nimbaarakaa, Madhva and Vishnusvaamii in the south all travelled north in time and set up shop in a new way. Monika Horstmann had proposed (in German, 2009) about ‘four *sampradaayas*’ as a way to discipline religion at the court of the Kachhvaaha king Jaisingh II in the early decades of the 18th century [cited in Hawley 2011]. The *nirguniyas*, such as the Raamaanandis and Daaduupanthis with their power centre at Galta (near Jaipur), had already acquired considerable influence in the court of Jaisingh of Amer through brahmins. The search for other early documents where the motif of four-*sampradaayas* appears, takes us also into the heart of the *saguna* domain – Vallabhites certainly, and may be Chaitanyites as well. In this context the *Sampradaayapradhiipa* of Gadaadhara becomes an instrument. It was concerned with (a) the problem of succession within the fold of the Pushtimaargii Vallabhites – fighting for the position of *tilakaayat mahaaraajashrii*; and (b) inter-sectarian rivalry with the Chaitanyites – Ruupa Gosvaamii (15/16th century – died 1564) of this sect, the theologian whose experience at the court of Hussain Shah of Gauda had prepared him well for subsequent negotiations with the Kachhvaahas and the Mughals, had no hesitation in referring openly and respectfully to

correspondences between Vallabha's system and his own. Jaina influence in the Hindu Vaishya communities of Gujarat, especially on the issue of non-violence, was reflected in the proselytising efforts of followers of the Vaishnava saint Vallabhaacharya, who were active in Rajasthan and Gujarat. Many Pushtimaargiya Baniyas, in fact, were converts from Jainism.

Inter-religious dialogues and debates

Very few pre-Islamic Indian religions have left any significant understanding of 'Muslims' or 'Islamicate' sects. Jains were perhaps an exception.⁹ And yet, expectedly perhaps, following the legacy of British colonial history, especially the James Mill type construct, Hindu-Muslim interactions in medieval and early modern India have been mostly studied in monolithic or antagonistic terms. The present day Hindu nationalists have not deviated from this track. However, numerous scholarly responses, both in India and abroad, have focused on demonstrating the need of highlighting extremely nuanced constructions of inter-religious dialogues – both at the level of the perception of the 'Self' and 'the Other' as well as factoring in the display of reason and rationality in such ideational interactions.

Some recent anthologies of provocative essays brought out in the last few decades explore not only the multiplicity within a given religious tradition but also focus on the exchanges among the various religious communities of north India from c.1500 to 1800 CE – thereby presenting a panoramic view of religious interactions during the period broadly regarded as Mughal [Dalmia and Faruqi, eds., 2014]. Close intertwining of religious traditions with political power, alongside a diversity of traditions in active conversation with one another become quite manifest, as one can see in the emergence and growth of Mahaamati Praannaath (1618-1694) and the Pranaami Movement and its involvement with the state authorities during the period of Emperor Aurangzeb. The movement was an interesting amalgam of Vaishnavite belief with Sufi mysticism and Shia millenarianism and its followers were simply designated as 'believers' (*momins*) – neither Hindus nor Muslims [Brendan Larocque in *ibid.*, 342-78].

Another anthology covering the same three centuries [Pollock, ed., 2011] charts out a different trajectory, and adds a remarkable chapter in Indian intellectual history to focus on distinctive forms of non-Western modernity. It examines new forms of communication and conceptions of power that developed across the subcontinent; changing modes of literary consciousness, practices and institutions; and unprecedented engagements in comparative religion, autobiography and ethnography in the Indo-Persian sphere. Just as random examples, one may mention essays on the utility of Brajabhaashaa for studying the problematic of language and science [Allison Busch in *ibid.*:115-139] and the history of the Bhuj Brajabhaashaa Paathshaalaa (1749-1948) founded by Lakhpat, whose interest in the patronage of music, dance and poetry was stimulated by a visit to the Mughal Court at Delhi whose display of such fine arts fascinated him [Francoise Mallison in *ibid.*:171-182].

John Cort's anthology of 1998 presents a complex history of 'otherness' in western India. Further, in an attempt to construct specific religious identities, it asks provocative questions: Who is a Jain? What is Jainism? Like the modern day Lingaayatas in Karnataka, Jains are also refusing to be bracketed with the 'Hindus' much to the discomfiture of 'Hindu Nationalists' in the garb of 'Cultural Nationalists'. Numerous contributions in Cort's volume bring out contested Jain identities of 'Self' and the 'Other'. Focusing on Jain interactions with non-Jains, including Muslims and Europeans, it has demolished the myth of Jains constituting a monolithic entity. Within the two broad divisions into Digambaras and Shvetaambaras that have been known for more than two millennia, there were sects within sects [Dundas 1985; Jaini 1991/1992]. The Muurtipuuujaks, Sthaanakavaasiis and Teraapanthiis emerged within the Shvetaambaras, as did a sense of 'self' and the 'other' along caste lines (Osval Jains claiming Rajput status) – the linguistic dyad of *Jain* and *Jainetara* ("Jain" and "non-Jain") also got formed. And like the shifting *paasanda/paashandin*, the frontiers of the *Jainetara* also could not remain constant. Thus, in the twelfth century Gujarat, we no longer see a strong sense of Buddhists as the 'other'; they have been replaced by the Shaivas, in particular Paashupata Shaivas, who vied with Jain mendicants for influence over the Chaulukyan kings. This religious rivalry with the Shaivas continued for many centuries. In the fifteenth century, Munisundarasuuri, the leader of the Tapaa Gachchha, mercilessly satirised the uneducated buffoonery of Shaiva clerics and monks who were a prominent feature of rural Gujarat in the 15th-16th centuries, in his *Bharataka-dvaatrimshikaa* [Dundas 1996: 153-

154], indicating that at that time the Shaivas were still the Jains' principal contestants for popular support in Gujarat.

Islamic views of Indian religions

Unlike responses of Indian religions to the coming of Islam, the response of the latter towards Indian religions in general and the 'Hindus' in particular has a long history. Notwithstanding Arab geographers' accounts of India going back to the 8th/9th centuries, there have been numerous accounts on this aspect at least from the eleventh century onwards. Presently we are not concerned about constructions of the theme of 'Influence of Islam on Indian Culture' on which several monographs exist (e.g., from Tara Chand's work of that title in 1922 to Audrey Truschke's *Culture of Encounters* and Manager Pandey edited *Mughal Badshaahon ki Hindi Kavita* in 2016). However, the trend of followers of Islam reflecting on the perceptions about Indian religions and philosophies began with al-Biruni (c.973-1054 CE) and continued for almost eight centuries. Al-Gardiizii (circa early eleventh century), Amir Khusraw (1253-1325), Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624) and the Naqshbandi Sufi, Mirza Mazhar Jaan-i Jaanaan (1698-1781), all made rich contributions. Some of these are very keen and conscientious attempts, some are quite vitriolic and some others (particularly those of Daaraa Shukoh) make a sincere effort to produce ideas that create a synthesis of Sufi and brahmanic philosophic thoughts. In this long chain, the *Dabistaan-i-Mazaahib* has carved out a special niche for itself [see also Behl 2011].

The *Dabistaan* by an anonymous author, variously named or identified as 'Mobad'/'Mubed', Muhsin Fani, or Mirza Zu'lfikaar Beg or Kaikhusrau Isfandyaar, is a phenomenal Mughal-period text (completed in, or a little after, 1653) on comparative religion, apparently written with painstaking research. 'Based not only on textual readings but also on personal "field work", this work is unique for its time, both when we consider its author's avowedly impartial approach and his anxiety to be not only detailed but also precise and accurate' [Habib, 2001: 474]. The allusion to the four-*sampradaaya* rubric in the *Dabistaan* has already been mentioned. Its tenth section (*ta'liim*) 'On the system of those who profess the doctrine of Tark' [Mubed, 1843/1998: 203-210] is especially striking for its extremely detailed spelling out of what is called the science of dialectics. The author enumerates sixteen parts of *Tarkashastra* as *pramaana*, *pramiti*, *samshaya*, *prayojana*, *drishtaanta*, *siddhaanta*, *avayava*, *tarka*, *nirneya*, *vaada*, *jalpa*, *vitandaa*, *hetvaabhaasa*, *chhala*, *jaati* and *nigraha* and also provides lists of their sub-divisions. It is evident that Imaam Arastu who related these to Mubed, was himself familiar with 'an old treatise upon logic' (possibly Gautama's). There are interesting hints about the trek through which this science of dialectics got dispersed among the Persians in the time of Alexander's conquest.

The objectivity of the author is indicated in its delineation of the *ibaadat-khaanaa* discussions: 'In the "discussion among Religions", which is apparently based on some text reporting Akbar's *ibaadat-khaana* discussions, the debate ends in favour of reason, with the kinds of arguments that had been raised in Akbar's court circle, with almost no touch anywhere of the *ishraqi* or illuminative mysticism of the *Sipasi* sect, to which the author of the *Dabistan* belonged. It is difficult, then to argue that in reproducing such a document our author was pursuing any agenda of his own' [Habib, 2001: 487].

Unlike the author of the *Dabistan*, Ahmad Sirhindi and Jaan-i Jaanaan differ in their attitudes to the pre-Islamic Indians, but both of them agree that the non-Muslim Indians living in the Islamic era are infidels and culpable for their failure to embrace Islam. Nevertheless, Jaan-i Jaanaan's sympathetic attitude to the ancient Indians and their scriptures, the tone of his discourse and the inoffensive language he employs are important: Jaan-i Jaanaan holds to his beliefs without being unnecessarily acrimonious towards the Hindu community and religion [Friedmann 1975; see also Tareen 2017].

Jain perceptions of Islam

Almost a quarter century ago, Pollock had shown (1993) how the narrative of *Raamaayana* was 'profoundly and fundamentally a text of "othering".' Hindu demonisation of Muslims as latter-day

equivalents of the *raakshasa* foes of Raama impacted some Jain writings with conflicting signals. Devavimaala's biography of Hiiravijayasuuri (the leader of the Tapaa Gachchha lineage of the Shvetaambara Jain *muurtipujaks*) entitled *Hiirasaubhaagya* (by Devavimaala Ganin) calls Abu'l Fazl as shukra, who is known in the Puraanas as the *guruu* of demons. However, a contrary description in the 1589 biography of the same Jain muni, *viz. Jagadgurukaavya* by Padmasaagara, describes Hindus opposed to the Moghul forces in demonic terms, and compares Hiiravijaya (who was at the Court of Akbar) to *shriimatkhudaa* (Muslim god).

There are occasional hints from a later period that not all Jains perceived Islam exclusively as a religion of *himsaa*, as can be seen from the *Senaprashna*, a Sanskrit text comprising the often very detailed responses given by Vijayasena Suuri (1547-1614, appointed successor to Hiiravijaya Suuri as chief ascetic of the Tapaa Gachchha in 1595), to a series of questions posed by members of the Jain community [Dundas 1999]. Indeed, there are enough indications that under the influence of Jain preceptors (Padmasundara, Hiiravijaya Suuri, Vijayasena Suuri, etc) Jain monks Bhaanuchandra and Siddhichandra at the courts of Akbar and Jahangir not only received several *farmaans* of grants, but more importantly both emperors, respecting the Jain idea of *ahimsaa* (non-violence), vowed to give up hunting and killing of animals [Findly 1987 and 1997]. Jahangir's relations with the Jains blew hot and cold. Once, he called them infidels and yet at other times his advocacy of Jainism was strong enough that at one point Jain monks called him to mediate when a factional dispute broke out between their two principal sects.

Jains, Hindus and the Europeans

The financial powers of the Jain baniyas, especially in Gujarat and Rajasthan, constituted an important factor in getting close not only to the Mughals but even to the Europeans in India. They acted as bankers, financiers and brokers. Their influence, however, was not confined to political and material support. A few early Europeans concluded their discussion of Jain nonviolence by noting its foundation in the doctrine of rebirth and saw parallels in Pythagorean views on 'the transmigration of the soul' [Findly 1997].

Very close to the arrival of the European trading companies and their subsequent ideational exchanges with the Jains arrived Roberto de Nobili (born in Tuscany) in Madurai in 1606. He was an Italian Jesuit missionary and spent fifty years till his death in Mylapore in January 1656. He learnt Tamil and lived like a *samnyaasii*, shaved his head, gave up meat and spirits, avoided all kinds of leather. He strongly opposed aggressive evangelisation, quoting the Book of Exodus: 'Do not speak against the gods'. He became a translator of cultures. When ultimately he got an opportunity to interact with the brahmin scholars of Madurai, the latter realised that the message of Christ in no way contradicted the teachings of the Upanishads. It was a remarkable meeting of minds. In 1987, K.U. Chacko of Kerala composed *Jesus Sahasranaamaa*, obviously modelled on such texts as the *Vishnu Sahasranaamaa* and the *Jina Sahasranaamaa*.

IX

Scientific Temper and the Bright Dawn

There has for long been a school of historical thought in India, which has relentlessly sung paeans to the glorious 'Hindu' period of Indian history that extended from the earliest times to the coming of the British in the 17th century. The 'medieval' for them is all 'Muslim', 'an inferno' in the language of Max Mueller, and to be eliminated. All scientific and technological advances were made during the several millennia of the 'Hindu' period. Relying on mythological allusions in the epics and the Puraanas, fantastical claims have been put forward to suggest that the ancients knew about aeroplanes, plastic surgery, test tube babies and cloning. Dealing with a case involving the death of twelve peacocks, a judge of a High Court in India (2016) pronounced, on the alleged evidence of the *Bhaagavat Puraana*, 'The main characteristic of the peacock is his celibacy. The peahen gets pregnant by swallowing the tears of the peacock. The culling of such a bird is a matter of national concern'. And all this, despite the Constitution of India expecting 'every Indian citizen to develop the scientific temper,

humanism and the spirit of enquiry and reform’ as one of the Fundamental Duties (Part IV-A, Article 51A (h) in the 42nd Amendment of the Constitution, 1976).

Charaka, a medical practitioner of early centuries CE, and his astounding treatise, *viz.*, the *Charaka Samhitaa*, needs special mention in the present context, not for its cures of various human ailments but for his strong espousal of reason and rationality that he expected both from the medical practitioner and the patient. It is remarkable that he regarded appealing to religious or scriptural authorities in the context of clinical practice as committing the fallacy of irrelevance. For him ‘medical integrity’ was supposed to consist in reliance on empirical data, inductive probability, practical efficacy, and *not* on religious authority. Interestingly enough, in spite of the presence of *karma*-theory in popular as well as theoretical consciousness, the text does not list ‘accumulated good *karma*’ as a condition of the curable patient. Medical discussion is to allow no proposition which is irrelevant, unauthoritative, uninvestigated, without any practical significance (*asaadhaka*), confused and without a general applicability (*avyaapaka*). Every position must be substantiated by reason (*sarvam hetumat bruuyaat*) [Chattopadhyaya 1980/2013: 107-13]. Charaka’s expectations of rational practice of medicine apart, he even enumerates traits of a ‘rational patient’, who must have (a) a good memory (so as not to forget her own case history); (b) obedience to the doctor’s instructions; (c) courage; and (d) verbal ability to describe the symptoms.

Carrying such a profound legacy, Jawaharlal Nehru spoke passionately at different fora about the paramount need of inculcating ‘scientific temper of mind’. Although Prime Minister of the country, he had no hesitation in becoming President of the Association of Scientific Workers of India, which was registered as a Trade Union. Lamentably, however, we also need to recall a disturbing episode in this context. A few months before his death in August 2017, the Late Professor Pushpa M. Bhargava, the renowned scientist, had recalled that when he, along with Professors Satish Dhawan (who later became Secretary, Department of Space) and Abdur Rahman (a distinguished historian of science) set up an organisation called The Society for Scientific Temper in January 1964 (shortly before Nehru’s death), the following statement had to be signed by members: ‘*I believe that knowledge can be acquired only through human endeavour and not through revelation, and that all problems can and must be faced in terms of man’s moral and intellectual resources without invoking supernatural powers.*’ Bhargava shares his disillusionment in finding that scientist after scientist refused to sign this statement. Following this incident, the ‘scientific temper minded’ scientists led by Bhargava himself persuaded Professor S. Nurul Hasan, then Education Minister, to get the above mentioned Constitutional amendment passed by the Parliament.

The gunning down of Dr Narendra Dabholkar (2013), Govind Pansare (2015), M.M. Kalburgi (2015) [Jha:2017]; and more recently Gauri Lankesh on Teachers’ Day in September 2017, for their intense and persistent questioning of superstitious and obscurantist religious beliefs and practices runs counter to the inherent trait of the Indian *maniishaa* (mind) as reflected in its long *vaada* tradition. The ostracisation and hounding of Perumal Murugan (in 2015) for his Tamil novel *Madhorubagan* (*One Part Woman* in English) for allegedly defaming women of the Vellalar Gounder community (a backward caste), and still more recently the spectacle of responsible people, people in power, demanding the head of Professor Kancha Ilaiah for his depiction of Vaishyas as ‘social smugglers’ (in a recent tract in Telugu, which in turn is an extract from his 2009 monograph *Post Hindu India: A Discourse on Dalit Bahujan, Socio-Spiritual and Scientific Revolution*) show where we stand today in fostering a ‘scientific temper’. *L’affaire* Murugan forced the author to announce that the ‘writer in him is dead’. Only a judicial verdict could release such an imprisoned mind and resurrect the writer in Murugan. ‘A rising phenomenon of extra-judicial, casteist and religious forces dictating the creativity of authors and writers, [is] a worrying trend’ observed the verdict of the Madras High Court [Rajasekaran 2016 : 123-125]. And amid the terror unleashed on Professor Ilaiah it is worth recalling the judgment on the Fundamental Right to Privacy. On 24th August 2017 Justice S.A. Bobde said in this unanimous judgment of the nine-member bench of the Supreme Court: ‘Privacy must also mean the effective guarantee of a zone of internal freedom in which to think...The vigour and vitality of the various expressive freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution depends on the existence of a corresponding guarantee of cognitive freedom’.

And finally, a few words of introspection for all of us. Is Julien Benda’s classic study of the 1920s *The Treason of the Intellectuals/The Betrayal of the Intellectuals*, coming to haunt us? Shall

we, the knowledge-seekers aspiring to achieve universal humanism and form the civil society, lower our guard and passively acquiesce in heralding, what Benda called ‘the age of the intellectual organisation of political hatreds’? It is to be hoped the immensely rich legacy of India’s dialectical traditions as delineated above, would not let us down and we should be able to sing: *woh subah kabhi to aayegi* – That Bright Dawn is bound to come some day.

Notes:

(1) Compare the distinction often made between an ‘intellectual’ and an ‘activist’ apropos Virmani 2017 and Sarukkai 2017a.

(2) Balcerowicz (2017) considers ‘irrational’ as one of the four definitional traits of ‘religion’. The other three are (a) ‘doctrine’, being a theoretical expression of a religious world view, (b) ‘religious practice, or cult’, being a practical expression of the doctrine and belief, and (c) ‘community’, being a social materialisation of the doctrine.

(3) It is rather surprising that in a recent interview (*The Hindu, Magazine*, December 17, 2017), Wendy Doniger expressed the view that she doubted if the Charvaakas existed at all except as an imagery straw man through whom people could express anti-dharmic ideas without being accountable for them.

(4) For a detailed discussion of issues involved here and the positions taken by the early Buddhists and the Jainas, see Krishna Mohan Shrimali, 2014, and 2016, pp.109-131.

(5) A comparable attempt was made about four decades later when J.P.Singh Uberoi appealed to the fraternity of anthropologists and sociologists of India to rethink about mechanical application of western models to understand Indian social dynamics. He concluded, ‘Until we can concentrate on decolonialization, learn to nationalize our problems and take our poverty seriously, we shall continue to be both colonial and unoriginal’. Cf. J.P. Singh Uberoi, ‘Science and Swaraj’, *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, Vol.2, 1968, pp, 119-124. I owe this reference to Professor Sabyasachi Bhattacharyya.

(6) As available in the *Sardulakarnavadanam*; cf Ranabir Chakravarti, 2012:229-239, where Rabindranath Tagore’s *Chandalika*, a three-act play of 1930 has also been discussed.

(7) Vanita [2018: Introduction] discusses her concept of ‘indigenous modernity’ in the late 18th-early 19th century, with its focus on hybridisation of culture and cosmopolitanism.

(8) A survey of attitudes of Young India (aged between 15 and 34 years) conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) and reported in *India Today* dated 22 May, 2017 showed that 60% support banning movies that hurt religious sentiments.

(9) The 11th century Buddhist *Kaalachakra Tantra* is effectively unique in providing some form of information about Islam, but most likely this was as much to add point to the text’s prophesy of the apocalyptic battle in which the Buddhists, with Hindu aid, would destroy the barbarian and heretical Muslim invaders, see Dundas 1999:37 and n.16.

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