



PUṢPIKĀ

TRACING ANCIENT INDIA
THROUGH TEXTS AND TRADITIONS

CONTRIBUTIONS TO CURRENT RESEARCH IN INDOLOGY

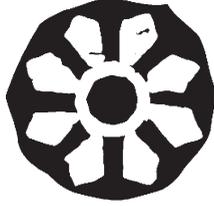
Volume 3

EDITED BY

Robert Leach

Jessie Pons

puspikā



A puṣpikā ('little flower') is the scribes' way of marking the end of the main text and the beginning of the colophon. The present logo is an artistic impression by Shubhani Sarkar based on such a scribal flourish seen on a Nepalese manuscript.

PUṢPIKĀ

Tracing Ancient India, through Texts and Traditions

Contributions to Current Research in Indology

Volume 3

PROCEEDINGS OF THE THIRD AND FOURTH INTERNATIONAL INDOLOGY GRADUATE RESEARCH
SYMPOSIUMS (SEPTEMBER 2011, PARIS & SEPTEMBER 2012, EDINBURGH)

Edited by

Robert Leach
Jessie Pons



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Contents

Preface	vii
1. <i>Marie-Hélène Gorisse</i> Is inference a cognitive or a linguistic process? A line of divergence between Jain and Buddhist classifications	1
2. <i>Elisa Freschi</i> Between Theism and Atheism: A journey through Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta and Mīmāṃsā	24
3. <i>Moreno Dore</i> The pre-eminence of men in the vrātya-ideology	48
4. <i>Paul F. Schwerda</i> “Tear down my Sādhana- and Havirdhāna-huts, stow away my Soma-vessels!” – Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa 2,269ff.: A typical case of cursing in the Veda?	74
5. <i>A. Ruiz-Falqués</i> A New Reading Of The <i>Meghadūta</i>	87
6. <i>Jérôme Petit</i> Banārasidās climbing the Jain Stages of Perfection	107
7. <i>Carola Erika Lorea</i> <i>If people get to know me, I'll become cow-dung:</i> Bhaba Pagla and the songs of the Bauls of Bengal	132
8. <i>Sven Wortmann and Ann-Kathrin Wolf</i> Revisiting Sanskrit Teaching in the Light of Modern Language Pedagogy	161

Preface

I must admit that when Iris Iran Farkhondeh asked me to join her and Jérôme Petit to organise the third IIGRS, I knew little about the previous editions. I had enrolled in the Indian Studies Programme University of Paris 3, Sorbonne Nouvelle to complement my training in South Asian Art History and I did not feel the urge to participate in the Cambridge and Oxford editions. I am delighted that I accepted the invitation to take part in this project and to see here the edited volume of a selection of the papers presented on the 29th and 30th of September 2011 at the University of Paris 3, Sorbonne Nouvelle.

The conference would not have been possible without the logistic and financial support of the UMR 7528 “Mondes Iranien et Indien” and the kind guidance of Prof. Pollet Samvelian (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris 3) and Ms. Maria Szuppe (Research Director, CNRS). Prof. Nalini Balbir encouraged our venture from the very beginning and immediately agreed to give the introductory speech, which retraced the long tradition of Indian and Sanskrit studies in France.

Doctoral candidates and young postdoctoral fellows from institutions in six countries – the United Kingdom, France, Austria, Italy, Germany and the United States – were invited to present their work. These were arranged in panels covering diverse disciplines and themes: Grammar, Philosophy, Buddhist studies, Controversy and exchange, Religious Studies, Sanskrit and Vernaculars, Sanskrit and diachrony. In addition, two eminent scholars, Prof. Gopabandhu Mishra and Prof. Ingo Strauch, delivered keynote lectures on, respectively, *Grammar in Poetry* and *The “cult of the book” in early Mahāyāna*. The conference was also attended by researchers from various other institutions, and provided a platform for a stimulating exchange between scholars at different stages of their academic careers.

Jessie Pons, Käte Hamburger Kolleg, Ruhr Universität Bochum

The fourth IIGRS was held, on the 4th and 5th of September 2012, at the University of Edinburgh in Abden House, a Victorian villa near Arthur's Seat which houses the Confucius Institute for Scotland. My sincere thanks to Natascha Gentz, Professor of Chinese Studies at Edinburgh, and Director of the Confucius Institute, who generously allocated funding for our symposium from the coffers of Asian Studies, and who kindly provided us with such a fine venue. My particular thanks go also to Paul Dundas for his support for and participation in the symposium, and for delivering both an entertaining *résumé* of the professional life and achievements of Arthur Berriedale Keith, lawyer, lecturer in constitutional history, and Regius Professor of Sanskrit at Edinburgh from 1914–1944, and the keynote lecture: a description and analysis of a 12th century eyewitness account of a Śvetāmbara Jain funeral found in Śrīcandrasūri's *Muṇisuvvayajīṇḍacariya*. I am also very grateful to our invited speaker, Elisa Freschi, whose contribution appears in the following pages, and to all other participants in the symposium – scholars from France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the U.S. and the U.K. – who helped to make it such an enjoyable and instructive couple of days. Finally, my thanks to Val Lamb at Oxbow Books for her generous help during the final stages of preparing the manuscript for publication.

Robert Leach, Institute for Asian and Oriental Studies, University of Zurich

One

Is inference a cognitive or a linguistic process? A line of divergence between Jain and Buddhist classifications

Marie-Hélène Gorisse

Abstract

Theories of inference mainly consist of the study of persuasive reasoning as a reliable source of knowledge. In classical India, investigations of inference (*anumāna*) are traditionally referred to as “Indian logic” (*nyāya*) and are performed as part of the treatises on the means to acquire knowledge (*pramāṇa*). As such, they lie at the junction between theories of knowledge, theories of argumentation and theories of meaning.

While Buddhist and Naiyāyika theories of inference are well documented, those of the Jains still call for further study. In Jainism, the founding teachings of the Digambara master Akalaṅka (640–680) are partly devoted to drawing a clear distinction between Dharmakīrti’s conceptions and those of the Jains. These teachings have been succeeded by those of Māṇikyanandi and a tradition ranging from Prabhācandra to Vādi Devasūri.

The objective of this paper is, from a study of the texts of this tradition, to understand the specificities of the Jain theory of inference, especially in relation with those of the Buddhists, which are very close. Within the framework of this paper, I will focus on the following issue: in the study of inference in both traditions, what is conceived as a cognitive process, and what as a linguistic one? This, in turn, will lead us to investigate different conceptions concerning the natural relations ensuring certainty, as well as different forms of inference.

1. The cognitive process of inference

1.1. Historic presentation

Around the 2nd century BCE, the emergence of rival philosophical schools in India, and the need to preserve and strengthen their respective positions, led to the development of the genre of *sūtra*, along with its commentarial traditions.¹ Already, at an early stage, this style of philosophical systematisation included refutations of rival theses, as well as refutations of attacks, or potential attacks, towards one's own theses. This tradition of debate evolved in such a way that around the 6th century CE, a pan-Indian inter-doctrinal consensus on what constitutes a satisfactory justification (a canonical presentation of a correct inference) was achieved. I will refer to this rich period of philosophical dialogue that occurred especially between Hindu, Buddhist and Jain schools, as the "classical" period of Indian philosophy. This period extends from the composition of the above-mentioned *sūtra* texts (2nd century BCE) to the Muslim invasions that mark a clear interruption to the Indian philosophical tradition around the 12th century CE.

The present study is more precisely concerned with the theorising on inference by Jain philosophers. Jain philosophy is often marginalised, and a proper reintroduction of Jain philosophical ideas within the broader framework of Indian philosophy is a *desideratum* in scholarship. I will focus on the period following Dharmakīrti (7th c.), a Buddhist philosopher who made breakthroughs in philosophy, especially in relation with the conception of necessity, and who addressed some virulent criticisms against Jain philosophy of knowledge.² At that time, the biggest challenge for Jain philosophers was to distinguish their conceptions from the conceptions of Dharmakīrti.

The milestone for such a challenge is Akalaṅka's teachings (640–680). Akalaṅka founded a systematic Jain theory of knowledge, and part of this theory is devoted to the study of inference and other logical considerations. After him, the Jain Māṇikyanandi (9th c.)

¹ I would like to thank my colleagues at Ghent University for the constructive discussions we had while I was writing this paper.

² The following passage from Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttikasvavṛtti* (PVs), 181.1, is a good example of his virulence against Jain philosophers: What the shameless [Jains] nonsensically profess, namely "a camel is, in a certain sense, yoghurt, [and] is not, in a certain sense, yoghurt", [a theory] which is really primitive, inconsistent and is not relevant to what should be avoided and to what should be appropriated – insofar as it does not help establish [that which should be avoided and that should be appropriated] – [and is therefore] confused (*yad ayam ahrikah syād uṣtro dadhi syān neti kim apy aśīlam ayuktam aheyopādeyam apariniṣṭhānād ākulaṃ pralapanti*). Translated by Balcerowicz (2006: 1) and edited by Gnoli (1960: 89).

organised Akalaṅka's mature philosophy into a concise treatise, the *Parīkṣāmukham* (henceforth PM), the *Introduction to philosophical investigation*. This work has itself been commented on by the Jain Prabhācandra (980–1065) in his *Prameyakamalamārtaṇḍa* (PKM), the *Sun that grows the lotus of the knowable*. The PKM is of particular importance, first because it presents Akalaṅka's influential teachings in a more organised and a more detailed way than his predecessors. Second, because it draws special attention to dialogues with other schools.³ The reception of the PKM exemplifies the marginalisation of Jain philosophy, because although it is an important text in the classical Indian tradition, only very small parts of it have been translated. A last name of importance is Vādi Devasūri (12th c.), who wrote a commentary to the PKM, namely the *Pramāṇanayattvālokaḷāṃkāra* (PNT), the *Commentary on the explanation of the nature of universal and contextual knowledge*. These three works constitute a lineage of commentaries, and each of them shares the same conception of inference, which I will refer to as “the tradition of Akalaṅka”. Since the PM is the first work in this line of tradition, I will mainly refer to this text, and will quote from the PKM and the PNT only when considering matters which are absent from earlier works.

This Jaina tradition is very close to the Buddhist tradition as initiated by Dharmakīrti in his comments on Dignāga. Therefore, I will focus on the differences between the two conceptions, and ask the following question: “in what sense can we say that the presentation at stake is specifically Jain?”

1.2. General presentation

Inference is the cognitive process by which a given subject acquires new knowledge using reasoning, in contrast with direct cognitive processes such as perception. This reasoning consists of finding which certainties one can acquire from the observation of a given phenomenon. Therefore, it lies at a junction between theories of knowledge, since investigations on inference (*anumāna*) are performed as part of the treatises on the means to acquire knowledge (*pramāṇa*), and theories of argumentation, since investigations on inference mainly consist of the study of persuasive reasoning as a reliable source of knowledge. What is more, this field of expertise traditionally referred to as Indian “logic” (*nyāya*), is concerned with theories of meaning as well, since one of its core issues is the question of the extension of predicates. More precisely, an inference is usually based on a relationship of inclusion between the range of two properties, although in section 2.2, we

³ For example, one can find in the PKM an entire text of Dharmakīrti which would have been lost otherwise, namely the *Sambandhaparīkṣā* (SP), the *Philosophy of relations*, see Shastri (1990: 504–511).

will see that Jain philosophers try to extend this conception. The example of inference provided by Māṇikyanandi is that one can acquire the knowledge that sound is subject to change as a result of one's previous knowledge that sound is something that is produced.⁴ This is due to the fact that everything that is subject to change is necessarily produced, given the very meaning of “subject to change”. This process is defined as follows:

PM.3.14. Inference is the knowledge of the target-property by means of the evidence-property.⁵

PM.3.15. The evidence-property is characterised by being always absent in the absence of the target-property.⁶

With anachronistic tools, the inference from the knowledge that sound is produced to the knowledge that sound is subject to change is ensured by the following relationship between the two properties involved:



This is the reason why in this case the evidence-property functions as evidence: if we know that the evidence-property is present, then we know for sure that the target-property is present too. The translation of the Sanskrit expressions *sādhyā* by “target-property” and *sādhana* or *hetu* by “evidence-property” is motivated by the fact that in the

⁴ *pariṇāmī śabdaḥ kṛtakatvāt*, in Ghoshal (1990: 127). In this paper, all translations are mine, unless stated otherwise.

⁵ *sāadhanāt sādhyavijñānam anumānam*, in Ghoshal (1990: 90–1).

⁶ *sādhyāvinābhāvitvena niścito hetuḥ*, *ibid.*

PM, the PKM and the PNT, these two expressions are regularly substituted with, respectively, *sādhya*dharma and *pakṣa*dharma. This, in turn, is a consequence of the fact that the universal relationship of pervasion that is ensuring the correctness of a given inference can happen only between properties. This is stated in:

PM.3.32. But as far as the universal pervasion is concerned, what one seeks to know is always a property.⁷

It should be stated that what is called “Indian logic” is principally the study of inference, and the way an inference can be proved within a debate against different types of opponents. That is to say that Indian logic is interested in the knowing subject, as well as in the interactive dimension of the knowledge-acquisition process. But we should keep in mind the fact that from Frege (1848–1925) until recently, logic was conceived in the West as the science of pure relations between propositions, i.e. without any psychological consideration of a knowing subject, and that it is only in recent times that new conceptions that pay attention to the interactive dimension of proof have emerged, for example Dynamic Epistemic Logic and Dialogical Logic.⁸ Therefore, it is in the framework of these recent conceptions that one will find contemporary attempts to answer the types of questions that Indian philosophers also attempted to answer in their logic.

2. The linguistic process of inference

2.1. Stating an inference in two steps

2.1.1. General presentation

So far I have introduced inference as a cognitive process which is undertaken in order to gain new knowledge through reasoning (through the transmission of certainty). But since inference is also the rational means one uses in order to convince persons, the inferential process has to be stated, and when this is done so it is commonly followed by a regulated

⁷ *vyāptau tu sādhyam dharma eva*, in Ghoshal (1990: 101).

⁸ See the work of Ditmarsch, Hoek and Barteld (2007) for Dynamic Epistemic Logic, and of Rahman and Keiff (2005) for Dialogical Logic. The emergence of these interactive models, as well as the belief that they are more adequate to express in a formal way the issues considered in Ancient texts on proof, is what motivated the creation of the research network “Dynamic and Dialogical Approaches to Historical Logic” <http://www.illc.uva.nl/medlogic/DDAHL/>

argumentation aiming to defend and/or refute it. In the following section, which forms the main part of this paper, I will study the modalities of such a stated inference. The stated form of an inference is what Indian philosophers – Naiyāyikas, Buddhists and Jains – call “inference for others” (*parārthānumāna*), in opposition to “inference for oneself” (*svārthānumāna*). I will be referring to inference for others as “the canonical display form of an inference”. This urge to separate two types of inference is probably close to Brower’s conception⁹ according to which mathematics is a mental construction that does not need logic, and that only when one intends to make the proofs public is logic needed. This difference between the knowledge act *per se* and the knowledge statement is reflected in Jain literature in the following quotation:

PNT.23. [What is called] in a metaphoric way an “inference for others” is the statement of the subject and of the evidence.¹⁰

In other words, although the knowledge statement displaying an inference is not, properly speaking, an inference itself, since it is not a knowledge act, it can be called *metaphorically* an inference.

According to Jain philosophers, to state an inference in the proper way, i.e. to perform a convincing line of argumentation, it is necessary and sufficient to state the subject (*pakṣa*) and the evidence-property (*hetu*). In order to understand more precisely what each consists in, let us take the following example of a canonical display form of an inference according to Jain philosophers:

PM.3.80. There is no Sissoo¹¹ here, because there is no tree.¹²

In this situation, the Sanskrit expression *pakṣa*¹³ might (i) designate the state of affairs “there is no Sissoo here”, i.e. refer to the whole ascription of the property “being endowed with a Sissoo” to the subject “here”; or (ii) refer to the subject “here” itself (also called

⁹ See especially the short and essential paper “Intuitionistic reflections on formalism” in Brower (1927: 490–2).

¹⁰ *pakṣahetuvacanātmaṅṅ parārthamanumānam upacārāt*, in Bhattacharya (1967: 208).

¹¹ What I translate “Sissoo” is the Śiṃśapā-tree. The Śiṃśapā-tree, mentioned in several Indian classical texts, has been identified as being either the *Dalbergia sissoo* or the *Amherstia nobilis*.

¹² *nāsty atra śiṃśapā vṛkṣānupalabdheḥ*, in Ghoshal (1940: 132).

¹³ The Naiyāyika technical term “thesis” (*pratijñā*) does not appear in the PM, the PKM nor the PNT. Instead we find “assertion of the subject” (*pakṣavacana*, *pakṣaprayoga*, etc.).

dharmin), if one understands the expression as a synecdoche.¹⁴ In our case, it designates the state of affairs, and it is a technical term regularly translated as “thesis”.

In the same way, the expression *hetu* might refer to (i) the target-property “being a tree”; (ii) the ascription of the target-property to the subject, in this example “there is no tree here”; (iii) the ontological cause of a given effect. In the last case, one has to pay attention to the fact that for the Buddhists, the effect, not the cause, can function as a target-property.¹⁵ In a word: “seed” functions as an ontological cause, and “sprout” as an epistemic one.

Two characteristics of this way to state an inference are worth mentioning. First, the display form of an inference is not in the form “if ϕ then ψ ” but in the form “since ϕ then ψ ”. That is to say that inference is not concerned with possible situations, but only with actual ones. Second, there are implicit epistemic conditions. This means that “there is no Sissoo here, because there is no tree” can be read “I *know* that there is no Sissoo here, because I *know* that there is no tree”. The Sanskrit expression “*anupalabdheḥ*” (“there is no.../I see no...”) bears witness to this state of affairs. I defend the position that it is important to keep these epistemic conditions implicit, because in contemporary logic, making them explicit, that is to say expressing these epistemic conditions within the object language, is usually a technique in order to deal only with the pure relation between propositions. But as previously discussed, logic in India is concerned with the relation between an epistemic subject and a proposition.

In conclusion, when they claim that the thesis and the evidence are the two members of an inference for others, Jain philosophers claim that in order to display a correct proof, it is sufficient to state: (i) The goal one is intending; that is to say, which property will be proved to be ascribed to which subject. (ii) The evidence; that is to say, the fact that another property is ascribed to the very same subject. And this is enough, because again, by virtue of the very nature of the evidence-property, the presence of the target-property is necessarily triggered.

¹⁴ See the work of Gillon and Hayes (1991: 22 ff.), for a discussion on a controversy on this issue between Dharmakīrti and Īśvarasena, a student and commentator of Dignāga. This controversy concerns the fact that this double use of “*pakṣa*” causes a problem, because it leads the expression “*pakṣadharmā*” to refer either to the target-property (as the property present in the thesis), or to the evidence-property (as the property present in the subject itself).

¹⁵ Because seeds cause sprouts. But the knowledge of the presence of a seed is not sufficient to cause the knowledge of the future presence of a sprout, because other factors are involved as well. Only the knowledge of the actual presence of a sprout causes the knowledge of the previous presence of a seed.

2.1.2. Differences with the framework of the Naiyāyikas

The Jain conception of a correct inference presented in the previous section goes first of all against the Naiyāyika position:

PKM.3.37. [...] [in the *Aphorisms on logic*¹⁶ verse 1.1.32] it is said that [an inference consists of the following] members: thesis, evidence, example, application and conclusion.¹⁷

And in the PM:

PM.3.46. These (example, application and conclusion) may be for the understanding of those who have little knowledge and for this purpose may be discussed only in the Śāstra, but these are quite unfit to be used in logical discussions.¹⁸

Firstly, Jain philosophers defend the idea that the purpose of an example is only pedagogical. Indeed, the main purpose of an example is to provide a case on which both disputants have no doubt. Let us consider an inference on which there have been historical disagreements concerning the example. This is the well-known inference designed by the Naiyāyikas to prove the existence of God and attacked by the Buddhist and the Jains:

[Thesis] Earth, etc., has a conscious maker.
 [Evidence] Because it is a product.
 [Example] Like a pot.¹⁹

In this inference, the example “like a pot” clarifies the relationship between the property “being a product” and the property “having a conscious maker”, since it is clear that no pot can be made without the previous intention of a potter to make it. Therefore, such a use of a case devoid of doubt proves efficient in order to strengthen one’s intuitive grasp of the situation. But it does not ensure the certainty that there is an inseparable

¹⁶ The *Aphorisms on logic* (*Nyāyasūtra*, henceforth NS) is well-known to be the root text of the of Nyāya, a Hindu school of philosophy.

¹⁷ *nanu pakṣahetudṛṣṭāntopanayaniganānyavayavāḥ [NS.1.1.32] ity abhidhānād...*, in Shastri (1912: 374–6).

¹⁸ *bālavayutpattiyarthaṃ tatrayopagame śāstra evāsau na vāde, anupayogāt*, in Ghoshal (1940: 111).

¹⁹ *kṣityādikaṃ buddhimatkarṭṛkaṃ, karyātvāt, ghaṭādivad*, edited by van den Bossche (1998: 13).

relationship between the property “being a product” and the property “having a conscious maker”, since one instance of a relationship is not sufficient to guarantee its universality.²⁰

Secondly, Jain philosophers do not recognise the usefulness of the application step. Indeed, if its role is to state that the evidence-property is ascribed to the subject, then it is already taken care of at the evidence step.

Thirdly, Jain philosophers do not recognise the usefulness of the conclusion step. Indeed, if its role is to state that the target-property is ascribed to the subject, then it is already implied by the other steps, and stating something that is already implied is considered a repetition i.e. as an argumentative fault.²¹

2.1.3. Differences with the framework of the Buddhists

The Jain conception of a correct inference presented in the previous section goes against the Buddhist position as well, when Māṇikyanandi says that:

PM.3.35. In order to teach by means of the evidence-property (*sādhanadharmā*) that the target-property is in the subject, the same way the evidence is explicitly stated, [the same way] the subject [is too].²²

PM.3.36. Otherwise, which proponent of the threefold evidence-property²³ is not displaying the subject while establishing [an inference]?²⁴

²⁰ For a detailed presentation of the different roles of example in inferential processes in classical India, and on its evolution and the reason why it is not considered as an argumentative step *per se* by Jain philosophers, see Gorisse (forthcoming) “Still like a pot: the role of example in Indian theories of inference”, proceedings of the conference “Dṛṣṭānta, udāharaṇa and nyāya in texts and contexts”, organised by Jayandra Soni and Kutumba Shastri in Ahmedabad, 24–28 February, 2014.

²¹ According to NS.5.2.15: “The actual statement by means of directly expressive words of what is already implied is repetition” (*arthād āpannasya svaśabdena punar vacanaṃ punar uktam*). English translation by Jha (1912: 1761).

²² *sādhyadharmiṇi sādhanadharmāvabodhanāya pakṣadharmopasaṃhāravat*, in Ghoshal (1940: 102). In this verse, my translation strongly departs from that of Ghoshal.

²³ Buddhist philosophers in the tradition of Dharmakīrti are targeted here, since in PVs.1, Dharmakīrti claims that “evidence is of exactly three kinds (namely identity of nature, causality and non-perception), because the inseparability [of evidence from what it indicates] is restricted [to just those three kinds of evidence]. [Any property] other than those is spurious evidence” (*tridhaiva saḥ |*

In this quotation, it seems that Māṅikyanandi attacks the Buddhists on the grounds that they do not recognise the explicit statement of the subject as a necessary step of the inferential process. But when the Buddhist Dignāga claims that being a property of the subject (*pakṣadharmatā*) is the first of the three characteristics that correct evidence has to possess,²⁵ he does recognise the need to express the fact that the subject is endowed with the evidence-property. And this requirement comes from an awareness of the fact that one does not seek a pure relation between properties, such as “whenever something is a product, it is subject to change”, but the ascription of a property within a given particular subject, such as “sound is subject to change”.

Therefore, Māṅikyanandi could not have this attack in mind. My hypothesis is that Māṅikyanandi’s attack is directed more precisely towards the requirement that the linguistic form of an inference contains not only the expression of the subject as being endowed with the *evidence-property*, but the expression of the subject as being endowed with the *target-property* as well. This is already recognised in Siddhasena’s work *Nyāyāvatāra* (henceforth NA, 5th century), *The Guide to logic*, when he states that:

NA. 14. [...] the pronouncement of the thesis has to be made here as showing the domain of the evidence-property.

NA.15. Otherwise, for [a person] to be apprised, who is confused regarding the domain of the evidence intended by the proponent, the evidence might appear to be suspected of being contradictory, just like...

avinābhāvānyamād dhetvābhāsāt tato 'pare), edited by Gnoli (1960: 1) and translated into English by Gillon and Hayes (1991: 3).

²⁴ *ko vā tridhā hetum uktvā samarthayamāno na pakṣayati*, in Ghoshal (1940: 102). One can find a close version in PNT.3.25. *trividhaṃ sādhanam abhidhāyaiva tatsamarthanam vidadhānaḥ kaḥ khalu na pakṣaprayogam aṅgikurute*, in Bhattacharya (1967: 210).

²⁵ “The statements of credible persons are inference insofar as they have the common character of not being false. Present in the object of inference and in what is similar to it, and absent in their absence” (*āptavākyāvisaṃvādasāmānyād anumānatā anumāne 'tha tattulye sadbhāvo nāstitāsati*), English translation by Hayes (1988: 238).

NA.16. ...for a person watching an archer's skill, the archer who hits without the specific mention of the target [is endowed with both] skill and its opposite.²⁶

The argument is straightforward: if an archer does not tell in advance what goal he is aiming at, one can never be sure that the goal that is reached is indeed the goal he had in mind. In the same way, one has to state his goal before developing the inference, because this is the only way he can be evaluated on his success or failure afterwards. It is worth noticing that if Jain philosophers claim that the statement of one's goal is a required step, it means that they conceive the inferential process not only as a way to acquire new knowledge, but also as a process enabling one to evaluate this process of knowledge-acquisition. What is more, it is possible that Jain philosophers have in mind the fact that, since the domain of a given predicate might affect its meaning, it is very important to state it. For example, the predicate "being mortal" does not mean the same thing for an animal or for a language; and from the evidence "because it is mortal", it is correct to infer the presence of sensibility in an animal, but not in a language.

2.2. Five relations ensuring certainty

I have said that inference is the cognitive process by which a given subject acquires a new piece of knowledge by means of a reasoning ensuring universality. This reasoning is usually based on the inclusion of the domain of the target-property within the domain of the evidence-property and, more generally, on whatever ensures that the target-property is present whenever the evidence-property is present. The technical term to express this inseparable presence is "invariable concomitance" (*vyāpti*, *verbatim* "pervasion"). In this conceptual framework, Dharmakīrti's breakthrough was to develop a theory of proper relevance between the target-property and the evidence-property.

In Dharmakīrti's conception, it is not sufficient anymore that the target-property is always present when the evidence-property is present. One has to seek the precise reasons why it is so, in order to be able to distinguish between arbitrary and necessary inseparable

²⁶ [...] *tatprayogo'tra kartavayo hetor gocaradīpakaḥ || anyathā vādyabhipretahetugocaramohinaḥ | pratyāyyasya bhaved dhetur viruddhārekito yathā || dhānuṣkaguṇasampreṣṭjanasya parividhyataḥ | dhānuṣkasya vinā lakṣyanirdeśeṇa guṇetarau*, in Balcerowicz (2001: 59–60). The translation is from Balcerowicz, except for the technical term "*hetu*" that I have chosen to translate as "evidence" for the sake of continuity in this paper.

relationships. According to Dharmakīrti, in order to ensure the certainty of the inferential conclusion, one should accept only the necessary inseparable relationships, which fall into three categories.²⁷

In the following presentation, I will introduce not Dharmakīrti's classification, but the fivefold classification established by Jain philosophers,²⁸ indicating when it diverges from the Buddhist theory of the three types of evidence. But although Jain philosophers identify five types of natural relations ensuring certainty in an inferential process, only four of these will be introduced in the present section. This is because the examination of the fifth requires the prior study of how negations function in the display form of an inference. In so doing, I follow the order of exposition found in the PM, the PKM and the PNT.

2.2.1. The presence of a pervaded property (*vyāpya*) ensures the presence of its pervasive property (*vyāpaka*)

To begin with, the first type of invariable concomitance is the one that holds between a pervaded property (e.g. "being an oak") and its pervasive property (e.g. "being a tree"). This type of invariable concomitance defines a type of inference related to class identity. These cases are the less problematic ones, since they are cases of – to phrase it in an anachronistic way – analytic inclusion of one class within another. Analytic, because one only needs to know the linguistic meaning of "tree" and of "oak" in order to know that if there is an oak, there is a tree too. The example put forwards by Māṇikyanandi is the one I have already mentioned, namely:

PM.3.65. Sound is subject to changes, because it is a product.²⁹

In this case, the invariable concomitance is due to a relation of identity of nature between the property of being a product and the property of enduring changes. Here, it is worth mentioning that Māṇikyanandi, Prabhācandra and Vādi Devasūri intend relations in

²⁷ As already indicated, according to this theory, a property counts as good evidence for the presence of another one (i) if it is part of its own nature, or (ii) if it is one of its effects. What is more, (iii) some types of non-apprehension tell us something about the absence of an intended property.

²⁸ For a detailed presentation of the Jain-Buddhist controversy on these accepted relations ensuring the correctness of inference, see my paper (forthcoming) "The taste of the mango: a Jaina-Buddhist dispute on evidence", to appear in the *International Journal of Jain Studies* as the proceedings of the 15th Jaina Studies workshop "Jain logic", London, March 22nd 2013.

²⁹ *pariṇāmī śabdaḥ kṛtakatvāt*, in Ghoshal (1940: 127–9).

which the two predicates involved do not have the same extension. For example, the predicate “oak” and the predicate “tree”. This will be important to keep in mind in section 3.1 concerning negations. It is to be noted that Dharmakīrti intends both these relations, as well as the ones involving co-extensible predicates, as for example the predicate “perishable” and the predicate “product”. Jain philosophers deal with co-extensible predicates in a distinct category to be introduced in section 3.2.3.

2.2.2. The presence of an effect (*kārya*) ensures the presence of its cause (*kāraṇa*), and vice versa

The invariable concomitance between an effect and its cause is the canonical model for the presentation of an inference. The most famous example used to illustrate it is that somebody who cannot see that there is a fire on a remote hill can know that there is one by seeing smoke on the hill in question. The popularity of this type of inference based on causality is due to the fact that it turns an inference into a scientific explanation i.e. an investigation on the causes of a given phenomenon. When presenting this type of inference, Māṅikyanandi uses the following example:

PM.3.66. There is intelligence in this individual, because there is speech ability in this individual.³⁰

Although Jains and Buddhists agree on this example, they would not agree on its converse, because Dharmakīrti considers that only the effect, and not the cause, can serve as evidence in a correct inference.³¹ In other words: knowing that the effect is present enables one to know that the cause is present too. But knowing that the cause is present does not enable one to know that the effect is present. The reason for this is that one can ever be sure that the two following pre-requisites are being fulfilled: (i) no impediment is blocking the potency of the given cause to produce its effect; (ii) all the conditions required for the production of the effect are present. Jain philosophers will answer that with a more finely grained definition of a “cause” as being what already consists of the totality of conditions for the emergence of the effect. In other words, as what already ensures the fact that both pre-requisites are fulfilled.

³⁰ *asty atra dehini buddhir vyāhārādeḥ*, ibid.

³¹ Dharmakīrti calls this category “*tadutpatti*”.

Contrary to the previous relation on identity of nature and pervasion, this relation is not directly linked to analytic inclusions. But it can be easily rephrased in terms of inclusion when one considers that the total set of causes of a phenomenon is nothing but its nature itself.

2.2.3. The presence of a predecessor (*pūrvacara*) ensures the presence of its successor (*uttaracara*), and *vice versa*

The invariable concomitance between a predecessor and its successor concerns cases of inference related to worldly regularities, by means of which events such as the rising of the stars are predictable. The example put forward by Māṇikyanandi is the following one:

PM.3.68: Aldebaran will rise soon, because the Pleiades are rising.³²

With this example, the difference between universality and necessity becomes clearer. Whereas the relationship between the Pleiades and Aldebaran is only universal (the Pleiades are always seen with Aldebaran), the relationship between an oak and a tree is universal *and* necessary (an oak is always seen with a tree *thanks to their very nature*). This is what Dharmakīrti pointed out when he developed his theory of proper relevance between the target-property and the evidence-property, according to which it is not sufficient that the target-property is always present when the evidence-property is present. One has to seek the precise reasons why it is so, in order to be able to distinguish between arbitrary and necessary inseparable relationships. To understand the consequences of this difference, let us recall Hume's questioning of the type of certainty one has concerning the fact that the sun will rise tomorrow. The type of certainty one has concerning the fact that the sun will rise tomorrow, as well as of the fact that the rise of Aldebaran will follow the rise of the Pleiades,³³ is plainly sufficient as a guideline to everyday life actions. It would be mad, for instance, to act as if the sun won't rise tomorrow. Nevertheless, stars die, and the possibility that the rise of Aldebaran does not follow the rise of the Pleiades exists. From this, inferences based on the inseparable relationship between predecessors and successors are correct ones *insofar as the conditions of emergence of the two phenomena into question stay the same*. On the contrary, inferences based on the inseparable relationship between a pervaded property and its pervasive property are correct ones *whatsoever*, it

³² *udeṣyati śakaṭaṃ kṛttikodayāt*, *ibid.*

³³ The Arabic name "Aldebaran" means precisely "the follower".

does not depend on any state of the world. Because although the world might come to an end, and stars and trees may cease to exist, it won't change the fact that if there is an oak in a given place, then there is a tree in that very place. This example of Aldebaran and the Pleiades has not been discussed by Dharmakīrti to my knowledge. It would be interesting to search for a discussion between Jain and Buddhist philosophers on this issue of the acceptance, respectively refusal, of certainty based on worldly regularities.

2.2.4. The presence of a co-existent (*sahacara*) ensures the presence of the other co-existent

Another type of invariable concomitance granted by the Jains is the one that holds between two co-existents. This type of invariable concomitance comprises those cases in which two things are never seen without one another, although they are neither causally related nor identical in nature. For example, it is sufficient to see one face of a coin, say tails, in order to know that the other face is heads. Māṇikyanandi uses the following example:

PM.3.70. This has the visible properties of a mango, because this has the taste of a mango.³⁴

But Dharmakīrti disagrees on the fact that this constitutes a separate category, and insists on explaining the correctness of the mango inference only by means of causality and identity of nature. More precisely:

PVs.9. Knowledge through taste of the visible properties and so forth that are dependent upon the same totality [of causes] [comes about] by means of inferring a property of the cause, like [the inference from] smoke of the changing state of the kindling.³⁵

In other words, in the same way that smoke and the changing state of the kindling are two co-effects of the presence of fire, so the taste and the visible properties are co-effects of the same totality of causes, namely the same stage of ripeness of the fruit.

³⁴ *asty atra mātuliṅge rūpaṃ rasāt*, ibid.

³⁵ PVs.9: *ekasāmagryadhūnasya rūpāde rasato gatiḥ | hetudharmānumānena dhūmendhanavikāravat*. Edition in Gnoli (1960: 7); English translation by Gillon and Hayes (1991: 12).

I would like to highlight two important issues addressed in this section. First of all, it seems that what triggers the disagreements between Jain and Buddhist philosophers on the types of relations ensuring certainty is the fact that Jain philosophers accept as a reliable relationship any relationship that ensures universality;³⁶ whereas Buddhist philosophers accept as a reliable relationship only those relationships that ensure necessity. In other words, it is not sufficient for Buddhist philosophers that two events have always been seen together in the past, one has to be sure it will still be the case in the future. More generally speaking, when it comes to the burden of a justification, Buddhist philosophers usually call for higher standards. An example linked with what we have just seen is that, according to Buddhist philosophers, it is not sufficient that no counter-example is to be found for one's thesis to be established, one needs to show that no counter-example is possible.

A second important remark is that one might wonder why in Jain literature these relations are being studied in the sections concerning inference for others, whereas Dharmakīrti introduced them in the section concerning inference for oneself. The next and final section of this article is devoted to answering this question.

3. On the delimitation between the cognitive and the linguistic side of the inferential process

3.1. A linguistic approach to negation

One line of questioning Indian philosophers tackled in detail is that concerning negation and its scope. Concerning the study of inference, the main question related to negation is the following one: if I can acquire new knowledge from the previous apprehension of one phenomenon, can I know something from the non-apprehension of a given phenomenon as well? Since inference is often based upon class inclusions, one should keep in mind that the inferential relation is not a symmetrical one.

Dharmakīrti tackled this issue and offered a classification of different types of non-apprehension as part of his study of inference as a cognitive process. In his PVs for example, the different types of non-apprehension are treated in the first chapter, that is to

³⁶ Actually, the cosmological order granted by Jain philosophers is such that it is in virtue of its very nature that Aldebaran follow the Pleiades and if one of these stars comes to die, their being in succession will occur again at the next manifestation of the world. Therefore, it can be argued that even in granting inferences based on succession Jain philosophers deal with necessity.

say in the chapter concerning the study of inferences for oneself. And he defined “non-apprehension” as one of the relations ensuring certainty. In other words, a special kind of “non-apprehension” is good evidence for gaining new knowledge, next to “identity in nature” and to “causality”.

In contrast, Jain philosophers treated this question as part of the study of inference as a linguistic process. And in the study of inference, types of non-apprehension are not considered. What is at issue are rather the different forms of inferential statements in which negations are used.³⁷ Let us therefore investigate these forms more closely.

3.2. The four forms of inference

First of all, Jain philosophers define four forms of inference:

3.2.1. One is justified in inferring the presence of the target-property due to one’s apprehension of compatible evidence

This first form of inference is the default form. All the relations ensuring certainty studied in this paper until now were in this form. And the relations ensuring certainty that are not in this form will be introduced only later. In this form of inference, only the following types of evidence are correct:

PM.3.59. [An inference based on the] apprehension of compatible [evidence] is of six kinds, namely [when its evidence is] a pervasive property, an effect, a cause, a predecessor, a successor or a co-existent.³⁸

But one can acquire new knowledge through non-apprehension (*anupalabdhi*) and apprehension of incompatible [evidence] (*viruddhopalabdhir*) too. This is what is being dealt with in the next three forms of inference:

³⁷ For a detailed presentation of this issue, see my forthcoming paper “Jain conceptions of non-apprehension: A criticism of Dharmakīrti’s theory of inference”, presented at the 5th Dharmakīrti conference in Heidelberg, 26–30 July 2014.

³⁸ *aviruddhopalabdhir vidhau ṣoḍhā vyāpyakāryakāraṇapūrvottarasahacarabhedāt*, in (Ghoshal 1940), p. 122.

3.2.2. One is justified in inferring the absence of a target-property in a case in which one has apprehended evidence incompatible to it

This concerns correct inferences only in cases where the evidence is of the following kinds:

PM.3.71. [An inference based on the] apprehension of incompatible [evidence] is the same (namely its evidence is either a pervasive property, an effect, a cause, a predecessor, a successor or a co-existent).³⁹

For example:

PM.3.75. Aldebaran won't rise in a *muhūrta*,⁴⁰ because Revatī has just risen.

Revatī, the “Prosperous”, is the group of stars in the constellation of Pisces which is the last group of stars to rise in the sky. Therefore, no other star will rise after it. As such, Revatī functions as incompatible evidence to the future rising of another star. This is how the presence of some phenomena is sufficient for us to know the absence of others.

One important point is that incompatibility would be better expressed by means of the term negation, according to which there is a mutual exclusion of two given terms, rather than by means of a (standard) propositional negation. To put it in other words, the apprehension of incompatible evidence does not equal the non-apprehension of evidence. For example, saying “he is unhappy” is not the same as saying “he is not happy”. Because in “he is unhappy” the negation concerns a determined domain, i.e. one is speaking about an individual who has feelings. Whereas in “he is not happy”, the negation does not concern a determined domain, and a broader range of meanings can be drawn from this negative statement, e.g. either he has another feeling than happiness, or he has no feelings at all.

In contrast, the absence of the target-property, as well as the non-apprehension of the evidence, would be better expressed by means of a propositional negation. In order to discuss this, let us first introduce non-apprehension.

³⁹ *viruddhatadupalabdhiḥ pratiṣedhe tathā*, in Ghoshal (1940: 129).

⁴⁰ A *muhūrta* is a unit of measurement in classical Indian astrology, representing approximately 48 minutes.

3.2.3. One is justified in inferring the absence of a target-property in a case in which one has not apprehended its evidence

This concerns correct inferences in cases where the evidence is of the following kinds:

PM.3.78. [An inference based on the] non-apprehension of compatible [evidence] is of seven kinds, namely [when its evidence is] either a pervaded property, an effect, a cause, a predecessor, a successor, a co-existent or an essence.⁴¹

For example:

PM.3.80. There is no Sissoo here, because there is no tree.⁴²

First of all, the only difference with correct inferences related to apprehension (whether it is apprehension of compatible or of incompatible evidence) concerns the relation of pervasion. The reason for this is straightforward and has already been stated: from the absence of a tree (pervasive property) one is justified to infer the absence of an oak (pervaded property); but from the absence of an oak (pervaded property), one is not justified to infer the absence of a tree (pervasive property), for there might be a pine in the place in question. And the converse is true for inferences based on apprehension of compatible evidence.

Secondly, let us note that the fifth type of relation ensuring certainty is dealt with by the Jains only here. This relation is the one that holds between a thing and its identity (*svabhāva*). Therefore, the Buddhist relation of identity of nature (*svabhāva*) includes both the Jain relation of pervader-pervaded (*vyāpyavyāpaka*), concerning predicates with different extensions, while this Jain relation of identity of nature (*svabhāva*) concerns predicates that have the same extension. In the three texts I am considering, only two examples of this fifth relationship can be found. The first example is that there is no pot if one cannot apprehend its nature,⁴³ its *potness*. Therefore it belongs to the third form of

⁴¹ *aviruddhānupalabdhiḥ pratiśedhe saptadhā svabhāvavyāpakākārya kāraṇapūrvottarasahacarānupalambhabhedāt*, in Ghoshal (1940: 131–2).

⁴² *nāsty atra śiṃśapā vṛkṣānupalabdheḥ*, *ibid.*

⁴³ PM.3.79. There is no pot on the floor, because it is not perceived (*nāsty atra bhūtale ghaṭo' nupalabdheḥ*), *ibid.*

inference of the absence of the target-property in the case of non-apprehension of the evidence; and the second example will be studied in the fourth form of inference, namely the inference of the presence of the target-property in the case of non-apprehension of incompatible evidence. This can only mean that when it comes to plain affirmations, Jain philosophers consider that stating predicates with the same extension equates to a repetition. And that only when there is an absence, does it make a difference to state it.⁴⁴

Thirdly, as I have indicated, the non-apprehension of the evidence, as well as the inferred absence of the establishable property, can be expressed by means of propositional negations. The inferred absence of the establishable property should not be conceived as a *refutation* of the establishable property, because a refutation is a proof that there is *at least one* counter-example to the presence of the establishable property. Instead, the inferred absence of the establishable property should be conceived as a *negative thesis*, because a negative thesis is a proof that there are *only* counter-examples to the presence of the establishable property.

What is more, since I have shown that two types of negations are used, each of which has an influence on the correctness of the inference at issue, there not two, but four correct forms of inference, the last form being a combination of these two non-redundant types of negations.

3.2.4. One is justified in inferring the presence of a target-property from the absence of incompatible evidence

This concerns correct inferences in case the evidence is of the following kinds:

PM.3.86. [An inference based on the] non-apprehension of incompatible [evidence] is of three kinds, namely [when its evidence is] either an effect, a cause, or an essence.⁴⁵

In other words, the absence of incompatible evidence can be evidence of the presence of the target-property. But this can be the case only if by “incompatible evidence” one means the exhaustive list of all incompatible evidence. It is comparable to the Jain

⁴⁴ Investigating the way negations and absences are treated in Jain philosophy, especially in comparison with Buddhist philosophy, is part of my planned research.

⁴⁵ *viruddhānupalabdhir vidhau tredhā viruddhakāryakāraṇasvabhāvānu palabdhibhedāt*, in Ghoshal (1940: 133).

conception of causality, where they accept that cause can serve as sufficient evidence of the presence of its effect only if by “cause” one means the exhaustive list of all causes.

Let us take as an example of this form of inference one in which the evidence belongs to the category “identity of nature”. This example is of special importance, since it is dedicated to proving the Jain theory of manifoldness:

PM. 3. 89. The manifold nature [of reality is established], because no nature with only one aspect can be found.⁴⁶

3.3. Conclusive remarks

In conclusion, this conception of four different forms of inference is very typical of Jain philosophers of Akalaṅka’s tradition. I claim that this theory is brought about by the fact that whereas non-apprehension is studied in Dharmakīrti as part of the study of inference as a cognitive process, it is studied by Māṅikyanandi, Prabhācandra and Vādi Devasūri as part of the study of inference as a linguistic process.

This, in turn, explains why the natural relations ensuring certainty are studied in the section devoted to the inference for others. Indeed, the form of the inference has an influence on the certainty brought about by a given natural relation. Because again, from the presence of a pervaded property I can infer the presence of the pervasive property, but from the absence of the pervaded property I cannot infer the pervasive property. From this, it makes no sense to introduce the relations (such as “pervaded”) outside the context of a given form (such as “inference of an absence from another absence”). And the answer to the question why the relations ensuring certainty are studied in the section devoted to the inference for others is probably that it is so because they suppose a given linguistic form and, more precisely, the form in which a presence is inferred from another presence.

In future research, I would like to consider other important specifically Jain conceptions that can have an influence on the issue in question. First, the fact that the inseparable presence between two properties has only one characteristic, its “inexplicability otherwise” (*anyathānupapatti*).⁴⁷ Second, the Jain philosopher would probably argue that relations ensuring certainty are studied in the section devoted to

⁴⁶ *anekāntātmakaṃ vastvekāntasvarūpānupalabdheḥ*, Ghoshal (1940: 134).

⁴⁷ This technical term has been introduced for the first time not by the Jains, but by the Mīmāṃsakas, in order to characterise supposition (*arthāpatti*). For a complete study of this characteristic in the Jain framework, see Balcerowicz’s paper (2003).

linguistic process because what is being treated in the cognitive aspect of inference is only the cognitive means itself to directly grasp these relations. This cognitive means is called “*tarka*”⁴⁸ or “*ūha*”. In the absence of a proper translation, I call it – only in this Jain framework – the “faculty of recognition of the universal”. Third, one could argue that relations ensuring certainty are studied in the section concerning the study of the linguistic process because the linguistic structure is involved, since the analytic inclusion of one class into another is due to the meaning of the predicates under discussion.

Finally, the four forms of inference as developed by Māṇikyanandi, Prabhācandra and Vādi Devasūri represent a breakthrough in the field of the study of inference. More precisely, they introduce the possibility of working on the forms of the inferential statement, which is nothing less than a first step towards an investigation on the logical structure itself.

Abbreviations

NA = Siddhasena’s *Nyāyāvātāra*

NS = Gautama’s *Nyāyasūtra*

PKM = Prabhācandra’s *Prameyakamalamārtaṇḍa*

PM = Māṇikyanandi’s *Parīkṣāmukham*

PNT = Vādi Devasūri’s *Pramāṇanayatattvālokālaṃkāra*

PVs = Dharmakīrti’s *Pramāṇavārttikasvavṛtti*

SP = Dharmakīrti’s *Sambandhaparīkṣā*

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⁴⁸ Logicians of the Nyāya use *tarka* as well, but do not recognise it as a distinct faculty of cognition.

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Two

Between Theism and Atheism: a journey through Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta and Mīmāṃsā*

Elisa Freschi

1. Terminological Foreword

The general purpose of this article is to show, through the case study of Veṅkaṭanātha's introduction of God into an atheistic system, that the commonly accepted notions of god, atheism, etc. are not as obvious as one might think.

“God” is not a univocal term, as shown also by the fact that it translates different concepts in Sanskrit, from *deva/devatā* to *īśvara* and to *paramātmān* or *brahman*. Furthermore, theism and atheism are not two mutually exclusive alternatives (there might be philosophical positions which neither advocate the belief in a personal God nor support an explicit denial of it). Last, and more intriguingly, belief in God does not need to be configured as belief in the existence of an external, subject-independent entity.

Within the precincts of this article, I conventionally adopt the term “deity” to translate *devatā*; “god” to cover the semantic realm of a superhuman being who has much in common with human beings (not least that they are both, ontologically speaking, “substances”, *dravya*), and who is mostly the efficient cause of the universe, but not its creator *ex nihilo*; and “God” to denote a non-human being to whom one has a personal and devotional relationship, but who might have no ontological grounding at all. The second “god” is often referred to as *īśvara*, although one must be aware of the fact that the three levels I have distinguished here, and especially the second and the third, are not strictly and explicitly distinguished in the sources, which often incorporate aspects I have

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associated with other levels here (so that, for instance, a God is also referred to as “creator of the world” or as bearing a conch).

Apart from these three levels there are the *paramātman* and the *brahman*. The former might be a superior being who is to be imitated but who is not necessarily involved in worldly affairs (like the supreme *puruṣa* in Yoga and Sāṅkhya, see Bronkhorst 1983). The latter term is used for an all-encompassing principle which might resemble an impersonal god comparable to Spinoza’s. The distinction between the Judaic conception of a creation out of nothing and the Indian concept of an efficient cause intervening on pre-existing material elements must also be taken into account.¹

¹ The discussion on the concept of “god” could go on through many volumes. For a preliminary bibliography see Leftow 1998, which displays the following statement already in the first paragraph: “Views of God’s relation to the universe vary greatly. Pantheists say that God is the universe. Panentheists assert that God includes the universe, or is related to it as soul to body. They ascribe to God the limitations associated with being a person — such as limited power and knowledge — but argue that being a person is nevertheless a state of perfection. Other philosophers, however, assert that God is wholly different from the universe. Some of these think that God created the universe *ex nihilo*, that is, from no pre-existing material. Some add that God conserves the universe in being moment by moment, and is thus provident for his creatures. Still others think that God ‘found’ some pre-existing material and ‘creates’ by gradually improving this material – this view goes back to the myth of the Demiurge in Plato’s *Timaeus*, and also entails that God is provident. By contrast, deists deny providence and think that once God made it, the universe ran on its own. Still others argue that God neither is nor has been involved in the world. The common thread lies in the concept of perfection: thinkers relate God to the universe in the way that their thoughts about God’s perfection make most appropriate”. Similarly useful is Owen 2006 (1967), which starts with this passage: “It is very difficult — perhaps impossible — to give a definition of ‘God’ that will cover all usages of the word and of equivalent words in other languages. Even to define God generally as ‘a superhuman or supernatural being that controls the world’ is inadequate. ‘Superhuman’ is contradicted by the worship of divinized Roman emperors, ‘supernatural’ by Benedict Spinoza’s equation of God with Nature, and ‘control’ by the Epicurean denial that the gods influence the lives of men. Therefore, while the above definition satisfies a wide range of usages, it is not universally applicable” (Owen 2006 (1967), p. 107). See also Morris 2002, pp. 27–35 for an overview of the difficulties of discussions among Christians, non-Christians and atheists in order to find a common ground for discussion. I also benefitted from Merricks 2006 and its analysis of the Christian Trinity, another paradoxical kind of “god”.

2. Mīmāṃsā, Anti-Realism and God

The Mīmāṃsā is a philosophical school, born as a school of Vedic exegesis, and hence its main philosophical inquiries have developed out of Vedic exegetical themes. Its root text, the (*Pūrva*) *Mīmāṃsā Sūtra*,² attributed to Jaimini (perhaps 2nd c. BC) is probably the most ancient philosophical *sūtra* ('aphoristic work'). It has been commented on by Śābara (dates uncertain, possibly 3rd–5th c. AD). Śābara's *Bhāṣya* was again commented on by Kumārila and Prabhākara (7th c. AD?).

The fact that within Mīmāṃsā philosophical thinking emerged out of exegetical concerns also means that the Mīmāṃsā is not primarily concerned with ontology. Contemporary Western readers generally tend to think of metaphysics and ontology as the first elements of philosophical thinking, and accordingly interpret pre-Socratic philosophy in Classical Greece, for example, through the lens of these later assumptions. However, for Mīmāṃsā the main focus was not on metaphysics, but on the Brāhmaṇa portion of the Veda. Mīmāṃsakas looked at the Brāhmaṇas (and at all of the Vedas) as primarily prescriptive texts. Non-prescriptive passages of whatever nature were considered as subsidiary to the prescriptive ones. Accordingly, for Mīmāṃsakas the *artha*³ of Vedic sentences is something to be done (*kārya* or *sādhyā*). This means that the Mīmāṃsā theory of meaning cannot be direct realist. Thus, an interpreter of Mīmāṃsā should be aware of the need to avoid his/her tendency to use direct realism when reading Mīmāṃsā texts.

The Veda also has a specific epistemic place and role, according to Mīmāṃsā thought. In fact, the Veda is the only source of transcendental knowledge accepted by Mīmāṃsakas, and in all other fields of knowledge Mīmāṃsā authors stick to a strict empiricism. In Kumārila's words: "Here like in any other case, Mīmāṃsakas do not accept anything else beyond what is commonly experienced".⁴ It is perhaps noteworthy that this sentence is to be understood not in an ontological context, but rather in an epistemological one (discussing the epistemological value of the Buddha's word). In other words, Mīmāṃsā authors aim to refrain from postulating unrequired concepts, but this does not mean that they naïvely accept reality as independent of the human beings perceiving it. Its existence

² As for the meaning of *pūrva*, see Parpola 1981 and Parpola 1994, and, against these, Bronkhorst 2007. It is uncontroversial that the *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* is the school which focuses on the ritual part of the Veda, i.e. the Brāhmaṇas, and that the *Uttara Mīmāṃsā* (also called *Vedānta*) is the one which focuses on the *Upaniṣads*.

³ *artha* may mean (among other things) both 'meaning' and 'purpose'. Given the Mīmāṃsā approach to language as eminently prescriptive, these two senses are always simultaneously present in the Mīmāṃsā use of *artha*.

⁴ *mīmāṃsakaiḥ punaḥ || idānīm iva sarvatra dṛṣṭān nādhikam iṣyate* (ŚV 2.98d-99ab).

independent of a knowing subject just lies beyond question, given that the focus is on the Veda and the Veda presupposes the existence of human beings carrying out the sacrifices it prescribes.

Out of the same refusal of unrequired postulations, Mīmāṃsakas adopt atheism. The belief in god(s), they maintain, contradicts direct perception and logical thinking, since no god is ever seen and since this belief is fraught with contradictions (e.g. how could a bodiless god create the world? And how could an embodied god be worshipped simultaneously by different worshippers in different parts of the world?). It is noteworthy that atheism is neither a main nor a distinct topic of investigation for Pūrva Mīmāṃsakas. Contemporary Western readers are accustomed to explicit discussions about theism and atheism; by contrast, the controversy over theism/atheism is almost “hidden” within the *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā Sūtra* (in the *devatādhikaraṇa*, PMS 9.1.4, *sūtras* 6–9, and within other technical discussions). Theism/atheism is not discussed as a preliminary topic within the theoretical introduction of the MS, namely the *tarkapāda* (PMS 1.1). Rather, discussions related to the status of *devatās* are scattered throughout the whole of the PMS, just like discussions about any other element of the sacrifice. *devatās* are in fact regarded as nothing more than an element of the sacrifice (the one to which the offering is dedicated), and their relation to the other elements is discussed within the broader perspective of the sacrifice.

2.1. The chapter on deities (*devatādhikaraṇa*) in the PMS and its commentaries

2.1.1. Jaimini

Understanding Jaimini independently of his main commentator is always a complex task. However, in the case of the *sūtras* later grouped as *devatādhikaraṇa* it can be seen with some clarity that they are part of a larger context in which the centrality of the sacrificial action over and above the other elements of the sacrifice, such as ritual offerings and deities, is stated:

*yajñakarma pradhānaṃ tad dhi codanābhūtaṃ tasya dravyeṣu saṃskāras
tatprayuktas tadarthatvāt || 9.1.1 ||*

devatā vā prayojayed atithivad bhojanasya tadarthatvāt || 6 ||

[...] *tasmād yajñaprayojanam || 19 ||*

The sacrificial action is the primary thing, because it has been brought into being by the injunctive word. Hence the preparation of its materials must be regarded as promoted by that [sacrifice], because they occur for its sake (PMS 9.1.1).

[Obj.:] The deity should promote [the sacrifice], because s/he is like a guest, for whose sake a meal is prepared (9.1.6).

[R:] [...] Therefore, the sacrifice is the promoter (9.1.19).⁵

There is no explicit denial of the existence of deities, although they are denied a principal role within the sacrifice, which is the culminating event of Jaimini's system, the one around which everything else revolves.

2.1.2. Śabara

The objector who initiates the discussion in the *devatādhikaraṇa* of the ŚBh⁶ starts with the very mention of deities in the dative case in Vedic sacrificial prescriptions, which make the sacrifice look like an act of feeding the deities:

bhojanaṃ hīdaṃ devatāyāḥ yāgo nāma. bhojyaṃ dravyaṃ devatāyai pradīyate, [...]. devatāsaṃpradānako hy ayaṃ yāgaḥ śrūyate. saṃpradānaṃ ca nāma karmaṇo 'pīpsitatamād abhipretataram. tasmān na guṇabhūto devatā, devatām prati guṇabhūte dravyakarmaṇi (ŚBh ad PMS 9.1.6, p. 72).

[Obj.:] For, the sacrifice to the deity is this feeding. The food, i.e. the ritual substance, is offered to the deity. [...] In fact, this sacrifice is found in the Sacred Texts as including the deity as the recipient. And the recipient is even more intended than the syntactical object, although this is said to be the “most desired one” (Aṣṭ 1.4.49). Therefore, the deity is not a subordinate element, [rather], the ritual substance and the ritual action are subordinate to the deity.

⁵ All these translations have very much benefitted from Clooney's translations and analysis in his wonderful work dedicated to “rediscovering the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā of Jaimini” (Clooney 1990, pp. 104–5, 147–149).

⁶ Clooney 1988 offers an insightful view into the *devatādhikaraṇa* from the point of view of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja.

The objector then shifts to a different understanding of sacrifices and adds that sacrifices (*yajña*) are an instance of worship (*pūjā*) and that a *pūjā* is instrumental to the worshipped person (*pūjanīya*):

api ca, yāgo nāma devatāpūjā. pūjā ca pūjanīyaṃ prati guṇabhūtā loke drśyate
(ŚBh ad PMS 9.1.6, p. 72).

[Obj.:] Moreover, the sacrifice is a worship of the deity. And the worship is commonly seen in worldly experience as being subordinate to the worshipped [person].

The later claim that the result of a sacrifice is given by the deity, pleased by the offering (*tasmād dhavirdānena guṇavacanaiś ca devatārādhyate, sā prītā satī phalaṃ prayacchati*, ŚBh ad PMS 9.1.8, p. 74) is probably related to the *pūjā*-argument.

Beside these two, the opponent speaking in the *devatādhikaraṇa* seems to have no other theological arguments, and to ground his position on the Smṛti texts about *devatās*, mythically described as eating, having bodies, etc.⁷

Interestingly, Śabara (and, seemingly, also Jaimini) starts his reply by putting the Vedic sacrificial prescriptions at the centre, insofar as it is only through them that one knows about the result and is then prompted to act (*yajñakarma pradhānaṃ syāt. yajater jātam apūrvam. kutaḥ. śabdapūrvatvāt. yad dhi phalaṃ dadāti, tatprayojakam. idaṃ phalaṃ dadātīy etajjñānaṃ śabdapūrvakaṃ, na pratyakṣādibhir avagamyate*, ŚBh ad PMS 9.1.9, p. 75). Next, the reply to the first objection is that deities are like ritual substances (*dravya*), namely ritual elements subordinate to the sacrifice itself (*nanu dravyadevatākriyaṃ yajatyarthaḥ. satyam evan. kiṃ tu guṇatve devatāśrutiḥ*, ŚBh ad PMS 9.1.9, p. 75). This subordination is grounded in the Mīmāṃsā thesis that the *artha* of the Veda (see fn. 3) is something to be done and that all established things mentioned are subordinate to it (*dravyadevataṃ hi bhūtaṃ, bhāvayitavyo yajatyarthaḥ*, ŚBh ad PMS 9.1.9, p. 75).

As an alternative strategy to the one stressing the centrality of the sacrifice, Śabara introduces with *atha* a new focus, on the centrality of the human beings involved in the sacrifice, who care for the result, and not for the deities (*phalaṃ ca puruṣārthaḥ. puruṣārthā ca naḥ pravṛttiḥ. na cāsau devatāyāḥ. tasmān na devatāprayuktāḥ pravartisyāmahe* ŚBh ad PMS 9.1.9, p. 76).

Against the second objection, the one stating that a sacrifice is like an act of worship (*pūjā*), Śabara says that one should not equate sacrifices with worldly acts of worship. In

⁷ To the *uttarapakṣin* asking “How is this known?” the objector repeatedly answers with some variations of *smṛtyupacārābhyaṃ* ‘through recollected texts and through figurative application’.

the latter, the worshipped person stands at the centre, whereas in the former the sacrificial act (*yajñakarman*) stands at the centre. This reasoning connects this sacrifice-centric view with the human-centric view discussed above: the sacrifice is at the centre, because it is through that that one obtains the result (*yad dhi phalavat tatprayojakam. tasmād yajñakarma prayojakam*, ŚBh ad PMS 9.1.9, p. 76).

The last objection, i.e. the reference to Smṛti passages pointing at deities, is refuted by Śabara by saying that these Smṛtis are based on *mantras* and *arthavādas* (and cannot, thus, contradict the Veda – rather, they must be understood as supplements of the prescriptive portion of the Veda, the Brāhmaṇas) (*tan na, smṛter mantrārthavādamūlatvāt*). The objector counters that since these Smṛtis do convey information about the deities they are surely not based on *mantras* and *arthavādas* (*yadi naivaṃparā na tarhi mantrārthavādamūlaṃ tadvijñānam*). Śabara could have answered that if they are not based on *mantras* and *arthavādas* they are simply invalid. Instead, he repeats that whoever observes carefully sees that they are based on them (*ye ālocanamātreṇa mantrārthavādān paśyanti, teṣāṃ tatsmṛtimūlam*, ŚBh ad PMS 9.1.9, p. 76).

More generally, Śabara (and perhaps Jaimini) seems to aim only at the refusal of Vedic deities, i.e. deities conceived as embodied personal beings, delivering the result of Vedic sacrifices. The objector arguing for the principal role of the deities explicitly says that they are embodied while answering to a counter-argument (*nanv evaṃ bruvatā, vighrahavatī devatā, bhunkte cety abhyupagataṃ bhavati. ucyate. bādham. vighrahavatī devatā, bhunkte ca*, ŚBh ad PMS 9.1.6, p. 73). And Śabara repeats that “giving” and “feeding” are impossible in the case of a non-embodied deity (*na hy avighrahāyai abhuñjānāyai ca dānaṃ bhjanaṃ vā saṃbhavati*, ŚBh ad PMS 9.1.9, p. 76), and goes on to discuss Vedic quotes⁸ in which Indra is said to have hands, a powerful neck, reddish brown eyes, etc. (ŚBh ad PMS 9.1.9, pp. 73–79), with the objector urging that the quotes have to be understood literally (*asty asau hasto vayaṃ yaṃ gr̥tīvantah*, ŚBh ad PMS 9.1.9, p. 77). Śabara’s repeated reply is that there is no evidence (*pramāṇābhāvāt*, ŚBh ad PMS 9.1.9, twice on p. 77, *tasyāpi bhāve na pramāṇam asti*, p. 78, *gr̥vāsattve nāsti pramāṇam*, p. 78) and that these are only assumptions of unseen things (*adr̥ṣṭakalpanā*, ŚBh ad PMS 9.1.9, p. 77). In more detail, he points to the fact that the offered oblations should diminish if they were really eaten by a deity and that there is no evidence

⁸ I have not been able to trace all quotes. An untraced one (*akṣī te indra piṅgale*, p. 79) is found also in the *Mahābhāṣya* (ad Aṣṭ 3.268.16) and was thus probably commonly known as a way of describing Indra. Several others come from the ṚV X (*sukhaṃ rathaṃ yuyuje sindhur aśvinaṃ* (p. 78), ṚV 10.075.09a; *viṣṭvī grāvāṇaḥ sukṛtaḥ sukṛtyayā hotuś cit pūrve haviradyam āśata* (p. 78), ṚV 10.094.02c). Other textual passages about Indra (*tuvigrīva indra*, p. 78) could also be Vedic.

for the fact that the deity only eats the taste, like a bee. In fact, this behaviour of bees is seized by sense perception, whereas in the case of deities it is not:

api ca, bhuñjānāyai devatāyai prattaṃ haveḥ kṣīyeta. na ca madhukarīvad annarasabhojīnyo devatā iti pramāṇam asti. madhukarīṣu pratyakṣam. na ca tadvad devatāyām (ŚBh ad PMS 9.1.9, p. 79).

Moreover, the oblation offered to a deity who [really] eats it should diminish [and this is apparently not the case]. Nor is there any instrument for knowing that the deities eat only the savour of the food, like bees. In the case of [insects] like the bees, this is sense-perceptible, but it is not in the case of the deity.⁹

The refusal of this sort of deity was — in my opinion — probably not understood as a real threat (see below, section 4.2) to theism by authors of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, who would not have supported the real existence of deities having bodies like ours, and who actually eat the offered ghee.¹⁰ In fact, it appears that the theology of Yāmuna etc. was not conceived as an alternative mechanical explanation of the way sacrifices work, nor did it accept all mythical narratives about deities (holding weapons, eating etc., ŚBh ad PMS 9.1.6–9, passim) at face value.

2.1.3. Kumārila

In his short commentary on the *devatādhikaraṇa*, Kumārila basically gives, much more concisely, some of the arguments used by Śābara, showing that there is no linguistic evidence in favour of the fact that the deities are the principal element in Vedic prescriptions, and that the presence of the deities' names in Vedic prescription does not require one to postulate the existence of deities in the world outside the Veda. The

⁹ Śābara also adds that, in fact, oblations may lose some taste but this is only due to the fact that they are left in the open air (*yad uktaṃ devatāyai haviḥ prattaṃ nīrasaṃ bhavatīti. naiṣa doṣaḥ. vātopahataṃ nīrasaṃ bhavatīti*, ŚBh ad PMS 9.1.9, p. 79).

¹⁰ Cf. this passage, where a third person objecting to the objector states that deities do not actually eat and the objector replies that they do: *āha. na devatā bhuñkte. yadi ca bhuñjīta, devatāyai haviḥ prattaṃ kṣīyeta. ucyate. annarasabhojinī devatā madhukarīvad avagamyate. katham. devatāyai haviḥ prattaṃ nīrasaṃ bhavati. tasmād annarasam bhuñkte devateti gamyate* (ŚBh ad PMS 9.1.6, p. 73).

linguistic reality of the Veda, in other words, does not necessarily entail a corresponding outer world in order to work.¹¹

2.1.4. Conclusions about the refusal of *devatās*

If one understands “theism” as it is usually employed in the West, i.e. as referring to the levels 2 and 3 discussed in the Terminological Foreword, *devatās* are beside the point when discussing atheism or theism in India. They are indeed found also in “atheist” religions such as Buddhism and Jainism, and they only represent a further class of sentient beings (in this sense they might be compared to mermaids, fairies etc.). Even Śabara does not altogether deny their existence in other parts of the ŚBh (e.g. ad PMS 6.1.5 where he explains that deities, along with plants and animals are not entitled to sacrifice).

However, a different understanding of god(s) can find its way through the objector’s reference (possibly evoked in the *sūtras* by *atithivat* ‘like a guest’ and explicitly in the *Bhāṣya*) to the worship (*pūjā*), since the same term is used also in theistic and devotional contexts.

2.2. Anti-theological arguments in Kumārila

By the time of Śabara’s commentator, Kumārila, the debate on god(s) had also turned into a more philosophical topic, probably especially because of the impact on the debate of the Nyāya deism (see Krasser 1999 on the role of the Naiyāyika Aviddhakarṇa). Thus, the debate evolved from the denial of the role of *devatās* within sacrifice to the denial of an *īśvara* who created and preserved the world, created language and taught or even composed the Vedas.

Kumārila’s refusal of this kind of god deeply influenced the Buddhist discussion on the same topic (see Krasser 1999 for Kumārila’s influence on Dharmakīrti) in a way which became more and more philosophically engaged. The target of the criticism is a god/*īśvara* as part of the ontology of a certain school (specifically of Nyāya and of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika).¹² Kumārila (and Dharmakīrti) refutes the idea of using an *īśvara* as a solution to ontological

¹¹ *tatra kiṃ vivakṣitam kim avivakṣitam iti vijñeyam. tatra loke ’rthakṛtā vivakṣā bhavati. vede tu śabdakṛtā (Ṭuṭṭikā ad MS 9.1 adhikaraṇa 5, p. 77).*

¹² See Bronkhorst 1996 on the “arrival” of a god in the Vaiśeṣika system: it seems plausible that god was at least also a way to deal with philosophical problems, such as those concerning the creation and dissolution of the world.

or logical problems on the basis of the idea that S/He creates more difficulties than S/He can solve. For instance, karmic retribution does not need a divine Supervisor and the assumption of one is anti-economical:

*kasyacid dhetumātratvaṃ yady adhiṣṭhātṛteṣyate |
karmabhiḥ sarvajivānāṃ tatsiddheḥ siddhasādhanam || ŚV, SĀP, 75*

If you assume that to govern something means being its general cause, then you prove what is already established. For that (cause) is already established by the past *karman* of all beings.

Śabara's arguments against the idea of an embodied deity are also expanded upon by Kumārila, who contends that god, in order to intervene in the world, must have a body. If he did not have one, how could unconscious entities like atoms obey him?

*kulālavac ca naitasya vyāpāro yadi kalpyate |
acetanaḥ katham bhāvas tadicchām anurudhyate || 81 ||
tasmān na paramāṇvāder ārambhaḥ syāt tadicchayā |*

And if his activity is not held to be like that of the potter,
how could an insentient entity [like an atom] obey his will?

Therefore, the atoms [and the other insentient elements in the world]
do not start [clinging together or separating] because of his will. (ŚV,
SĀP, 81–82 ab)

However, the idea of a body of god is fraught with difficulties, since god's body also needs to be created (else it would not be a body like ours), but in that case who created it, since god did not yet have a body at that time?

In short, Kumārila rejects the idea of an *īśvara* which is involved in the creation and maintenance of the world, of language and of the Veda, but which is still very similar to other agents (a “superman” more than an altogether different entity). Specific attacks are reserved for the Buddha, not for Viṣṇu or Śiva and not even for a non-acting Brahman.

3. Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta

When Vedānta entered the philosophical scene, the situation changed and the role of “god” was primarily occupied by the *paramātman* or *brahman*, with lower deities being accepted only at a worldly (*vyavahārika*) level.

Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, by contrast, is a philosophical school which became more and more closely connected to the so-called Śrī Vaiṣṇavism. The latter is a general label used to group Vaiṣṇava beliefs which mostly circulated in and were elaborated on in South India, and which attributed a role also to Viṣṇu's consort Śrī. On the one hand Śrī Vaiṣṇavism is linked with the devotional songs of the Āḷvārs and on the other with the Pāñcarātra Sacred Texts, which are kind of “manuals” for personal and temple-worship. Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta adds to those beliefs and practices a philosophical, specifically Vedānta, frame. Thus, whereas Śrī Vaiṣṇavism has Viṣṇu as its central focus, Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta rather discusses His philosophical counterpart, called *brahman* or *paramātman*. In post-Rāmānuja (traditional dates 1017–1137 AD) times the two traditions merge more and more, and theological topics (such as the relation between Viṣṇu and his consort Śrī, and that between Viṣṇu and his body) are dealt with from a philosophical perspective. Thus, theism (here understood only as the opposite of atheism, in the sense of “belief in God”) is a required presupposition of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta. However, this does not necessarily imply the belief in a personal God, nor in a saving, caring one. As far as I am aware, the latter characteristics are altogether absent from Rāmānuja's contributions to Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta *stricto sensu* (e.g. in his *Śrī Bhāṣya*, although they might be present in his devotional and Vaiṣṇava works).

4. Can They be Reconciled?

4.1. Kumārila and *vivakṣā*

The problem of reconciling something we would call “god” with the authority of the Veda was already present among Pūrva Mīmāṃsakas. Apart from Kumārila's *ŚV-maṅgala* which, as shown by Kumārila's commentator Pārthasārathi, is a double-entendre praising the Veda and Śiva at the same time, similar devices are used also by other authors (see the concluding verse by the late Mīmāṃsaka Rāmānujācārya in his *Tantrarahasya*, Freschi 2012b, p. 5).

In a different context and work, Kumārila Bhaṭṭa discussed what it means to speak of the Veda's *vivakṣā* ‘intention’ and refused to understand it only metaphorically. In a non-metaphorical sense, *vivakṣā* implies the desire of someone to communicate. Who could this “someone” be? Kiyotaka Yoshimizu (2007, 2008) explains by means of TV verses that it is the *paramātman* which is embodied in the Veda:

śabdabrahmeti yac cedam śāstraṃ vedākhyam ucyate |
tad apy adhiṣṭitaṃ sarvam ekena paramātmanā || (TV ad 3.1.13,
 Subbāśāstrī 1929–1934, p. 703, ll. 6–7, v. 11)
 This Sacred Text called “Veda” is referred to as the “*brahman* consisting
 of language” |
 And this whole is superintended/inhabited (*adhiṣṭhā-*) by a single
 Supreme Self ||

Here, the key term *śabdabrahman* and Kumārila’s mention in the same connection (*ibidem*, v. 15) of a verse by Bhartṛhari about his concept of a *śabdabrahman* (‘*brahman* which consists of language’) should alert the reader. In fact, in what sense can the *brahman* be ‘superintended’ by a *paramātman*? In my understanding, the *śabdabrahman* is not a subform of *brahman* (still in need of a higher governor), but the *brahman* itself (and Bhartṛhari’s metaphysics correspondingly sees the all-pervasiveness of language in epistemology and ontology). In this sense, Kumārila could look at the *śabdabrahman* as tantamount to the Veda and connected to/identical with the *paramātman*.¹³ What exactly should this connection (expressed by the verb *adhiṣṭhā-*) be? Verse 12 speaks of the Ṛgveda and of the other Saṃhitās as “bodies” and as “always endowed with consciousness” (*tathargvedādayo dehāḥ proktā ye ’pi pṛthak pṛthak | bhogyatvenātmanām te ’pi caitanyānugatāḥ sadā ||*). This seems to hint at the idea of the Veda as the *paramātman*’s body, with “body” pointing at, as usual in Pūrva Mīmāṃsā thought (see Freschi forthcoming[a]), a living body which is inseparable from the self, i.e. so that a corpse is no longer a “body”. This also means that such a conscious body is conceptually not separated from the self “inhabiting” it and that their relation cannot be comprehended as one of ultimate difference. At most, the body might be seen as an inseparable quality of the self.¹⁴

¹³ According to the latter interpretation, *adhiṣṭhita* would mean that the Veda is ‘inhabited’ by a *paramātman*, which was previously declared to be no different from the Veda itself. I do not want to deal extensively with the interpretation of these verses, which is partly off-topic for the present paper. Apart from Yoshimizu’s essays, one can read my opinion on the topic here: <http://elisafreschi.com/2013/09/06/plurality-of-subjects-in-mimamsa-kiyotaka-yoshimizu-2007/> and here: <http://elisafreschi.com/2013/09/13/is-theveda-the-body-of-god-yoshimizu-2007-ii-part/>. Yoshimizu 2007 is also connected to the issue of Kumārila and Vedānta, on this see Mesquita 1994 and Taber 2007.

¹⁴ The concept of “body” especially when related to “god” is very problematic. As already described, Śābara and Kumārila showed how a straightforward understanding of god’s body (as having e.g. a definite extension in space, and resembling the body of any other sentient being) leads to contradictions. However, Udayana and other thinkers (also within Buddhism, with the doctrine of

4.2. Yāmuna etc. on the denial of deities as an instrumental move

The idea of interpreting Jaimini's *devatādhikaraṇa* (although not Śābara's commentary thereon) as in fact not really aiming at a refusal of the existence of deities, but rather at strengthening faith in the efficacy of sacrifice must have been already commonsensical at the time of Yāmuna, the fourth in the traditional line of teachers of the tradition later called Śrī Vaiṣṇavism. In fact, Venkaṭanātha puts forth this argument with almost the same words as Yāmuna, and Yāmuna himself mentions it *en passant* while discussing a different point of the alleged Pūrva Mīmāṃsā-Pāñcarātra divergences. This cursory mention makes one think that Yāmuna's readers were already acquainted with the argument:

*yathaiva hi bhagavato jaimineḥ karmaphalopanyāsaḥ
karmaśraddhāsaṃvardhanāyeti.*

Like indeed the revered Jaimini stated that the [rituals'] result comes from the sacrificial action [and not from the deity to whom the sacrifice has been offered] for the sake of augmenting the faith in the sacrificial action.

(*Āgamaprāmānya*, Śāstrī 1937, p. 67).

Should one think that Yāmuna dwelt on this topic longer in his lost works, one should explain why Venkaṭanātha, while elaborating on this issue, only mentioned this same passage.

Rāmānuja's *Vedārthasaṃgraha* repeats a similar point: In order to avoid the lack of faith in ritual action of people who have not heard the Upaniṣads (*aśrutavedānta*), some excessive statements (*ativāda*) have been used in the *devatādhikaraṇa*, in order for one to have faith in the mere ritual actions. The definitive conclusion of those who know the Veda is that all of this is a single treatise (*śāstra*).¹⁵

Thus, rituals are praised by Jaimini for the sake of people who do not know the Upaniṣads. In fact, Rāmānuja emphasises that rituals lead even people who do not know the Upaniṣads to strive for liberation, thus it is good for them to keep on performing them.

Venkaṭanātha developed Rāmānuja's idea insofar as he chose to distinguish Jaimini from his commentators and attributed all sorts of good intentions to the former, but not to

the *kāyas*) tried to imagine a different kind of "body" for the god. On this fascinating topic, see Colas 2009.

¹⁵ *aśrutavedāntānām karmaṇy aśraddhā mā bhūd iti devatādhikaraṇe 'tivādāḥ kṛtāḥ karmamātre yathā śraddhā syād iti sarvam ekaśāstram iti vedavitsiddhāntaḥ*, Buitenen 1956, p. 157.

the latter. It might be that this move had also been anticipated by some earlier Viśiṣṭādvaita or Śrī Vaiṣṇava author, as Veṅkaṭanātha took care to tell his readers in the SM and in the MP, where he tried hard to show that the acceptance of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā is perfectly legitimate from the point of view of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta-Śrī Vaiṣṇavism (see below, section 4.4).

4.3. The specificity of Veṅkaṭanātha's *Seśvaramīmāṃsā: apūrva*

Rāmānuja seems quite keen on re-establishing the idea that sacrifices work only insofar as they please Viṣṇu, who then bestows on the sacrificer the expected result. This directly counters the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā stress on the centrality of sacrifice. Rāmānuja even goes so far as to reuse the model criticised by Pūrva Mīmāṃsā authors in the *devatādhikaraṇa* and to affirm that the sacrifice is for the sake of the *devatās* but that, since the inner ruler (*antaryāmin*) of the *devatās* is Viṣṇu, it ultimately pleases him. Consider his commentary on BS 3.2.39 and 3.2.40:

[Obj.:] For this very reason, the teacher Jaimini thinks that, out of congruity and because of the Sacred Texts [stating it], only dharma, in the form of sacrificing, giving, oblation and venerating (*upāsana*) delivers the fruit. In fact, in worldly experience we commonly see that activities like agriculture and activities like massaging deliver their results by themselves, either immediately (as in the case of massaging and the pleasure it causes) or mediately (as in the case of agriculture, where a seed gives rise to a plant grows only after a certain period of time has elapsed). In the same way, also in the Veda, although sacrificing, giving, oblation do not immediately deliver a result, they can nonetheless deliver a result mediately, through an *apūrva*. [...]

[R:] [...] The revered Bādarāyaṇa considers that it is only the supreme person (*paramapurūṣa*) who delivers the result. [...] Because it is indicated (*vyapadiś-*) in several Vedic sentences that deities (*devatā*) such as Agni or Vāyu, which have been propitiated (*ārādhya*) by the sacrifice — which consists of a propitiation of the deities — are the cause of this or that result. [...] And in the form of Vāyu etc. only the supreme person

(*paramapuruṣa*) remains as the one who delivers the result because of having been propitiated.¹⁶

Thus, Veṅkaṭanātha had in front of him a hard task as he tried to reconcile Pūrva Mīmāṃsā and Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta on this issue.¹⁷ The fact that he managed to create a new synthesis is evidence of his genius as a systematiser, wherein the term “systematiser” does not entail a lower order of philosophising. On the contrary, Veṅkaṭanātha had to find a higher synthesis of contradictory positions, one which could still look acceptable to his Viśiṣṭādvaita fellows.

Veṅkaṭanātha’s general strategy seems to be to accept the Mīmāṃsā approach (which is useful in order to keep Buddhist and other Sacred Texts out of the precinct of validity) while adding to it an exception, namely God. Thus, Veṅkaṭanātha agrees that bodies are created except for God’s body, which is *nitya*.¹⁸ Similarly, direct perception cannot grasp dharma (so that it is impossible that the Buddha knew dharma) except for God’s perception. In fact, throughout SM ad PMS 1.1.4, Veṅkaṭanātha shares the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā arguments against the possibility of *yogipratyakṣa*, and only in the concluding verses does he, surprisingly, add that these arguments do not apply to God. “God” (referred to with the adjective *aśa* in the verse) is thus clearly different from a *devatā* but also from the god Kumārila attacks, since He does not belong to the same categories human beings (*puruṣa*) belong to; He can have an eternal body, although eternal bodies are inconceivable for us, and can perceptually see dharma, although this is also a priori impossible for other sentient beings. In this way, Veṅkaṭanātha can avoid refuting the Mīmāṃsā stance, while embedding it in a larger frame where a God is indeed possible (this embedding strategy is

¹⁶ *ata eva upapatteḥ śāstrāc ca yāgadānahomopāsanarūpadharmam eva phalapradaṃ jaiminir ācāryo manyate. loke hi kṛṣṇādikaṃ mardanādikaṃ ca karma sāksād vā paramparayā vā svayam eva phalasādhanam dṛṣṭam; evaṃ vede 'pi yāgadānahomādīnām sāksātphalasādhanatvābhāve 'pi paramparayā apūrvadvāreṇa phalasādhanatvam upapadyate [...] paramapuruṣasyaiva phalapradaṃ bhagavān bādarāyaṇo manyate. [...] devatārādhanaabhūtayāgādyaṛādhyabhūtāgni-vāyvadidevatānām eva tattatphalāhetutayā tasmīn tasmīn api vākye vyapadeśāt. [...] vāyvādyātmanā ca paramapuruṣa evārādhyatayā phalaprādāyitvena cāvatiṣṭhate [...].*

¹⁷ Just like on many other issues, see Neevel 1977 and the long discussion in Mesquita 1980 about Yāmuna’s vehement opposition to Pūrva Mīmāṃsā.

¹⁸ *tad etat śarīram dvividham—nityaṃ anityaṃ ceti | tatra nityaṃ triguṇadravyakāḷajīva-śubhāśrayādyātmaṃ iśvaraśarīram; nityānāṃ ca svābhāvīkagaruḍabhujagādirūpam (Nyāyasiddhāntjāna 1st section, on dravya, Vīrarāghavācārya 1976, p. 174, see Mikami n.y. par. 1.9.2).*

most likely a distinguishing feature of Veṅkaṭanātha's approach, see Freschi forthcoming[b]).

The Vedānta school usually accept Pūrva Mīmāṃsā theories, but only within the empirical world (*loka*). Thus, one might think of Veṅkaṭanātha's move as just part of his general strategy. However, he embraces even transempirical claims of the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā. Noteworthy, in the case of sacrifices, he makes use of the key Mīmāṃsā concept of *apūrva*, that is, the 'unprecedented', which cannot be known through any other means of knowledge:

The unprecedented [potency] (*apūrva*) which is realised by the action, though permanent (*sthīra*), is not perceivable by people like us. This consists, in fact, in the favour (*anugraha*) of the Deity [to whom the sacrifice has been offered]. For, the intention of one (the pleased Deity who wishes to favour the sacrificer) cannot be perceived by another person.¹⁹

Hence, *apūrva* is imperceptible because it consists in the Deity having been pleased, and the intention of one (the Deity who has been pleased) is not perceptible by another (a person like us). In a simpler scheme, this is the (reconstructed, hence the asterisk) Vedic model:

*sacrifice → deities' pleasure → result

And the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā model:

sacrifice → *apūrva* → result

Last, Veṅkaṭanātha's model:

God's pleasure
=
sacrifice → *apūrva* → result

¹⁹ *kriyāsādhyam apūrvaṃ sthīram api nāsmadādipratyakṣam. tad dvi devatānugrahātmakam. na hi parābhiprāyaḥ parasya pratyakṣatām iyāt* (SM ad PMS 1.1.4, p. 50 1971).

The *apūrva* is the fact that God is pleased. God's propitiation is beyond the usual means of knowledge (and hence not empirical) because the intention of one is imperceptible to another; not being empirical, it is not within the boundaries of the Mīmāṃsā empiricism. Thus, Veṅkaṭanātha does not only embed the worldly views of PMS in his system, but also its transempirical views about the Veda and the dharma. This he does by connecting (some of) the highest elements of his system (God and the body of God) with the highest elements of the PMS system (dharma and the Veda).

4.4. Sociological Background

At this stage of my research, I have been focusing on the intrinsic value of Veṅkaṭanātha's theology, independent of its possible sociological motivations.²⁰ Consequently, I have not looked for external evidence through e.g. inscriptions and other artefacts. Nonetheless, some elements are striking just within Veṅkaṭanātha's texts.

- Veṅkaṭanātha seems in both SM (Introduction, naming Nārāyaṇārya, and *passim* for the constant reference to Rāmānuja, see Freschi forthcoming[b]) and MP (MP v. 7cd, MP v. 11, naming Nārāyaṇārya and Dramiḍa)²¹ very keen to show how his forerunners anticipated and endorsed his strategy in regard to the inclusion of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā within Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta. That this point was controversial is however shown by the opponents who are sceptical about this inclusion, and whose voices have been recorded in the MP (see MP vv. 6–9 and 11). It is also indirectly shown by the fact that Veṅkaṭanātha could not produce univocal statements for the time before Rāmānuja and that even Rāmānuja's statements often have a rather different scope (see Freschi forthcoming[b]). At the risk of an illegitimate induction, we might derive from the fact that Rāmānuja's arguments appear to have been at times stretched to cover Veṅkaṭanātha's agenda, that the same happened also with his forerunners, whose works are lost. Consider for instance the following quote from the SM:

²⁰ I am grateful to Paul Dundas for having raised this issue during the discussion of this paper in the fourth IIGRS conference.

²¹ Dramiḍa is mentioned by Rāmānuja in the opening verse of his *Śrī Bhāṣya* and in his *Vedārthasaṅgraha* (section 93) as among the forerunners on his path. (*bodhāyanaṭaṅkadramiḍa-guhadevakapardibhāruciprabhrtyavigītaśiṣṭaparigrhītapurātanavedavedāntavyākhyānasuvyaktārthaśrutinikaranidarśito 'yaṃ panthāḥ, Vedārthasaṅgraha*). No work of him has survived.

The ones who, after having themselves superimposed (*adhyasta*) a fault in the analysis (*vyākriyā*),²² abandoned even a *sūtra*, these would almost abandon even a crystal [although the faults are not in the crystal, but have only been superimposed on it], because there is a fault in a China rose [behind it].²³

From the context, the verse should be attributed to Nārāyaṇārya, a predecessor whose work is lost, but who is credited with a more critical approach to Pūrva Mīmāṃsā (see, again, MP v. 11 for Veṅkaṭanātha's reinterpretation of this approach). Veṅkaṭanātha interprets it as explaining that Jaimini's *sūtras* are authoritative, although their commentators are not, but the passage may have referred only to the Vedānta Sūtra (or some other *sūtra*).

- Yāmuna and Rāmānuja use many Pūrva Mīmāṃsā devices, so that the claims by Neevel and Mesquita about the overall hostility between Yāmuna and Mīmāṃsā might need to be at least in part reconsidered: Yāmuna is not hostile to the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā school (in fact, he uses Pūrva Mīmāṃsā arguments to defend the epistemological validity of the Pāñcarātra in his ĀP), but rather to the person or people, possibly connected with Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, who tried to deny the validity of the Pāñcarātra (see Mesquita 1980 with a tentative identification of this person as Sucarita Miśra).

- At the time of Veṅkaṭanātha there were perhaps no more atheist Pūrva Mīmāṃsakas, and perhaps Pūrva Mīmāṃsā theories in general continued to exist only as a corpus of technical rules, adopted by Vedāntins for their own exegetical needs.

To sum up, the relation between Pūrva Mīmāṃsā and Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta was complex and multifaceted. It was not (or not only) the case that Śrī Vaiṣṇavas wanted to be accepted as “orthodox” and were contested by Pūrva Mīmāṃsakas. Resistance was vehement also from the Śrī Vaiṣṇava/Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta side, and Veṅkaṭanātha was in a very difficult position.²⁴

²² Or perhaps “in the *vṛtti*”. But both meanings are not attested in Apte, PW, MW.

²³ *adhyasya vyākriyādoṣaṃ ye sūtram api tatyajuh | prāyaḥ sphaṭikam apy ete jahyur eva japābhramāt ||* (SM, Introduction, p. 5 1971).

²⁴ A comparable case has been discussed in a recent talk by Alexis Sanderson in the context of the relation of Tantric Śaivism and the so-called orthodox “Hinduism”: It is not only the case that Śaiva authors tried to be accepted as “orthodox Hindūs” and “orthodox Hindūs” tried to block them. By contrast, on both sides there were trends towards assimilation and resistance to these trends (see Sanderson 2013).

4.5. Conclusions: *siddha* part

Veṅkaṭanātha could introduce a God into the unitary Vedānta-*sāstra* because He was very different from the deities refuted in the *devatādhikaraṇa*, and also from the god criticised by Kumārila and by later Mīmāṃsā authors. First of all, this God does not compete with the Veda; secondly, He does not render the sacrifice devoid of significance. Mīmāṃsā authors did not want sacrifices to be directed at pleasing a deity who would have then delivered a desired result because this runs counter to their empiricism and their sticking to economy (Pūrva Mīmāṃsā authors agree with Ockham's *entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem*), and because it makes sacrifices (and the Veda) just one out of many means to please deities. By contrast, Veṅkaṭanātha does not want to make either the sacrifices or the Veda dependent on something extrinsic. Sacrifices must be performed because of the Vedic injunctions prescribing them, but their performance pleases God and this pleasure is equated with the *apūrva*.²⁵ At the same time, one should not lose sight of Veṅkaṭanātha's multifaceted approach, which is evident in his poetical as well as his philosophical work (see Hardy 1979) and which constantly enables readers/listeners to reflect upon and appreciate both the epistemological or metaphysical connection of Veda-(*śabdabrahman?*)-God and one's personal relationship to God as a person to be worshipped.

4.6. Some yet-to-be established conclusions

This part of the conclusion has a merely heuristic and philosophical concern, since I have not yet been able to ground it in the words of Veṅkaṭanātha and his forerunners.

How should one conceive of a God who is untouched by the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā attacks? How can S/He "be"²⁶ without being a superfluous entity like the god whose logical necessity is denied by Kumārila? Possibly because Veṅkaṭanātha's God is no longer an ontologically given entity, distinct from the Veda and from the sacrifices and pleased through them, as with Indra and other Vedic deities. Nor is He an agent acting in the world, like the (allegedly Naiyāyika) god attacked by Kumārila. He does not need a finite

²⁵ The occurrence that God is pleased by sacrifices is not coincidental, given God's connection with the Veda, whereas the equation with the *apūrva* implicitly states that the Veda is the only epistemic means to know about God.

²⁶ I am using this more neutral term in order to avoid the ontological commitment of the verb 'to exist'.

body because the whole world is His body (as stated in the *Nyāyasiddhāñjana* 1st section, on *dravya*, p. 178–9, Mikami n.y. par. 1.9.3).²⁷

This means that He is also the metaphysical foundation of the Veda, not (entirely?) different from it, as described in the case of Kumārila. Such a God would be tantamount to the Veda and it would not be an ontological substance:

God = Veda ≠ an ontological substance

A big obstacle in this interpretation is Yāmuna’s care in distinguishing his position (and, thus, what would have become the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta position) from the “Buddhist” and “crypto-Buddhist” (=Advaita Vedānta) position: the self (including the *paramātman*) is for Yāmuna not tantamount to consciousness (ĀS). Rather, it is endowed with consciousness as its intrinsic characteristic (*svabhāva*). It is difficult to understand how this position can at the same time be distinguished from the Nyāya position about the Self being intrinsically unconscious, but having consciousness as a characteristic.

However, in a similar context, Walter G. Neevel suggested that the technical term *svabhāva* applied by Yāmuna to consciousness indicates that consciousness is not identical

²⁷ *eṣāñ ca vyaṣṭijīvaśarīrāñām īsvaraṃ prati śarīratvaṃ sadvārakam advārakañ ceti sampradāyaḥ. sadvārakam eveti anyañ. prathamā tu pakṣaḥ prācuryeṇa bhāṣyakāravavyavahāriḥ sūcyate tattvaratnākare 'pi sa evoktaḥ, “cetanācetanayor aviśiṣṭaṃ taṃ prati śarīratvaṃ” ityādivacanāt. dvitīyas tu pakṣo vivaraṇākāraṅgīkṛtaḥ. ṣaḍarthaśaṅkṣe hi acito jīveśvarayor dehatvāt tadvācīśabdajanitadhīyām ubhayatra paryavasānam ubhayor api svayam eva bhānāt dvirbhānañ cāśaṅkayoktam, “nācito jīvadvārā brahmaśarīratvāt” iti. vivaraṇe 'pi ayam evārthaḥ prapañcītaḥ. ayañ ca vivādo devamanuṣyādivyaṣṭidehaviṣayaḥ; divyamaṅgalavigrahādyacitsu sadvārakatvāyogāt. vivaraṇe 'pi hi tamaḥprabhṛtinām api śarīratvanirdeśavirodhaparihārāya, “ādisṛṣṭau tu” ityādinā samaṣṭitvāñām sāḅṣāt paraśarīratvaṃ uktam.*

tejo 'bannasṛṣṭisamanantarabhāvidevamanuṣyādirūpavyākaraṇamātra eva, “anena jīvena” ityādiśrutyanurodhena [p. 179] sadvārakatvaṃ. tatrāpi advārakaṃ sadvārakañ ca śarīratve na kaścīd doṣaḥ. ubhayaparyavasānam api viśeṣamūlaprayogabhedapratiniyamāt parihṛtam. ata eva na dvirbhānam api. na ca ekasya yugapad anekaṃ prati śarīratvaṃ anupapannam; tallakṣaṇayogena tadupapatteḥ, anekaṃ prati ṣeṣatvādivat. na va svato jīvavat śarīrabhūtasya triguṇadravyasya jīvanupraviṣṭasaṅghātaviśeṣadaśmātreṇa īsvaraṃ prati śarīratvaṃ apasarati. na ca tad anyad dravyam; dravyābhedāt. vyākṛtabhūtatvagādīn prati ca īsvarasya antaryāmitvāt. tata eva ca teṣāṃ taccharīratvaṃ śrūyate. suṣuptimurcchādyavasthāsu ca svābhāvīkam īsvaranīyāmyatvaṃ eva dehadehinor dṛṣyate. ata idam advārakanīyamaṃ tatpakṣe na syāt | jīvasattāmātrañ ca na dehanīyamaṇaupayikam; tadāñiṃ jñāneccārahītatayā tasya gaganādisattātulyatvāt. ataḥ sarvāvasthāñām sarvadravyāñām praty eva svataś śarīratvaṃ. jīvaṃ prati tu tatkarṃmakṛtam iti samīcīno 'yaṃ panthāḥ.

with the self, but that it cannot be separated from it (unlike happiness, *sukha*), just like in the case of the Nāvyā Nyāya *svarūpa upādhi*²⁸ and going in the direction of the ontological assessment of *viśiṣṭa-advaita*, understood as “the non-duality of what has been qualified” (Neevel 1977, pp. 130–141). This would make the disidentification of God with an ontological entity again possible.

It might, moreover, be suggested that the *paramātman* is understood as a person (Yāmuna and Veṅkaṭanātha stress, with Pūrva Mīmāṃsā and against Advaita Vedānta, that it is identical with the “I” appearing in cognitions)²⁹ and, thus, as a dynamic melding of consciousness and action. If this were the case, such a “person” would not need to be an ontologically fixed entity and could steer away from the Scylla of the Nyāya ontology and the Charybdis of Buddhist deconstruction.

5. What Do We Mean by “God”, “Atheism”, and “Empiricism”?

The concept of “god” is not as univocal as Western readers who share a similar Judeo-Christian background – but have not dwelled much on it – might think. Furthermore, the link of God first and foremost with ontology is not the only possible way to interpret His/Her role.³⁰ We have seen that Veṅkaṭanātha introduced God in Mīmāṃsā through its deontics. Kumārila did something similar due to exegetical reasons.

The notion of “atheism” stands also in need of a parallel redefinition. The Pūrva Mīmāṃsā atheism seems not to address all sorts of “gods” and not all in the same way. Heinrich Zimmer has spoken of transtheism in the case of Jainism, which is more disinterested than hostile towards god(s). Pūrva Mīmāṃsakas are clearly antitheistic but only against a certain interpretation of deities.

Last, the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā commitment to empiricism, though linked with its atheism, is not linked with direct realism in the realm of semantics and of epistemology (both consider also *sādhyā* ‘to be realised’ items the ontological status of which cannot be dealt with through direct realism).

²⁸ *svarūpa upādhi*: a characteristic which constitutes the very essence of something e.g. cognition in the case of the *ātman* according to some thinkers.

²⁹ For Yāmuna, see Neevel 1977, p. 137. For the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā position, see Freschi 2012a, Freschi 2014.

³⁰ An interesting hint at a non-substantiated God is indeed found also in John’s first Letter, with the well-known definition “God is love” (Deus caritas est, ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν, 1 John 4: 16).

nanv evaṃ śabda eva devatā prāpnoti. naitad asmābhiḥ parihartavyaṃ na hīdam ucyamānam asmatpakṣam bādhatē (ŚBh 10.4.23).

[Obj.:] Then, the deity is just a linguistic expression.

[R.:] We do not need to refute this. In fact, this statement does not contradict our view.

Abbreviations

Aṣṭ	Pānini's <i>Aṣṭādhyāyī</i>
MP	Veṅkaṭanātha's <i>Mīmāṃsāpādukā</i>
PMS	Jaimini's (<i>Pūrva</i>) <i>Mīmāṃsā Sūtra</i>
ṚV	<i>Ṛgveda</i>
ŚBh	Śābara's <i>Śābarabhāṣya</i>
SM	Veṅkaṭanātha's <i>Seśvaramīmāṃsā</i>
TV	Kumārila Bhaṭṭa's <i>Tantravārttika</i>

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Three

The pre-eminence of men in the *vrātya*-ideology

Moreno Dore

1. Introduction

Studies concerning the Vrātyas have a long history. Ever since the famous work by Hauer 1927, the later inquiries by Choudary 1964 and Banerjea 1963, as well as the reconstructions suggested by Heesterman 1962 and Falk 1986, the role and the characteristics of the Vrātyas have become increasingly clear. I shall refer to some of these studies in the following, as well as the recent new interpretation of the *vrātya*-culture proposed by Candotti and Pontillo (*forthcoming*). Moreover, Parpola's hypothesis (1983; 2012) of an acculturation between two waves of Aryan immigrants with different religions – an earlier (*vrātya* or atharvavedic) wave and a later (*ṛgvedic*) one – challenges the idea of whether it is possible to find some other evidence in order to try to reconstruct other features of the first atharvavedic wave. This idea of the Vrātyas as older waves of invaders is also shared by Bollée (1981; 2007), that agrees with Hauer (1927: 23) believing that they had taken possession of Magadha, bringing with them pre-Vedic traditions and influencing both the Jains and the Buddhists.

The aim of this paper is to attempt to reconstruct the ascetic ideology found in the *Atharvaveda Śaunakīya* (AVŚ) – a *vrātya* source which has very often been quoted but not frequently analysed – in particular providing an explanation for the supremacy and pre-eminence among the gods achieved by the Brahmacārin and the Ekavrātya, as well as for their role as demiurges. For this purpose, their relations with the gods, and specially with Prajāpati, will be investigated. Attention will be drawn to the relation between the Ekavrātya and the Brahmacārin and their cosmogonic role in connection with Prajāpati. For this reason, the starting point of the present research is the first verse of the first hymn of the *Vrātyakāṇḍa*. Here the figure of Prajāpati is mentioned as the second figure

after the Vrātya (15.1.1: *vrātya āsīd īyamāna evā sā prajāpatiṃ sām airayat*). However, for the comprehension of this verse we must first understand the role of Prajāpati in the Vedas.

We learn from the *Rgveda* (RV) that Prajāpati is described as a giver of cows from whom offspring is expected (10.169.4). In 10.184.1 (AVŚ 5.25.5),¹ Viṣṇu is requested to prepare the womb, Prajāpati is expected to pour the semen, while Dhātār places the embryo. Furthermore, in the nuptial hymn RV 10.85.43 the poet asks Prajāpati to generate offspring. The generative role of Prajāpati is even more explicit in the famous hymn RV 10.121, where an unnamed creator god is praised, until finally in the tenth stanza² the poet refers to Prajāpati. Although in a different hymn, the same stanza is found again in AVŚ:

AVŚ 7.80.3. *prajāpate nā tvād etāny anyó viśvā rūpāni paribhūr jajāna [...]*
 O Prajāpati,³ no one but you has generated all these forms,
 surrounding (them) [...]

It is noteworthy that Prajāpati is not only the one who gave birth to the living beings. Yet, by employing the term *paribhū* which also has the meaning of ‘guiding’ or ‘governing’, the poet establishes the pre-eminence of Prajāpati over the creatures. In his annotation to this hymn, Gonda (1986: 89) states that a passage such as AVŚ 10.7.8 – to which I shall return later – “creates the impression that he was the sole creator and in the variant of RV. 10, 121, 10, viz. [AVŚ] 7, 80, 3, this is clearly stated”. Gonda also notes that he “begins with

¹ AVŚ 5.25.5: *viṣṇur yonim kalpayatu tvāṣṭā rūpāni piṃśatu / ā siñcatu prajāpatir dhātā gārbhaṃ dadhātu te.*

² Possibly a later addition. Geldner (1951: 349) writes: “Die Antwort, die der Dichter des Liedes unausgesprochen im Sinne hat, ist vielleicht erst später von einem Zudichter gegeben worden, nachdem jener höchste Gott in Prajāpati seine bestimmte Ausprägung erhalten hatte.” On the last verse as being possibly later see also Renou (1956: 252), who adds: “Il est vrai que le nom de Prajāpati est déjà impliqué au v. 1b.” Brown (1965: 25) believes that in the hymns emphasising the theistic approach an attack is made directly upon Indra, and explains: “The most obvious illustration is RV 10. 121, a riddle-type (brahmodya) hymn to the god Ka (Who), not otherwise named until the final stanza of the hymn, where the answer to the riddle is given and the god is called Prajāpati (“Lord of Creatures”). To the god are ascribed powers and feats which regularly are Indra’s [...] If we accept the authenticity of the final stanza, in which Prajāpati is named as the supreme god, the hymn is a direct refutation of Indra’s position and an assertion of a super-deity in his place and of course above him. If, on the other hand, we should accept the other view of the final stanza, namely, that it is spurious [...] then the false and later addition of the final stanza still would be positive evidence that in someone’s view (not the author of the hymn) Indra was to be supplanted by another deity.”

³ The translations consulted for the different texts are by Aufrecht 1850, Bloomfield 1897, Griffith 1896, Whitney 1905, Charpentier 1911, Geldner 1951, Renou 1956, Kajihara 2002.

the absolute beginning, viz. his ‘birth’ and being the ‘sole lord’ (st. 1), who established heaven and earth” (143). Kuiper (1970: 101) recalls that the golden embryo “is apparently identical with the ‘embryo of the Waters’ mentioned in stanza 7 of the same hymn and in X.82.6”. Although the concept of the golden eggs survives in later literature, Kuiper thinks that this figure “remains unclear”. He adds (pp. 103–104):

“the first stage of the cosmogony was an undivided unity [...] In some ritual speculations, it is true, Prajāpati, the Father of the Universe, finds at last a *pratiṣṭhā*, a support, by piling the sacrificial fire on the ‘nest of the waters.’ The most prominent characteristic of this primordial world remains, nevertheless, that the mundane egg floats on the waters and that the main concern is where to find a fixed point, a ‘support.’ There can be little doubt that this lack of a settling point is of essential importance in the initial stage of the cosmogony. [...] the appearance of a male figure in this primordial world is needed to create such a fixed point from which the earth can develop.”

This is worthy of note, since in AVŚ 15.1 we find:

AVŚ 15.1.2. *sá prajāpatiḥ suvárṇam ātmánn apaśyat tát prājanayat //*
He, Prajāpati, saw gold in himself; he begot that.

One may here wonder about the poet’s scheme. A male figure was responsible in the very first moment for the beginning, after which a sort of golden germ is the starting point of the creation. Nonetheless, there was no room in this scheme for another figure: the *Vrātya* of the first verse of the *Vrātyakāṇḍa* is something new. We shall see how this can help us obtain a better understanding of the *vrātya*-ideology.

2. The pre-eminence of Prajāpati in the AVŚ

In the following pages, I shall show that the pre-eminence of Prajāpati is apparent from his constant connection with the creative activity. This is clear when the recurring formula “first-born of *ṛta*” (*prathamajā ṛtasya*) is used. It is also important to note the associations made by the poets between Prajāpati and the others great gods (Indra, Agni, etc.), as well as with different abstract concepts (*prāṇa*, *virāj*, *tapas*, death.). Then, the relation between Prajāpati and *brāhman* will be also analysed through famous hymns to Time and the Skambha. Finally, a special knowledge connected to man will emerge.

2.1. The creation of Prajāpati

In many verses of the AVŚ we find elements that continue the reflections of the ṚV. In AVŚ 6.69.3 Prajāpati is requested to put glory and splendour (*várco átho yásó*) in the poet as the sky is in the sky (*diví dyám iva dṛṃhatu*).⁴ Prajāpati is also depicted as a creator in hymn AVŚ 11.3 devoted to the extolling of the *odana* (rice-mess), out of which the god measures 33 worlds (*tráyastrimśataṃ lokán nír amimīta*). Gonda (1986: 45) has also found a reference to Prajāpati's creative power in AVŚ 9.3.11, where whosoever builds a house does so in order to obtain progeny and "is a replica or representative of the Creator God", the Parameṣṭhin Prajāpati (*prajāyai cakre tvā śāle parameṣṭhí prajāpatih*).

The relation between Prajāpati and Parameṣṭhin is worth exploring further. The latter term is sometimes used as an epithet of the former but it is also used as a proper name of a specific divinity.⁵ In the first verse of the AVŚ hymn 9.7, we find both of them compared to the two horns of a bull (*prajāpatís ca parameṣṭhí ca śṛṅge*), thus highlighting their particular closeness. In the last verses of 10.3 where many entities are listed as pairs, Prajāpati is mentioned in association with Parameṣṭhin (v. 24: *yáthā yásaḥ prajāpatau yáthāsmín parameṣṭhíni*). A quite typical characteristic of atharvanic poetry is the crowding and extolling of the entity with many other divinities. In AVŚ 13.3.5 Virāj, Parameṣṭhin, Prajāpati and Agni Vaiśvānara (*yásmín virát parameṣṭhí prajāpatir agnir vaiśvānarāḥ*) are set in the sun, and in 4.11.7 the bull is Indra-shaped, but also identified with Agni, Prajāpati, Parameṣṭhin and the *virāj*. (*indro rūpéṇāgnir váhena prajāpatih parameṣṭhí virát*). In hymn 19.9, *parameṣṭhin* is instead an epithet used with Vāc (v. 3: *iyám yá parameṣṭhíni vág deví*) and with Manas (v. 4: *idám yát parameṣṭhínaṃ máno*). The poet also lists Prajāpati along with other gods as he asks for welfare (*śam*) in verses 6 and 12.

Moreover, as is well known, the figure of Prajāpati becomes more and more important in the AV and in the Brāhmaṇas. This is suggested, for instance, in AVŚ 3.10, devoted to the *ekāṣṭakā*.⁶ In verse 12 an embryo (i.e. Indra) is generated,⁷ but in the following verse the

⁴ Gonda (1986: 81) finds here "a reference to the god's creative activity: it is Prajāpati who has established the sky; where? in the sky (which has been fixed so firmly that it does not fall down; the sky, so to say, now keeps itself in place)".

⁵ Gonda (1985: 457) stressed that it is "recommendable not to try to sketch a historical development of the use of the term on the basis of an orderly, systematic arrangement of its occurrences. Nor should we indulge too much in speculations on its origin, on questions concerning its distribution or on possibilities of popular influence or syncretizing tendencies."

⁶ Macdonell-Keith (1912: 119): "That Aṣṭakā is the eighth day after the full moon appears clearly from the Atharvaveda. Ekāṣṭakā, or the 'sole Aṣṭakā,' must denote not merely any Aṣṭakā, but some particular one. Sāyaṇa, in his commentary to the Atharvaveda [...] fixes the date meant by the term

ekāṣṭakā itself is Prajāpati's daughter:

AVŚ 3.10.13ab. *īndraputre sōmaputre duhitāsi prajāpateḥ //*

Having Indra as a son, having Soma as a son, you are daughter of Prajāpati.

Elsewhere, Indra is even identified with Prajāpati. AVŚ 17.1 praises Indra and the sun, and verse 18 begins with “You (are) Indra, you (are) Mahendra, you (are) the world, you (are) Prajāpati” (*tvám īndras tvám mahendrās tvám lokās tvám prajāpatiḥ*). The fact that Prajāpati is active during procreation is also evident in 10.8.13, where he moves within the womb and, unseen, is born in many forms (*prajāpatīś carati gārbhe antār ādṛśyamāno bahudhā ví jāyate*). Gonda (1986: 9 f.) underlines that “this means that the god of biological procreation is believed to be present or active in the womb” since “[e]very birth is in reality a rebirth of the Lord of Creation”. The expression “first-born of *ṛta*” (*prathamajā ṛtasya*) found in AVŚ 12.1.61 and 4.35.1 seems to combine the role of the god in both creation and pro-creation. Gonda (1986: 21 f.), commenting on the poet's request “what in you is deficient, may Prajāpati first-born of *ṛta*, fill that up for you”,⁸ further notes that it is Prajāpati's function “to continue his creative and preservative activity with regard of the Earth”.⁹ Finally, in AVŚ 10.5.45, the god is called “lord of earth” (*bhuvaspate*) and is asked to give food.¹⁰ In the hymn in praise of the *odana* (4.35), Prajāpati is explicitly presented as the figure who originally cooked the rice-mess. The first verse refers to “The *odana* that Prajāpati, first-born of *ṛta*, cooked with *tapas*¹¹ aiming at the *brāhman*” (*yám odanám prathamajā ṛtasya prajāpatīś tāpasā brahmāṇé 'pacat*). The second verse, however, reports that “the former *brāhman* cooked aiming at the *brāhman*”¹² (*papāca brahmāṇe brāhma pūrvam*). This ambiguity led Gonda (1989: 46) to ask:

as the eight day in the dark half of the month of Māgha (January-February).” On the relation between the year and the *Ekāṣṭakā* see also Gonda (1984: 40 f.).

⁷ AVŚ 3.10.12ab: *ekāṣṭakā tāpasā tapyámānā jajāna gārbhaṃ mahimānam īndram*.

⁸ AVŚ 12.1.61cd: *yát ta únám tát ta á pūrayāti prajāpatiḥ prathamajā ṛtasya*.

⁹ Cf. AVŚ 10.7.7.

¹⁰ AVŚ 10.5.45: *yát te ánnam bhuvas pata ākṣiyāti pṛthivīm ánu / tāsya nas tvám bhuvas pate sampráyacha prajāpate*.

¹¹ On *tapas* in ṚV and AV see Blair 1961; on *tapas* connected to *brahmacarya* and asceticism see Kaelber 1976: § 4–5; 1979: § 2–3.

¹² See also Gonda 1965b: 96; 281 f.

“Are Prajāpati and Brāhman the same person? Or is the alternation between the two verb forms – as it usually is in the hymns of the Ṛgveda – motivated, and does the perfect here also, as often elsewhere, express a state, a permanent situation and does the imperfect here also refer to an event in the mythical past? if so – and why not? – does the author refer to Brāhman as a subject that was already cooking before Prajāpati and to Prajāpati as a god who, after Brāhman’s example, as a true originator (once) cooked in the past to introduce a new rite?”

Both forms being used indiscriminately in later texts, Gonda admits that the first interpretation – i.e. the identification of the subjects – is also possible. On the other hand, in 19.9.12¹³ Prajāpati is listed second immediately after *brāhman*. Given the contradictory nature of the verses, it remains difficult to draw any firm conclusion with regard to their relation here.

Many entities are extolled in the *Atharvaveda* and Prajāpati is often identified with one of them. As is well known, AVŚ 9.9 and 9.10 mostly repeat the verses of ṚV 1.164. Verse 24 is new, however, and presents a series of identifications where “*virāj* [is] speech, *virāj* [is] earth, *virāj* [is] atmosphere, *virāj* [is] Prajāpati, *virāj* became death” (*virāḍ vāḡ virāt̄ pṛthivī virāḍ antāriḡṣam virāt̄ prajāpatiḡ virāḡ mṛtyúḡ [...] babhūva*). In hymn 10.10 it is said that “On the cow the gods subsist, also men on the cow; the cow became all this [universe]”¹⁴ and in verse 30, “The cow [is] the sky, the cow [is] the earth, the cow [is] Viṣṇu, Prajāpati” (*vaśā dyaúr vaśā pṛthivī vaśā viṣṇuḡ prajāpatiḡ*).¹⁵ In 11.4, *prāṇa* is praised and the poet equates it with many concepts among which *virāj*, worship, the sun and moon and finally Prajāpati (“they call breath Prajāpati”).¹⁶ In the third verse of 11.7 the poet also identifies Prajāpati with the entity he is praising (*ucchiṣṭa*): “In the remnant [are] *sat* and *asat*, both death and strength, Prajāpati” (*sānn ucchiṣṭe āsam̄ ca ubhau mṛtyúr vājaḡ prajāpatiḡ*). However, while more abstract concepts are chosen in association with Prajāpati, more concrete ones are

¹³ AVŚ 19.9.12a: *brāhma prajāpatir dhātā lokā védāḡ saptaṣṭāyo ‘gnāyaḡ*.

¹⁴ AVŚ 10.10.34: *vaśām devā úpa jivanti vaśām manuṣyā utá / vaśédām sárvaḡ abhavad [...]*.

¹⁵ This last hymn is similar in content to the praise of the bull seen previously (4.11), and it is curious to note how the same but slightly modified verse is used in a similar context to celebrate a different entity as observed in the hymn to Skambha. Cf. AVŚ 4.11.1 and 10.7.35, where both the bull and Skambha sustain heaven and earth, the atmosphere, and the six directions, and entered into the whole existence (*vísvaḡ bhúvanam ā viveśa*).

¹⁶ AVŚ 11.4.12: *prāṇó virāt̄ prāṇó déṣṭrī prāṇám sárva úpāsate / prāṇó ha sūryas candramāḡ prāṇám āhuḡ prajāpatim*.

connected to Agni and Indra. According to Gonda (1986: 105), this line could imply that “Prajāpati exceeds these pairs of opposites in status and power” and it is “hardly a matter of chance that Prajāpati’s name is associated with two pairs of ultimate principles, of the most fundamental cosmic, metaphysical and existential opposites”.

The importance of Prajāpati in the creation is further evidenced by his association with Time.¹⁷ According to AVŚ 13.2.39, “the reddish¹⁸ became Time, the reddish in the beginning (became) Prajāpati”¹⁹ and then Prajāpati’s birth seems to be only a secondary event. One of the hymns to Time provides complementary information on its association with Prajāpati. Time is praised as the origin of all, as giving birth to heaven, earth and both what is and what is to be (v. 5).

AVŚ 19.53.8. *kālē tāpaḥ kālē jyēṣṭham kālē brāhma samāhitam /
kālō ha sārvasyeśvarō yāḥ pitāsīt prajāpateḥ //*

In Time *tapas*, in Time the pre-eminent, in Time *brāhman* is collected;
Time is lord of everything, which was father of Prajāpati.

9. *téneṣitām téna jātām tād u tāsmin prātiṣṭhitam /
kālō ha brāhma bhūtvā bibharti parameṣṭhīnam //*

Moved by it, born by it, and in it this [universe] is founded;
Time, indeed, after becoming *brāhman*, bears Parameṣṭhin.

As observed in 11.7.3, an entity gathers various abstract concepts within itself. Prajāpati has the role of a son and he seems to be born at a second moment. Indeed, if we accept that Parameṣṭhin mentioned in verse 9 is used as epithet for Prajāpati²⁰ (cf. 9.3.11), this would imply that the latter was born after *brāhman*. From what precedes, it follows that there are at least two moments in creation: firstly, the abstract concept of Time gives birth to a creator and secondly, this son generates beings.

¹⁷ On Prajāpati and Time see Gonda 1982: 51–52.

¹⁸ Srinivasan (1978: 215 f.) notes that “[t]he term *rohita* already appears in the RV; it is used exclusively there as an attribute designating the color of horses; nowhere is it applied directly to the sun. Thus Rohita appears to be an independent invention of the poets of the AV to advance their inquiries into the nature of supreme power.”

¹⁹ AVŚ 13.2.39ab: *rōhitaḥ kālō abhavad rōhitō ‘gre prajāpatiḥ.*

²⁰ Cf. AVŚ 9.3.11 above.

2.2. The knowledge of Prajāpati and the knowledge of man

The hymn to Skambha (10.7) makes clear references to the role of Prajāpati in maintaining the worlds (v. 7: *stabdhvā prajāpatir lokānt sārvaṃ ādhārayat*) and to his generative power (v. 8: *yāt paramām avamām yāc ca madhyamāṃ prajāpatiḥ sasṛjé viśvárūpam*), sometimes in the capacity of sole creator. Srinivasan (1978: 213), underlining the fact that Prajāpati “did not create himself” and that “the imagery of cosmic parturition continues to be closely adhered to”, notes that the same symbolism conveys a new “speculative position” since “[t]he position understands the personal creator to be first produced of primordial matter but not the supreme creative force”. Having both an active and a passive force, Skambha has the duty of procreating the one who will continue the work of creating. As Srinivasan observes, this new “way of conceptualising the supreme creative force is not found in the RV”. Kuiper has also drawn attention to a reference to the creation of the earth in verse 41: “He who knows the golden reed standing in the sea – he verily is in secret Prajāpati”²¹ (Whitney 1905: 593). Kuiper (1970: 103, n. 28) explains the passage in light of a reference to the story in *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* 1.1.3.5–6 where Prajāpati, seeing a lotus leaf standing upright in the waters, decides to establish the earth upon it: the lotus leaf would be “a transformation of an older motif, that of the golden reed”. Another verse of the hymn connects the knowledge of man to that of Prajāpati:

AVŚ 10.7.17. *yé pūruṣe brāhma vidús té viduḥ parameṣṭhīnam /
yó véda parameṣṭhīnam yás ca véda prajāpatim /
jyeṣṭhām yé brāhmaṇam vidús te skambhām anusāmviduḥ //*

They who know *brāhman* in man, they know Parameṣṭhin; whosoever knows Parameṣṭhin and whosoever knows Prajāpati, they (know) the pre-eminent *brāhmaṇa* (holder of the *brāhman*), they know together the Skambha.

In this verse, Prajāpati and Parameṣṭhin seem to be identified with *brāhman* and Skambha, but are also said to be in man (*puruṣe*). Some questions immediately arises: who is the *jyeṣṭha brāhmaṇa*? What is denoted by means of this expression? It is likely that this refers to someone who has attained a special knowledge which can be understood as a sort of esoteric knowledge. In order to validate this hypothesis, some verses of the so-called “speculative hymns” of the *Atharvaveda* can be useful. They connect the figure of Prajāpati, the concept of *brāhman*, man and references to a particular knowledge.

²¹ AVŚ 10.7.41: *yó vetasām hiranyāyam tiṣṭhantaṃ salilē véda / sá vai gúhyaḥ prajāpatiḥ.*

In the second hymn of the same book, called “The wonderful structure of man” by Whitney (1905: 567), several statements follow a long list of questions:

AVŚ 10.2.21. *bráhma śrótṛiyam āpnoti bráhmamám parameṣṭhinam /
bráhmamám agnīm pūruṣo bráhma saṁvatsarām mame //*

The *bráhman* obtains a learned one (*śrótṛiya*), the *bráhman* (obtains) this Parameṣṭhin, the *bráhman* [as]²² man (is) this Agni, the *bráhman* measured the year.

23. *bráhma devāṁ ánu kṣiyati bráhma daívajanīr víśaḥ / [...]*

The *bráhman* dwells among the gods, the *bráhman* (dwells among) the people of the divine hosts, [...]

It is tempting to connect the *śrótṛiya* in verse 21 with the *jyeṣṭha brāhmaṇa* of the previous hymn (10.7.17). In the former the *bráhman* obtains a learned one, while in the latter, knowing the *bráhman* in man means knowing the *jyeṣṭha brāhmaṇa*. Since knowledge is the knowledge of the *bráhman* and the *bráhman* is one with the *jyeṣṭha brāhmaṇa*, the pre-eminence of the *brāhmaṇa* seems to depend on the same knowledge that makes a man a *śrótṛiya*. Moreover, if this interpretation is correct, then it follows that to know the *bráhman* in man means to know it in the *jyeṣṭha*. Firstly, if one admits that Agni is “dwelling in beings as speech in the speaker”²³ (AVŚ 2.1.4: *vācam iva vaktāri bhuvaneṣṭhā*) then it ensues that the “*bráhman* in man” – or the “*bráhman* [as] man” who is Agni – is the one that belongs to the *jyeṣṭha*. Secondly, verse 23 points to a clear connection between men and gods that still depends on their knowledge of the *bráhman* as both humans and gods seem to aim at achieving the same goal. This conjecture can be strengthened by a verse in 10.7:

AVŚ 10.7.24. *yātra devā brahmavidō bráhma jyeṣṭhám upāsate /
yó vai tán vidyāt pratyákṣam sá brahmá véditā syāt //*

Where the *bráhman*-knowing gods worship the chief (*jyeṣṭhám*) *bráhman* – whose verily knoweth them eye to eye (*pratyákṣam*), he may be a Brahman (*brahmán*), a knower. (tr. Whitney)

In a note to his translation, Whitney (1905: 592) adds that “Perhaps an acceptable emendation in **d** would be *bráhma*: i.e. ‘he may be (may be regarded as) one knowing the

²² Here I follow Whitney 1905: 570.

²³ For an interpretation of hymn AVŚ 2.1 see Dore (*forthcoming*).

brāhman’ [...]”. This interpretation seems to match with my interpretation of verse 27. We find that only those who know the *brāhman* also know the thirty-three gods,²⁴ and they are probably the same people that (v. 28) know the golden embryo as the highest (*hiranyagarbhām paramām*). In both these hymns, the poet quite explicitly alludes to the possibility for man to take the same path of knowledge followed by the gods, thus becoming a *brāhman*-knower.

AVŚ 11.8.30. *yā āpo yās ca devātā yā virāt brāhmaṇā sahā /
śārīraṃ brāhma prāvīśac chārīre ‘dhi prajāpatiḥ //*

What waters and what gods, what *virāj* (are) with *brāhman*;
brāhman enters the body, on the body (is) Prajāpati.

32. *tāsmād vai vidvān pūruṣam idāṃ brāhmēti manyate /
sārvā hy āsmin devātā gāvo goṣṭhā ivāsate //*

Then, indeed, who knows the man thinks «This is *brāhman*»;
because all the gods are seated in him, as cows in the stall.

Furthermore, this hymn is also devoted to man, and once again the *brāhman* is said to be entered into man and more specifically into a human body. Gonda (1989: 42) underlines that “[t]he two, Brāhman and Prajāpati, are clearly different and are obviously considered to have different functions” but it is difficult to fully agree with Gonda that the *brāhman*’s function is simply that of a psychical apparatus. In verse 32, to know man means recognising that he is *brāhman* and that all gods are inside him. This imply the existence of a knowledge enabling man to recognise his divine essence, and is thus comparable to a Gnostic path.

3. The pre-eminence of man in the AVŚ

We have seen that there is in these hymns the idea of a pre-eminent Brāhmaṇa (*jyeṣṭha brāhmaṇa*) as ‘holder of the *brāhman*’ and that the *brāhman* resides in man. There are clear references to a special (most likely an esoteric) knowledge coveted by men and gods. Then the *jyeṣṭha* seems to be the one who knows that Agni in himself as speech in the speaker, and that knows that all the gods dwell in him as cows in the stall (AVŚ 11.8.32). Below I shall discuss the hymns where figures of men are praised.

²⁴ AVŚ 10.7.27cd: *tān vai trāyastriṃśad devān ēke brahmanvīdo viduḥ.*

3.1. The pre-eminence of the Brahmācārin

The next hymn I wish to consider is AVŚ 11.5, where the Brahmācārin is praised. In another article, I focused on the close ties and the special relationship existing between the gods and three Vedic figures (i.e. Keśin, Vrātya and Brahmācārin) as well as the recurring topic of an esoteric knowledge. In this paper I shall not discuss the references to the *upanayana* in the hymn as all these details and the connections with what is found in the Gṛhyasūtras have already been analysed by other authors.²⁵ Rather than concentrating on the ritual background, I will analyse the various ways this human figure is glorified and praised.

Bloomfield (1897: 626) has interpreted AVŚ 11.5 as a solar hymn differing little from that dedicated to the Keśin (ṚV 10.136).²⁶ Confirming that it has the same starting point as the hymn to the *muni* (i.e. the sun), he writes:

“The sun, who contributes elsewhere many of his qualities to the speculations regarding the primeval principle of the universe, is here for the nonce imagined as a Brahmākārin, a Brahmanical disciple, engaged in the practice of his holy vows; next, by an easy transition, all the functions and powers of the Brahmākārin are made the basis of a momentary cosmogonic and philosophical account of the origin and existence of the universe.”

With regard to this hymn, Gonda (1965a: 284 ff.) affirmed that it shows the essential features of the *upanayana*, and he states that “this ‘praise’ of the brahmācārin views him as a person who ‘devotes’ himself completely to brahman and who endeavours to realize it in his own existence or to realize his being brahman”. Then, the author draws attention to the “ambulatory life” of the Brahmācārin which may be inferred from the use of the verbs *eti* and *carati* in the hymn, and his “supranormal power”.²⁷ More recently, Olivelle (2007: 176 f.) connected the Brahmācārin to a “life of ceaseless movement to acquire *brahman*, probably Vedic or another kind of esoteric knowledge” and interprets the beginning of the hymn in AVŚ as emphasising his association with travel.²⁸ Moreover, in his famous work on the notion of *āśrama*, Olivelle (1973: 33 f.) argued that, before the construction of the

²⁵ Cf. Kaelber 1981; Smith 1986; Oguibénine 1990; Kajihara 2002; 2004; 2009.

²⁶ I have already discussed the figures of the Keśin in ṚV 10.136 elsewhere, see Dore and Pontillo 2013.

²⁷ See also Gonda 1986: 88.

²⁸ See also Oguibénine 1990: 4.

theory of the four *āśramas*, each of these was considered a permanent state. This implies that the Brahmacārin himself was a perpetual student. Kaelber (1981: 78) has further stressed the similarities between this figure and the ascetics of later times:

“*brahmacārin*’s career is in large measure a forerunner and legitimizing model for the initially ‘heterodox’ practices [the author refers here to ascetic and ecstatic practices of persons originally marginal to or outside of the Brāhmaṇic fold; see n. 12] of ascetics later assimilated into orthodoxy as *vānaprastha* (i.e., forest hermit) and *sannyāsin* (i.e., homeless wanderer). The activities of the *brahmacārin*, clearly approved of by the orthodox tradition, thus helped prepare the ground by which the initially ‘unorthodox’ activities of certain ascetics could be accepted into Brāhmaṇic fold. This was possible, in part, precisely because of the assimilation of asceticism and sacrifice in the career of the *brahmacārin*”.

Regardless of the undeniable references to the *upanayana* ritual in the Brahmacārin hymn, Kaelber seems to underestimate the importance of the composition when he states (p. 81) that the Brahmacārin is “glorified in exaggerated fashion” and that despite “the exaggerated praise, there is no question that the term *brahmacārin* in these verses refers to the Vedic student”. Also Oguibénine (1990: 3) – rejecting Bloomfield’s interpretation of the hymn as one of praise to the sun that considers rather “the integration of the Vedic student in the cosmos” – sees hyperbolic rhetoric and affirms:

“there is no sense in denying the hyperbole and so less the rhetoric and stylistic means used in the AV-sūkta and in the ŚB passages; [...] intention is however clear: that is to multiply the associations, the ties and the contacts of both the teacher and the pupil with these elements”.

However, as I hope to show in the following pages it is possible to find an explanation for this peculiar and seemingly excessive praise: I think that this praise is the result of a particular ideology characteristic of what can be called *vrātya*-culture. A connection between the Brahmacārin and the Vrātya has already been posited by Bloomfield (1899: 94) when he wrote that the latter “seems to be a kind of a Brahmacārin”, since “having become holy through his acquired *brahmacaryam* is emphatically representative of *brahma*; like the

Brahmacārin (11.5) he is apotheosized”. In his much-quoted work on Vrātya, after discussing the figure of the Ekavrātya and Ekaṛṣi, Hauer (1927: 324) adds that “Wir haben noch weitere Typen von heiligen Personen in der vedischen Literatur, die mythologisiert und zu kosmischen Mächten erhoben worden sind, nämlich den Keśin, d. i. den langhaarigen Verzückten, den Brahmacārin und den Vena, den Erleuchtung schaffenden Seher und Licht-Heros.” Although arriving at a different conclusion, Heesterman (1964: 25) suggests that Brahmacārin and Vrātya “are originally variants of the same basic type” since they “belong to the pre-classical stage in the development, where the meaning of *brahmacārin* was certainly not yet limited to that of a young man learning the Vedas”. Following Heesterman’s line of research, Falk (1986: 70) proposes a more precise hypothesis:

“Bisher fanden wir Vrātya und Sattrin, die sich auf die Organisation erstreckten, auf Gelübde, Absprache, Kleidung, Armut und Beziehung zum Tod. Es fällt auf, daß die Schüler von Sommer- bis Wintersonnwende bei ihrem Lehrer tätig sind, Vrātyas und Sattrins dagegen im darauf folgenden Halbjahr. Sind also Brahmacārin und Sattrin/Vrātya jahreszeitlich bedingte unterschiedliche Benennungen ein und derselben Wesen?”

Candotti and Pontillo (*forthcoming*) offer a different reconstruction. According to these authors, the *vrātya*-pattern in Falk’s reconstruction “might rather have been inscribed in a sort of second historical phase of the *vrātya*-phenomenon, which was probably contemporary with the rise of the so-called ‘brahmanic’ *varṇāśrama*-system”. They further explain:

“The ancient cyclical exchange of roles described by Heesterman could have been brought about by a crisis at a certain time for some newly coming causes, sorting out two different re-arrangements which might be responsible for such a different treatment in more or less brahmanized works such as Dharma-Sūtras and AV respectively. On the one hand Vrātyas are marginalised, although their way is somehow retrieved as a mere stage of life, and on the other hand the *vrātya*-life is exalted as a permanent option among the different ways of life and it could match with the so-called ‘Vedic asceticism’ of forest-dwellers.”

In her PhD thesis, in my opinion one of the most complete works on this topic, Kajihara (2002: § 8.1.1) draws attention to the fact that the term *brahmacārín* is only found once in the ṚV. She states that “[t]his isolation implies that the *brahmacārín*, or the figure which was called with this term was just arising, but was common yet, in the ṚV.” According to this author, in the period between ṚV and AV this figure rapidly obtained an important position in society accounting for his association with the sun. Kajihara (§ 8.1.3) recognises that the same figure “in the appendix books of the *Atharvaveda* is quite different from what is found in the older strata”. He is “no longer such magnificent figure, regarded as a gods’ limb” but “becomes more worldly than in the older books”. She ascribes this change to an equivalent change of social position. While discussing the figure of the *Brahmacārín* in connection with the *Dīkṣita*, she suggests (§ 8.2.3) that the latter word “seems to have originally had the more general meaning”, and explains:

“the basic features of the *dīkṣitá* of the Soma ritual appear to have been developed based upon the model of the *brahmacārín*. It was on the side of the *brahmacārín* that most of the features common to these two peculiar figures originated”, then “the *dīkṣitá* in the post-*Atharvavedic* texts borrowed the major features from the old ‘*dīkṣitá*’, the *brahmacārín* in the *Atharvaveda*.”

Anyway, I think that if one takes into consideration the fact that the *Keśin* and the *Vrātya* are archetypal models, and bears in mind the different cultural background that belongs to the *Brahmacārín* and to the *Dīkṣita*, one can propose a slightly different reconstruction to that of Kajihara. I have already dealt with these two figures and the particular kind of knowledge they were looking for. Furthermore, I have tried to demonstrate that the figure of the *Gandharva* in AVŚ 2.1 is an archetypal model²⁹ arising from the set of beliefs that belong to the *vrātya*-culture. This seems to have also affected the hymn to the *Brahmacārín*. My assumption is that the exaltation of these figures has its roots in beliefs that are connected to the search for esoteric knowledge, a gnostic path that eventually leads to heaven. In these hymns, the poets’ purpose seems to place men – obviously men with a special knowledge that is unattainable for ordinary people – in the divine pantheon, in order to realise a ‘replacement’ through which the wise man comes to be transfigured into a god. Therefore all these compositions, if considered together, can be understood as an ideological *manifesto*.

²⁹ Cf. Dore (*forthcoming*).

The first hymn already provides interesting evidence of a recurring pattern by which the Brahmacārin “sustains heaven and earth” (*sá dādhāra pṛthivīm dívam ca*) as the bull does in 4.11.1 (*anaḍvān dādhāra pṛthivīm utá dyām*) and the Skambha in 10.7.35 (*skambhó dādhāra dyāvāpṛthiví ubhé*). We can also refer to the ṛgvedic hymn discussed above in the first verse of the later 10.121 (*sá dādhāra pṛthivīm dyām*) which ends with a reference to Prajāpati. A similar statement in the opening verses of the hymn reveals the poet’s intentions. It is very likely that – as seen in the corresponding verses – the aim is to extol an entity as the first cause of the world. Furthermore, this man has a role of pre-eminence among the gods and the demi-gods:

AVŚ 11.5.2. *brahmacārīṇaṃ pitáro devajanāḥ pṛthag devā anusāmyanti sārve / gandharvā enam ānvāyan trāyastriṃśat trisatāḥ ṣaṣṣahasrāḥ sārvaṅt sá devāṃs tāpasā piparti //*

After the Brahmacārin, the fathers, the troops of the gods, all the gods follow one by one; the *gandharvas* have followed him: (they were) thirty-three, three hundred, six thousand. All the gods he supports with *tāpas*;

5. *pūrvo jāto brāhmaṇo brahmacārī gharmāṃ vāsānas tāpasód atiṣṭhat / tasmāj jātām brāhmaṇaṃ brāhma jyeṣṭhām devās ca sārve amṛtena sākām //*
Born as first (/in the east) from the *brāhman*, the Brahmacārin, clothing himself with *gharmā*, stood up with *tāpas*; from him (was) born the *brāhmaṇa*, the pre-eminent *brāhman*, and all the gods together with immortality.

The role of the Brahmacārin and the fact that his role depends on his knowledge both clearly emerge from these two verses. It is true that here we find the motif of a solar hymn exactly as we do in the Keśin hymn. Yet often a Vedic hymn can only be understood by considering it from different points of view. Kajihara also underlines that here “[t]he *brahmacārīn*’s privilege of partaking of the secret knowledge of *brāhman* is highlighted, and he is said to protect the knowledge (*brāhmaṇa*) and make it his own. Such a high status must reflect the importance of his enterprise, namely, his learning and sustaining the secret and sacred *brāhman*” (§ 4.1.6). Therefore the beginning of verse 5 should be understood in two ways: as a reference to the sun on the one hand and to the birth of the Brahmacārin from the *brāhman* on the other.

We have seen that a connection between the demiurge and the concept of *brāhman* is found in AVŚ 4.35.1 dedicated to the *odana*, and that in 19.9.12 Prajāpati is listed

immediately after the *brāhman*. Nonetheless, in one of the afore-mentioned hymns to Time, a similar idea is expressed, since *brāhman*, *tapas* and *jyeṣṭha* are all found. It is noteworthy that these three elements recur in these hymns. Firstly, there is an entity as the starting point for the entire creation (Time, Brahmācārin, Skambha, etc.); secondly, *brāhman* is in a changing relationship with the first entity; and finally Prajāpati is the god from whom everything else emerges. Although one cannot go so far as to say that this is a fixed scheme that poets strictly apply, it appears to be a recurring model. This can be exemplified by the following hymns. In the hymn on Time it is said “In Time *tapas*, in Time the pre-eminent, in Time *brāhman* is collected; Time is lord of everything, that was father of Prajāpati”; and “Time, indeed, becoming *brāhman*, bears Parameṣṭhin”: in chronological order there was Time, then *brāhman* and lastly Prajāpati Parameṣṭhin. In 10.7.17 we have seen something similar regarding Skambha, and again, the same three elements are found in 10.2.21 (*brāhman*, man, Parameṣṭhin) and in 11.8.30 (*brāhman*, body, Prajāpati). Thus, the poet establishes hierarchies between the entities in order to explain the very first moments of the cosmogony.

Another important question – as we have seen in the previous part – regards the term *jyeṣṭha*. If the previous interpretation is correct, it is used to refer to special beings who possess an esoteric knowledge shared by men and gods. Then it should refer to a knowledge that can be found in man (AVŚ 10.17.7) and that is now (AVŚ 11.5.5) said to be born in the Brahmācārin, i.e. in man. In AVŚ 10.2.21 the *brāhman* once more is related to the *śrotriya* who due to this knowledge can be recognised as Agni and Parameṣṭhin. In their aim to obtain the knowledge of *brāhman*, men and gods seem identical. This conclusion can also be drawn from AVŚ 10.7.27 which reports that those who know the *brāhman* also know the thirty-three gods, as well as from verse 24 which indicates that whosoever knows the gods directly (*pratyākṣa*) is a knower and a *brahmān*. Therefore, the poet’s intention to proclaim the wise man identical to the gods is made even more obvious in the statement of AVŚ 11.8.32: “who knows man thinks «This is *brāhman*»; because all gods are seated in him, as cows in the stall.” Although put differently, the same concept is expressed again in the Brahmācārin hymn (v. 22). Here, the *brāhman* is brought in the Brahmācārin (*brahmācārīṇy ābhṛtam*).

AVŚ 11.5.7. *brahmācārī janāyan brāhmāpó lokāṃ prajāpatim
parameṣṭhīnam virājam / gārbho bhūtvāmṛtasya yōnāv indro ha
bhūtvāsuraṃs tatarha //*

The Brahmācārin generating the *brāhman*, the waters, the world, Prajāpati, Parameṣṭhin, the *virāj*; after becoming an embryo in the womb of immortality, after becoming Indra, has crushed the Asuras.

The poet repeatedly returns on the cosmogonic activity of the Brahmacārin. There are at least two important features that directly connect this figure with the Vrātya. The first of these concerns the fact that the extolled figure is put in first position as being the very origin of the cosmogonic act, even before both the *brāhman* and Prajāpati. The second feature pertains to the conquering of Indra's role, which only comes after Prajāpati. Interestingly, the alternation between Indra and Prajāpati can be encountered elsewhere. If it is true that the latter appears only a few times in the ṚV, and the former is the much honoured king of the gods, in the AVŚ the importance of Prajāpati is on the rise. In 17.1.18 both gods are identified while the sun is extolled, but in AVŚ 3.10.12 the Ekāṣṭakā gives birth to Indra and in the next verse, we read that she who has Indra as a son is also Prajāpati's daughter. From this overview, one may conclude that the two great gods are still in the midst of the struggle for supremacy. In any case, what should be noticed here is the inversion of the relationship between man and god. This is not merely an exaggeration that depends on the poet's enthusiasm but rather the evidence of a particular ideological background. Another reference to the relationship between the Brahmacārin, Indra and Prajāpati is provided in verse 16:

AVŚ 11.5.16. *ācāryò brahmacārī brahmacarī prajāpatiḥ / prajāpatir ví rājati
virāḍ indro 'bhavad vaśí //*

The teacher (is) the Brahmacārin, the Brahmacārin is Prajāpati;
Prajāpati rules, the *virāj* became the ruling Indra.

It seems that the aim of the poet to deify the Brahmacārin is achieved through successive substitutions (i.e. identifications) of the different ruling figures with him, the sole protagonist of the hymn. First of all, the pupil takes the role of the teacher,³⁰ then he becomes Prajāpati, the ruler that becomes Indra. Are we to understand that as a consequence of his conquering the role of a teacher, the Brahmacārin obtains the role of the supreme gods? This is at least a conclusion which can also be drawn from the *Vrātyakāṇḍa* in the AVŚ.

³⁰ I have discussed the importance of the teacher/pupil relationship elsewhere, see Dore (*forthcoming*).

3.2. The pre-eminence of the Vrātya

In the second and sixth hymns of AVŚ 15 the Vrātya is depicted as a leader for the gods. It seems that he has the role of the entity that exists before creation, as seen in the previous hymns.

AVŚ 15.2.1ab. *sá úd atiṣṭhat sá prācīm dísam ánu vy àcalat //*
tám bṛhác ca rathamtarám cādityás ca víśve ca devá anuvyàcalan //
 He stood up, he moved towards the eastern direction;
 after him moved *bṛhát* and *rathamtará* and the *Ādityas* and all the gods.

AVŚ 15.6.9. *sá sárván antardeśán ánu vy àcalat //*
tám prajāpatís ca parameṣṭhí ca pitá ca pitāmahás cānuvyàcalan // [...] *[...]*
 He moved towards all the intermediate directions;
 after him moved *Prajāpati* and *Parameṣṭhin* and the father and the
 grandfather; [...]

The Vrātya is followed by *Prajāpati* and *Parameṣṭhin* and, being the one who knows he becomes their “dear abode” (*priyám dhāma bhavati yá evám véda*). Yet the mere fact that the special place assumed by the Vrātya in the Vedic pantheon depends on the knowledge he has conquered, allows him to be connected to both the ṛgvedic *Keśin* and the *Brahmacārin*. Moreover, the use of *úd atiṣṭhat* seems to suggest that the Vrātya shares the responsibility for creation with the latter. In 15.14.11 we read that the Vrātya (*yá evám véda* again) moved towards the offspring, and that after him *Prajāpati* came into being and moved (*sá yát prajā ánu vyàcalat prajāpatir bhūtvānuvyàcalat*), and that afterwards (v. 12) when he moved again in all the intermediate directions, *Parameṣṭhin* came into being (*sá yát sárván antardeśán ánu vyàcalat parameṣṭhí bhūtvānuvyàcalat*). AVŚ 15.7.1 also seems to allude to a cosmogony:

AVŚ 15.7.1. *sá mahimá sádrur bhūtvántam pṛthivyá agachat sá samudró*
'bhavat //

That greatness, after becoming *sadru*, went to the end of the earth; he became ocean.

2. *tám prajāpatís ca parameṣṭhí ca pitá ca pitāmahás cāpas ca śraddhā ca*
varṣám bhūtvānuvyāvartayanta //

Prajāpati and *Parameṣṭhin* and father and grandfather and waters and *śraddhā*, after becoming rain, followed him.

In the first part of verse 1, the term *sadru* is quite puzzling and various interpretations have been proposed. It has been translated in various ways: “Seine Grösse, sich in Bewegung setzend” (Aufrecht 1850: 133); “That greatness, becoming sessile”³¹ (Whitney 1905: 7); “Diese Größe nun wurde glänzend” (Charpentier 1911: 381); finally as “He, having become moving majesty” (Griffith 1896: 191). Even if Whitney did not believe Aufrecht’s translation to be correct, one must admit that the latter has the merit of a logical connection with the movement of the *Vrātya*. On the other hand, the idea of something fixed and stable expressed by Whitney, recalls the support (*pratiṣṭhā*) which Kuiper³² refers to as a requirement for a cosmogony. I take for granted that the greatness to which the poet refers is the *Vrātya* (or the *Ekavrātya*), he seems to return to the primordial state of the cosmos, when everything was uncreated. Then, once again, *Prajāpati* and *Parameṣṭhin* come after the first entity responsible for creation.

AVŚ 15.1.1. *vṛātya āsīd īyamāna evā sā prajāpatiṃ sām airayat //*
 A *Vrātya* was there, just going around, he set *Prajāpati* in motion.³³
 2. *sā prajāpatiḥ suvárṇam ātmānn apaśyat tāt prājanayat //*
 He, *Prajāpati*, saw gold in himself; he begot that.

The same verbal form is used also in one of the hymns to Time as an act performed by the first entity. Indeed, in AVŚ 19.54.4 we read that “Time set in motion the sacrifice” (*kālō yajñām sām airayat*). In AVŚ 15.1.1 the *Vrātya* is invested with the same role identified by Kuiper as “the appearance of a male figure” that begins the creation. Elsewhere (cf. ṚV 10.121.1) we have observed that *Prajāpati* ‘diachronically’ precedes the embryo who is the lord of creation. In the following verses the same scheme is repeated with the addition of another character.

AVŚ 15.1.3. *tād ēkam abhavat tāl lalāmam abhavat tán mahād abhavat tāj
 jyeṣṭhām abhavat tād / brāhmābhavat tāt tāpo bhavat tāt satyām abhavat
 téna prājāyata //*
 That became one, that became marked, that became great, that
 became pre-eminent; that became *brāhman*, that became *tapas*, that
 became reality, then he procreated.
 4. *só vardhata sā mahān abhavat sā mahādevó bhavat //*
 He increased, he became great, he became the great god.

³¹ But also (p. 782): “He, becoming a sessile greatness”.

³² See above.

³³ Cf. AVŚ 4.2.8ab: *āpo vatsām janáyantīr gárbham ágre sām airayan*.

Here, clear references are made to the connection between the title of *jyeṣṭha* and the conquering of the knowledge of the *brāhman* as an esoteric wisdom shared by the gods and allowing man to gain a divine status. More relevant to the current discussion, though, is the fact that in the first three verses, the poet relates a cosmogonic myth which is very similar to other atharvanic stories. In fact, if we leave out the figure of the Vrātya we have a former entity which is followed by Prajāpati, a golden embryo (the one begot), and then a list of identifications or, better, transformations that ends with a progeny. Nonetheless, in the fourth verse, the poet does not follow the story of the multiplication of beings, as usually happens in the speculative hymns. We do not find the list of abstract concepts, celestial elements, minor gods and so on (see § 2.1). On the contrary, the poet's attention is directed on the creator, the Vrātya. When he became a *mahādeva*, the multiplicity of the newly created universe is left aside to follow the evolution of the Vrātya.

AVŚ 15.1.5. *sá devānām íśám páry ait sá íśāno 'bhavat //*

He reached the lordship of the gods³⁴, he became *íśāna*.

6. *sá ekavrātyó bhavat sá dhánur ādatta tād evéndradhanúḥ //*

He became the Ekavrātya, he took a bow: that (was) just Indra's bow.

The figure of the Ekavrātya in the sixth verse seems to go back to the opening verse. To say that the Vrātya is identified here with the Supreme Being could be correct, but is of very little significance, and does not provide us with any greater understanding about the figure itself. In verse 5, the Vrātya is said to become *íśāna*, after having reached (*páry ait*) the lordship, the role of the first god. The verb form *páry ait* is used in another hymn, previously discussed, devoted to Time. In AVŚ 19.53.4 we read that Time encompasses all the beings (*sá evá sám bhúvanāni páry ait*). A similar idea, yet referring to Prajāpati, is expressed in AVŚ 7.80.3, where the god's sovereignty is acknowledged by the use of *paribhū*. In the Ekavrātya-hymn, the poet seems to point to the same idea of sovereignty. This is certainly confirmed by the sixth verse which reports that the Ekavrātya obtained Indra's bow. Furthermore, the fact that the Vrātya has become a king among the gods seems to be indisputable. A better understanding of the hymn may be grasped by focussing on the way the story is told, and consequently on the relationship between the Vrātya and the Ekavrātya. Is there a difference between them? And if so, what is this difference? Both of them seem to have the role of a demiurge, and both are strictly connected with creation.

³⁴ Cf. Aufrecht (1850: 130): "Er strebte nach der Götterherrschaft"; Whitney (1905: 773): "He compassed the lordship of the gods"; Charpentier (1911: 377): "Er übertraf (*paryāit*) die Herrschaft der Götter"; Griffith (1896: 191): "He gained the lordship of the Gods".

Nonetheless, at the same time, the poet apparently places them at the beginning *and* at the end of the creation process. Therefore, we can assume that the hymn does not merely allude to an evolution of the cosmos, but also to that of the Vrātya that eventually reaches the role of the Ekavrātya³⁵ by re-enacting and actualising the creation process.

4. Conclusion

In an article entitled *Dharma and Mokṣa*, published more than fifty years ago, van Buitenen (1957: 34 f.) states that already in the ṚV “we meet personalities who were evidently outside brahministic sacerdotalism” and recognises them as “remote precursors of the *yogins*, and among them precursors of a Gautama and a Mahāvira”. He stresses the significance of the concept of self-creation in later texts (Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas and early Upaniṣads), and the increasing importance of the original state before creation, pointing out that “[p]robably under some influence from the protoyogic circles, there was a tendency to enact ritually and produce such a reversion, which amounts to complete transcension over man’s created, i.e., embodied, condition”. Van Buitenen (p. 38) believed that the search for trance states lays at the root of *yoga*, and that through a “superstructure of Sāṃkhya-inspired rationalization” is it still possible to see in many kinds of bodily manipulations “the archaic practices of shaman and medicine-man”. Therefore he concludes:

“Sāṃkhya cosmogony was superimposed on the practices, and the *yogin* was thought to repeat in the gradual slackening and ceasing of supposedly hierarchically ordered functions in reverse order the self-creation process of the ultimate in himself and to return through a sequence of self-dissolution to the original state of non-manifestation.”

It goes without saying that the *Vrātyakāṇḍa* does not include all the ascetic practices cited by van Buitenen. Scholars have often nevertheless underlined several details. For instance, in hymns 10–13 the Vrātya (always singular) is praised as a guest (*atithi*) and this can be considered as a confirmation of the ascetic practice of wandering, also attributed to the Brahmacārin. In hymns 15–17 reference is made to the three breaths (15.15.2: *saptā*

³⁵ Candotti and Pontillo (*forthcoming*) have tried to explain the figure of the Ekavrātya also from a historical and social point of view.

prāñāḥ saptāpāñāḥ saptā vyāñāḥ) and at the beginning of the third hymn it is said that the Vrātya stood erect for a whole year (a practice well attested in the texts of the religious traditions of Magadha). However, as I hope to have demonstrated in this article, more than the findings of some precise ascetic practices, it is the search for an esoteric knowledge that can help us single out the particularity of the *vrātya*-ideology.

This knowledge was thought to lead to the attainment of a role of supremacy and pre-eminence, referred to by the poets with the term *jyeṣṭha* and which in the hymns seen above could be equivalent to *śrotṛiya*. This terminology alternately relates to the first and the second entity or creator. The poets describe a gnostic path, through which a man could obtain divine knowledge, that is to say omniscience.³⁶ But in their view, complete knowledge is attainable only with the conquering of the very first moment of creation, since omniscience and omnipotence find their highest expression in the cosmogonic act.

In the introduction, I have mentioned the hypothesis that the pre-Vedic Vrātyas and the religions of Magadha (Jainism and Buddhism) could have a common origin. This point of view is shared by scholars such as Hauer and Bollée. In conclusion, I wish to briefly indicate a resemblance between two ancient stories; a mere reflection on the third hymn of the *Vrātyakāṇḍa*, and a plausible connection with the culture of Magadha, and particularly with Jainism.

AVŚ 15.3.1. *sá saṃvatsarám ūrdhvó 'tiṣṭhat táṃ devá abruvan vrātya kíṃ nú tiṣṭhasṭi //*

He stood erect a year; the gods said to him: Vrātya, why are you standing?

2. *só 'bravid āsandīm me sám bharantv íti //*

He said: Let them together bring a chair for me.

3. *tásmai vrātyāyāsandīm sám abharan //*

For that Vrātya they together brought a chair.

This direct dialogue between the Vrātya and the gods points to the simultaneous presence of man and gods rather than to the presence of a priest who invokes some distant and silent god. Also worth noticing is the fact that the gods give a chair to the Vrātya. Leaving aside the question of the *āsandī* as a ritual object,³⁷ and solely considering what seems to be its immediate function here, namely that of a throne, this particular event can be associated to another story from the *Ācārāṅga Sūtra* 2.15. This narrates Indra's reaction as he became aware of the Mahāvīra's intention to retire from the world:

³⁶ On omniscience and *vrātya*-ideology cf. Dore (*forthcoming*).

³⁷ See Renou (1954: 32) and van Buitenen (1968).

Sakra, the leader and king of the gods, quietly and slowly stopped his vehicle and chariot, quietly and slowly descended from it and went apart. There he underwent a great transformation, and produced by magic a great, beautiful, lovely, fine-shaped divine pavilion, which was ornamented with many designs in precious stones, gold, and pearls. In the middle part of that divine pavilion he produced one great throne of the same description, with a footstool. (19) (tr. Jacobi)

Admittedly, the gift of a throne does not prove anything in itself. However, it is noteworthy that the belief in omniscient persons, not only worshipped as gods but also by the gods, emerges in the religions of Magadha, a region to which the Vṛātyas are explicitly connected (AVŚ 15.2). The mythology of figures like Mahāvīra or King Nami (who is praised by Śakra in Uttarādhyayana Sūtra 9.55–60) could have had their origins in the same cultural *milieu*: probably the same *milieu* from which the concept of *pratyeka-buddha* originated, a concept that Norman (1983: 100–102) has found to be both pre-Buddhist and pre-Jain.

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Four

“Tear down my Sādhana- and Havirdhāna-huts, stow away my Soma-vessels!” – Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa 2,269ff. :
A typical case of cursing in the Veda?¹

Paul F. Schwerda

The Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa (JB 2,269ff.) contains an interesting passage that deals with a case of cursing or black magic. It belongs to the part of the text that discusses the horse sacrifice (aśvamedha). But the story itself is not concerned with the aśvamedha. Instead it describes the conflict between a chieftain named Mauṇḍibha and a brahmin called Yavakrī. The one curses the other and is counter-cursed in return. My aim in this paper is to analyse how their respective curses work and to contrast this episode with the normal curse procedure found in other Vedic texts, especially the Atharvaveda and its ritual sūtras. First we must ask: how does a normal curse work? How do you inflict upon your enemy pain, damage, loss of life? What are the mechanics of black magic?

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The answer to these questions can be found both in the earlier Vedic tradition, namely in the Atharvaveda, as well as in one of the youngest layers of the tradition, namely in the ritual sūtras.

In the texts we find magical spells used to bind, or bury the enemy. Even in non-magical utterances, such as Ṛgvedic hymns, the speaker invokes deities like Indra to help smite adversarial armies, among other things. One example of such invocation is the battle of the ten kings described in ṚV 7,18 and 7,33 where Indra provides crucial support in a desperate battle. Invoked by the seer Vasiṣṭha, he makes a river swell and sweep away the enemies of Vasiṣṭha's chief, thus securing his unlikely victory. Indra is often invoked in battle as the slayer of Vṛtra so that his power may aid the slaying of the foe.²

In the Atharvaveda we find more personal attacks such as spells that make an opponent impotent as well as counter-spells to counter-act such attacks. The text generally abounds in love-spells, healing spells and various other beneficent and harmful magic. In AVŚ 6,138, for example, we find a spell used to make a man impotent. I will cite the first three stanzas:³

tvāṃ vīrúdhāṃ śréṣṭhatamābhiśrutáśy oṣadhe /
 imáṃ me adyá púruṣaṃ klībám opaśínam kṛdhi //1//
 klībám kṛdhy opaśínam átho kurīríṇam kṛdhi /
 áthāsyéndro grāvabhyām ubhé bhinattv āṇḍyaù //2//
 klība klībám tvākaram vādhre vādhrim tvākaram árasārasám tvākaram /
 kurīram asya śīrśāṇi kúmbam cādhinídadhmasi //3//

1. You are renowned, O herb, as the best among the plants; make this man for me impotent (and) the wearer of an opaśa⁴ now!
2. Do make him impotent, the wearer of an opaśa, and make him the wearer of a kurīra; then let Indra with two pressing stones split both his testicles.
3. Impotent one, I have made you impotent; eunuch, I have made you a eunuch; sapless one, I have made you sapless; we set a kurīra and a kumba on your head.

² See Oldenberg 1917, pp. 150ff.

³ Cf. also Bloomfield's translation and especially his comments on this hymn in Bloomfield 1897.

⁴ An opaśa is apparently a kind of hairstyle sported by women, just as kurīra and kumba seem to be a female hairstyle and headdress respectively.

While it begins with such straightforward spells as this example, the Vedic *Opferwissenschaft* gets more complicated and sophisticated over time. It moves away from freely formulated hymns, invocations, and spells towards a highly developed set of fixed rituals which, when performed in the correct way, ensure a successful outcome.

Thus, we encounter an elaborate system of harmful magic in the ritual sūtras of the Atharvaveda that is grounded on something that was originally intended to have a positive outcome. Besides the large number of solemn rites that permeate the year such as the new- and full-moon rituals, the seasonal sacrifices, and so on, there are also optional sacrifices carried out for specific wishes. A yajamāna, i.e. a sacrificer, who wishes for a long life or cattle or the birth of a son can make an offering with one of the so-called *kāmyeṣṭis*⁵ to achieve his goals. These sacrifices are modelled on the new- and full-moon rituals and differ only in details. By adjusting the addressed deities or by using verses in a different metre, the sacrificer can change the meaning of the sacrifice and obtain his wishes.⁶

By manipulating *kāmyeṣṭis*, however, one can harm one's adversary. Thus, instead of sacrificing for one's own long life and health one can just as easily use the ritual to shorten someone else's life. The mechanics behind this are detailed in some passages of the Kauśika Sūtra, for example.⁷ The opposite effect from the original positive rituals is achieved by performing rituals "the other way round", i.e. using the left hand instead of the right, wearing the sacred thread on the right shoulder instead of the left, invoking the god Rudra instead of Indra, etc. etc. To establish a connection with the intended opponent, one gets hold of some of his enemy's hairs or nail clippings. These are then used in the ritual so that the recipient of the ritual's outcome is clear. Another way to establish the recipient's identity is to prepare a clay figurine (*krtyā*)⁸ in the foe's likeness. This effigy is used as a kind of Voodoo doll, as can be seen in the following example from Kauśika Sūtra 39, where the procedures of a counter-spell against such a clay effigy are described:

kr̥tyayāmitracakṣuṣā samīkṣan kṛtavvyadhani_ity avaliptam kṛtyayā
vidhyati /11/
anyatpārśvīm samveśayati /16/
abhyaktā_iti navanītena mantroktam /18/
darbharajjvā samnahya_uttīṣṭhaiva_ity utthāpayati /19/
marmāṇi samprokṣante /28/
kṛṣṇasīreṇa karṣati /29/

⁵ A *kāmyā-iṣṭi* is a ritual for obtaining a specific desire. See Sen 1978, p. 61.

⁶ For a detailed discussion of wish offerings see Caland 1908.

⁷ We find this in *kaṇḍikā* 47. See Caland 1900, pp. 157ff.

⁸ See Caland 1900, pp. 132f.; and Goudriaan 1987.

If there is an effigy, (the Brahman) aims at the place tainted by the effigy with a hostile eye and pierces it uttering the stanza AVŚ 5,14,9. /11/

He puts it on its back. /16/

Uttering the stanza AVŚ 10,1,25, he performs the action with new butter which is described in the mantra (i.e. he anoints the effigy with butter). /18/

Having bound it with a string of darbha-grass he makes it rise while uttering the quarter verse AVŚ 10,1,20c. /19/

They (the Brahman and his assistants ?) sprinkle (water) on the vulnerable spots. /28/

He ploughs (the spot) with a plough (pulled by) black (oxen). /29/

Another way to connect the sacrifice to the opponent is to perform the ritual on the enemy's land. The sacrificial ground is established on the land of the foe. The sacrificer together with the priests proceeds to the sacrificial ground and performs a distorted version of a regular sacrifice. One distortion is that only half of the normal sacrificial ground is established. Again, details are changed, such as there being different wood for the sacrificial posts. Only half the oblation is offered; the other half is discarded; and so on. It is interesting to see that the overall structure of the rituals is kept, but details get modified to ensure both that the rituals are indeed harmful rather than beneficent, and that they actually harm the right person and not the sacrificer. Keeping these strategies and practices of black magic in mind, then, we shall now consider how the curse is carried out in our JB passage.⁹

tena haitena mauṇḍibha udanyur īja udanyūnāṃ rājā. tad dha
yavakriḥ saumastambir āstāvaṃ prati niṣasāda. tasya hāyaṃ pūṣā
rayir bhaga ity etāḥ pratipadaś cakruḥ. sa hovāca chaṃbaṇ me 'sthā¹⁰

⁹ This passage has also been translated (into German) by Caland 1919.

¹⁰ This emendation has been proposed by Gerhard Ehlers (personal communication, April 17, 2014). The edition of 1954 reads chaṃbaṭ māsā which is found in some manuscripts. The correct reading of the curse remains elusive. Caland speculates that one has to read "chambaṇ me sa mauṇḍibho 'pa prāṇān arātsid iti" (Caland 1919, pp. 190ff.). Another option is found in Ehlers 1988, p. 70. He reads "mā ... mauṇḍibhāpa prāṇān rātsir iti". Cf. also the suspiciously similar "chambaṇṇāsā iti" in Maitrāyaṇi Saṃhitā II, 4, 5. Amano 2009, p. 545, translates: "Das [Opfer] da ist nicht vorbei" ("That (sacrifice) is not over"). See also her footnotes 2359 and 2360.

mauṇḍibhāpa prāṇān arātsīr iti. eṣa ha tarhy anuvyāhāra āsa. atha ha mauṇḍibha udanyus trayyai vidyāyai kassavita āsa. sa hovācasamṣṛhata me sadohavirdhāne mṛdā me grahān saṃdihya nidhatta. yarhy ayam brāhmaṇo 'nuvyāhārī martā tarhi yaṣṭāsa iti. tasya ha mṛdā grahān saṃdihya nidadhuḥ. atha ha yavakrīḥ saumastambis tejasvī brahmavarcasy āsa. sa ha sma yām acchābrūte yā ha smainaṃ kāmayate mriyate ha sma. yo ha smainaṃ na kāmayate mriyata u eva. sa ha yajñavacaso rājastambāyanasya jāyām acchoce. sā hekṣām cakre yadi vā enaṃ kāmayaṣye yadi ca na mariṣyaty eva syā. hantainaṃ kāmayaī. brāhmaṇasya cit syā priyaṃ kṛtvā mriyatād iti. taṃ hovācādas tiṣṭha. atha tvābhyeṣyāma iti. /269/

tām hālaṃkurvāṇāṃ rudaṭiṃ patir ājagāma. tām hovāca kim alaṃkuruṣe kiṃ rodiṣīti.

sā hovāca mariṣyasi hīty ātmānam evaitat kṛpaye. yavakrīr vai tyām acchāvocateti. sa hovācājyam ata āharateti. tad dha pavitrābhyām utpūya juhavāṃ cakāra yā no adya trāyāti bhāradvājasya saṃskṛtā preṇim agnipriyām agne tām mahyam ā vaha svāhā iti. tasyai ha tadrūpām evāpsarasam utthāpayām cakāra. tām hovācāsau yavakrīr. tad ihīti.

dvitīyaṃ ha juhavāṃ cakāra. gandharvam ugraṃ balinaṃ aśmaghātinam aṃsalaṃ, bhāradvājasya hantāraṃ viśvajyotiṣam ā vaha svāhā iti. tasyai hāyaḥkūṭahastaṃ gandharvam īrṣyum utthāpayām cakāra. tam hovācāsau te jāyā yavakriyam abhyagāt. tad ihīti. tasyai hāyatyā upatastāra. sā ha ṣiṣmiye. sa hovāca nāha kila te strike smetavyam. atha smayasa iti. kathā hetī. mariṣyasi hīti. sā ha pādāṃ pragṛhṇaty uvāca na khalu tvam puruṣetthampadīm striyaṃ peciṣa iti. lomaśau hāsya adhastāt pādāv āsatuḥ. saṃnipannau vā hāsaṃnipannau vāsatuḥ.

atha hedam evāyaḥkūṭahasto gandharvo 'bhivicakrame. sa hovāca namas te 'stu.

kāsya prāyaścittir iti. /270/

asti vā na veti hovāca. yad eva te kiṃ ca pitu svam tasya sarvasya purā sūryasyodetoś śiraś chinddhi. sā vaiva sā vā neti. sa ha tathā chettum upacakrame. te hocur adṛpad yavakrīr vibadhnāmeti. neti ha pitovāca. deveṣito vai me putraḥ karoti. eṣa eva tad veda yad atra śreya iti. tad

dha badhiro grāme takṣā pratiṣidhyamānaṃ na śuśrāva. tasya ha ghnana pareyāya. sa ha ko nu no janas tṛṇedhīti. sa evāsyā prajaghānety eke. ghnantam evainaṃ sūryo 'bhyudiyāya. tasyodite sa eva gandharvaḥ prajaghānety eke. yathā ha tu mamāra tathāsa. śāsavad dhāsyā sa eva gandharvaḥ prajaghāna. /271/

tad u ha maunḍibho 'nubudhyovāca saṃminuta me sadohavidhāne yājayata mā brāhmaṇāḥ. amṛta ha vai sa brāhmaṇo 'nuvyāhārīti. tasya ha tathā cakruḥ. tad uha saumastambir anubudhyājagāma. sa ha tathaiṅvāstāvaṃ pratiniṣasāda. tasya hāyaṃ pūṣā rayir bhaga ity etā eva pratipadaś cakruḥ. sa hovāca na vai kilāyaṃ rājanyabandhur imaṃ yajñakratuṃ vidāṃ cakāra. na vai kila me 'nenoktena putram avadhīt. etāvad vāva kila tyasya putrasyāyur abhūd iti. taṃ ha tac chaśāpa mariṣyaty ahāyaṃ rājanyabandhuḥ paro ime maunḍibhā bhaviṣyantīti. ta ete parābhūtā gotamā bruvāṇāś caranti. [...] /272/

Maunḍibha Udanyu, chieftain of the Udanyus, sacrificed once with this (horse sacrifice). Yavakrī Saumastambi sat down at the Āstāva (a certain place on the sacrificial ground). They made "ayaṃ pūṣā rayir bhaga"¹¹ the initial verse of the sacrifice. He (Yavakrī) said then: "O Maunḍibha, you have thrown at me in vain. You have missed (my) life-breaths!"¹² This was the curse (anuvyāhāra). But Maunḍibha Udanyu had the threefold knowledge. He said: "Tear down my Sadas- and Havirdhāna (-huts), stow away my (Soma-) vessels after besmearing them with clay! When this cursing brahmin dies I will sacrifice."

They stored his vessels after besmearing them with clay. Yavakrī Saumastambi, however, was powerful and knowledgeable in sacred

¹¹ ṚV 9.101.7a

¹² This translation of the curse is based on the emendation mentioned above. Alternatively, the following emendations have been proposed by Gerhard Ehlers in his new edition which is as yet unfortunately in a preliminary state. The sentence according to Ehlers reads: "sa hovāca cchambaṃ māsthā* maunḍibhāpa prāṇān arātsīr ity." He tentatively translates: "You have thrown at me in vain, o Maunḍibha, you have missed your life-breaths(?)" All of this can only be found online so far at the Frankfurt University-based Thesaurus Indogermanischer Text- und Sprachmaterialien (TITUS): <http://titus.fkidg1.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/etcc/ind/aind/ved/sv/jb/jbx/jbx.htm> (link retrieved 20.10.2013).

knowledge. Whichever woman he called to him and slept with died. But when she did not sleep with him she died (as well). He called for the wife of Yajñavacas Rājastambāyana. She thought to herself: If I sleep with him or if I do not sleep with him I will die (regardless). I want to sleep with him! After gaining the affection of a brahmin I will die.” She told him: “Stay there; I will come to you.” (269)

While she was adorning herself crying (her) husband came to her. He said: “Why do you adorn yourself? Why are you crying?” She said: “I mourn myself because I am going to die. Yavakrī has called for me.” He said: “Bring me therefore ghee!” And he sacrificed after he had purified it (with the utterance): “She who is going to protect us from Bhāradvāja’s offspring, this preṇī (lovely one), Agni’s lover bring hither! Svāhā!” Out of it (the fire) he summoned an apsaras in the same shape (as his wife). He said to her: “That Yavakrī, go there (to him)!”

He sacrificed a second time (with the words): “The gandharva, the mighty, powerful, stone-destroying, strong, Bhāradvāja’s murderer who is light entirely, bring hither! Svāhā!” He summoned a jealous gandharva who was wearing an iron rod in his hand. He told him: “Your wife has gone to Yavakrī; go there!” He (Yavakrī) prepared (the bedding). She smiled. He said: “Woman, you should not smile (and) yet you are smiling.” – Why (not)?” – “Because you will die.”

There she said while showing (him her) foot: “You have never let a woman with such feet become ripe (?), O human.” Her feet were hairy underneath. They were lying together or not (yet) lying together when the gandharva with the iron rod came walking towards him. He (Yavakrī) said: “Greetings to you! What is the expiation for this (deed)?” (270)

“There is one or there is none,” said (the gandharva). “Whatever belongs to your father behead it all till dawn! That is the (expiation) or it is not.” (Yavakrī) started to chop off (the heads). They said: “Yavakrī has gone mad. Let us tie him up!” – “No,” said his father, “my son acts driven by the gods. Only he knows what is the best now.” A deaf woodcutter in the village did not hear the warning. After getting close

to him he hit him. He said: “Which human crushes us?” “He (the woodcutter) has killed him,” some say. Others (say): “The sun came up while he was (still) killing. After dawn the gandharva killed him.” How(ever) he died, thus it happenend. (But) certainly, the gandharva killed him.¹³ (271)

After Maunḍibha heard about it he said: “Erect my Sadas- and Havirdhāna(-huts), assist me, O brahmins! The brahmin who has cursed (me) is dead.” They made it for him in such a way. After Saumastamba (the father of Yavakrī) heard about it he came. He said down at the Āstāva as well. They made “ayaṃ pūṣā rayir bhaga” the initial verse (of the sacrifice). There Saumastamba said: “This kṣatriya (verbatim: this rājanyabandhu) does not know this form of the sacrifice. He did not kill my son with this utterance. My son’s lifespan was (simply) that long.” He cursed him: “This kṣatriya will die. His offspring will live in humiliation.” They live in humiliation and call themselves the Gotamas. [...] (272)

In sum, the JB leaves us in the dark about the cause of Yavakrī’s death. It was either the woodcutter or the gandharva who killed him because he was not finished with the atonement when the sun rose. Whatever the reason, as soon as Maunḍibha hears about Yavakrī’s death he orders his sacrificial huts to be re-erected and performs a sacrifice. But Yavakrī’s father Saumastamba goes to the offering ground as his son did before and informs Maunḍibha that his curse has been without effect, as Yavakrī had simply reached the end of his lifespan and did not die because of anything Maunḍibha did. He states, moreover, that the kṣatriya does not know the right ritual anyway. Now Saumastamba curses Maunḍibha in turn, wishing that he die and that his offspring live in humiliation. The story closes by saying that Maunḍibha’s progeny live in humiliation and are called the Gotamas.

Ignoring the middle part of the story for the moment, we can actually identify three separate curses operating in this passage. Yavakrī curses Maunḍibha, Maunḍibha counter-curses Yavakrī, and Yavakrī’s father curses Maunḍibha. As a probable result of these curses Yavakrī is dead, Maunḍibha might be dead, and his offspring live in debasement. Both Yavakrī’s and his father’s curses follow the pattern we can find in other texts, both Vedic

¹³ See also Witzel 1987, p. 384.

and Classical. It reminds one of the case of the “shattered head” in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads; one example is Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad 3,1–9. This passage is a dialogue between Yājñavalkya and some other sages. Yājñavalkya is asked questions by the others and has to answer them correctly. In two instances he is questioned by Gārgī. When she asks him what the Brahma-world is woven into, Yājñavalkya warns her as follows: “Gārgī, do not overask so that your head does not burst! Really, you ask beyond the deity which is not to be asked beyond. Gārgī do not overask!’ Then Gārgī Vācakovī fell silent.”¹⁴

In most cases this injunction not to overask is only a warning to fellow discussants not to wander beyond the realm of things they understand. It is often used in discussions and there are strategies to avoid the flying-apart of one’s head if one does not know the answer. The way to avoid the shattering of one’s own head is either admitting defeat and becoming the disciple of the one with superior knowledge or just remaining silent. If, however, one should overask, one will certainly die. Most of the time it remains just a warning. But in the case of the challenger Vidagdha Śakalya, he actually dies as a result of a verbal dispute.¹⁵

These curses are also in line with the reactions of angered ṛṣis we find time and again in Classical texts such as Śakuntalā, where the seer Durvāsa is enraged by Śakuntalā’s neglectful greeting and curses her to be forgotten by her beloved.

Remarkably, the outcome in these cases does not seem to depend on any kind of ritual – no Atharvavedic spell is used, no kāmyeṣṭi performed – but rather on the superior sacred knowledge of the curser, although this is only hinted at and not spelled out in the JB passage. One clue, however, that the outcome of the curse depends on sacred knowledge is the assertion of Yavakrī’s father that Mauṇḍibha as a kṣatriya does not know the right ritual. And Mauṇḍibha’s curse, in contrast, is rather remarkable. Instead of performing a ritual or sacrifice, he just stops sacrificing altogether. I am unable to find this kind of behaviour in any other Vedic text. Mauṇḍibha’s behaviour is certainly not the expected conduct when cursing or counter-cursing an opponent. The mechanics behind it remain unclear. We can speculate that the ceasing of all rituals is meant as an incentive to the gods to do what the sacrificer, or rather the non-sacrificer in this case, asks them to do, so that, when the deed is done and the rituals are resumed, the gods can again partake of sacrificial offerings. This strategy, however, is the opposite of standard Vedic behaviour wherein one asks the gods for a favour (in earlier Vedic times), or expects the gods to react in a certain way after they have received the offerings (in later Vedic times).¹⁶ But one does not

¹⁴ Witzel 1987: p. 363

¹⁵ See Witzel 1987: pp. 377ff.

¹⁶ See Oldenberg 1919 for the change in attitudes towards the god during the Vedic period.

pressure them or blackmail them by withholding offerings. This is certainly not a wise strategy because the gods may be angered and wreak havoc on the life of one who behaves in such a way. Even gods such as Varuṇa, though they are no longer nearly as important or powerful as in R̥gvedic times, are able to inflict people with illnesses. Famous examples include R̥gveda hymns to Varuṇa in the seventh Maṇḍala such as 7,86 and 7,88. In these hymns, the seer Vasiṣṭha asks forgiveness for his sins. Apparently, he is affected with dropsy, the illness associated with Varuṇa, because of a sin he does not even remember having committed. So, he asks both what he has done to anger the god and how he can atone for it. Another case of a possibly harmful god is Rudra, who is often asked to spare family, tribe, and cattle from plagues. He is feared so much that one does not make offerings to him in the normal way. He is excluded from the Soma-ritual and is instead paid off by a verse addressed to him – a verse which carefully avoids the usual “come hither!”.¹⁷ Punishment by angered gods and the danger of the gods favouring someone else are good reasons not to skip or cease any sacrificial activity. Thus, Maunḍibha’s action seems to be all the more misguided, and I tend to agree with Saumastamba’s assessment that Maunḍibha’s curse did not work and that Yavakrī did actually die for other reasons. But for what reason, then, is the story included in the JB?

We can, again, only speculate about the reasons. Normally, stories are included in Brāhmaṇas – at least in the Jaiminiya and the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa – because they help to explain why a certain form of ritual or sāman, melody, worked. They present cases in the past where someone was successful because of the discussed ritual. One of the standard examples is Prajāpati, who desires something such as offspring; he sees such and such a ritual, brings it here, and uses it to make offerings. Thus, Prajāpati obtains his desired outcome – say, offspring; and by performing the same ritual, another sacrificer can obtain offspring, too.

This kind of connection cannot be found in our JB passage. Clearly, there is no allusion to the aśvamedha – the ritual being discussed in this section of the JB – in the story. Nothing going on here has anything to do with the ritual. The only mention of it is the statement of the fact that Maunḍibha Udanyu had at some point carried out an aśvamedha. Maybe he was remembered as a chieftain who had carried out the aśvamedha in the past and he became connected with the story of Yavakrī. There seems to be no clear motivation for the story to be included in the discussion of the horse sacrifice – the rest of which, furthermore, is hard to understand. My best guess, therefore, is that the simple fact that Maunḍibha has performed an aśvamedha was enough for the composer of the JB to include

¹⁷ See Oldenberg 1917, pp. 215ff.

his otherwise unrelated story here. It remains now to discuss the question of the story's function. Since I have not found a ritualistic reason for its inclusion here, I would like to offer a different interpretation.

Once we disregard the discussion of ritual, there is another picture emerging in this passage. I assume that what is happening here is a power-play between the two classes of brahmins and *kṣatriyas*. Although the middle part of the story about Yavakrī's actual death is distracting, the underlying idea seems to me to be a trial of strength between a brahmin and a chieftain. Much about the first curse uttered by Yavakrī against Mauṇḍibha remains unclear. The content is sketchy, while the reason he says what he says is never stated. The counter-curse by Mauṇḍibha in which he wishes for Yavakrī's death is, by contrast, very clear. I hope to have shown that his actions are unusual, to say the least, and that, although Yavakrī died, Mauṇḍibha's curse was not the reason for his demise. It is rather the last execration by Saumastamba that actually works, for Mauṇḍibha's offspring live in humiliation. This seems to be the only curse for which the JB concedes an impact or effect. Saumastamba's statement that Mauṇḍibha is a *kṣatriya* who does not know the correct ritual corroborates the hypothesis that this story is about the affirmation of the superior position of brahmins. Because they have better knowledge of the correct performance of certain rituals, brahmins are superior to *kṣatriyas*. While *kṣatriyas* might try to use rituals and sacrifices to harm their opponents, it is only brahmins versed in sacred knowledge that are actually capable of doing this. It is an opportunity to prove their indispensability and, in my opinion, one of the many instances where brahmin superiority is asserted. Following this interpretation, the position of this rebuke of *kṣatriyas* in the text becomes very significant. The *aśvamedha*, the horse sacrifice, is used by chieftains to establish sovereignty over other chieftains. It is one of the few rituals that furthers and symbolises the might and power of a ruling *kṣatriya*. It is the highest religious manifestation of worldly power.¹⁸ But we have to keep in mind that a *Brāhamaṇa* is primarily a comment on the rituals composed by brahmins for brahmins. In an attempt to assert their superiority over mundane power, they undermine a chieftain and his knowledge in the discussion of the ritual that should make him more powerful. There are probably few places where such a strategy would be as well placed as here, right in this section. It also reminds us of other attempts by brahmins to assert themselves over worldly might. The most striking example of which is the *rājasūya*, the consecration of the chieftain.¹⁹ During the consecration the chief is beaten with wooden sticks on his back by the officiating priests.²⁰ It is explained

¹⁸ Oldenberg 1917: pp. 470f.

¹⁹ See Weber 1893 for a full account of the ritual.

²⁰ Weber 1893, pp. 63f.

that this procedure shall ensure that the chieftain cannot be beaten by his enemies in the future. But the act itself remains remarkable: the highest ranking kṣatriya is physically beaten by members of the priestly class who usually use other means of claiming the first rank in society.

To fully comprehend the story in the Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa 2,269ff., it is therefore of vital importance to pay attention not only to the ritualistic aspects of the text but also its societal background.

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Five

A New Reading Of The *Meghadūta*¹

A. Ruiz-Falqués

1. Purpose of this paper

In this paper I suggest a new reading of Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta* (MD) as a literary work. I do not intend to clarify its meaning through a new or better philological analysis leading us towards a different translation. In fact, translations of the MD are generally unproblematic, and they do not differ very much when they follow the same edition. Mallinātha's edition has been favoured by scholars since Wilson's pioneering translation. In recent times Vallabhadeva's edition, allegedly the oldest (10th century A.D.), seems to be the standard for translators.

The problem with the MD, I claim, does not lie in the translations, but in the general interpretations of the poem. My aim here is to show how some of these interpretations are not even based on the text or its translations. These interpretations belong to the sphere of literary criticism, not to the sphere of philology. Therefore, I will not resort to philological arguments if it is not necessary.

The novelty of my reading is not that I offer a revolutionary interpretation of the poem. Rather, I try to give some aspects of the poem the relevance that, I think, they deserve.

2. A missed message

A commonplace view regarding the MD is that it is a poem where a banished *yakṣa* (a demigod, and servant of the god Kubera) sends a message to his wife by means of a cloud.²

¹ I would like to sincerely thank Robert Leach for his helpful suggestions and corrections, both in form and content.

This idea about the poem is baseless. It is true that a *yakṣa* wants to send a message, but we do not see, in the poem, how the message is conveyed. We rather should suspect that it will never arrive. Kālidāsa himself tells us, in verse 5, that a cloud cannot convey messages:

*A cloud is a conglomeration
of vapour, light, water and wind,
and messages must be conveyed
by living beings with keen faculties.*³

This seems to indicate that no message will ever reach the city of Alakā – the capital city where the *yakṣas* live, the destination of the cloud. If Kālidāsa makes this remark at the very beginning, I believe, it is because this information is capital, and it affects the whole poem.

The MD consists of approximately 110–120 stanzas (depending on the edition). The first 5 stanzas contain the words of the narrator (should we say Kālidāsa?). These stanzas constitute a sort of introduction. The rest of the poem, from stanza 6 onwards (independently of the edition) consists of the *yakṣa*'s words. The poem, therefore, can be read more or less as a monologue. The famous message (*saṃdeśa*) appears in indirect speech. It is found only at the end of the work, and it consists of 14 stanzas (96–109 in Vallabhadeva's edition). The largest part of the monologue, as is well known, is an itinerary from the mount Rāmagīri, in the Vindhya Range, to the mythical city of Alakā, in the Himālaya. Some have attempted to draw the map of this journey. I believe, with Nathan,⁴ that this idealised geography must not be taken literally, and therefore the possibility of reading the poem as a map should be excluded.

We should keep in mind that verse 5 extends its shadow throughout the poem. At the end of the monologue, the *yakṣa* addresses his last words to the cloud. We may have forgotten that he is talking to an insentient being. In that case, it is our fault, not the fault of Kālidāsa. But I suspect Kālidāsa wants us to be absorbed in the state of mind of the *yakṣa*.

² This is the paradigm of *Megadhūta*'s theme, see Ruben, 1956: 9: "Kālidāsa lässt in diesem Gedicht einen aus der Geisterwelt verbannten Geist durch eine Wolke eine Nachricht an seine Geliebte in der Heimat überbringen".

³ All quotations from the MD are from Mallinson's translation (see Bibliography).

⁴ See Nathan, 1976: 2: "[T]he *Yakṣa* describes for the cloud its appropriate northward itinerary, and in so doing maps out a country permeated with the lore and legend that summon up many of the deepest values of Indian life". However, I think we should take into consideration the fact that this itinerary represents the conquered land of the Gupta Empire.

At the end of the poem the reader (the audience) probably believes, with the *yakṣa*, that the cloud is going to perform his “duty”:

*I hope, kind sir, that you have decided
to carry out this task for me, your friend.
In no way do I consider your silence a refusal:
when asked, you give water to the chātaka birds without a
word,
for the good answer supplicants by doing what they want.*

The *yakṣa* believes that the cloud is his friend, a good friend who will do a favour to him, “whether through friendship / or pity for me” (v. 111). The reader may easily become credulous. But in the aforementioned verse 5, Kālidāsa has already told us that this *yakṣa* is not in control of his senses:

*Ignoring, in his enthusiasm, this incongruity,
the yakṣa made a request to the cloud –
those consumed by love
petition the sentient and the dumb
indiscriminately.*

Anxiety (*autsukya*) is what precludes the *yakṣa* from recognising the cloud as an insentient (*acetana*) being.

The commentators Vallabhadeva and Mallinātha, and all the translations that follow these two editions, have no doubt about the meaning of this stanza.

A passage from Bhāmaha’s *Kavyālaṅkāra* (5th–6th century CE?) possibly refers to this stanza when it says:

*ayuktimad yathā dūtā jalabhṛṇmārutendavaḥ
tathā bhramarahārītacakravākaśukādayaḥ //
avāco’vyaktavācakaś ca dūradeśavicāriṇaḥ
kathaṃ dūtyaṃ prapadyerann iti yuktyā na yujyate //
yadi cotkaṅṭhayaḥ yat tad unmatta iva bhāṣate
tathā bhavatu bhūmnedam sumedhobhiḥ prayujyate//*

The employment, as messengers, of Clouds, Winds, the Moon; also the Bee, *Hāritā* (a bird of that name), *Cakravāka* (bird) or the parrot is the *Doṣa* known as “*Ayuktimat*.”

Those that cannot speak and those that are of indistinct utterance – how can these, going to distant places, perform their function as messengers? Such descriptions do not fit in with reason.

If these are addressed by one from an excess of longing, as if he were mad, – be it so. This resort is generally used by intelligent [poets].⁵

Some scholars understand this passage as suggesting the existence of a genre of messenger poems before or at the time of Kālidāsa (“though no examples seem to have survived from that period except his”).⁶ Since we do not have any other instance of this genre before the MD, and the date of Bhāmaha is not settled (he was perhaps a contemporary of Daṇḍin, 6th-7th century CE?), I think we should not exclude the possibility that the MD was the first *saṃdeśa* poem, whose precedents are simply episodes where animals or insentient beings function as messengers.

The difference between these stories and the MD is precisely that, according to Bhāmaha’s parameters, Kālidāsa is realistic. That is why we cannot compare the message sent by Hanuman to Sītā in the *Rāmāyaṇa* with the message of the *yakṣa* in the *Meghadūta*.⁷ Of course, as Singh has clearly shown in his monographic study on Kālidāsa, the poet’s sources are old, and no one would believe that Kālidāsa is inventing the *saṃdeśa* theme. But the cloud of Kālidāsa, unlike the ape of Vālmīki, does not really talk. It is a normal cloud, an insentient being, and Kālidāsa never portrays him as talking – only the folly of the *yakṣa* does.

Summing up the first point, the MD tells the story of a message that will never reach its destination.

⁵ *Kāvyālaṅkāra*, I.42–44. Trans. Naganatha Sastry, except the last line, which does not make much sense in Sastry’s translation, so I have translated it myself.

⁶ See Warder 1977: 145.

⁷ Bhāmaha’s remark is intentionally devastating because it implies that the *Rāmāyaṇa* (the *ādikāvya*!) is flawed. Bhāmaha was a Buddhist. *Brāhmaṇa* commentators, like Pūrṇasārasvatī in his *Vidyullatā* “Creeper of lightning”, will try to demonstrate, on the contrary, that the MD is a tribute to the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

3. Absence of the Romantic idea of Nature in India

If you are asking about “ecology” (a modern concept) you’re not asking about the spirits of deceased ancestors inhabiting the trees (are you?).

Eisel Mazard, *Vegetarianism and Theravāda Orthodoxy*⁸

In ancient Indian literature we do not meet with the idea of Nature. This idea is a Western construction. Consider, for instance, the dichotomy Natural Science (*Naturwissenschaft*) vs. Cultural Science (*Kulturwissenschaft*, today we call it Social Sciences).⁹ When I say that the idea of Nature does not exist in India I mean, specifically, the Romantic idea of Nature: the world untouched (and unpolluted) by human activities. It often boils down to what we would call natural landscape and wild life, the favourite theme of Romantic poets. This idea of Nature is part of the foundations of modern ecology as well. But, however many modern literary critics have praised the description of Nature by Indian poets, I think our idea of Nature does not apply to ancient Indian literary parameters. One will never find, in the list of elements required in a *kāvya*, the category “description of nature”. What we may find is “description of war”, “description of an embassy”, “description of the seasons”, “description of the rivers”, etc. They are all at the same poetical level. For some reason (probably because modern literary criticism is influenced by Romanticism) we often find praise of Kālidāsa for his descriptions of “nature”, and never for his descriptions (let’s say) of buildings.

If we look up the word *nature* in Apte’s English-Sanskrit dictionary, the result is the following:

Nature, s. : sṛṣṭi f. jagat n., bhūmaṇḍalaṃ, viśvaṃ, brahmāṇḍaṃ, sargaḥ. / 2. mārgaḥ, rīti f., kramaḥ, vidhiḥ, niyamaḥ, dharmāḥ, sṛṣṭikramaḥ. / 3 prakṛti f., māyā, śakti f. nirmātrī devatā, ādiśaktiḥ – māyā, pradhānaṃ (according to Sāṅkhyas). / 4 prakāraḥ, rūpaṃ, jāti f.,

⁸ <http://a-bas-le-ciel.overblog.com/2012/06/vegetarianism-and-theravada-orthodoxy.html> (accessed 7/11/2013).

⁹ This division was established in the 19th Century by German philosophers and scientists such as Gustav Ricker. Western ideas of Nature vary, but they all mainly derive from Aristotelian philosophy (see Aristotle’s *Physics*, *Metaphysics*).

rītiḥ, vidhā, in comp. / 5 bhāvaḥ, prakṛtiḥ, svabhāvaḥ, nisargaḥ, dharmaḥ, tattvaṃ, sattvaṃ, guṇaḥ, prakṛti-nisarga-jāti-svabhāva-saṃsiddhi f., svarūpaṃ, svadharmāḥ, śīlaṃ. / 6 svabhāva or prakṛti-guṇaḥ or dharmāḥ, etc.

None of these Sanskrit words reflects the Romantic idea of Nature. And yet, it is hardly possible to find literary critics of the MD who can praise the poem without resorting to this idea. The following is a paradigmatic example:

The *Meghadūta* is a living picture of natural beauty, presenting a love romance of the newly married couple on the dream-land of fancy.¹⁰

Even Mallinson's introduction to his *Messenger Poems* cannot do without it:

The theme of *viraha* is reinforced by allusions to desires found in the natural world.¹¹

I think it is misleading to use the word *nature* (with or without a capital N) in the context of the MD, and probably in other *kāvya* works as well. As I have said before, the major part of the poem is the monologue of a deranged man. It is to be expected that such a man will speak in a way that we could probably call irrational (*ayuktimat*, Bhāmaha). In other words, we do not necessarily need to see the descriptions given by this man as a faithful portrait of the real world. The MD is mainly a monologue of a crazy lover, it is an hallucination, and therefore it is no wonder that all things are mixed together and what we call "the natural world", that is, mountains, rivers, trees, birds, and so on, are personified.

It is impossible, indeed, to establish a clear-cut boundary that distinguishes Nature from what is not Nature in the MD. Vallabhadeva, for instance, gives *upavana* "forest" as a synonym of *udyāna* "garden" (comm. ad MD 7).

But what do critics mean when they talk about "nature" in the MD? If what they mean is Nature as opposed to Man (the realm of Nature vs. the realm of Man), then we know that in India, the idea of what is human (*pauruṣeya*) is not a negation of what we call Nature, but a negation of what we call non-human (*apauruṣeya*), for instance: the Veda. And the Divine, indeed, is a prominent aspect of the MD, to the extent that there are some stanzas where it is impossible to draw a line between what we would probably call Nature and Divinity:

¹⁰ See Singh, 1979:4.

¹¹ See Mallinson, 2006:16.

When I manage to find you
 in the visions of my dreams
 and stretch out my arms into space
 in the hope of a tight embrace,
 it is from none other than the watching earth-spirits
 that teardrops as big as pearls
 rain down on the trees' sprouting leaves.¹²

Three spheres: Human, Natural and Divine, are intertwined. Moreover we have to take into consideration that the hero of the poem is a *yakṣa*, a *devayoni* or “demigod”. Would we consider him part of Nature? What we could see as three different spheres of reality becomes one single sphere in the mental projection of the *yakṣa*'s desire.

With this I do not want to enter into a discussion on the reality of this projected world. I think it is clear that Kālidāsa, in the first five stanzas, has portrayed the *yakṣa* as a crazy lover. The relevant distinction of realms is given, again, in verse 5: *cetana* vs. *acetana*: the realm of the conscious and the realm of the unconscious. The *yakṣa* does not distinguish between them.

Winding up, if we apply the Romantic idea of Nature to the interpretation or literary evaluation of the MD, we will surely miss an essential point of the poem, namely the fact that a lovesick person sees him-/herself in the *acetana* world, and therefore the *acetana* world becomes a mirror for the mad. This explains why the cloud falls in love with the rivers, etc. It is not Kālidāsa's intention to offer a beautiful description of nature in the Romantic sense. Obviously, the poet wants to offer beautiful descriptions of what we call “nature”, but also of other realities that we do not call “nature”: women, gods, cities, agriculture, etc.¹³

¹² MD 104. Here, even if we adopt Nathan's (1976: 2) interpretation of “landscape” in order to avoid the word “Nature”, we are still stuck with Western concepts. As far as I know, there is no word (no concept) for “landscape” in Sanskrit (it does not figure in Apte's English-Sanskrit Dictionary, at least).

¹³ Even Kāle (1969: xv) struggles with this evidence: “This deep insight into the heart of Nature is fused so wonderfully with his profound knowledge of the human heart that it is impossible to see in his poetry where the poet of Nature ceases and the poet of human emotion begins”. Of course, it is impossible, because there is no such division, and Kālidāsa must not be judged by these (Western) parameters. And again, if one prefers to use the concept “landscape”, he should remember that gods, for instance, are not part of any “landscape”.

4. The *Meghadūta* as an innovation

In his work *Kālidāsa: A Critical Study*, Singh has shown how the messenger theme is very much recurrent in Indian Literature. For instance, in *R̥gveda* X 108, Indra sends a bitch with a message to the Paṇis. In *Rāmāyaṇa* IV.44 Rāma sends a message to Sītā through Hanuman. In *Mahābhārata* III.45 a royal goose conveys a love message between Nala and Damayantī.¹⁴ There is no doubt that the messenger theme is older than Kālidāsa. However, the MD seems to set a new model for the *saṃdeśa* theme, because all the *saṃdeśa* poems after Kālidāsa consciously follow, or play on, the same model, the MD. This model has been so influential that we cannot but look into earlier versions of the theme through the lens of the MD. This has prevented some critics from seeing the great originality of the MD, but other critics, perhaps more sensitive in literary matters, have noticed it. Pollock, for instance, says:

The *Meghadūta* stands virtually alone in the classical literature as an example of the narrative lyric poem. Though its theme is an old one, and Kālidāsa's treatment of it wholly traditional, in point of structure the work is quite innovative. It is one of those rare Sanskrit poems which are of a piece, where we can perceive attention to the design of the work as a whole, something usually sacrificed to attention to detail.¹⁵

And even if innovation is found only in the treatment of the theme¹⁶, I do not think that Kālidāsa blindly follows his sources. As I will now show, I think the MD follows no specific tradition, but it creates one.

The innovation in Kālidāsa lies not in using an “inanimate object” (as Singh claims),¹⁷ but in that he sticks to literary realism (which is not to say that he lacks imagination). I have already pointed out how, according to Bhāmaha, it does not make any difference if the messenger is a sentient being or not, as long as the messenger is incapable of conveying intelligible messages. In terms of realism, then, a monkey is as unfit as a cloud in the task of conveying a message. In earlier poets, the messengers did actually convey the

¹⁴ See Singh, 1977: 77.

¹⁵ See Pollock, 1978: 562.

¹⁶ Pollock seems to follow his teacher, Ingalls, in this idea of innovation through conservatism; cf. Ingalls' *Kālidāsa and the attitudes of the Golden Age*.

¹⁷ See Singh, 1977: 77.

message. In the MD, on the contrary, the message will never be conveyed. This difference transforms the MD from implausible (*ayuktimat*) to plausible (*yuktimat*), and hence the praise of Bhāmaha. Our oldest commentator, Vallabha, points out the trick of Kālidāsa to avoid a poetic flaw: *na hi te [kāmāntā] viṣayam aviṣayam vā vivektuṃ samarthā iti bhaṅgyā kaviḥ svadoṣaṃ nirasyati* “with this pretext, namely that the lovesick people cannot distinguish between proper and improper object, the poet eludes his own fault”.¹⁸

The MD is also innovative in the metre. The verse used throughout the poem is the *mandākrāntā*. Nathan says that “the *mandākrāntā*” is “a fixed pattern of short and long syllables that critics have found especially suited to the subject of the poem, as other patterns are suited to other subjects”.¹⁹ It may be suited to the subject of the poem, but what is, after all, the “subject of the poem”? Nathan gives it for granted – and thus his argument remains incomplete.

If we want to understand the relationship between the subject of the poem and the metre we have to look somewhere else. According to Kāle (whose edition is the most widespread version of the MD): “The metre throughout is *Mandākrāntā* or the Slow-mover which is well-suited to the serenity of its theme”. This is, I venture to say, a gloss on Mallinātha’s lines:

*atra kāvyē sarvatra mandākrāntā vṛttam. taduktam ‘mandākrāntā
jaladhīṣaḍaḡairmbhau natau tād-guru cet²⁰ iti.*

In this *kāvya* the *mandākrāntā* metre is used throughout. That is defined (*uktaṃ*): ‘it is [called] *mandākrāntā* if (*cet*) it consists of four (*jaladhi*) + six (*ṣaḍ*) + seven (*aga*) syllables, being: - - / - u u (*mbhau* = *ma-bha*); u u u, - - u (*na-tau*); - - u, - - (*tād-gurū* = two heavies after *ta*).

But Kāle’s explanation is problematic, because it is self-evident that the *rasa* of the MD is anything but “serenity”. Therefore, if the metre is suited to the theme, then the metre should express longing, suffering, madness or whatever state of mind can be attributed to a lovesick *yakṣa*. This seems to be a fitting mood for the *mandākrāntā*. The line is a cycle of three phases, in contrast with each other:

¹⁸ See Hultzsich, 1911: 5.

¹⁹ See Nathan, 1976: 5.

²⁰ The definition of the verse is a quotation from the *Vṛttaratnākara* by Kedārabhaṭṭa. In my translation I follow the edition and commentary of Lakṣmaṇadāsa edition, 1942 (see Bibliography).

---- / UUUU - / -U--U--

Slow, fast, waving. It is not always slow; therefore the word *manda* should stand not for “slow” but for “dull, faint, languid”.²¹ This roller coaster metre does not seem fit to represent a state of mental balance, but rather its opposite.

If that is true, the MD is not only the first *saṃdeśa* “messenger” poem extant (for there is no real evidence of predecessors), but also the first poem (extant) which uses only the *mandākrāntā*. This is, I think, an innovation, because everyone would have expected a *khaṇḍakāvya* in *śloka* or *triṣṭubh*, as used in earlier *saṃdeśa* “scenes”. We should not discard the possibility of Kālidāsa borrowing a dramatic metre and using it in lyric poetry, perhaps for the first time.

In any case, tradition regards Kālidāsa as the creator of this metre.²² Among his followers, most of them used the same metre (for instance: Dhoyi uses it, although Rūpa Gosvāmin does not).

A third aspect which needs to be highlighted is the fact that there is no ending or closure in the poem. A powerful ambiguity has been left at the end so that the audience does not know with certainty if the cloud is going to convey the message or not. As we have already said, Kālidāsa makes the clear point that it is impossible. However, the poem is so full of rhetorical devices that we also intuitively understand that the thundering of the cloud are its words, its mere appearance is the message. In other words, what the *yakṣa* does (from a realistic standpoint) is to recognise the cloud as a messenger. The rain cloud “tells” that the rainy season has arrived, which can be translated, in the MD context, as “the curse of Kubera is approaching its end”. This is actually a message of relief. Even if the cloud is not able to bring verbal messages, Kālidāsa has chosen a cloud, and not the wind, or a monkey, or a bird, because in this particular context the cloud represents itself the message saying that the monsoon has come. Kālidāsa then puts us at a higher level: in the first level, we believe that the cloud will convey the message (this is a commonplace naive interpretation), in the second level we know that this is impossible because the cloud cannot convey messages, but in the third level we know that, even if the cloud will not talk, his mere presence in front of the beloved *yakṣiṇī* will be like a message of relief.

There is yet another aspect I would like to stress, and that could be a fourth level. This fourth level is rather pessimistic – there is always a balance between the presentation of good and bad omens in the *Meghadūta*: it is never sure, after all, that the *yakṣiṇī* will be

²¹ See MW, s.v. *manda*.

²² Deo, 2007: 37.

there to listen to the message. The *yakṣa* shows clear signs of anxiety in this respect, and he is not completely sure that his wife will be loyal:

*Now that you have learned
from this token of remembrance
that I am well,
don't let idle talk
make you distrustful of me,
o dark-eyed girl.*²³

The *yakṣa* has previously imagined his wife in a miserable state due to separation. But this is only his imagination: she could be doing pretty well, actually. This side of the story we totally ignore. We never see the actual wife. We, the audience, only imagine her through the imagination of the *yakṣa*. And if the *yakṣa* is confident that his wife is loyal, it is also true that he wants to send a message in order to reassure her belief that the reencounter is near. The possibility remains, indeed, that she might have died, or have broken down, or that she has listened to too much gossip and has forgotten her lover and happily married another *yakṣa*.

Although these last points are obvious and I think are implicit in many interpretations of the MD, it is necessary to stress them, because they have to be understood against the trenchant realism (or even scepticism) we find in the five introductory verses. This realism is also challenged by the very fact that the main character is not a hero, but an anti-hero, an out-law, a cursed *yakṣa* – I do not want to say, however, that a *yakṣa* is a fantastic or mythological being, because the audience may believe that *yakṣas* exist.

To sum up, the MD is innovative in a) its metre and b) in the realistic treatment of the *saṃdeśa* theme.

²³ MD 109.

5. The meaning of *kelikāvya* in Vallabhadeva's commentary

The true nature of their art is hinted at in the origin myth itself (*Nāṭyaśāstra* I.11), when the gods ask Brahmā for something that is playful or pleasant *kriḍānīyaka* as their 'fifth *veda*'.

A. K. Warder, *Indian Kāvya Literature*²⁴

The whole discussion about the way we should read the *Meghadūta* is directly related its literary genre. It is not easy to define the genre to which the MD pertains. As a matter of fact, this question has never been conclusively answered.

The oldest extant commentary on the MD is Vallabhadeva's *Pañcikā* (Kashmir, 10th century A.D.). In Hultzsch's edition (1911: 1) we find a passage (which might as well be an interpolation) where a literary genre or label for the MD is proposed:

*atha yad etad bhavān vyācaṣṭe kim etad. ucyate: mantradūtaprayāñādyabhavān mahākāvyaṃ api khaṇḍakāvyaṃ na bhavati. tathākhyāyikāvyaṃ padeśas tu dūrāpeta evātra. prāvṛḍāśrayaḥ pravāsaviḥpralambhaḥ kaver varṇayitum iṣṭo 'tra. sa ca nāyakaṃ anāśrītya varṇyamānas tathā rasavattāṃ na dhārayati. na ca śṛṅgāraavidhānam. guhyako 'tra nāyakatayāśritaḥ. tasya ca virahonmattatvād dūtye meghaprerāṇam api nāyuktam iti kelikāvyaṃ ity etad sarvaṃ svastham.*²⁵

Now, this passage has been interpreted in two different ways. According to Ambardekar, Vallabha considers the MD as a *khaṇḍakāvya* ("minor poem" or "lyric poem") of the *kelikāvya* ("playful poem") type. Gary Tubb, on the contrary, offers what I consider a more plausible translation of the first line: "by replying to the question of what the poem is with the statement that because it omits the standard topoi it is neither a *mahākāvya* ("great poem") nor a *khaṇḍakāvya* (...) Vallabha goes on to explain that the poet's purpose in the *Meghadūta* was to present the mood of love-in-separation due to being away during the rainy season, and that the choice of protagonist and the employment of the action of sending a cloud as messenger are proper because the poem is actually a *kelikāvya* ("playful

²⁴ See Warder, 1972: 15.

²⁵ See Hultzsch, 1911: 1.

poem”?, “amusement poem”?); Vallabha gives no explanation of what this term means or what the general characteristics of such a poem should be.”

These two interpretations are incompatible. In my “new reading” of the text, I follow the path treaded by Tubb. It does not make sense that Vallabha determines the genre *khaṇḍakāvya* and afterwards discards the *ākhyāyikā* (“narrative”) genre as well. I think it is clear that Vallabha also discards *mahākāvya* and *khaṇḍakāvya*, because the MD does not fulfill the characteristics of either genre. Then one could say it is an *ākhyāyika*, for the simple reason that there seems to be a monologue. But that is not correct (“considering it an *ākhyāyikā* is out of question”) according to Vallabha – and here I add my own translation of Vallabha’s passage – because “since he [Kālidāsa] narrates independently of the hero (*nāyaka*) there is no display of *rasa* (*rasavattām na dhārayati*).” This is very important and it is actually an obvious fact when we read the poem. The *yakṣa* is the one who talks, but he does not talk about himself, and therefore: 1) It cannot be an *ākhyāyikā*, and 2) In the absence of a *nāyaka*, the classical *rasa* mechanisms do not operate.

To the best of my knowledge, no one has ever noticed these implications before – either because they interpreted the whole passage wrongly (Ambardekar et. al.) or because they were focusing on other aspects (Tubb).

Now, if it is not a *mahākāvya* or a *khaṇḍakāvya*, and nor is it an *ākhyāyikā*, then what is it? Vallabha argues:

Furthermore, we do not find explicit love scenes (*śṛṅgāra**vidhāna*) either [i.e. it is not an erotic poem]. Here [in this particular poem] the *yakṣa* (= *guhya**ka*) functions as a hero. And because of his madness produced by separation [from his wife], it is not irrational (*na ayuktam*) that he urges a cloud to send a message. That is why (iti) it is all well if we call this poem a “jocular poem” (*kelikāvya*).²⁶

I have underlined the words that back up my argument. This is, of course, my interpretation of the passage, which can be supported with a number of playful scenes throughout the poem. My reading is not far away from Tubb’s suggestion of translating literally *kelikāvya* as “playful poem” or “amusement poem”.

Having said this, I am forced now to examine another powerful interpretation of the concept *kelikāvya* in Vallabha, namely Wezler’s argument, which I prefer to summarise in his own words:

²⁶ My translation.

keli is demonstrably (...) a term used to denote a particular phase in the development of love for another person, viz. that characterized by a constant dwelling of one's imagination on the beloved, the imaginative "play" with her or him; and this term is used by Vallabhadeva here, by a slight extension, to denote the very similar state of mind and emotions of the Yakṣa separated from his wife.²⁷

Wezler's argument is strong because it is based on a number of sources defining *keli* as one of the eight stages of a love relationship. He rightly points out that we find a definition of *keli* in Viśvanātha's *Sahityadarpaṇa* (3.131):

vihāre saha kāntena krīḍitaṃ kelir ucyate

Translated by Ballantyne (1875) as "playing when walking about with one's lover is called 'Sportiveness'." But *vihāra* seems to mean "(coquetish) playful behaviour [in sex], sexual sportiveness."²⁸ Wezler claims that *keli* has to do with one of the stages in sexual relationships, during the foreplay and when there is no eye contact yet (absence of eye contact is crucial in Wezler's argument). And since his argument is philologically sound, I think it is a matter of personal taste to accept it or to dismiss it – in other words, there is nothing in Vallabha's commentary that verifies or refutes Wezler's interpretation.

In my opinion, however, Wezler's argument fails to explain why Vallabhadeva (or Pseudo-Vallabhadeva) gives *kelikāvya* as a substitute for terms like *mahākāvya*, *khaṇḍakāvya* or *ākhyāyikā*, terms referring, all of them, to literary genres. Wezler's rendering of *kelikāvya* as "a particular phase in the development of love" does not answer the question "what

²⁷ See Wezler, 1998: xii. A developed explanation of this hypothesis is found in Wezler, 2001: 915–16: "the following explanation can be proposed for the classificatory term *kelikāvya*: it is meant to characterize the poem of the *Meghadūta* as a work dealing specifically with the internal, mental, i.e. imaginary play with one's beloved, a psychic stage through which every man passes when he wishes to sleep with his beloved or with a woman he is attracted to, and it is also all, or almost all, a man can do, or what his feelings force him to do, if he happens to be separated from the woman he desires. *Keli* understood in this way is not only an almost natural element of a man's emotional state in the most painful situation of *viraha*, but is also in fact a very appropriate, or should I say, surprisingly precise, description of what the *Meghadūta* is about, viz. the imaginary overcoming of geographical distance and of the pangs of separation from the beloved, and the attainment of a dreamlike reunification with her. But to show this in greater detail, and with reference to Kālidāsa's text itself, will be possible only in the framework of another article."

²⁸ See Wezler, 2001: 899.

kind of poem is this?" (*atha yad etad bhavān vyācaṣṭe kim etad*), because the question is about the form, not about the content. Wezler thinks that Vallabhadeva is shaping a new concept, taking the part for the whole: if *keli* means "play" in a general sense, here it only means this "love-foreplay", a concept which characterises the stage of love of the *yakṣa*. That would be supported by Vallabha's statement "there are no explicit love scenes (*śṛṅgāra*vidhāna)", i.e. we do not have love in union (*sambhogaśṛṅgāra*), involving eye contact, etc. However, we have another classic instance of a sequence of stages in love in separation, which is found in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (22.169–171), a text prior to Kālidāsa (unlike the texts quoted by Wezler):

The ten stages of love: *abhilāṣa* (longing) is the first stage; *cintā* (anxiety) is the second stage; *anusmṛti* (recollection) is the third stage; *guṇakīrtana* (glorification of the qualities of the lover) is the fourth stage; *udvega* (annoyance, distress) is the fifth stage; *vilāpa* (lamentation) is the sixth one. *unmāda* (insanity) is the seventh stage; *vyādhi* (sickness) is the eighth stage; *jaḍatā* (stupor) is the ninth stage and *marāṇa* (death) is the tenth. This holds good in the cases of both men and women. Understand the characteristics of these.²⁹

This list seems to describe in much more appropriate manner the tragic situation of the *yakṣa* in the MD. Our lover is unmistakably sunken into the *unmāda* "insanity" stage. Chances are that he will not survive the ordeal and, as is proper for a lover in separation, he will soon reach the tenth stage: *marāṇa* "death." This is not what Kālidāsa wants us to think, because the *yakṣa* himself utters a message of optimism when he says that there are only four months to go until the end of the curse. But still, the situation is extreme, and the description of the *yakṣa* in the introductory verses portrays an emaciated being hardly able to stand on his feet (*tasya sthitvā katham api puraḥ...* "Hardly able to stand on his feet in front of that one who...", MD 3).

It is true that the word *keli* has a technical, specific sense. But it has also a more general sense. There is nothing in Vallabhadeva's commentary which could indicate which one of these meanings is correct.

Now, if we take the word *keli* in a general sense for the sake of argument, the word *keli*kāvya becomes much more suitable to shape a new term for a literary genre. We might simply understand that this poem, the *Meghadūta*, is a playful, jocular piece, not a serious

²⁹ See Bharatamuni, 2003: 340. I have corrected the typographical errors in the translation.

and solemn literary work. The *Meghadūta* is meant to be funny. It is not a grave romantic poem. In what way is it not grave? In the same way as, for instance, Don Quixote's insanity is not grave; but at the same time, it is full of pathos and tragedy. There is unanimity among commentators about the *yakṣa*'s insanity. In this case, insanity is due to love in separation. Mallinātha himself says very clearly: "the *rasa* of the poem is love, under the category of separation, and it is also the state/stage of madness (*unmādavasthā*)."³⁰ Vallabha, realising that the poem has no hero (understood in the traditional sense: *dhīrodāttaguṇānviṭaḥ* "[a character] endowed with the qualities of steadiness and loftiness"³⁰) and that it does not fit into any one of the common categories, calls it a "jocular poem." From the point of view of the crazy lover, it is love in separation, but from an objective, external point of view – the standpoint of the poet (the first five stanzas) and the audience – the main theme of the *Meghadūta* is unmistakably madness (*unmāda*).

The term *kelikāvya* was not successfully adopted by later commentators. This is probably because the sense of humor implied in the poem got lost as the centuries passed by.³¹ Sthiradeva (14th century A.D.), author of the *Bālaprabodhinī*, is the only commentator who picks up this concept, using a synonym: *krīḍākāvya* ("a sport-poem", Ambardekar). The difference between Sthiradeva and Vallabhadeva is that the former sticks to the idea that the MD is a *mahākāvya* (!), whereas the term *kelikāvya* in Vallabhadeva stands in opposition to *mahākāvya*, *khaṇḍakāvya*, *ākhyāyikā*, etc. It is a new term, designed for a specific class of poems (see point 4). As Ambardekar says, "these nomenclatures [*kelikāvya* and *krīḍākāvya*] are not known to Sanskrit rhetoricians".³²

On this point, again, we are biased by the first readings of Kālidāsa by European romantic scholars, who defined the poem according to Western categories such as "lyric", "elegy", "monody", and so on.³³ The fact that tradition has coined the concept *saṃdeśakāvya* after the MD, shows that the main formal characteristic of the poem is the sending of a message. One of the alternative titles of the work, apart from *Meghadūta* or *Meghasaṃdeśa* is *Yakṣasaṃdeśa* – the word *saṃdeśa* or an equivalent is always there, because it is considered the most important feature. Vallabha, on the contrary, coined a new word for what he probably identified as a new genre, a salient feature: its sense of humour.

³⁰ Found in, among other treatises, Viśvanātha's *Sāhityadarpaṇa*.

³¹ A similar phenomenon is found in the Pāli commentarial tradition, where irony and humour in the *suttas* is consistently ignored (see, for instance, R. Gombrich, *What the Buddha thought*, London, 2009; the idea is already found in T.W. Rhys Davids *Dialogues of the Buddha*, Pali Text Society, London, 1899–1910).

³² See Ambardekar, 1979:10.

³³ See Ambardekar, 1979:11.

To conclude, Vallabhadeva is the only author who describes the MD as a *kelikāvya*, a jocular poem, a farce, a tragicomedy. Plenty of instances show that Kālidāsa is smiling, and wants us to smile, beneath the *yakṣa*'s despair – consider, for instance, the comparison of the cloud with a flatulent man who has to drink a medicine in order that his flatulence (the thunder) is cured;³⁴ or the cloud acting as a pimp (*viṭa* “facilitator”) who helps loose women to see the road at night.³⁵ All these features link the MD with entertainment genres such as the *bhāṇa*, commonly translated as “causerie”, but actually meaning “recitation” (i.e. a monologue). The conventional definition of the *bhāṇa* genre is found in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (18.107cd-110):

Next I will define the Causerie. The Causerie has many parts but it is performed by a single actor who narrates his own experiences and also recounts what has happened to others. The speech of others is performed by the actor himself with replies, dialogues, speaking to others as if they were present (lit. “speaking to people in the sky”), gestures and mime. Experts should by all means introduce rogues and pimps in it, make it contain various situations and a single act, and make it eventful.³⁶

Although the MD is not a *bhāṇa* “causerie, farce”, I think it is not totally unrelated to this genre, and in a way it is more related to this genre than to *mahākāvya*s like the *Kumārasaṃbhava* or *Raghuvamśa* and dramas like the *Abhijñānaśakuntala*.

6. Conclusion

Before reviewing what has been said, I think it is not superfluous to anticipate some criticisms.

First: Some could argue that the MD is unmistakably a love-in-separation (*vipralambhaśṛṅgāra*) poem, and that love-in-separation is the main “flavour” (*rasa*). There is no doubt about that. Madness (*unmāda*) is, however, a salient modulation of this *rasa* “flavour”: it is madness *within* love in separation. In other words: the general topic is love, more particularly love-in-separation, and even more particularly the stage of madness that

³⁴ MD 20.

³⁵ MD 37.

³⁶ See Dezső & Vasudeva, 2009: xv.

arises in love-in-separation. I leave it to more competent philosophers to determine if the particular is more real than the general.

Second: When I interpreted the term *kelikāvya* as an attempt by Vallabhadeva to categorise the poem within the traditional framework, what I meant to say was that: 1) *kelikāvya* is probably a proposed name for a new style or genre (and this is related to the fact that the MD is probably the first poem of its class), and 2) it is meant to combine the genre of *khaṇḍakāvya* with the dramatic genre of parody, comedy or causerie, since the MD partakes of both. I admit this interpretation can be disputed. Others will find Wezler's analysis more convincing. To me, it solves the philological problem, but not the literary one, for the poem is not about flirtation and coquettishness, but about despair and emotional derangement.

In this respect, I believe the duty of the modern reader of Sanskrit poetry is to extract as much "flavour" as possible. I do not consider Classical Indian poets handicapped in any respect in comparison to modern poets. Therefore, as I read a modern poet in a way that the reading is as rich and complex as possible, I also read Kālidāsa in the richest way possible. That means considering as many layers of meaning as possible. And the *Meghadūta* is far more interesting if we consider the possibility of its being a *kelikāvya* in the sense suggested by Tubb. It grows as a literary work, and does not demand a change of perspective. It makes the reading richer, rather than reducing it to a tasteless joke.

As a conclusion, I compile the main ideas of this paper in a Decalogue:

1. The message will never reach its destination.
2. The *yakṣa* is in the stage of madness, approaching death. His words are like the hallucinations of a dying man.
3. The *Meghadūtas*'s approach is rational (*yuktivat*), although the subject is the realm of fantasy.
4. The *Meghadūta* is probably the first *saṃdeśakāvya*, the genre-maker.
5. Romantic ideas of nature and the natural world do not apply to *Meghadūta*, where the divine, human and natural worlds are indissoluble.
6. The main ontological distinction in the *Meghadūta* is *cetana/acetana*.
7. Unlike its predecessors, the choice of a cloud as a messenger responds to internal logic.
8. The *mandākrāntā* metre portrays madness, an unbalanced mind, not solemnity.

9. The term *kelikāvya* in Vallabhadeva's commentary means "jocular poem".
10. The *Meghadūta* is meant to be funny, a tragicomedy with several superposed, even contradictory, possible readings.

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Six

Banārasīdās climbing the Jain Stages of Perfection

Jérôme Petit

Banārasīdās (1586–1643) is well known for the autobiography he wrote in 1641, at the age of 55. He gave it the title *Ardhakathānaka* ‘Half a Story’, because the ideal life span is considered to be one hundred and ten years within the Jain tradition. He wrote in the conclusion of his text that “the best part is about to come”, but this part was indeed very short because he died only two years after having finished his work. Written in Brajbhāṣā, the *Ardhakathānaka* is considered to be the first autobiography written in Hindi and more largely in any Indian language.¹ Banārasīdās was a merchant and a jeweller of the Jain community. His parents were pious Śvetāmbaras but he was seen in the 1630s as the leader of a Digambara religious movement known as Adhyātma. Adhyātma means ‘Supreme Self’ and its teachings aim at the attainment of a high level of spirituality. Its members named it ‘Adhyātma śailī’, a Sanskrit word which means, in modern language, a ‘style’, a ‘way of life’, a ‘movement’. The Adhyātma emerged in the sixteenth century in different urban centres in North India. There is no precise ‘Date of Birth’, there is no ‘guru founder’ whose name could be revered. It is a movement of Jain laymen who gathered in assemblies (*sabhā*) to discuss spiritual topics.²

* Many thanks to Patricia Bass who patiently helped me to improve my English.

¹ The text has been edited by Nāthūrām Premī (2d ed. 1957) with an introduction and a glossary. The first English translation was made by Mukund Lath, *Half a Tale: A study in the interrelationship between autobiography and history*, Jaipur, 1981. A second one has been recently written by Rohini Chowdhury, *Ardhakathānak : A half story*, with a preface by Rupert Snell, Delhi, 2009. The first French translation was done by the author of this paper, *Histoire à demi : autobiographie d’un marchand jaina du xvii^e siècle*, Paris, 2011.

² On the Adhyātma movement, see Cort 2002 and Petit 2013. One of its members named Pītāambar addressed a 52–verse panegyric entitled *Jñānabāvanī* to Banārasīdās in 1629. See Banārasīdās 1922, 1987.

The intellectual basis of the movement can be found in the work of Kundakunda, a fourth or fifth century Digambara master³ whose work marks the beginning of a powerful philosophical tradition. The most well-known of his works is certainly the *Samayasāra* ('Essence of the Self'), in which Kundakunda describes the very nature of the Self and the way to realise the supreme Self (*paramātmān*). Written in Prakrit Śaurasenī, it contains 415 stanzas in *āryā* meter. It has been commented on in Sanskrit by Amṛtacandra in the 10th century. Amṛtacandra included some verses in his prose commentary which give the essence of certain themes elaborated by Kundakunda. Those verses had been separated from the main text to constitute another independent text known as *Samayasārakalaśa* ('Water-pots containing the Essence of the Self'). Written in a beautiful and poetical Sanskrit, the 248-verse *Samayasārakalaśa* was translated into pre-modern Hindi (the *ḍhūṅḍārī* language of the Jaipur area) by Rājamalla Pāṅḍe in the 16th century. The composition of this *Bālabodhavadanikā* ('Prose Commentary for the Awakening of the Beginners') is sometimes considered to mark the beginning of the Adhyātma movement. Rājamalla's Hindi translation made this important philosophical work, otherwise reserved for monks, accessible to the lay community. In the case of Banārasīdās (and also in many other cases), reading this work was instrumental in his passage from the Śvetāmbara to the Digambara ideology. He then wrote many poems⁴ inspired by the inner spiritual life as it is described by Digambara masters. He rejected (in theory more than in practice as we will see) all external attributes of ritualised religion like material worship (*dravyapūjā*).

This crisis ended when the Ādhyātmika group of Agra, to which Banārasīdās belonged, invited a scholar named Pāṅḍit Rūpacand to give lectures on Nemicandra's *Gommaṭasāra*. In this important 10th century text, the Jain theory of 'Stages of Perfection' is expounded: from delusion to self-realisation, one should climb fourteen 'Stages of Qualities' (*guṇasthāna*) and pass through eleven additional 'Steps of Perfection' (*pratimā*). These stages invite the voluntary layman to take the monastic vows. They also link the four groups of the Jain community (laymen, laywomen, monks and nuns) by including the monastic life in the continuity of the mundane life. Banārasīdās realised that one should act according to one's position in these stages of perfection. He never wanted to become a monk but his mind was pacified and he could write a *Samayasāranāṭaka* ('Drama on the

³ The dates of Kundakunda are not exactly known (ranging from the second to the eighth centuries) and are subject to several discussions. See e.g. Upadhye 2000, p. 10; Dhaky 1991, pp. 187–206; Dundas 2002, p. 107; Malvania and Soni 2007, p. 93.

⁴ Banārasīdās' short texts were gathered after his death by his Ādhyātmika friend Jagjīvan under the title *Banārasīvilāsa* ('Plays of Banārasīdās'), edited by Nāthūrām Premī in 1922 (see also 1987 Jaipur edition).

Essence of the Self', henceforth SSN), a long poem of more than seven hundred verses inspired by Rājamalla's commentary on the *Samayasārakalaśa*. Banārasīdās added a supplementary chapter devoted to these stages of perfection to the original twelve chapters. In this 13th chapter, Banārasīdās begins by praying to the image of the Jina. It is very interesting to see a leader of a non-conformist movement opposed to the worship of images singing about the magnificence of those images! Maybe we can read these introductory verses as an homage to his Mūrtipūjaka (worshipper) family.

jinapratimā jana doṣa nikandai / sīsa namāi banārasī bandai //
phiri mana māṃhi vicārai aisā / nāṭaka garantha parama pada jaisā //
 SSN_13.4 //

The image of the Jina puts an end to the faults committed by people. Banārasīdās pays homage [to it] after having bowed his head. Then he thinks in his heart: "The book entitled *Nāṭaka* is a supreme text."⁵

parama tatta paracai isa māṃhi / gunathānaka kī racanā nāṃhi //
yā maiṃ gunathānaka rasa āvai / to garantha ati sobhā pāvai // SSN_13.5 //

Supreme principles are exposed in this [book, but] the composition of the Stages of Qualities is not included. If the essence of the Stages of Qualities is introduced, the book would attain its full splendour!"

iha vicāri saṃcheṇa saum, gunathānaka rasa coja /
varanana karai banārasī, kārana sivapatha khoja // SSN_13.6 //

Thinking this way, Banārasīdās is going to show, in the form of a summary, the essential aphorisms of the Stages of Qualities – because these stages are a search for the path of realisation.

Before exploring the details of this chapter, it could be helpful to have a quick look at the *guṇasthāna* theory.

1. Fourteen Stages of Qualities (*guṇasthāna*)

The ladder composed of the fourteen 'Stages of Qualities' are certainly the most important of the ladders of perfection theorised by Jainism. From complete delusion (i.e. to not be a Jain) to

⁵ The term '*Nāṭaka*' is a term used to designate both Kundakunda's *Samayasāra* as well as Amṛtacandra's *Samayasāra-kalaśa*. See B. Bhatt 1994: 447.

total omniscience (i. e. to be a Jina), the Stages of Qualities invite the laymen to take the difficult path of the realisation of the Self and to progress through different stages:

1. *mithyātva*, wrong belief
2. *sāsvādāna*, the taste of right belief
3. *miśra*, mixed
4. *avirata-samyagdṛṣṭi*, right belief without self-control
5. *deśa-virata*, partial self-control
6. *pramatta-virata*, complete self-control with carelessness
7. *apramatta-virata*, complete self-control without carelessness
8. *apūrva-karaṇa*, process against new karmas
9. *anivṛtti-karaṇa*, ‘no return’ process against karmas
10. *sūkṣma-saṃparāya*, war against the subtle passions
11. *upaśānta-moha*, one whose delusion is pacified
12. *kṣīṇa-moha*, one whose delusion is destroyed
13. *sayoga-kevalin*, omniscient one still with activity
14. *ayoga-kevalin*, omniscient one without any activity

First, the soul is bound by the karma-producing delusion (*mohanīya-karman*), and it ignores the path of liberation. 2. The second stage ‘rehabilitates’ an adept after a fall from a higher stage. 3. The third stage is a transition between wrong belief (stage 1) and right belief (stage 4). 4. The fourth is important because the adept is now truly Jain and cannot go back to wrong belief (stage 1). He has the right belief but is without self-control yet. 5. During the fifth stage, the adept has partial self-control and is now ready to take the vows of the Jain layman (*aṇuvrata*). The “believer” becomes an “active member” of the Jain community. 6. The sixth stage marks the passage from secularism to monkhood. The adept has self-control though can still be careless in his actions and he is ready to take the vows of Jain monks (*mahāvratā*). The step to becoming a monk is very high indeed, which is why the doctrine prepared several degrees between the fifth and the sixth Stages of Qualities, as we will see below. 7. The monk has now complete self-control without carelessness, so he can make the vows correctly. 8. He is engaged in a process against new karmas and ‘makes war’ to stop the secondary passions (*nokaṣāya*). 9. Then he is engaged in a process that permanently prevents karma from obscuring the soul and makes war to destroy the secondary passions. 10. Then he makes war against the subtle passions (*kaṣāya*). 11. In the eleventh, the monk becomes an ascetic, free of attachments, who has not yet attained omniscience. Stages 9 to 11 constitute a separate ladder named the ‘Ladder of Pacification’

(*upaśamaśreṇi*), from which a fall is still possible. 12. The ascetic, free from attachment, has now destroyed delusion. In this stage, one has not attained omniscience but the passions are completely destroyed. From here, there is no possible return. 13. The *sayoga-kevalin* is an omniscient being who still has activity. This is the stage attained by the revered figures in Jainism like the Jinas, the Arhats, etc. The soul is still embodied in order to achieve the life span (*āyus*) of the ascetics. 14. Lastly, the *ayoga-kevalin* is an omniscient being without any activity. This is the instant before death when all the categories of karma are destroyed: life-span (*āyus*) incarnation (*nāma*) social status (*gotra*) and sensations (*vedanīya*). The end of the journey is *mokṣa*, the liberation of the perfect soul (*siddha*), free from all karmic material.

As we can see, the elaboration of the *guṇasthāna* is linked with the Jain theory of karma which divides the karma into eight main categories (*mūlaprakṛti*), subdivided into several secondary categories (*uttaraprakṛti*) to form a set of 148 elements:

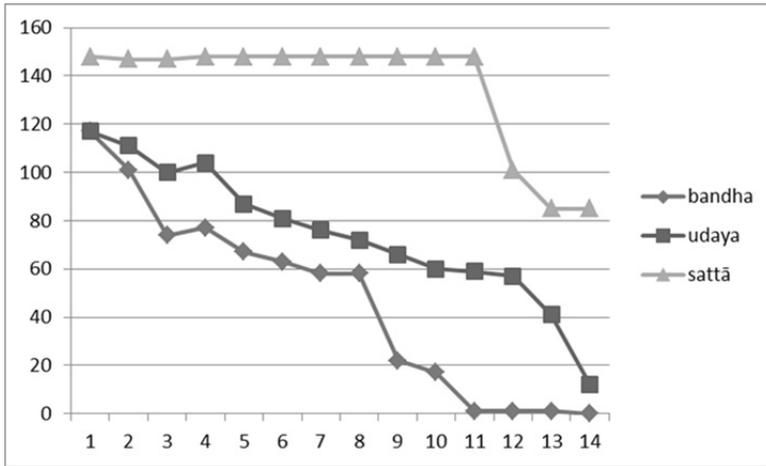
- 5 karmas obstructing knowledge (*jñānāvaraṇa-k.*)
- 9 karmas obstructing belief (*darśanāvaraṇa-k.*)
- 2 karmas producing sensations (*vedanīya-k.*)
- 28 karmas producing delusion (*mohanīya-k.*)
- 4 karmas determining life-span (*āyus-k.*)
- 93 karmas determining individual characteristics (*nāma-k.*)
- 2 karmas determining social status (*gotra-k.*)
- 5 karmas producing hindrance (*antarāya-k.*)

All the karmic categories are defined by different aspects, of which three are particularly important in the context of the *guṇasthāna*: enslavement (*bandha*), maturity/manifestation (*udaya*), existence (*sattā*). At the first stage, all categories exist and 117 categories bind the soul and come to maturity. At the second stage, 101 categories bind the soul and 111 come to maturity. At the crucial fourth stage only 77 categories bind the soul and 104 come to maturity. During the fifth stage, 67 categories of karma bind the soul and 87 come to maturity. In the seventh stage, 58 categories bind the soul and 76 come to maturity. In the tenth stage, 17 categories bind the soul and 60 come to maturity. The eleventh stage is an important step as only one category of karma can bind the soul – the *sātavedanīyakarman* which causes the feeling of what has been obtained. Fifty-nine categories of karma can still come to maturity. In the fourteenth stage, none of the categories bind the soul, 12 categories come to maturity and 85 categories are still in existence.

The chart below presents the number of karmic categories (*prakṛti*) involved at every stage of the *guṇasthāna*. The graph shows at a glance how the progression through the stages provokes the decline of karmic enslavement.

guṇasthāna	bandha	Udaya	sattā
1	117	117	148
2	101	111	147
3	74	100	147
4	77	104	148
5	67	87	148
6	63	81	148
7	58	76	148
8	58	72	148
9	22	66	148
10	17	60	148
11	1	59	148
12	1	57	101
13	1	41	85
14	0	12	85

Chart: Data taken from Glasenapp 1915/2003.



Graph: The enslavement (*bandha*), maturity (*udaya*) and existence (*sattā*) of the categories of karma during the progression through the 14 *guṇasthāna*.

The theory of karma also gives an idea of the time taken by the karma to decline. This is the duration (*sthiti*) calculated with a minimum and a maximum time. The minimum a karmic category binds the pure soul is one *muhūrta* – 48 minutes. The maximum can reach 70 *koṭakoṭi sāgaropama* – 7×10^{225} years. If we consider this maximum, we realise how long the path to omniscience can take to travel.

It is interesting to see how Banārasīdās expresses himself on the subject. The chart below gives the detail of the SSN verses that treat each *guṇasthāna*. We can easily note that Banārasīdās pays a lot of attention to stages four through six – the crucial moment when the voluntary layman has to make a choice: to be monk and continue to follow the path of realisation or not to be a monk and stop the journey at the fifth stage.

	‘Doctrinal’ <i>guṇasthāna</i>	<i>Guṇasthāna</i> in SSN	SSN verses
		Introduction	1–8
1	<i>mithyādr̥ṣṭi</i>	<i>Mithyāta</i>	9–18
2	<i>Sāsvādāna</i>	<i>Sāsādāna</i>	19–20
3	<i>samyak-mithyātva</i>	<i>Miśra</i>	21–22
4	<i>samyak-dr̥ṣṭi</i>	<i>avratā/avirata</i>	23–52
5	<i>deśa-virata</i>	<i>vrata/virata (aṇuvrata)</i>	53–76
6	<i>sarva-virata</i>	<i>Paramatta</i>	77–92
7	<i>apramatta-virata</i>	<i>Aparamatta</i>	93–94
8	<i>apūrva-karaṇa</i>	<i>apūrava-karana</i>	95–96
9	<i>anivṛtti-karaṇa</i>	<i>anivṛtti-karana/bhāva</i>	97–98
10	<i>sūkṣma-sāmparāya</i>	<i>sūcchama-lobh</i>	99
11	<i>upaśānta-moha</i>	<i>upasānta-moha</i>	100–101
12	<i>kṣiṇa-moha</i>	<i>khīna-moha</i>	102–104
13	<i>sayoga-kevalin</i>	<i>Sajogī</i>	105–109
14	<i>ayoga-kevalin</i>	<i>Ajogī</i>	110–111

After the introductory verses, Banārasīdās gives the list of the Stages of Qualities. Then he gives the details of each stage: categories of karma involved, duration, consequences, and the many lists associated with the stages. For example, the fourth stage of the right ‘Jain’ belief is the occasion for Banārasīdās to detail all the most important lists theorised in Jainism: the eight aspects of right belief (SSN 13.26–38) in which there are eight qualities (*guṇa*, SSN 13.30); five ornaments (*bhūṣana*, SSN 13.31); twenty-five faults (*doṣa*, SSN 13.32–36) in which there are eight great sources of intoxication (*mahāmada*, SSN 13.33), eight

impurities (*mala*, SSN 13.34), six karmic sanctuaries (*āyatana*, SSN 13.35), and three ineptnesses (*muḍhatā*, SSN 13.36); five causes of destruction (*nāśa-kāraṇa*, SSN 13.37); five transgressions (*aticāra*, SSN 13.38); seven sub-categories of delusion-producing karma (*mohanīya-karma*, SSN 13.40–47). The explanation of the fifth *guṇasthāna* also details the twenty-one qualities requested for laymen (SSN 13.54), the twenty-two food interdictions (SSN 13.55), and the eleven steps of perfection (*pratimā*, SSN 13.57–73), which we will address shortly. The expounding of the sixth *guṇasthāna* finally lists five types of carelessness (*pramāda*, SSN 13.79), twenty-eight qualities requested for monks (SSN 13.80), five restrictions (*samiti*, SSN 13.82), and six daily duties (*āvaśyaka*, SSN 13.83). It would be boring to describe all the lists – the present article contains lists enough! May the patient reader allow us to translate the presentation of the *guṇasthāna* by Banārasidās, interesting in the present context.

*niyata eka vivahāra saum, jīva caturdasa bheda /
raṅga joga bahu vidhi bhayau, jyaum paṭa sahaja supheda // SSN_13.7 //*
Unified [from the absolute point of view], the soul knows fourteen categories from the conventional point of view: a naturally white cloth that is dyed with colors becomes multiple.

*prathama mithyāta dūjau sāsādana tījau miśra,
caturtha avrata pañcamau virata rañca hai /
chaṭṭhau paramatta nāma sātamo aparamatta,
āṭhamo apūravakarana sukha-sañca hai //
naumau anivṛttibhāva daśamo sūcchama lobha,
ekādaśamo su upasānta mohabañca hai /
dvādaśamo khīnamoha teraho sajogī jina,
caudaho ajogī jā kī thiti aṅka pañca hai // SSN_13.8 //*

The first one is wrong belief. The second one is only the taste of right belief. The third is mixed belief. The fourth is [right belief] without self-control. The fifth is [right belief] with self-control. The sixth is named carelessness. The seventh is an absence of carelessness. The eighth is a process of reduction of new karmas which is full of happiness. The ninth is a ‘no return’ process of karmic reduction. The tenth is the avidity⁶ for subtle passions. The eleventh is a good

⁶ The term ‘*lobha*’ is more common than the official ‘*sāmparāya*’.

pacification which undermines delusion. The twelfth is the destruction of delusion. The thirteenth is the stage of the Jina who still has an activity. The fourteenth is the stage of the omniscient without activity whose duration is equal to the time taken to pronounce the five vowels.

*baranai saba guṇasthāna ke, nāma caturdasa sāra /
aba baranaṃ mithyāta ke, bheda pañca parakāra // SSN_13.9 //*

The essence of all the fourteen Stages of Qualities is going to be described. I now describe the categories of wrong belief of which there are five kinds. Etc.

2. Banārasīdās's Avasthāṣṭaka and the categories of the self

The *Samayasāranāṭaka* is not the only text of Banārasīdās in which he evokes the *guṇasthāna*. A short text entitled *Avasthāṣṭaka* ('Eight Verses on Stages') can be found in the *Banārasīvilāsa* collection. The term *avasthā* designates the stages of spiritual realisation, i. e. the *guṇasthāna*. The text makes parallels between *guṇasthāna* and six categories of souls. A complete translation of the text is the best way to understand the process. The short form of the text is an example of the 'reminders' genre: the poet has received a teaching which he later transcribes in order to remember it. The *Banārasīvilāsa* is full of texts of this kind which was also a popular genre in seventeenth-century North India.

*cetana-lakṣaṇa niyata-naya, sabai jīva ikasāra /
mūḍha vicakṣaṇa parama soṃ, tri-vidhi rūpa vyavahāra // AA_1 //*

From the absolute point of view, all the animate principles are identical: their main characteristic is consciousness. From the conventional point of view, they are divided into three categories: deluded, clear-sighted and supreme.

*mūḍha ātamā eka vidhi, tri-vidhi vicakṣaṇa jāna /
dvi-vidhi bhāva paramātamā, ṣaṭ-vidhi jīva bakhāna // AA_2 //*

Deluded Self has one sub-category. Know that the clear-sighted Self has three sub-categories. Supreme Self has two sub-categories distinguished by psychic states. The animate principle is described as having six sub-categories.

*vidhi niṣedha jānai nahiṃ, hita anahita nahiṃ sūjha /
viṣaya-magana tana līnatā, yahai mūḍha kī būjha // AA_3 //*

He does not know rules or hindrances; he does not perceive what is beneficial or harmful; he disappears, totally absorbed in a topic: here is the deluded Self.

*jo jina-bhāṣita saradahai, bhrama saṃśaya saba khoya /
samakitavanta asaṃjamī, adhama vicakṣaṇa soya // AA_4 //*

He places his faith in Jina's aphorisms; illusion and doubt are completely destroyed; he has the right belief without self-control (i. e. he has attained the fourth *guṇasthāna*): here is the common clear-sighted Self.

*vairāgī tyāgī damī, sva para vivekī hoyā /
deśa-saṃjamī saṃjamī, madhyama paṇḍita doya // AA_5 //*

He is free from worldly desires; he has abandoned worldly objects; his senses are controlled; he has discernment concerning his own self: there are two kind of average scholar, one with an incomplete self-control (i.e. one who has attained the fifth *guṇasthāna*) and one with a complete self-control (i. e. one who has attained the sixth *guṇasthāna*).

*apramāda guṇasthāna soṃ, kṣīna-moha loṃ daura /
śreṇi-dhāraṇā jo dharai, so paṇḍita śiramaura // AA_6 //*

From the stage of quality without carelessness to the destruction of delusion (i. e. from the seventh to the twelfth *guṇasthāna*), one who cares about the concept of a spiritual ladder is a gem among scholars.

*jo kevala pada ācarai, caḍhi sayogi-guṇasthāna /
so jaṃgama paramātamā, bhavavāsī bhagavāna // AA_7 //*

One who takes the path of omniscience after having attained the stage of quality with activity (i. e. the thirteen *guṇasthāna*) is the mobile supreme Self – like Bhavanavāsī divinities.

*jihim pada meṃ saba pada magana, jyom jala meṃ jala bunda /
so avicala paramātamā, nirākāra niradunda // AA_8 //*

In his path, all paths are engaged, like in water, all water particles are engaged: here is the immobile supreme Self, without form, non-dual.

	Guṇasthāna	Categories of the Self in Banārasīdās' Avasthāṣṭaka	
1	<i>mithyādr̥ṣṭi</i>	Deluded Self (<i>mūḍha</i>)	
2	<i>Sāsvādāna</i>		
3	<i>samyak-mithyātva</i>		
4	<i>samyakdr̥ṣṭi</i>	Clear-sighted Self (<i>vicakṣaṇa</i>)	Common clear-sightedness (<i>adhama vicakṣaṇa</i>)
5	<i>deśa-virata</i>		Average scholar (<i>madhyama paṇḍita</i>)
6	<i>sarva-virata</i>		Gem among scholars (<i>paṇḍita śīramaura</i>)
7	<i>apramatta-virata</i>		
8	<i>apūrva-karaṇa</i>		
9	<i>anivṛtti-karaṇa</i>		
10	<i>sūkṣma-sāmparāya</i>		
11	<i>upaśānta-moha</i>		
12	<i>kṣīṇa-moha</i>	Supreme Self (<i>parama</i>)	Mobile supreme Self (<i>jaṃgama paramātāmā</i>)
13	<i>sayoga-kevalin</i>		Immobile supreme Self (<i>avicala paramātāmā</i>)
14	<i>ayoga-kevalin</i>		

The categorisation of the Self, given by Banārasīdās here, is quite unusual in the Jain literature. The spiritual progression is facilitated by some more significant 'steps' to pass through. This three-pronged separation emphasises that during the first three stages the Self is deluded. One must necessarily pass through these stages to attain the fourth stage (the first 'Jain' stage), namely the field of a clear-sighted Self. This field is the largest and it has been divided into three sub-categories. The right belief (fourth *guṇasthāna*), meaning a belief just cleared of delusion, is in the field of a 'clear-sightedness' and more specifically in the part of the field considered to be 'common', 'low' or 'inferior' (*adhama*). This name sounds like an invitation to give it up quickly and to attain the field of an 'average scholar'

(*madhyama paṇḍita*). The term *paṇḍita* is interesting because authors like Kundakunda would use the term *jñānī*. It was also a popular term in the pre-modern period to designate laymen who reached the status of well-known scholar, like ‘Paṇḍit’ Banārasīdās himself, or Hemerāj ‘Paṇḍe’, Rājamalla ‘Pāṇḍe’, ‘Paṇḍit’ Dyānatrāy etc. It could be said that these Paṇḍits had reached the fifth *guṇasthāna* and could reach the sixth *guṇasthāna* by taking the vows of monks (which is a fundamental step) and be called a ‘gem among scholars’ (*paṇḍita śīramaura*). The two last stages are the field of the supreme Self and are reserved to Realised beings of the Jain mythology. This is an abstract world to which common people – with poetical hearts – composed hymns.

3. Eleven Steps of Perfection (*pratimā*)

We have seen that in the course of the fifth *guṇasthāna*, the layman is invited to climb eleven more steps known as *pratimā*, largely expounded by Banārasīdās. Incidentally, we can notice that Banārasīdās employed a more lively and common vocabulary than the one used by Nemicandra. He also composed some ‘free’ or less official verses to move the reader and to give a new tone to the text. The term *pratimā* means ‘image’, ‘statue’, and probably refers to the statues of the Jinas represented in *kāyotsarga*, standing with their arms at their sides, which are seen as a model to follow. Even more so than the other stages, the *pratimā* here allow the voluntary layman to lead a life-style closer and closer to that of a monk. They are the following:

1. *darśana*, Step of belief
2. *vrata*, Step of taking the vows
3. *sāmāyika*, Step of equanimity
4. *poṣadhā*, Step of fasting during holy days
5. *sacitta-tyāga*, Step of renouncing food containing living beings
6. *rātribhakta*, Step of renouncing diurnal enjoyment
7. *brahmacarya*, Step of complete chastity
8. *ārambha-tyāga*, Step of renouncing daily activities
9. *pari-graha-tyāga*, Step of renouncing possessions
10. *anumati-tyāga*, Step of renouncing permitted activities
11. *uddiṣṭa-tyāga*, Step of renouncing prescribed food

During the first step, the layman simply has a firm faith in the Jain teachings. 2. Then, he becomes a full member of the Jain community by taking the fundamental vows of all Jains:

to not injure living beings (*ahiṃsā*), to always tell the truth (*satya*), to not steal (*asteya*), to reduce sexuality (*brahmacarya*), to not own possessions (*aparigraha*). 3. He practices meditation in the posture of *kāyotsarga* and tries to consider all things with the same eye, with equanimity. 4. He trains to face the difficulties of fasting – a very hard exercise for Banārasīdās whose gluttony is legendary. 5. Then, the adept is invited to pay attention to his daily life by renouncing food containing living beings. 6. Another difficult exercise awaits Banārasīdās: the step of renouncing diurnal sexual enjoyment, which is a preliminary stage before complete chastity. It is sometimes read as *rātri-bhukta-tyāga*, the renunciation of eating at night in order to save one from injuring living beings. 7. Known for his numerous affairs during his youth, Banārasīdās puts particular emphasis on this seventh step of complete chastity. Having accorded only one couplet (*dohā* or *caupāi*) to the other steps, he composed a quatrain in *kavitta* meter concerning the step of chastity (SSN 13.67). 8. The step of renouncing daily activities marks a real transition from secularism to monkhood. 9. The adept has to renounce all possessions, a step that permanently transforms the individual’s status from “householder” to monk, also signifying their departure from the home. 10. The adept only accepts what other people give him to eat and does not cook by himself (the ‘permitted’ activity of step ten). 11. Finally, the step of renouncing prescribed food marks a swing from the lay status to the religious life. The adept is now ready to attain the sixth *guṇasthāna* and to take the vows of monks. The Śvetāmbara tradition names this step the “becoming monk” (*śramaṇabhūta*) and the Digambara tradition subdivides it into two more steps: the junior monk (*kṣullaka*), who wears three pieces of cloth, and the monk who wears only one piece of cloth (*ailaka*).

Banārasīdās evokes the *pratimā* this way:

aba pañcama guṇasthāna kī, racanā varanaṃ alpa /

jā maiṃ ekādasa dasā, pratimā nāma vikalpa // SSN_13.56 //

Now I will quickly describe the composition of the fifth Stage of Qualities in which eleven diverse states named ‘*pratimā*’ take place.⁷

darsana-visuddha-kārī bāraha virata-dhārī,

sāmāika-cārī parva-proṣadha vidhi vahai /

sacita kau parahārī divā aparasa nārī,

āṭhaṃ jāma brahmacārī nirāraṃbhī hvai rahai //

⁷ In the text, the more popular and common term *dasā*, which means ‘state’, ‘condition’, is used to designate the *pratimā*.

*pāpa parigraha chaṇḍai pāpa kī na śikṣā maṇḍai,
koū yā ke nimitta karai so vastu na gahai /
aite desavrata ke dharaiyā samakitī jīva,
gyāraha pratimā tinhaiṃ bhagavanta-jī kahai // SSN_13.57 //*

One purifies their belief, takes the twelve vows, attains equanimity, leads different fasts during the holy days, renounces [food] containing living beings, does not touch any woman during the day, observes chastity during the eight parts of the day, lives by renouncing daily activities, rejects sinful possessions, does not enhance the learning of sinful things, does not take a meal prepared for someone else. The Lord states these eleven steps for orthodox souls who have attained the stage of self-control (i.e. the fifth *guṇasthāna*).

*saṃjama aṃsa jagyau jahāṃ, bhoga aruci parināma /
udai pratigyā kau bhayau, pratimā tā kau nāma // SSN_13.58 //*

When a part of self-control awakens, enjoyment turns into disgust. This manifestation of a promise is what we call a *pratimā*!

After having described each *pratimā* in detail (SSN 13.59–72), Banārasīdās subdivides them into three groups. This distinction gives an idea of the way the *pratimā* were seen – as a transition from one state (the laity) to another (the monkhood):

*ṣaṭa pratimā tāṃī jaghana, madhyama nau paraṃjanta /
uttama dasamī gyāramī, iti pratimā viratanta // SSN_13.73 //*

They are low up to the sixth step, medium up to the ninth, high through the tenth and the eleventh: here is the story of the *pratimā*.

	Guṇasthāna		Pratimā	
1	<i>mithyādr̥ṣṭi</i>			
2	<i>Sāsvādāna</i>			
3	<i>samyak-mithyātva</i>			
4	<i>samyakdr̥ṣṭi</i>			
5	<i>deśa-virata</i>	1	<i>Darśana</i>	Secularism
		2	<i>Vrata</i>	
		3	<i>Sāmāyika</i>	
		4	<i>poṣadha</i>	
		5	<i>sacitta-tyāga</i>	
		6	<i>Rātribhakta</i>	
		7	<i>brahmacarya</i>	
8	<i>ārambha-tyāga</i>			
9	<i>parigraha-tyāga</i>			
6	<i>sarva-virata</i>	10	<i>anumati-tyāga</i>	Monkhood
		11	<i>uddiṣṭa-tyāga</i>	
		7	<i>apramatta-virata</i>	
		8	<i>apūrva-karaṇa</i>	
		9	<i>anivṛtti-karaṇa</i>	
10	<i>sūkṣma-sāmparāya</i>			
11	<i>upaśānta-moha</i>			
12	<i>kṣiṇa-moha</i>			
13	<i>sayoga-kevalin</i>			Jina, Arhat
14	<i>ayoga-kevalin</i>			Divinities

4. Stages of Perfection in History

The history of the *guṇasthāna* is quite complicated to delineate.⁸ It seems like this concept is not mentioned in the Śvetāmbara Canon, although we can find descriptions of other

⁸ Three authors in particular have studied the *guṇasthāna* theory. The German scholar Helmuth von Glasenapp devotes a chapter of his thesis, *Doctrine of Karman in Jain Philosophy* (published in German in 1915 and translated into English in 1942) to the subject. In 1996, Sagarmal Jain wrote an entire book on the *guṇasthāna*, followed in 2007 by Sādhvī Darśanakalāśrī. P. S. Jaini (1979) and N. Tatia (1994),

ladders of perfection such as the *pratimā* which appear in a manual for laymen. The *Uvāsagadasāo* ('Ten Laymen'), the seventh text of the main branch of the Śvetāmbara Canon (Aṅga) which describes the Right Conduct for the Jain lay society, tells the story of Ānanda, a layman who feels ready to progress through the stages of an ideal layman (*upāsaka*) who is the central figure of the text.

“§ 70. Then Ānanda, the servant of the Samaṇa [Sanskrit 'śramaṇa', the Jain ascetic, here for the Jina Mahāvīra himself], engaged in conforming himself to the standards of an uvāsaga. Perfectly, in thought, word and deed, he practised, maintained, satisfied, accomplished, proclaimed and completed the observance of the first standard of an uvāsaga [Sanskrit 'upāsaka', the ideal layman] according to the sacred writings, according to the rules prescribed in them, according to the right way, and according to the truth.

§ 71. Then Ānanda, the servant of the Samaṇa, completed the observance of the second standard of an uvāsaga, and likewise that of the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, and eleventh standards.” (Hoernle translation 1885: 46)

In the Digambara tradition, Kundakunda refers to the stages of perfection, mentions both the *guṇasthāna* and *pratimā*, but he never addresses the theory in detail. His own doctrine focuses on the purity of the self and follows the absolute point of view (*niścaya-naya*) away from the conventional point of view (*vyavahāra-naya*) where these stages were conceptualised.

The soul possesses neither stages of biological development (*jīvasthāna*) nor states of spiritual development (*guṇasthāna*), all these are modifications of the matter. (*Samayasāra* 2.17, Translation Zaveri/Kumar 2009)

In the same period, the philosopher Umāsvāti, whose authority is recognised by Śvetāmbaras and Digambaras, described the Stages of Qualities in the ninth chapter of his

two 'gems among scholars' in Jainology, also evoke the theory as a major element of the Jain path to Realisation as formulated for the Jain lay society.

Tattvārthasūtra. He evokes the Stages in their ancient form: the ladder begins with the fourth stage, at the very moment when the adept becomes a resolved Jain.⁹

The first complete list is given by the *Ṣaṭkhaṇḍāgama* ('Treatise in Six Parts'). It is a voluminous treatise seen as a pro-canonical text by the Digambaras, and the ultimate source of their teachings. Written around the 3rd century, it gives a simple list of the fourteen stages without any technical details.

*micchāiṭṭhī //9// sāsanaśammāiṭṭhī //10// sammāmicchāiṭṭhī //11//
asaṃjadāsammāiṭṭhī //12// saṃjadāsaṃjadā //13// paṃattasaṃjadā
//14// appaṃattasaṃjadā //15// apuvvakaṛaṇa-paviṭṭha-suddhi-
saṃjadesu atthi uvasamā khavā //16// aṇiyaṭṭi-bādara-sāṃparāiya-
paviṭṭha-suddhi-saṃjadesu atthi uvasamā khavā //17// suhuma-
sāṃparāiya-paviṭṭha-suddhi-saṃjadesu atthi uvasamā khavā //18//
uvasanta-kasāya-vīyarāya-chadumattā //19// khīṇa-kasāya-vīyarāya-
chadumattā //20// saḷogakevalī //21// aḷogakevalī //22//*

Wrong belief; taste of right belief; right and wrong belief; right belief with self-control; self-control and non-self-control; self-control with carelessness; self-control without carelessness; pacification is still weak for self-controlled beings for whom purity has begun a process against new karmas; pacification is still weak for self-controlled beings for whom purity has begun a 'no return' war against rough passions; pacification is still weak for self-controlled beings for whom purity has begun a 'no return' war against subtle passions; non-omniscient ascetics, free from attachments, for whom passions are pacified; non-omniscient ascetics, free from attachments, for whom passions are destroyed; omniscient ascetics with activity; omniscient ascetics without activity (*Ṣaṭkhaṇḍāgama*, 1.1.9–22).

Nemicandra was inspired by this text when he wrote the *Gommaṭasāra* ('Essence of Mahāvīra's teachings'). The book is divided into two parts: one devoted to the soul (*Jīvakhaṇḍa*), the other devoted to karma (*Karmakhaṇḍa*). The first book gives the list of the fourteen Stages of Qualities, here referred as 'compositions of the soul' (*jīvasamāsa*); the second explains the karmic categories involved in every stage.

⁹ *Tattvārthasūtra* 9.1, 9.10, 9.37–41, 9.47. See Tatia 1994.

*miccho sāsana misso aviradasammo ya desa-virado ya /
viradā pamatta idaro apuvva aṇiyatṭhi suhamo ya // GSJ_9 //
ubasanta khīnamoho sajogakevalijiṇo ajojī ya /
caudasa jīvasamāsā kameṇa siddhā ya ṇādavvā // GSJ_10 //*

Wrong belief; taste of right belief; mixed; right belief without self-control; partial self-control; complete self-control with carelessness; the opposite (i.e. complete self-control without carelessness); process against new karmas; ‘no return’ process; war against subtle passions; pacification; destroyed delusion; Jina with activity; and Jina without activity must be understood as the fourteen compositions of the soul leading gradually to Realisation (*Gommaṭasāra*, *Jīvakhaṇḍa*, 9–10).

The *Gommaṭasāra* was popular in Digambara circles until the 18th century, as we saw with Banārasīdās. The early 18th-century Digambara author Paṇḍit Dyānatrāy wrote pieces which were collected after his death by Paṇḍit Jagatrāy under the title *Dharmavilāsa*. Some of his *padas* are still very famous among Digambaras who continue to sing them during daily ritual. But it is another independent text which is more pertinent to our present study. According to the oral tradition, Dyānatrāy¹⁰ became a fervent adept of Goddess Padmāvātī who offered to grant him a wish in return for his deep devotion. Dyānatrāy answered that he did not want anything for himself but he wished that everyone would convert to the Jain faith! In her wisdom, Padmāvātī said that such a project was not in her power, nor was it in Jina’s power. So Dyānatrāy just asked her for inspiration for the short treatise on Jainism, the *Carcāsataka* (‘One Hundred Verses on Conversations’, henceforth CŚ), that he was composing. The term *carcā* was used by the Ādhyātmika groups to refer to their meetings. The CŚ is a 103-verse poem (mostly in *chappay* and *savaiyā ikatisā* metres) on the soul (*jīva*) and its journey through the three worlds (infernal, human, divine) towards the Realisation (*siddhi*). The text is organised around three main concepts: karma theory, doctrine of the Stages of Qualities, and cosmology. Dyānatrāy’s ambition seems to have been to present all the Jain theories of Realisation in detail. And we have seen how Jainism names, classifies and lists doctrinal elements. For example, verse 31 lists the highlights of Jainism: three times (*kāla*), six substances (*dravya*), seven principles (*tattva*), eight qualities (*guṇa*), etc. “The one who places his faith in these principles”, concluded

¹⁰ See Cort 2002/2003 and Dyānatrāy 1913 (introduction by Nāthūrām Premī).

Dyānatrāy, “is on his way to Jain orthodoxy, so he is close to being delivered”.¹¹ We can observe that the *guṇasthānas* are not included in the list, but they are underlying themes throughout the text.¹² Dyānatrāy asks what happens after the fourteenth stage: “I bow to he who follows the path of beatitude after having crossed the fourteenth stage, who does not know age nor death.”¹³ He expounds the karmic mechanism: influx (*āsrava*), enslavement (*bandha*), and manifestation (*udaya*) of karmas determining life-span (*āyus-k.*). His obsession with lists and numbers leads the reader into confusion – it is as if the classificatory system explodes. This obsession reveals the influence of Nemicandra’s *Gommaṭasāra*. The difference is that the latter is a voluminous treatise and not an extremely condensed one-hundred-verse poem.¹⁴ An additional verse of the CŚ pays direct homage to Nemicandra and his compendium.

*vandaṃ Nemi-jinendra, namaṃ cauvīsa Jinesura /
Mahāvīra vandāmi, vandi saba Siddha mahesura //
suddha jīva praṇamāmi, pañca-pada praṇamaṃ sukha ati /
Gomaṭasāra namāmi, Nemicanda ācāraja niti //
jina siddha suddha akalaṅka vara, guṇa-maṇī-bhūṣaṇa udavadhara /
kaḥuṃ vīsa parūpana bhāva saṃ, yaha maṅgala saba vi vighanahara //
CŚ_46 //*

I worship Neminātha, the excellent Jina; I bow to the twenty-four gods Jina; I worship Mahāvīra after having worshiped every Realised being; I bow to the pure soul; I bow to the five Names (Arhat, Siddha, Upādhyaya, Ācārya, Sāddhu) who assure a supreme bliss; I bow to the *Gommaṭasāra* which exposes the moral philosophy of Ācārya Nemicandra. They are conquerors, realised beings, pure souls, free

¹¹ *tihūṃ kāla ṣaṭa daraba, padāratha nava tume bhākhai / sāta tattva pañcāstikāya, ṣaṭa-kāyika rāke // āṭha karma guṇa āṭha, bheda lesyā ṣaṭa jānai / pañca pañca vrata samiti, carita gati gyāna bakhānai // saradhāi pratīta rudhi mana dharai, mukati-mūla samakita yahī / pada namaṃ jora kara sīsa dhara, dhana sarvaga iha vidhi kahī // CŚ 31 //*

¹² See the direct references to the *guṇasthāna* on verses 11, 13, 27, 37, 51–55, 73–85.

¹³ *vandaṃ ika caudasa thāna taji, ajara amara siva-pada varai (CŚ 82).*

¹⁴ To condense is the main task of a poet. Banārasīdās and his contemporaries wrote many ‘reminders’ on different topics, condensing a larger teaching. In the words of the twentieth-century American poet Lorine Niedecker: “Grandfather / advised me: / Learn a trade / I learned / to sit at desk / and condense / No layoffs / from this / condensery” (*Collected Works*, University of California Press, 2002).

from stains, excellent, jewelled ornaments that are, by their qualities, elevated. I will say twenty teachings with all my heart: may they be all auspicious and may they destroy what injures (*Carcāsataka*, 46).

In the mid-18th century, the Digambara scholar Paṇḍit Ṭoḍaramal wrote a *Gommaṭasāra-pūjā*, a poem which praised the qualities of the *Gommaṭasāra*, demonstrating the popularity of the text. Then, the theory of the Stages of Qualities became much too complicated for the modern Jain lay society. It seems that the laymen of the 19th century preferred to follow an easier path in their spiritual progression. In the mid-19th century, the poet Daulatrām wrote a short treatise for laymen, the *Chahaḍhāla* ('Six Chapters' or 'Six Shields [against karma]'). This text never directly refers to the *guṇasthāna*, but the chapters of the book form a progression from delusion to Realisation. This progression evokes the Stages of Perfection. Nowadays, whether the *guṇasthāna* is more an object of study than a real practice among the Jain lay society is a question that merits further study. In texts, the idea of a progression is present but the technical aspects of the *guṇasthāna* may not be very popular in practice. At every stage of the *guṇasthāna*, a certain kind of karma should decline. This is described by the treatises with great precision and a strong mathematical background is advised to fully comprehend the theory, which is based on a calculus of the duration and destruction of all the 148 karmic categories.

5. Conclusion

We can conceptualise the *Samayasāranāṭaka*, and more largely Banārasidās' philosophical position in 17th-century India, as a crossroads between the two Jain points of view: the absolute point of view (*nīścaya-naya*) prescribed by the *Samayasāra* and the conventional point of view (*vyavahāra-naya*) described in the *Gommaṭasāra*. Kundakunda started a lineage of Jain scholars, reformists and poets, that is sometimes called the "Digambara mystical tradition".¹⁵ These authors credited his work as the basis of their thought, like the Adhyātma groups did during their time. But the "monk literature" Kundakunda wrote is not accessible nor attractive to laymen. This surely exhibits a kind of mixed thought in this lineage which goes from Kundakunda in the beginning of the common era to Rājacandra at the end of the 19th century: discussions concentrate on the search for the true nature of the Self, all while daily life is organised in a way which allows the layman to continue working in the market-place. If we consider the other Jain authors of this tradition, like

¹⁵ See Cort 2002, Dundas 2002, and Petit 2013.

Dyānatrāy, Ṭoḍaramal, or Daulatrām, the stages themselves appear to be more or less abandoned during the late 18th century, possibly because of the high level of technical complexity. Rājacandra himself said in the *Ātmasiddhi* that both absolute and conventional points of view are useful for the voluntary layman who wants to search for the self and to become an *ātmārthī* ('seeker of the Self').¹⁶ So Banārasidās (although he is not the only one), by including the *guṇasthāna* theory within the *Samayasāra*, included the lay community in the quest for Realisation.

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¹⁶ See Rājacandra, *Ātmasiddhi*, 130–133.

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Seven

*If people get to know me, I'll become cow-dung: Bhaba Pagla and the songs of the Bauls of Bengal*¹

Carola Erika Lorea

Introduction

When I was studying Bengali literature at the university town of Shantiniketan, in the arid and sunny district of Birbhum, West Bengal, I was living in the rural outskirts close to a village that is densely populated by Bauls. I soon started to appreciate and learn Baul songs from the musicians who lived in the surrounding area. Among the songs the performers were teaching me, many bore the *bhaṇitā* of Bhaba Pagla (1902–1984): a songwriter and spiritual teacher from East Bengal.² The name of this composer appeared again and again, not only in the last couplets of the songs performed, but also in the Bauls' personal life stories; for instance, many Bauls used to pay regular visits, or even permanently resided, at the ashram of Kalna (Bardhaman), where Bhaba Pagla spent most of his life on the Indian

¹ *Khabar haye gelei gabar haye yābo* is a very well-known saying of Bhaba Pagla reported by his biographers, disciples and devotees (see for instance G. R. Cakrabarty 1995: 45). It refers to the reserved nature of Bhaba Pagla's personality and his concern about avoiding all sorts of publicity in connection to his spiritual accomplishments and supposed supernatural powers.

² A Baul song normally consists of three or four stanzas, a refrain that is repeated at the beginning of the song and after each stanza, and a couplet that precedes the initial refrain and appears again at the end of the song. The *bhaṇitā* usually appears in the last lines of the final stanza and it shows the name of the composer, who speaks of himself in the third person and may give his ultimate opinion on the song's theme or even twist it through a riddle. For example at the end of the song "The flute is still playing in Vrindavana" by Bhaba Pagla: *āsā chilo mane mane yābo āmi Bṛndābane / Bhabāpāglā ray bāṃdhane māyār kāche re* (I was thinking to myself this time I'll go to Vrindavan / but Bhaba Pagla remains bound to Māyā).

side of Bengal;³ numerous Baul singers and practitioners took initiation with the mantra Bhaba Pagla used to give, either from him directly or from his eldest disciples. Most of the Bauls respect Bhaba Pagla as a mahājan, an enlightened teacher, and publicly show their devotion by displaying Bhaba Pagla's image on the top of their *ektārā* (the one-stringed instrument that is peculiar to Baul music).

Travelling around and visiting various gatherings of Bauls and Fakirs, such as the annual *melās* at Agradwip, Sonamukhi, Jaydev, Sriniketan, and a number of smaller fairs and Baul performances, I soon realised that in the oral repertoire of songs stored in the performers' memory, Bhaba Pagla's songs have a very consistent presence, and indeed constitute a central part of it. Together with the lyrics of Lalok Fakir, Gurucand Gosain, Duddu Shah, Haripad Gosain and many more named and anonymous masters of the tradition, Bhaba Pagla's compositions permeate the landscape of the *orature* transmitted and played by the itinerant minstrels of Bengal. In an article by Manas Ray and Suparna Tat (2006), a sample survey – probably too small and contextually confined to be of any analytical significance – on the authorship of the songs performed by Bauls shows that four songs out of twenty bore the name of Bhaba Pagla. It would probably be hyperbolic to state that the majority of the songs of the Bauls, a tradition that embraces a multitude of lineages distributed on a territory that could be as big as the old undivided Bengal, appear to have been authored by a single *padakartā*. It is undeniable though that songs like *Gān-i sarbaśreṣṭha sādhanā* (Singing is the most excellent practice for self-realisation), *Nadī bharā dheu* (The river is full of waves), *Kālī balo maṅṅi āmār* (My heart, repeat Kali's name), and many others, unavoidably belong to the oral repository of any Baul, notwithstanding his origins and his lineage (*paramparā*), and there is no public concert or music session among the Bauls of West Bengal in which Bhaba Pagla's name does not resonate.

In striking contrast to the pervasive presence of Bhaba Pagla's works in the oral milieu of Bengali devotional and esoteric songs, the written references are scarce and confusing. The secondary sources and the academic literature available on Bauls and Fakirs – an extensively discussed topic in the field of Bengali folklore and folk literature to which a consistent number of publications has been dedicated – rarely cite Bhaba Pagla's songs. Even in the anthologies and in the collections of Baul songs that appeared in the last fifty years, it is surprising to notice that the inclusion of Bhaba Pagla's compositions is almost non-existent. Apart from the few selections of songs, collected by his devotees, that have been privately published, and circulate among followers and initiates who can purchase them at the temporary stalls in front of the temples when some festive occasion occurs,

³ Such is the case, for example, of the well-known Subal Das Baul of Aranghata (Nadia district).

the widespread circulation of Bhaba Pagla's songs in the oral literature is not reflected in the vast written (academic as well as popular) literature available on Bauls and Fakirs.

The extraordinary absence of Bhaba Pagla attracted my curiosity and led me to a more in-depth study of the circumstances in which local scholarship on Bauls has developed, and of the way in which Bhaba Pagla came to be known and represented by both local practitioners and scholars. How can we explain Bhaba Pagla's absence in the *Baulsphere* as it has been represented in printed texts?⁴ How has his work been discussed in the available references? How do his disciples interpret this exclusion?

Supported by data and evidence, both oral and written, that I gathered in the last few years, the attempt to answer these questions is just the first step of an ongoing doctoral research project on the broader issue of Bhaba Pagla's *oeuvre* in his performative context. The textual and contextual sources I am going to use have been collected during two years of field-work (July 2011 – August 2013) in West Bengal, in which time I recorded interviews, songs and oral teachings of Bauls, Fakirs, specialised performers of Bhaba Pagla's songs and members of his lineage, predominantly in the districts of Birbhum, Nadia, Murshidabad and Bankura.

1. The Baul tradition: a premise on a negotiable category

In this section I am going to provide some background information on the tradition known as 'Baul' and, after a very brief description of the Bauls' identity and system of beliefs, I will consider the way in which Bauls have been represented in academic portraits, from the studies of post-Independence Bengali scholars up until the most recent academic trends. This will form a basis of useful information to understand the constructed category of Bauls and the way in which Bhaba Pagla's songs failed to respond to the criteria of authenticity defined as necessary to pertain to the Baul class.

In one of the catchiest definitions, Bauls have been defined as the mystic minstrels or the Tantric *troubadours* of Bengal.⁵ In the most general and shared sense, *Baul* is used as an umbrella-name that refers to a wide and variegated spectrum of lineages. Their members – mostly low-caste singers, musicians and/or practitioners of an esoteric cult that revolves around a number of techniques for self-realisation (*sādhanā*) – may belong to both Hindu

⁴ I owe this neologism to Mimlu Sen (2009).

⁵ See for example Bhaskar Bhattacharya's book on Bauls *The Path of the Mystic Lover: Baul songs of passion and ecstasy* (1993) and Alokeranjan Dasgupta's *Roots in the void: Baul songs of Bengal* (1977: 39), where Bauls are defined as "troubadours of lore".

and Muslim families (the latter would prefer to define themselves as Fakirs since the term 'Baul' became more and more associated with Vaishnavism in certain areas of West Bengal). The religious tradition followed by Bauls and Fakirs is essentially Tantric in its fundamental faith in the identity between microcosm and macrocosm, the priority of the guru, and the yearning for transcending conventional polarities.⁶ It is said to be a syncretic outcome of Sahajayana Buddhism, Vaishnava ecstatic devotionalism and Sufism and is generally regarded as a non-institutionalised, heterodox and strongly antinomian movement. The adepts do not recognise the validity of sacred scriptures, which are considered but *anumān* (understood as 'mere hear-say'), and they follow the teachings and instructions of a living guru. They consider castes (*jāti*), classes and religious affiliations (*dharma*) to be artificial divisions among men and thus do not engage in any caste-based discrimination. Considering exterior ritualism, dogmas and idol worship to be inferior practices for self-realisation, they are not particularly affiliated to any temple or mosque, do not distinguish between the ritually pure and impure, polluting and contaminating, and some of their practices of inner alchemy dealing with substances such as faeces and menstrual blood are seen as despicable and scandalous by Hindu and Muslim orthodoxies. The initiates may prefer to define themselves using different names for a more precise or a broader affiliation (for example *darbeś*, *baiṣṇab*, *baiṣṇab fakir*, see Chakraborti 2001:355–360) but all of them share common festivities and occasions of gathering, common practices and basic beliefs, and a fluid and ever-changing corpus of songs that constitute the 'encyclopaedia' of Baul tenets and creed, vis-à-vis the lack of a unified written code or a single founder recognised by the independent lineages.

At the time of Rabindranath Tagore, when Bengali folk culture started being refined and rehabilitated in order to provide a basis for nationalist identity (Sen 1997: 1–5; Narayan 1993: 186–190; Ghosh in Chakraborti 2010: 338–351), Baul songs were brought under the spotlight, and their scandalous elements expurgated in order to fit the need for cultural pride and to embody an example of glorious indigenous heritage. With the writings of Rabindranath Tagore (for instance, the appendix on Bauls in *The Religion of Man*, 1931), Kshitimohan Sen (1949) and others, the identity of the Baul was idealised and romanticised, and the portrait of a lonely minstrel that moves together with the wind, unattached to worldly matters, whose songs are his only form of worship (Dimock, 1966: 251; Datta, 1978: 445–455), started to permeate the academic as well as the collective imagination.

⁶ In referring to the general characteristics of the various and numberless religious phenomena hardly ascribable to the single term "Tantrism", I rely on the descriptive characteristics pointed out by Douglas Brooks (1990: 55–72) and by Goudriaan and Gupta (1981: 2).

The generation of Bengali folklorists that worked in the cultural climate of the independence movement sought to deconstruct the orientalist idea of the 'spiritual East'. The folk literature and folk religions of Bengal had to be analysed in order to demonstrate the non-spiritual character of Indian culture. For example, the nationalist Benoy Kumar Sarkar in his *The Folk Elements of Hindu Culture* (1917) attempted to demolish the other-worldliness attributed to the Hindu mind in the eyes of the colonisers, and sought to highlight the positive background of folk traditions, where "religiosity is not an obstacle but a handmaid to progress and material prosperity" (Sarkar 1926: 211). He described Bengali folk traditions such as the Gambhira of North Bengal as an example of "strength" and "virility" and interpreted Hindu polytheism as an example of true agnosticism and a manifestation of a spirit of tolerance.

With a similar goal, Dinesh Candra Sen, a doyen of the history of Bengali folk literature, emphasises the secular, this-worldly orientation of folk-tales that, according to him, emerged in the ancient kingdom of Magadha and had a world-wide diffusion during the Pala dynasty, well before the Hinduisation of Bengal and the Muslim arrival in India.

"The striking analogies, which are no chance coincidences, between these stories of the East and West remind us [...] that in the olden times the debt of enlightenment and culture was one of Europe to India, as in our times it has been quite the opposite. In India the highest culture and refinement were for ages represented by Magadha, from the ruins of which have now sprung up some of the cities and towns of Bengal [...] having been one of the landing shores of enterprising foreign peoples who traded with India, it is no wonder that Bengal [...] folk-literature has obtained a world-wide circulation".
(Sen 1920:41)

In his view, the folk-ethos of an "essentially Bengali consciousness" propagated by folk-tales continues to survive in rural Bengal and provides a common bond between Hindu and Muslim peasants (Sen 1920: xv-xvii).

The studies on Bauls conducted after Independence continue to echo this concern for highlighting the secular, materialist and rational sides of the tradition in contrast to the Tagorean description of Bauls. Shakti Nath Jha suggests the idea of a strong subversive materialist movement that has its roots in the ancient atheistic traditions of Carvakas, Ajivikas, Buddhists and Jains, and survives nowadays in the "body-centered immanentist practices of Bauls" (Jha 1999: 8). He vehemently opposes the use of attributes such as

‘mystic’ and ‘idealist’, for Bauls “explain nature and universe in terms of organic chemistry, they explain human creation through female menstruation and male semen, and natural creation through the four elements” (ibid.: 8–9).

Instead of the previous adjectives that accompanied the romanticised image of the Baul, post-Independence scholarship, starting from the massive book that followed Upendranath Bhattacharya’s long field-work (*Bāul o Bāul Gān*, 1957), describes the Baul tradition with new attributes, such as *bastubādī* (translated as ‘materialist’: whose body-centred practices are based on the control, intake and manipulation of *bastu*, in the sense of matter, bodily substances and fluids) and *bartamān-panthīs* (followers of *bartamān* as a means and object of knowledge: that which is experienced through one’s own senses). Abdul Wahab (2011: 124) suggests the influence of Kapalikas on Baul thought, for Kapalikas were derogatorily called *bastubādīs*, and recognised *bastubādīs* were already present in the ancient classical schools of philosophy under the name of Lokayata or Carvaka, thus reiterating the supposed nexus between atheist, materialist philosophers and contemporary Baul lineages.

In this way, as I pointed out in a previous article, a wave of recent scholarship on Bauls started focussing more closely on the hard-core esoteric practices, giving a privileged place to the description of the sexo-yogic techniques of control of the practitioner’s body and concentrating on the private sphere of the tradition. Putting emphasis on their most extreme and socially controversial aspects, the public sphere of Bauls’ activities – their role as performers for an audience of outsiders, the exoteric social message and their interrelation with the broader socio-economic constellation – was disregarded and neglected (Lorea 2013: 439–440).

On the other hand, the widespread influence of Marxist ideas and the pervasive impact of the perspective of subaltern studies affected the realm of the studies on folklore and oral traditions in West Bengal, shaping its theoretical basis. As reported by Bikas Cakraborti (2010: 20), the work of Marxist folklorists led to a certain confusion in the understanding of what should be the subject of folkloristics, for “they failed in facing the relation between folklife and religion from an objective point of view”. Adherents to the Marxist cultural movement, for example, refused to treat Baul music as folk song on the grounds that it was based on religion while in their opinion, folk music is intimately related with only the “hard realities and struggles of life” (ibid.: 20). The limitation of the approach advanced by subaltern studies in recognising the religious dimension of subaltern consciousness has been critically discussed elsewhere (see Hugh Urban 2001: 8). It is important to point out here that the tendency to value the Baul tradition only in relation to its opposition and resistance against the hegemony of religious establishments

and the dominant economic system, has excluded a range of phenomena – such as the malleable views on temple-based rites and the dynamic negotiations between Baul performers, remunerated staged performances and urban patronage – thus preventing a holistic understanding of the contemporary repertoire of Baul songs. We will see how similar academic trends may constitute an important factor in explaining the removal of Bhaba Pagla’s lyrics from the scenario of Baul songs in print.

In the last decades, several scholars have pointed to the effects of considering the changeless, perennial character of the tradition and privileging the most intimate practices of Bauls instead of their entanglement with new socio-economic realities (Ray 1994: xi; Mukharjee 2012: 47). As the lyrics and the performances of Bauls increasingly enter the realms of the record industry, show-business, popular culture, commercial movies and Bengali best-sellers, some researchers (e.g. Manas Ray, Manjita Mukharji, Abhisek Basu, Ben Krakauer) have contributed to the field of Baul studies by avoiding the underestimation of Bauls’ interactive and *intercultural* (Jabbour 2004: 1–13) facade, re-evaluating the pivotal importance of the “folklore of the market” against the rooted tendency to investigate merely the “folklore of the hearth” (Abrahams cited in Jabbour, *ibid.* p. 17–18).

2. *Bahurūpī* Bhaba Pagla: an introductory profile

The analysis of the works of Bhaba Pagla, and the way he has been defining himself independently from academic taxonomies, may shed some light on the larger theme of the studies on Bengali folklore and folk-songs. In this section we will shortly describe Bhaba Pagla’s life story and corpus of songs, and then observe the versatile ways in which his religious affiliation is perceived by followers and devotees.

In the first place, Bhaba Pagla ascribes to the tradition of “divine madness” (McDaniel 1989) of the non-institutional cults of Bengal that gathers many eccentric characters of poets-saints and ecstatic Tantric masters, such as Ramprasad Sen, Lalon Fakir, Bama Khyepa etc. He is remembered as a thin *sādhu* in red robes and blue *cādar* (a cloth that covers the shoulders, see fig. 1) with rebel curly hair, always accompanied by his *sonār lāṭhi*, a bamboo cane stick covered in decorated foils of gold, that he used to heal and even resuscitate people by vigorously beating the injured part of the body. His qualities as a virtuoso singer, musician and composer are profusely praised by those who attended any of the music sessions that he regularly held at temples and devotees’ houses: he was said to be an impressive harmonium and *behālā* (Indian violin) player as well as an impromptu composer of both texts and melodies that he would orally improvise or even impulsively

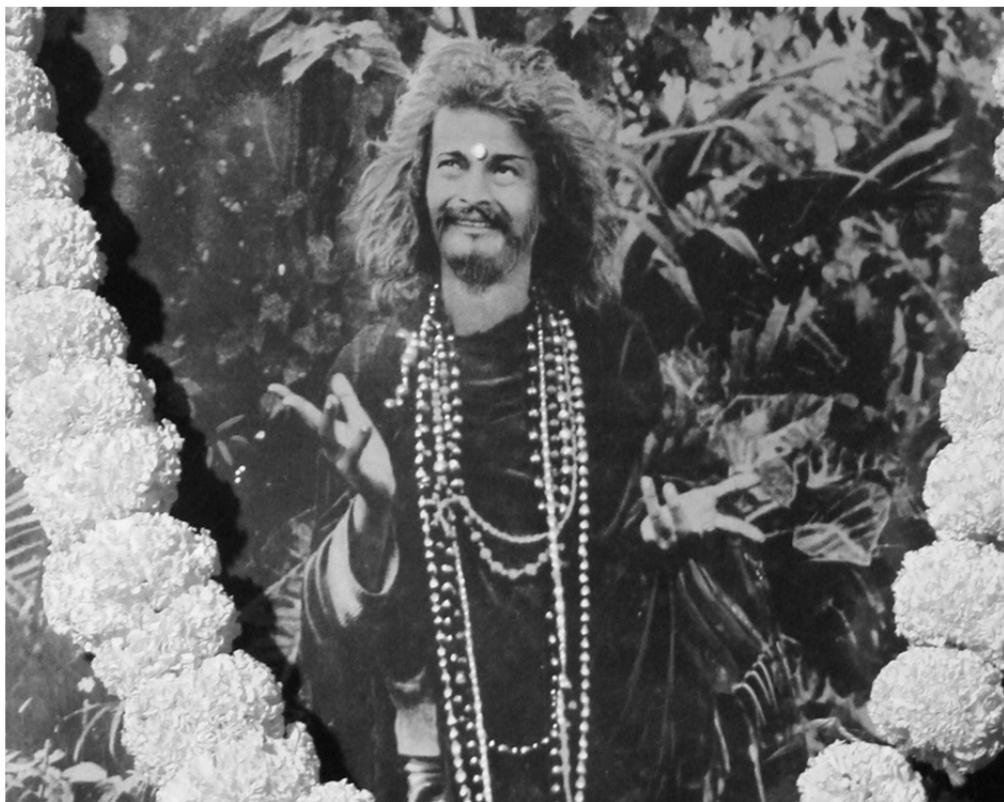


Fig. 1: A picture of Bhaba Pagla preserved in the Shyama Mandir of Sodpur (Natarah, North 24 Parganas district).

write down on a piece of paper (some disciples remembered having been suddenly asked to bring a piece of paper while he was squatting in the toilet since he could not refrain from writing down a new composition).⁷ The fact that he addressed his devotion to the Goddess Kali, sanctified Kali temples and used to perform rituals and offerings to the icon of the Goddess made him fit to be generally labelled as a Shakta worshipper, even if it is difficult to give him a clear religious pedigree: an important part of his corpus of songs is dedicated to the guru as the highest object of devotion (*gurutattva gān*), many lyrics deal with the love of Radha-Krishna in a typically Vaishnava (or Vaishnava Sahajiya) devotional fashion, several songs use the terminology of *mārphati gān* (esoteric Islamic songs), and others are

⁷ Interview with Sukumar Mistri, in the temple of Kalna, 20/03/2012.

composed in tune with the images, metaphors and jargon of *dehatattva* songs on the doctrine of the body-centred *sāadhanā* practised by Bauls and Fakirs.

It is undeniably difficult, if not impossible, to record with historical precision and documentation the chronology of Bhaba Pagla's life and works. His biographies always have a legendary and supernatural tone, and witness the process of divinisation that his personality underwent in the representations offered by his community of devotees. Instead of discarding the anecdotes and life-stories that have been reported by his followers as unreal and analytically insignificant, I prefer to adopt the perspective chosen by McLean in his study on Ramprasad Sen, where he gives relevance to the miraculous events that surround the story of Ramprasad's life: no matter how incredible and unbelievable, "it is the Ramprasad of myth, not history, that is important for the Shakta tradition" (McLean 1998: 28).

According to the information we can extract from the biographies of Tamonash Bandyopadhyay (1985), Gopika Ranjan Cakrabarti (1995) and Gopal Khetri (1999), Bhaba Pagla was born as Bhabendramahan Ray Chaudhury in the village of Amta (Dhamrai, at present in the Dhaka district of Bangladesh) around 1903. His father, Gajendra Mohon Ray Chaudhury, possibly a descendent of the Chaudhury landowners of Baliyati, worked as a broker for a jute company. Bhabendra was the youngest son, together with his twin brother Debendra. According to the available hagiographies/biographies, since his childhood he was inclined toward a religious life. He used to compose devotional songs dedicated to Kali, roam about in cremation grounds, and offer to the icon of the Goddess rounded *sandesh* (sweets of unripe curd cheese) made of mud that would magically turn into actual *sandesh*: a story that probably derives from the famous incident in the childhood of Chaitanya, who was reproached by his mother for eating dirt, and stated he did not see any essential difference between mud and sweets (*Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, Adi 14.25–14.29). He was sent to Kolkata as a child and got acquainted with Sarada Devi, the widow of Sri Ramakrishna; he used to visit her regularly and entertain her with his devotional songs that she enthusiastically appreciated to the point that she apparently wondered whether he could be the reincarnation of Ramakrishna (Bandyopadhyay 1985: 9–10). Around his late teens, as a reward for saving his older brother's son's life when he was seriously ill, he was given some land where he established his first Kali temple, that he called Anandamayi Mandir. His mother arranged his marriage when he was around thirty with a ten-year old girl from the same village. By that time he was already well known as an ecstatic poet-saint and had gathered a number of devotees, both Hindu and Muslim, in virtue of his miraculous powers.

When the communitarian tensions in East Pakistan became unbearable, Bhaba was convinced to migrate to West Bengal. One of his closest devotees bought him some land in the proximity of Kalna (Bardhaman district), where he could establish his temple and ashram, which is still run nowadays by his grandsons. After his arrival in West Bengal, in less than thirty years, Bhaba Pagla attracted a considerable number of followers (one hundred and fifty thousand, according to G. R. Cakravarti, *ibid*: 44) and founded, on request of his disciples, a number of Kali temples scattered around the whole State. He died in 1984, leaving us an extraordinarily vast canon of orally transmitted songs (twenty-eight thousand, according to the hyperbolic opinion of his disciples) and some hand-written notebooks jealously kept in the main temple, in which about six thousand compositions are preserved. These songs are nowadays learned and performed by first and second generation disciples, by Baul performers, and by Bengali singers and entertainers trained in *śyamāsaṅgīt* (Shakta devotional songs) and folk-songs; apart from the festivities connected to the temples and ashrams led by Bhaba Pagla's descendants and disciples, among the performative occasions during which Bhaba Pagla's songs are sung the Baul gatherings represent the most important ones. From the chronicles on Bhaba Pagla's life and also from field-work sources, it seems that his music sessions were attended by many Bauls and Fakirs, and he gave initiation to several Bauls. Bandyopadhyay (1988: 131) put it as a matter of fact: "needless to say, a large number of devotees belonging to the Baul Vaishnava class were gathering around Bhaba to share the nectar of his words. [...] A large number of *mājhi-māllā* [sailors, oarsmen] were attracted as well". In a different publication Bandyopadhyay reports that the songs of Bhaba Pagla were exported to the West as soon as the wave of the success of Bauls in the USA started.⁸ When Bhaba was staying at her devotee Jashoda Devi's house, he was visited by two Bauls who were "wearing loose clothes and long hair tied in a bun". One of these Bauls was named Harekrishno, from Manikganj. He was apparently looking for Bhaba for a long time and as soon as he met him, he told him he was in America for a tour together with Purna Das Baul. There he sang many of

⁸ From the 1960s, thanks to Bob Dylan and his entourage, the Bauls became well-known in the Western underground and counterculture scene. Five Bauls, including the now world-famous Purna Das Baul and his brother Lakshman from Siuri (Birbhum district) toured in the USA in 1965 after an invitation from Albert Grossman, Dylan's manager, who organised various concerts, in which they supposedly performed Bhaba Pagla's songs (Bandyopadhyay 1985: 87–88).

Bhaba's songs, such as "*Bale kaye mānuṣke ki sādhu karā yāy*", "*Kālo haye ki habe re, māyer madhur madhur mūrti*", and "*Maraṇ kāro kathā śune nā*" (Bandyopadhyay 1985: 87–88).⁹

Among Baul singers and practitioners, Bhaba Pagla is respected as a *mahājan*, an enlightened one who shared his accomplishment (*siddhi*) through his poetic talents. In many of his songs Bhaba Pagla cites the term *Baul* and defines himself as a *Fakir*. For example: "In forests and grooves, in the lotus flowers / hundreds of Bauls are drunken by your name." (Bandyopadhyay 1988: 109); "Bhaba Pagla's Baul verses are not bad at all/ how much you've seen, how much you'll see, in an ever changing acting./ Rather than laughing you'll mostly cry, nobody is going with you." (ibid. pp. 152–153); "Bhaba became a *Fakir*/ hope, peace, desires, he forgot everything./ He gave away his little life at everybody's side." (ibid. p. 85); "Why don't you let me break, oh Lord the chains of this deception: I am a *Fakir*." (ibid. p. 109).

But "*Fakir*" is not the only title the composer chose to employ to describe his religious path. First of all, the term *Fakir* does not particularly relate to a religion or a social group but rather serves as an epithet for renouncers and "divine madmen" of different lineages of Bengal, and pertains to Sufi-oriented backgrounds, as well as to *sādhakas* of the Shakta and Vaishnava tradition. The famous poet-saint Ramprasad Sen, for instance – an emblem of Bengali Shaktism – used to refer to himself as a *Fakir* in some of his songs. In some cases, if we compare Bhaba Pagla's and Ramprasad's biographies, we would find striking similarities and we may suppose certain episodes of Bhaba's life were constructed in order to parallel the renowned Shakta saint's life. It is believed that Bhabendra told his father he did not want to apply for a governmental job to become an employee or a policeman and that his only wish would have been to become an "officer of the Mother" (*māyer cākri karbo*, Bandyopadhyay 1985: 31), echoing the well-known fate of Ramprasad Sen who was working as an office clerk but could not fulfil his duties: his mind was too absorbed in ecstasy and his record notebooks were filled with poems dedicated to the Mother Goddess (McDaniel 2004: 162; McLean 1998: 11–12). The relation between Bhaba Pagla and Ramprasad Sen cannot be underestimated: not only did he compose songs specifying, in the head line, that they were to be performed in *prasādi sur* (the melodic style that came to be associated with Ramprasad's songs), he also explicitly claimed to be a reincarnation of Ramprasad ("*Ramprasād, Nidhirām, Amar Caraṇ, Bhabār nām / cāri janam āche pramāṇ / tāhā ki mā sab bhulecho*/" – With the name Ramprasad, Nidhiram, Amar Caran and then Bhaba/

⁹ The titles (actually the first line of the refrains, commonly used as a title for Baul songs) can be translated respectively as: "Can you easily turn a man into a *sādhu*?"; "How's that my Mother's sweet icon is all black?"; and "Death pays heed to no one".

there is proof of my four incarnations/ did you forget it mother?).¹⁰ The belief in the metempsychotic heritage from Ramprasad Sen helps us to understand the perceived importance of the influence of Ramprasad's compositions on Bhaba's literary production, but also their constructed overlapping identities as poet-saints who achieved spiritual perfection and acquired supernatural powers through the practice of singing (*gāne siddha*), and their religious affinity in the path of Tantric *sāadhanā*.

In fact, nowadays several leaders of prominent Tantric lineages of Bengal refer to Bhaba Pagla attributing to him the titles that are typically ascribed to the most realised practitioners (*siddha*; *mahājan*; *avadhūt*, etc.). Khyepa Baba, a guru who is supposedly related to Bhaba Pagla's lineage through his guru-mother, considers Bhaba Pagla an *avadhūt*, "one who experiences *sannyās* within *saṁsār*"; he had the authority to wear a blue cloth because the *avadhūt* "wears the color of the sky, of illusion: Maya's color. While naked Digambaras take a distance from Maya, society, and reality, the blue *avadhūts* act, take a participative role within society. Thus they cannot be naked, but they choose the colour of the awareness of the illusion [see the verses in note 2, "Bhaba Pagla remains bound to Maya"]".¹¹ Pratap Narayan Cakrabarti, who is described as an erudite *śmaśānabāsi bāmācāra tāntrik* ("left-hand" Tantric practitioner living in the cremation ground) considered him to be "a hidden *avadhūt*. A hidden *avadhūt* wants to maintain his *sāadhanā* secret. His most remarkable characteristic is, his *kuṇḍalini* is awake. Whatever he wishes can become true. For him every discrimination, what to eat and what one shouldn't eat, [...] all this is superfluous". (Bandyopadhyay 1988: 70–71).

By now we can appreciate how difficult it would be to contain the figure of our saint-composer within a definite category. Fluidly moving from the context of Bauls to the domain of Shaktism and Tantric *siddhas*, the transreligiosity of Bhaba Pagla reflects the flexible nature of non-institutional *sahajiyā* cults of Bengal, reluctant to define boundaries which are, for them, constrictive and constantly renegotiable. On the other hand, the religious identity of Bhaba Pagla was constructed in such a way that it could appear multivalent, cross-religious, and free from the cage of crystallised definitions.

Cakrabarti (1995: 62) reports that when a devotee asked him "What are you actually?", Bhaba Pagla replied "I am a *bahurūpī* (one who assumes many forms, a chameleon-like

¹⁰ The verse was reported by Sukumar Mistri (09/05/2013), a disciple who grew up with Bhaba Pagla and takes care of the temple of Kalna.

¹¹ Interview of Khyepa Baba in one of his disciples' house in Shantiniketan (Birbhum district), on 19/01/2013.

actor, a quick-change artist)".¹² This amusing statement, that perfectly fits the witty character of the composer, can be interpreted in multiple ways. On the one hand, Bhaba Pagla deliberately confused those who were interested in attributing to him a fixed religious subscription: at times he would sing the glory of Krishna's name; at times he would wear a Muslim hat and sing of Allah and Mohammad; in the temple, he was performing *pūjas* to the Goddess Kali, and again in some songs he would boldly state all Gods' mystical identity (see for instance the verses "Kali, Krishna, Allah, Rasul, they are all bound in the same melody" in Bandyopadhyay 1985: 148) or even deny the existence of any deity and sing that the only God is man (see the verses "*mānuṣ-i bhagabān, tāre dio sammān*" in Khetri 1999: 66). Evading any kind of restrictive classification, Bhaba Pagla always avoided revealing the name of his *dīkṣā-guru*: in the official version he referred to his devotees, he received his initiatory mantra from Shiva himself while he was meditating at the cremation ground. In a similar way, the well-known Baul master and composer Lalon Fakir never referred to his religious background and carefully kept his family name secret, while scholars and writers are still ferociously debating and inquiring as to his possible Hindu or Muslim origins, dragging his religious identity toward the one or the other group according to the political needs of the moment (Urban 1999: 40–44).

From another perspective, the advantage of wearing the clothes of a *bahurūpī* are particularly evident if we recognise Bhaba Pagla as a spokesman of a subversive, heterodox tradition that cannot freely display itself in the public eye. The risk of persecution, social disapproval and marginalisation that would derive from the open discussion of certain anti-conventional social views and sexo-yogic practices makes it inappropriate for them to be revealed outside of an esoteric circle. Thus, in order to protect the esoteric knowledge from outsiders, the teachings and the outfit of a guru may embody a safe exoteric facade, socially acceptable and apparently orthodox. In a similar fashion, Dimock described the double-face attitude of Vaishnava Sahajiyas in the need for self-protection as follows:

"Sahajiya was an esoteric school. Its deviation was not always socially visible. [...] It seems that Vaishnava Sahajiyas were exemplary citizens, rarely given, like the Pashupatas and other Indian deviants, to

¹² *Bahurūpīs* of Bengal are also a traditional caste of professional folk actors. Every day they disguise themselves as a different character, mostly as Gods of the Hindu pantheon, mythological heroes, or even school teachers, tax collectors, angry wives, animals, etc. They wander from village to village, especially during rural fairs, and display their elaborate make-up, costumes and amusing acting skills. The entertained spectators remunerate them with an offering of money, food or clothes. See the second volume of *History of Indian Theatre* (Varadpande 1992: 136).

demonstrating their convictions of the meaninglessness of the world by public exhibitions of obscenity and sloth. Whatever demonstrations they might have made were largely private. [...] The Vaishnava self is the ‘official self’ of a Vaishnava Sahajiya. This self is a social being. The unofficial self is the Sahajiya self, his elect nature goes against all normal standards. The personality of the Vaishnava Sahajiya, it would seem, was somewhat schizophrenic (Dimock, 1966: 109)”

I believe the ‘transformism’ of Bhaba Pagla’s character can parallel the Vaishnava Sahajiyas’ need for a schizophrenic identity, that takes a different form depending on the private sphere or the public sphere of their activities. Other esoteric cults who prescribe strict secrecy regarding the most intimate practices similarly describe their ideal code of behaviour in “chamaleontic” terms. In a *śloka* of the Kulārṇava Tantra we read: “Secretly Kaula, outwardly Shaiva, and Vaishnava among men” (11,83). In his rainbow-coloured *bahurūpi*-identity, Bhaba Pagla assumed different colours according to the eyes of those who were looking at, and portraying him. In the next section we will see how he figures in the academic and popular literature and how his prismatic identity was a source of confusion and disorientation that resulted in the forgetful exclusion of Bhaba Pagla’s songs in the publications focused on the Bauls’ literary production.

3. Representing Bhaba Pagla in academic and popular literature

The literature dedicated to folk-songs, and especially to the songs performed by Bauls and Fakirs, has increasingly appealed to the Bengali readership since the first voluminous collection of Upendranath Bhattacharya (1957). In the last decades several compendia and monographs on Bauls’ oral tradition have been published both in English and Bengali. While certain composers of Baul songs found a growing interest and public fortune, others have been systematically removed from printed representation, though their oblivion is counterbalanced by their pervasive presence in the oral repertoire performed by Baul singers. Exalted as the indigenous philosopher of humanism and tolerance, Lalon Fakir attracted academic and popular curiosity to the extent that the incessant production of scientific publications¹³ is densely alternated by popular novels and movies inspired by the

¹³ Among the most recent studies on the figure are: Carol Salomon’s *Cosmogonic riddles of Lalon Fakir*, 1991; Annadashankar Ray’s *Lālan o tār gān*, 1992; Wakil Ahmed’s *Lālan Gīti Samagra*, 2002; Abdul Ahsan Chaudhuri’s *Lālan Samagra*, 2008; Haroonuzzaman’s *Lalon - Bangla Baul*, 2008; Abdul Ishahaq Hosain’

life and deeds of the celebrated folk poet.¹⁴ The commercial fortune of Bhaba Pagla, on the contrary, encountered the resistance of the scholars who opposed his inclusion within the Baul field, and there are virtually no works entirely dedicated to his massive and sophisticated literary production (the book *Bhabāpāglār Jīban o Gān*, drawn from the Ph.D. thesis of Gopika Ranjan Cakrabarti and published by the Bangla Academy of Dhaka may be the only semi-serious attempt). Some collections of selected songs of Bhaba Pagla are distributed and circulate among his disciples' temples and ashrams in the form of cheap pamphlets and home-made printings. Besides these few audacious commitments, if one looks at the wide editorial fortune of the literature on Bauls that appeared, both in English and in Bengali, as early as the beginning of the 20th century, it is interesting to note the context in which Bhaba Pagla's name is mentioned, and how surprisingly heterogeneous his descriptions are.

Some authors include one example of Bhaba Pagla's songs in their wider anthologies of Baul compositions. For example, in Charles Capwell (1986: 202–203) the song “*Nadī bharā ḍheu*” recorded from the performance of Subal Candra Das, bears the *bhañitā* of Bhaba Pagla, who appears as the lyricist, with no further information added. Sudhir Cakrabarti, in his collection of *dehatattva* songs (1985), includes one song by Bhaba Pagla (*Deha-aṭṭālikā ati manoram*, “Delightful is the palace of the human body”, *ibid.*: 193) that discusses the components of the esoteric body using the conventional numerology employed by Bauls and Fakirs (nine doors for the nine orifices, sixteen thieves as the ten senses and six vices etc.). Here as well, apart from being named as the lyricist, no additional detail is presented. Abdul Wahab (2011: 216) also decided to insert one composition by Bhaba Pagla in the anthology at the end of his work *Bāñlār bāul, sufi sādhanā o saṅgīt* (Bauls of Bengal, Sufi music and spiritual practices): he selected the song on the inner search for the potentially perfected being that lies within ourselves “*āmi mānuṣ khunji*” (I am looking for the man) and gave no information about the author apart from mentioning his name.

The earliest reference to Bhaba Pagla's songs according to the study of Cakrabarti (1995: 47) appears in the enormous collection of Upendranath Bhattacharya (1957). The song considered by Cakrabarti is *Bhāb nā jene preme maje* (*ibid.*: 436), “He enjoys love without knowing divine ecstasy”, about the practices of control and retention of semen during

Lalon Shah the great poet, 2009; a two-volume collection of Lalon's lyrics and notation of songs commissioned by UNESCO in 2010, etc.

¹⁴ *Acin Pākhi* by Dhayanjan Ghoshal and *Maner Mānuṣ* by Sunil Gangapadhyay, 2009 provide good examples of popular literature on the subject. Among the most recent movies on Lalon Fakir, Gautam Ghosh's *Moner Manush* (2010) and Tanvir Mokammel's documentaries (*Acin Pakhi*, 2001, and *Lalon*, 2004) are worthy of mention.

ritual intercourse. Though the *bhaṇitā* of the song is suspiciously uncommon compared to the rest of Bhaba Pagla's *oeuvre*: the last line mentions a "Bhaba", but it says "Raman Das kay Bhabare" (Raman Das says to Bhaba), following the convention by which the composer refers to the teachings learnt from his guru, 'signing' the lyric in his guru's name. None among the disciples and devotees of Bhaba Pagla have ever heard of this particular composition. On the other hand, many Baul performers knew the lyric and revealed that the Bhaba who authored this song is "a different Bhaba, a more ancient one, whose guru's name was Raman Das".¹⁵ The existence of "a second Bhaba" passed completely unnoticed in the studies on Baul songs. This demonstrates how a purely textual approach to folklore fails at reproducing the emic perspective on orally transmitted knowledge as well as historical veracity. Combining ethnographic field-work with textual sources may provide for a methodologically more appropriate point of departure for a better understanding of a folkloric phenomenon.

In the technically detailed article "Problematic Aspects of the Sexual Rituals of the Bauls of Bengal", Rahul Peter Das (1992: 416) quotes a line from Bhaba Pagla's repertoire (*Kālī balo mantī āmār*, tr. My heart, repeat Kali's name) and defines Bhaba Pagla as an "important preceptor for many Bauls in the extreme West of Bengal (!?) particularly influenced by Shakta Tantrism", thus conceding that a Shakta identity may well be combined with penetration into the Baul tradition.

More popular and narrative publications on Bauls that enjoyed a wide readership of non-specialists also refer to Bhaba Pagla as a key spiritual instructor. Bhaskar Bhattacharya (1992: 23) referred to him as a very influential and revered preceptor of Bauls and included a photograph of the saint-singer in the first pages of his book. In the travelogue and memories of Mimlu Sen among the Bauls of Bengal, together with his partner, the well-known performer based in Paris, Paban Das Baul, she describes Bhaba Pagla as "an adept on [sic] Kali and a guru for many of today's Bauls who continue to sing his marvellous songs". Her partner Paban was highly influenced by the eccentric personality and musical skills of Bhaba Pagla, with whom he spent considerable time in his early days, together with many other Bauls. The music sessions held in the temple of Kalna during his lifetime are vividly described as joyful festive occasions: "Wealth was showered upon him by his disciples who were middle-class people [...] He spent his wealth to nourish his disciples, bought the best fish [...] and cooked himself to feed all and sundry" (2009).

¹⁵ Information reported by Debdas Baul during the interview at his house in Suripara (Birbhum district), 14/08/2013. The same opinion on the existence of "another Bhaba" was confirmed by the Fakir singer Nikhil Biswas on 10/07/2013 in Badkulla (Nadia district).

The most important and assertive references to Bhaba Pagla in the academic literature, and the last ones we are going to take into consideration, are given by the British anthropologist Jeanne Openshaw, whose admirable work offers us an important and accurate contribution to the understanding of the practices and beliefs of the Fakirs of Nadia. Openshaw first mentions Bhaba Pagla in her article on the autobiography of the Baul guru Raj Khyepa and, discussing biographical/hagiographical accounts on these characters' lives, she says "an extra-ordinary childhood foreshadows and legitimizes the future saint" as in the case of Bhaba Pagla, "whose Baul songs are so popular these days" (1995: 120). Ascertaining the popularity of Bhaba Pagla's songs, she is here more interested in underlining the characteristics and effects of the process of the divinisation of a human guru. But in her major work, *Seeking Bauls of Bengal* (2004), Bhaba Pagla appears as a smart composer who conveniently disguised his lyrics under the fashionable outlook of Baul songs, adapting their content to the taste of a well-off audience that would be horrified if subjected to any textually explicit reference to corporeal *bastus*. "A very popular songwriter" (ibid.: 238), Bhaba Pagla is accused of producing "fakeloric" (Dorson 1976) Baul songs in which the transmitted teaching gives more importance to the *sāadhanā* of singing than to the *sexo-yogic* practices of body-centred realisation: "The relationship of singing and esoteric practice are hierarchised, an order which is reversed for the *bhadralok* and those composers who cater to their taste".¹⁶ Because of his famous lyric *Gān-i sarvaśreṣṭha sāadhanā* (a song that says "Singing is the most excellent *sāadhanā* / it does not require flowers nor sandal paste / it does not even need rituals and formulas"; see Cakrabarti 1995: 119), Bhaba Pagla is thus labelled as a folk composer that takes advantage of the success of Baul songs among the urban elite, enjoying its patronage and satisfying the demand for "clean" songs that do not scandalise a conservative mentality. Paradoxically, the situation depicted by the disciples of Bhaba Pagla is quite the opposite: whenever they are opposed to the categorisation of Bhaba Pagla's songs as strictly "Baul", they explain their perplexity by saying that nowadays Bauls are mere stage performers who do not engage in serious esoteric practice any more, while "each and every song of Bhaba is music for *sāadhanā*, *sāadhanā saṅgīt*".¹⁷

Elsewhere I have pointed out how, in the eyes of the practitioners, singing constitutes a practice that is perceived as equally important as the performance of techniques of

¹⁶ Literally "well-mannered person", the term *bhadralok* started to designate a precise class of gentlefolk in 19th century Bengal, generally belonging to a rich as well as upper-middle-class segments of Bengali society, mostly high caste, who received a western-style education.

¹⁷ From the interview of Gour Pagla (Tehatta, Nodia district; 09/07/2013) who, as one of Bhaba Pagla's eldest disciples, has been given the robes of a renouncer by Bhaba Pagla himself.

dehasādhanā (Lorea 2013: 441–446). Here I would like to remind the reader that, even if many among Bhaba Pagla’s songs (especially those most preferably performed in “public” contexts, such as village fairs and concerts open to a general audience) present a predominantly devotional mood, a consistent number of his lyrics are dedicated to the practices of breath control, regulation of seminal emission during ritualised sexual intercourse and intake of menstrual blood, each of which are supposed to characterise “authentic” Baul songs. Though these kinds of songs are rarely performed on a stage, and their content is concealed under the protective veil of an extremely metaphorical and enigmatic language (see for instance “*śeolā bharā nadīr mājhe sām̄tār dili ki kāraṅ*” in Bandyopadhyay 1988: 162, or “*du kūl bhāsāy yāy, du kūl ḍubāye yāy*”, *ibid.*: 136). In other songs Bhaba Pagla attributed the quality of *sarvasreṣṭha* (the most excellent) to different practices, such as the mastering of the techniques of breath control (as in “*sām̄tār shikho nā re jele*”, tr. Oh fisherman, first learn how to swim, *ibid.*: 162) or the practice of *kuṇḍalinī* yoga (as in the song “*bhajan sādhan kena habe nā*”, tr. Why wouldn’t you be successful in the practice of worshipping).¹⁸ Other times he says that the most excellent *sādhanā* is to exercise one’s devotion toward the guru, or to worship and respect humanity. In tune with his self-definition of a *bahurūpī*, Bhaba Pagla’s teachings, as they emerge from his lyrics, are multifaceted and hard to codify in a rigid system: it is possible that different teachings, related to different practices, are addressed to different disciples, according to their stage in the progression of their personal *sādhanā*. Rather than compromising with the taste of a sponsoring audience, I would rather consider the idea that Bhaba Pagla’s “clean” songs, appropriate for an exoteric performative context and enjoyable to a non-initiate listener, act as a screen of self-defense, a self-representation as a respectable sadhu in the eyes of a broader society from which the performers ensure their economic sustenance. Is preoccupation with one’s financial subsistence against the rules for an “authentic” Baul? Isn’t any Baul, even those who are not performers by profession, concerned with their means of livelihood, whether or not they rely on the alms offered in exchange for a song?

In a discussion of tourism and cultural displays, the folklorist Regina Bendix explores the relations between market, tourists and performers, and sheds some light on the common paradox by which “authenticity” disappears once the economic dimension corrodes an indigenous tradition: “Equally suspect is the argument that claims meaning disappears once money is introduced [...] money has been part of cultural endeavors for centuries, and to claim that its presence in the negotiation of cultural displays robs them

¹⁸ Full text available at the web page Lok Giti,

http://www.iopb.res.in/~somen/cgibin/Flk_sng/gen_pdf.cgi?-porbo=Baul&ganernam=799. Last visit 05/12/2013.

of their meaning is both an over-statement and a romanticization of the “folk’s” awareness of cash in their everyday lives” (1989: 143).

It seems that the paradigm delineated by a certain trend of scholarship on Bauls, by which a genuine Baul is a materialist *bastubādī* with no relation to temple-based ritualism and to the dynamics imposed by show-business, neglects the obvious fact that an esoteric tradition, subjected to social reprisal and ridicule if openly displayed, must have been developing strategies of self-defense and self-promotion that may not clearly emerge until we remove the “search for authenticity” (Bendix 1997) from the intentions of our research.

Bhaba Pagla’s inability to fit into the aforementioned paradigm of authenticity may be one of the reasons why his corpus was not given much attention by scholars who research on Bauls, together with a number of concomitant factors that we are going to discuss more closely in the next section.

4. Escaping classifications, disappointing “the communists”: perspectives on Bhaba Pagla’s absence from the literature on Bauls

Defined by his followers as the master of “the spontaneous way” (*sahaj path*) and the “distributor of universal love” (*biśva mānab premer pheriwālā*), Bhaba Pagla’s nature and the variety of his texts’ styles make it quite difficult to pigeonhole his variegated *orature* into a single genre. Overflowing with puns, jokes and riddles, his uncountable songs touch on different topics and are at times sung in the *bhāṭiyāli* style, at times *jhumur*, and even in the *prasādi* melody or explicitly marked in his note-books as having a “Baul tune”.¹⁹ If we adopt the method of performance theory of the study of folklore (see Bauman 1986; 1984; Ben-Amos 1971; Abrahams 1968), considering the context of the texts’ performances as an essential element in understanding a folkloric phenomenon, we would easily realise that, in the living realm of “events” rather than “items” (Bronner 2012:30), Bhaba Pagla’s songs are sung and transmitted mainly among the lineages of Bauls and Fakirs. How could this information have so little repercussion in the studies on Bauls and in the collections of Bauls’ songs?

I asked this question to the members of the lineage and to disciples of different branches of the cult that revolves around Bhaba Pagla, and we will examine their opinions and observations as starting points to further develop some ideas that could explain this omission.

¹⁹ The names refer to genres of folk and devotional melodies, as they are usually referred to in the headline of the handwritten texts of Bhaba Pagla’s compositions in his notebooks.

The most commonly shared opinion lies in the fact that Bhaba Pagla apparently tried to discourage any kind of self-advertising, and his reserved character passed by unnoticed even when scholars like Upendranath Bhattacharya were travelling in rural Bengal to collect sayings and teachings of influential Baul gurus. Bhaba Pagla's disregard for self-promotion and lack of concern for enlarging his circle of disciples through proselytism is well reflected by his famous saying that I chose as a title for this article, *Khabar haye gelei gabar haye yābo*: if the news spread, if people get to know about me, I'll become cow-dung. The careful avoidance of publicity and the fear that a public display would spoil the transmitted knowledge is in tune with the need for secrecy of a heterodox system of beliefs. Bijayananda Giri, who is in charge of the Kali temple of Badkulla (Nadia district) said Bhaba Pagla strictly forbade the public diffusion of his message, and "every time a journalist or writer was arriving to interview him he used to chase them away saying '*Khabar haye gelei gabar haye yābo*'".²⁰ Sharply critical of the attempts at proselytism and the institutionalisation of the lineage operated by the grandsons of Bhaba Pagla, the eighty-three year old guru Amulya Ratan Sarkar said the transformation of Kalna temple into a business centre that exploits the donations of the devotees is contrary to the tenets of Bhaba Pagla, who opposed "every kind of propaganda by saying '*Khabar haye gelei gabar haye yābo*'".²¹

A different opinion was advanced by Khyepa Baba, which we already mentioned in the second section. According to him, Bhaba Pagla regarded disfavouredly the academic interest in Bauls because "leader scholars on Bengali folklore, such as Shakti Nath Jha and Sudhir Cakrabarti, belonged to the communist party. Their interest was to depict Bauls as a community without gods and with no respect for outer representations of gods. That is why they neglected the figure of Bhaba Pagla, who was externally performing *pūjās* and rituals".²² I am not myself privy to the personal political commitments of the aforementioned scholars. Nevertheless, there has certainly been a tendency toward the stress on the this-worldly, atheist and materialist aspects of the Baul tradition (but also of other traditions, such as Gambhira folk-theatre and Chau dance, for example), exalted as the opponents of temple rituals and idol worship. The way in which the authenticity of the Baul practitioners was constructed became incompatible with daily practices of exterior ritualism such as *ārati* (a Hindu religious ritual of worship) and *pūjā*. Even if I witnessed several Fakir lineages performing Kali *pūjā* (the line of Lalon Fakir's disciple Narayan Fakir of Badkulla, for instance), Bhaba Pagla's outer identity as a Kali worshipper forbade him to

²⁰ Interview recorded in Barrackpore (North 24 Parganas), 28/01/2013.

²¹ Interview recorded at Amulya Ratan's ashram in Jugpur Colony (Nadia district) on 11/08/2013.

²² Interviewed in Shantiniketan on 19/01/2013.

be counted as a revered figure in the Baul milieu. In the search for a secular and rationalist indigenous folk-culture that could represent the ideals of a modern nation, when the Bauls were glorified as rejecting the communal-based superstitions of the orthodoxies, Bhaba Pagla was excluded from the representation of the Baul landscape because of his uncomfortable link with exoteric ritualism that the broader society could accept and identify with. In sum, due to his exterior facade (*bahirāṅga*), Bhaba Pagla was not able to fit either the image of the Tagorean Baul, or the criteria of the “materialist” Baul, and thus he came to be simply ignored.

A further opinion, as interesting as it is improbable, was elaborated by Gopal Khetry, who runs the Kali temple of Digha (East Midnapore district) and is tirelessly involved in the promotion of philanthropic actions that could transform the humble message of Bhaba Pagla into a universal religion of humanism and brotherhood. Gopal Khetry, who travelled to England to export the teachings of his guru and gave several lectures on local media and television, proposed a conspirational theory: Bhaba Pagla failed to be adequately represented because all the media of Bengal are owned and controlled by the Tagore family and the Ramakrishna Mission, who forbade him to mention his guru’s name during his interview on the TV channel *Durdarshan*. Besides this, he also proposed the idea that “because of his name, Pagla (a fool, a madman) he was underestimated by *bhadraloks*.”²³ Titles like Pagla, Khyepa etc. that literally mean “mad”, are honorific epithets in the *sahajiyā* traditions and are attributed to practitioners who transcend all dualities in the sense of exalted religious madmen (on the concept of religious madness see McDaniel 1989, Feuerstein 2006, Kinsley 1974, Dowman 2000). The social conduct of these characters is free from conventional norms of behaviour and their actions are judged by mainstream society as obscene and reproachable (as an example of such behaviour, Bama Khyepa, the renowned Tantric saint of Tarapith, used to urinate on the Goddess’s *mūrti*, and in a similar mood Bhaba Pagla used to consecrate his devotees’ amulets with his saliva). For this and other reasons, Bhaba Pagla may have been an inconvenient character for intellectuals and *bhadraloks* to represent as a model of folk poetry: the devotion to Bhaba Pagla is particularly strong in the villages of West Bengal inhabited by Bangladeshi refugees and immigrants from what was East Pakistan, who look to their saint countryman with regional pride, as a cultural hero for a lost territorial identity. Besides that, a considerable number among the followers and the eldest disciples of Bhaba Pagla belong to the lowest strata of the Hindu society, and his lineage is particularly strong among outcasts of the *namaśūdra* community (see Bandyopadhyay 1997). In the academic rehabilitation of Bauls and Fakirs

²³ From the second interview to Gopal Khetry, Kolkata, 28/04/2013.

as folk representatives of a dignified Bengali oral literature, and in the public promotion of Bauls as messengers of a political philosophy of indigenously rooted Indian tolerance, perhaps a poet-saint revered by Bangladeshis and very low classes could not be the desired emblem.

What I would suggest as a possible solution to the question of Bhaba Pagla's misinterpretation and exclusion regards the methodological approach to the subject. On one hand, it has to do with the limits of superficial field-work (or no field-work at all) in the study of an esoteric tradition accessibility to which requires time and personal involvement. On the other hand, it concerns the limitations of a textual approach in the study on an essentially oral tradition.

For instance, a more in-depth look at the teachings of Bhaba Pagla as they are transmitted among insiders would reveal that the "materialistic" premises that have been associated with the practices and beliefs of Bauls are well-known and carefully preserved among certain members of the lineage. These teachings, however, are attentively protected and Bhaba Pagla himself warned his disciples of the need for secrecy. The efficiency of the strategies of concealment and disguise/deception (Stewart 1990) played by the community is probably at the basis of Bhaba Pagla's mysterious absence in books as opposed to his ubiquity in performance.

The exhortation to secrecy and the encouragement to not discuss one's personal practice is so widespread in Bhaba Pagla's corpus of songs that it almost constitutes a literary *topos*. The verses "*bhajan kario man ati gopan*" ("Do your worship in extreme secrecy"; recorded in Kalna, 08/05/2013) or "*cala yābo mane sādhanē / gopane gopane / jānbe nā re keu / tomār premer d̄heu*" ("Let's go oh Mind to do *sādhanā* / secretly secretly / nobody has to know / the waves of your love", recorded in Barrackpore, 5/12/2013) are the performed exemplifications of the restricted access to the esoteric teaching, whose core tenets are expressed in the songs through symbols and complicated metaphors. "*Bhaba told many things indirectly in his songs. There are hints at many teachings. To explain these, you have to be in an isolated, tranquil place, without any other person around. If other people hear about them, they could be revolted and hostile (bimukhi)*", said the guru and performer Amulya Ratan Sarkar. "*We have to separate Bhaba's bāhiraṅga (outer aspect) from his antaraṅga (inner aspect): in public, he performed pūjā because he wanted to show people that he was celebrating pūjā. But only few people received his actual teaching. Sukumarda has lived with Bhaba Pagla from his very young age. He did not receive his teaching that deals with karma*".²⁴ The discrepancy

²⁴ Interviewed in Jugpur Colony on 3/12/2012. *Karma* is interpreted by Bauls and other *bartamān panthīs* as the comprehensive set of practices to be experienced through the body. See Openshaw 2004: 179.

between outer (*bahir*) and inner (*antar*), between the exoteric side of the tradition transmitted by Bhaba Pagla and the esoteric teachings reserved for the initiates in a progression of hierarchical levels of spiritual achievement, is repeatedly remarked upon by disciples. The disguise in the clothes of a Shakta and the concealment of the innermost truths made it extremely difficult for previous authors, and for audiences of Baul songs in general, to acknowledge the “*bastubādi*” side of Bhaba Pagla’s songs.

“The true doctrine is practised in secret. In his *bahiraṅga* Bhaba Pagla performed *pūjās* and acted as a pious Vaishnava. In the *antaraṅga*, where the doctrine is concealed, he was against exterior ritualism (*bāhyik baidhik bhakti*). One disciple went to him and asked for a *tābij* (an amulet) to heal his illness. Bhaba Pagla answered: ‘*Śālā! Yā tābije, bīje tā!*’ (Rascal! The thing that is in the *tābij* is the same you have in your seed). The supreme power is within the semen.”²⁵

In contrast to the collections elaborated through a literary approach, the archives of Baul songs based on written as well as oral sources show an exorbitant number of Bhaba Pagla’s songs. For example, the comprehensive online archive of Bengali folk songs “Lok Giti” (www.iopb.res.in/~somen/lokgiti.html) born from the laudable efforts of Somen Bhattacharjee and Sudipta Mukharji, lists ninety-eight songs as a result for the key-word “Bhaba Pagla” in the search engine. According to the information the two collectors kindly granted me via email, the lyrics they catalogued were mostly transcribed from the memory of the performer Satyananda Das Baul of Bankura. Some other songs of Bhaba Pagla were collected during their visits to the Baul tent of Paush Mela (the biggest fair held in Santiniketan, Birbhum, and an occasion of gathering for many Bauls and Fakirs), from “unknown singers”, and “often from the unclassified thin nondescript books one gets in remote bus stations, small fairs...”²⁶ The problem arose when they had to systematise and classify Bhaba Pagla’s songs in their digital archive: what label can be given to his compositions? Should the attributed genre be based on the musical style associated with a particular song, or rather on the content of the song? The criterion chosen by the archivists seems to be a combination of both.

²⁵ Recorded during a performance of *kaḅigān* (a kind of battle of improvised poetry) held in occasion of a gathering of the community of Bhaba Pagla’s followers. Barrackpore, 05/12/2012.

²⁶ Somen Bhattacharjee, personal communication, 18/04/2013.

“We in fact found it difficult to classify Bhaba’s songs. The songs that we heard from Bauls, are kept in Baul category. Those lyrics which contains [sic] words like shyama [one of the names of the Goddess], joba [the red ibiscus flower that is offered to the Goddess], kalee etc are kept in shyama songeet [Shakta devotional songs, as those composed by Ramprasad Sen]. Some of the songs, that we heard and as you said, have ramprasadi sur [the musical style typically associated to the songs of Ramprasad]. Those are kept in shyama sangeet. However, I will have to say, though this is the best we could do, our categorization may also create confusion.”²⁷

The great majority of the songs appears under the genre “Baul”. Though some compositions have been classified as “shyama sangeet” (22 out of 98) on the basis of the occurrence of a terminology that, at the most superficial level of interpretation, refers to the conventional worship of the Goddess’s idol. The presence of a versatile vocabulary of images and metaphors in the works of the same composer, and the recurrence of the lexicon of Shakta devotionalism in songs mostly performed by Bauls is a matter of shock and bewilderment:

“That’s a surprise because baul philosophy is antagonistic to the idea of such symbols (for God). I am not sure if this is a case of a baul turned more traditional to pen these syamasangit or a traditional lyricist became a baul later on.”²⁸

In any case, the coexistence of the Shakta and the Baul aspect is seen as contradictory, because, in the eyes of the enthusiastic collectors, who brilliantly reflect this deeply rooted prototypical image of the “authentic” Baul, Baul philosophy is “antagonistic” to Shakta devotionalism, and, more generally, to whatever has to do with rites and icon worship.

Conclusions

This article is but an initial step toward a more comprehensive research project dedicated to the literary production of Bhaba Pagla in his performative context. So far I have made

²⁷ Sudipta Mukherji, personal communication, 27/04/2013.

²⁸ Somen Bhattacharjee, personal communication, 23/04/2013.

an attempt to give a brief account of the “archaeology of knowledge”²⁹ in the field of the studies on Bauls and Fakirs, in order to highlight the increasing popularity of this research topic, and its adherence to general cultural trends in the study of folklore; from its birth – influenced by the romantic quest for authenticity and the demands of nationalism – to its post-colonial developments. After that, I offered a brief introduction to the character and work of Bhaba Pagla, focussing on his relation to the Bauls during his lifetime, his eclectic self-definitions and the way his disciples defined him as far as religious affiliation is concerned. From this, we could observe how Bhaba Pagla’s sense of belonging to any particular *sampradāya* seems to have been unfathomable and/or deliberately avoided.

From the literary survey of the available information about Bhaba Pagla in academic as well as popular publications, Bhaba Pagla emerges in contrasting portraits, and he does not seem to be as prominent in printed texts as he is in oral and performative contexts.

Taking into consideration the insiders’ perspective on the scarce fortune of Bhaba Pagla in academic interest in Bauls, I reasoned on the factors that could lead to his misrepresentation. First, the impossibility of fitting his outwardly orthodox personality into the pattern and features of the “materialist” Baul. Second, the difficulty of transcending the barrier of secrecy to observe the actual practices in the private circuit of the adepts. This protective barrier is built by: the use of an enigmatic code-language (*sandhyā-bhāṣā*), the emphasis on keeping one’s private practice (*antaraṅga*) hidden from the general public, and the avoidance of “publicity” (*Khabar haye gelei gabar haye yābo!*).

A clearer and more holistic understanding of the contemporary repertoire of Baul and Fakir songs would be possible if we reconsider some predominant methodological perspectives. On one hand, as Claus and Korom (1991) have highlighted in their work on the study of folklore in India, Indian scholarship still predominantly operates with a literary approach that leaves little space for the analysis of the multi-layered context in which oral literature is composed, produced and transmitted, a context in which performers, audience, patrons, and places and times of the performance play an equally important role. In this sense, adopting a more performance-oriented premise for the study of folk-songs would help in avoiding serious omissions.

On the other hand, the perspective of subaltern studies, which has contributed a great deal in underlining aspects of opposition and resistance against the oppression and marginalisation perpetuated by religious establishments, neglected the exoteric dimension

²⁹ The expression refers to the methodological work by Michel Foucault (1969), in which the author treats established notions in the history of ideas as constructions, thus problematised and contextualised in their emergence in history.

of the Baul tradition as conforming to the orthodoxies, and ended up inventing a reductionist canon of authenticity.

Seen from a different light, and encompassing the limiting pattern of the discourse on *sanskritisation*, that interprets the adoption and incorporation of dominant castes' rites and customs by marginalised groups as an attempt to improve their social status, the adoption of orthodox elements and their accommodation into a "subversive bricolage" may be interpreted as a strategy of subaltern resistance, as some authors have already pointed out (Comaroff 1985: 198).³⁰

The case of Bhaba Pagla here presented will hopefully bring to the surface some problematic aspects of the study of esoteric traditions and folk literature in Bengal, showing the constraints of previous approaches to the subject and encouraging the formulation of new research strategies that could be more appropriate for the analysis of a living folkloric treasure.

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³⁰ The term *sanskritisation*, introduced by M. N. Srinivas in his study on the Coorgs of South India in 1952, has been readily adopted by various anthropologists to describe social phenomena even beyond the tribal context. For an analysis of the concept and its legitimacy see Charsley's article "Sanskritization: The career of an anthropological theory" (1998).

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Eight

Revisiting Sanskrit Teaching in the Light of Modern Language Pedagogy

Sven Wortmann and Ann-Kathrin Wolf



Fig. 1: Cartoon in *Le Sanskrit* caricaturing an episode from the *Kathāsaritsāgara* (Balbir 2013: 590)

The following paper is a report of our application of modern language pedagogy to the teaching of Sanskrit at the Centre for Religious Studies¹ at Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany in 2010. This reform was conducted in order to make our introductory Sanskrit

¹ With the permission and support of Prof. Dr. Sven Bretfeld, chair of Religious Studies.

course as efficient as possible, given the little time reserved for teaching and learning. The introductory course extends over two terms (each lasting 14 weeks), with two teaching hours per week, and is only worth a total of 4 credit points, imposing a weekly homeworkload of not more than 3 hours for the students². Our course is therefore half or one third the size of Sanskrit courses elsewhere in Germany. Our methods are derived mainly from courses like the Summer School in Spoken Sanskrit at Heidelberg University, various intensive courses in the Landesspracheninstitut at Ruhr-University Bochum, as well as from workshops offered by the university language centre at Ruhr-University Bochum. The first part of this paper will give a short overview of the history and methods of western language pedagogy in general and of Sanskrit in particular. In the second part, we will give some practical examples as to how to improve a Sanskrit course with efficient methods. We consider language teaching as a core competence of Indology and Religious Studies and we are – in this respect – traditional. However, in order to maintain and improve this competence, we will not hesitate to slaughter sacred cows.

1. History and methods of language pedagogy at western universities

Until and during the 19th Century the most prominent “method” for the teaching of all languages was the so called “grammar-translation method”, also called the “Prussian method” or “the classical method”. It consists basically in formal and abstract teaching of grammar followed by the translation of sample sentences and texts (deductive-prescriptive grammar approach). In the late 19th Century the grammar-translation method was strongly criticised by a reform movement which promoted the so called “direct method”, stressing practical, communicative and monolingual teaching in the target language (see Edmondson & House, 2000: 48–50). The emergence of this reform movement was the starting point of modern academic reflection on language pedagogy. However, due to negative institutional reaction and political circumstances this movement did not have a strong institutional impact, so the “grammar-translation method” remained prominent. It was after 1945 that two closely related methods revolutionised the field of language pedagogy (see Edmondson & House, 2000: 115–125). These were the “audio-lingual method” and “the audio-visual method”. Here, students have to repeat phrases and dialogues triggered by words or pictures given by the teacher. The advantages of this approach are clearly the use of audio and visual input and the focus on actual speaking and on useful conversations. However, this behaviouristic approach was criticised during the

² According to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).

so-called “communicative turn” in the 1960s because of its rigid and mechanical character. Modern language pedagogy since the communicative turn has tried to avoid a methodological “monoculture” and is based on a variety of multi-sensual methods,³ chosen according to the specific needs of the students, and taking into account their active and creative participation.

After this short overview of the history of language pedagogy, we shall now mention some widely accepted concepts and practical implications of modern language pedagogy. One of the most important insights for improving our curriculum is that people have different learning styles (see Grotjahn, 2007). A learning style is defined as a stable preference of a given learner for particular social forms of learning and/or particular sensory faculties. With respect to the last point, one can categorise different types of learners, e.g. (rule-based) analytical, visual, auditory, communicative, haptic etc. When it comes to grammar teaching, which is of particular interest for Sanskrit, it is important to be aware of the distinction between the inductive-explorative and the deductive-prescriptive grammar approach. Whereas in the first, the comprehension of grammar is developed through the reading of texts, in the latter method the grammar is explained before the text is read. The consideration of various learning styles not only exploits equally the potential of different students, but also stretches the comfort zone of each student. It is thus not only a question of efficiency but also one of treating different types of learners equally. Another point is to explain and discuss different methods with the students in order to raise their learning awareness, and in consequence, their learning efficiency. Let us now recapitulate the usual methods of Sanskrit teaching at Western Universities in the light of what has been said about the history and the methods of language pedagogy. In short, most textbooks⁴ and curricula for Sanskrit (and other so-called classical languages) still follow the 19th Century “grammar-translation method”.

“[T]hough it may be true to say that the Grammar-Translation Method is still widely practiced, it has no advocates. It is a method for which there is no theory. There is no literature that offers a rationale or justification for it or that attempts to relate it to issues in linguistics, psychology, or educational theory” (Richards & Rogers, 2001: 5).

³ See the four competences of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR): listening, speaking, reading and writing (Council of Europe, n.d.)

⁴ Among these: Coulson 2003, Deshpande 2007, Goldman 2011, Lehmann 2013, Maurer 2010.

It is clear that many philological scholars are not aware of the disconnection between their methods and modern language pedagogy. Even Indological authors who deal explicitly with “Didaktik” (Mylius, 2013; Stiehl, 2007) do not mention alternatives such as audio-visual input or inductive-explorative methods, and they purely follow the grammar-translation method. To our knowledge, the first textbook to harmoniously integrate different teaching methods is *Le Sanskrit* (Balbir, 2013). It is structured in cycles of 6 short text lessons (in Latin and Devanagari script, translation and as audio files) with exercises and a short cartoon, *followed* by one formal grammar lesson for each cycle. Listening and repetition are stressed in the preface:

“The principles which have made the success of the Assimil-Method – lessons in the form of dialogues or sketches – are far away from being problematic for Sanskrit, a language which has always lived and still continues to live strongly in pronunciation and orality, recitation, poesy, hymns of praise, theatre or chant” (Balbir, 2013: X [translation S.W.]).

Other progressive developments include intensive courses in spoken Sanskrit, such as the yearly course at the University of Heidelberg (conducted since 1999), as well as the more recent course at the University Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3, where lessons of spoken Sanskrit have found their way also into the weekly curriculum. Apart from these exceptions, what are the reasons for this drastic mismatch between modern methods of language pedagogy and the common methods of Sanskrit teaching? First of all, many if not most Indological scholars are not trained language teachers with formal education in language teaching. So in many cases they just do not know alternatives. Even worse, some defend the status quo, when confronted with new methods. We shall discuss some arguments we have come across so far:

Argument 1: Sanskrit is a dead language, therefore non-analytical exercises are not required.

First of all, this argument ignores the fact that listening, speaking, writing and seeing are actions which *generate* grammatical and lexical knowledge (see Hirschfeld, 2007: 279; Eßer 2007: 293). Secondly, these actions connect language with physical movement which has an efficient memorisation effect. Furthermore, Sanskrit is not a dead language! Listening comprehension is of high importance when it comes to field work. The main problem with this argument is not the stress on (rule based) analytical teaching. This is indeed

important. The problem is that it *only* stresses analytical teaching, which, as we have seen, contradicts the equal treatment of students and does not use their full learning potential.

Argument 2: Modern textbooks use “fake Sanskrit” and not “authentic” texts.

A frequent critique of modern textbooks is that they have “fake Sanskrit” because a contemporary non-Indian author has written it and it does not belong to the authentic Sanskrit literature – whatever that might be. Adherents of this argument prefer “real Sanskrit” texts right from the start. This leads to the usage of isolated example sentences, which are much more difficult to understand than semantically connected sentences within a narrative. In addition, this argument is shocking if one thinks it through: It is implicitly normative and racist. It is normative because it implies the notion of (a non-defined) canonicity and it is racist because it denies that non-Indians can write real Sanskrit. The inconsistency of this argument becomes obvious by reflecting, for example, on why Thomas Lehmann (present day Heidelberg, Germany) should be less authentic as a Sanskrit writer than Shankara (8/9th Century Kerala, South India). Neither had Sanskrit as his mother tongue.

Argument 3: Modern methods are infantile.

Another traditional argument is that modern methods are infantile and that students are adults, who can learn on their own. If this is so, why should classes be given at all? Perhaps modern methods are infantile. But the relevant parameters are not infantile vs. adult but efficient vs. inefficient. In the best and most expensive intensive language courses, students will be animated to sing, play games, move their body and do role playing, because it works. Efficient methods should not be dismissed out of taste or style. To sum up, we have never encountered arguments against modern methods based on pedagogical considerations or experience. Apart from this we would like to mention the implicit dangers of a language curriculum which is disconnected from modern language pedagogy. In fact, an inefficient curriculum will lead to low numbers of graduates and compromises the maintenance of Indological departments in the long run.

2. Practical examples for the teaching of Sanskrit

The present section will give some practical examples for the application of new methods in the teaching of Sanskrit. What we generally recommend is to take any textbook with

narrative texts (not disconnected sample sentences), create audio-visual material for it, and use three or more different types of exercise each lesson while reducing teacher-centred teaching (“Frontalunterricht”). One of the points we think is important concerning a holistic and digestible progress is to teach Devanagari, Latin transcription, lexis, grammar and Sandhi synchronistically. For this purpose we use the textbook *Sanskrit für Anfänger* by Lehmann (2013). The textbook consists of three volumes (covering grammar, texts and Devanagari) for parallel usage, which has the following advantages: It provides a smooth transition from Latin to Devanagari script, a step by step implementation of Sandhi-rules, and texts with appealing narratives (simplified versions of Indian folk-tales). For the sake of frequency and digestibility we have split the two-hours per-week course into two sessions a week, 60 minutes each. In addition, we use an e-learning-platform in order to give the students the opportunity to deal with Sanskrit in multiple ways at home: e.g. they can use a simple digital vocabulary trainer and can listen to the texts of the lessons on audio-file and orally repeat them. The audio-files can also be used as a form of dictation to practice either Devanagari script or Latin transcription.

Considering styles of learning – Exercises

There are various exercises which can be implemented while holding a Sanskrit lesson. The following exercises are options from which we try to use at least two or three each lesson. The variation of these exercises is important because different learning styles should be used. As we mentioned, we try to exploit visual, auditory, communicative, haptic and analytical learning potential.

1. The first example is to use a *visual vocabulary trainer*. On a screen or on cards students see different pictures of objects from the current lesson. In the first cycle, the teacher pronounces first and the students repeat the words which the pictures represent, for example: lion, cave, deer, hunter, net, mouse, hole, tooth. After one or two cycles, the students have to say the words just after seeing the pictures. After some cycles of repeating the teacher then asks simple questions about the pictures, and students have to answer. For example: “What is the lion doing?” “He is eating a deer.” “Who lives in the cave?” “The lion lives in the cave” etc. Employing a visual vocabulary trainer is highly efficient for learning vocabulary, grammatical paradigms and pronunciation at the same time. Because of the usage of the audio-visual faculties it becomes possible to teach a larger amount of vocabulary in a short time. A variation of this is conversation practice in which students can introduce themselves to each other. By doing this it is possible to learn

pronouns very quickly. The visual vocabulary trainer is by far the most popular exercise among students.

2. We regularly use *Translation after Listening* as an alternative to the common reading-translation practice. The teacher reads out the sentence several times and the students have to translate without looking into the text or notations. Here the auditory faculty is utilised.

3. During *Writing Practice* the teacher reads out a sentence of the lesson, and students have to write it in Devanagari and/ or Latin script. Alternately, the students have to write it down on the whiteboard. As writing implies contour following, it uses haptic learning potential. Furthermore, making the students stand up, move and go to the whiteboard at least once every session is a subtle method to keep them attentive and to reduce tiredness.

4. *Arranging Cards with Grammatical Forms* is a haptic, visual and analytical practice. Students have to arrange cards with grammatical forms in a special order (see below Fig. 2 and Fig. 3). It is a kind of visualised grammar, and a comfortable alternative to the otherwise unpopular learning of grammatical forms.

5. By *Drawing a Lexical Field* students create a simple picture with Sanskrit-subtitled scenes of already translated narratives or a map of certain lexical fields (animals, persons, food items etc.). It involves the active construction of Sanskrit, uses the haptic and visual learning potential and repeats and connects contents from previous lessons.

6. Through *Thematic Excursions* including lists of additional Sanskrit terms which match with the content of the lesson, students get to know and understand the background of the texts which are covered. Furthermore, they can connect their knowledge of Sanskrit at a very early stage with other courses which have a material focus. Examples for such thematic excursions are life-cycle rituals, the Vedic or Hindu pantheon, the caste-system, concepts of afterlife and rebirth as well as Indian text genres.

Reading courses

After finishing the introduction course within two terms, students at Ruhr-University Bochum have to attend a reading course where they translate selected Sanskrit texts. An adequate choice for the first reading course would be simple texts from the *Pañcatantra*, *Kathāsaritsāgara* or the *Bhagavadgītā*. It is a better motivation and easier for the students to cover a large quantity of a relatively easy text than a small quantity of a difficult text. Within these reading courses it is then possible to teach grammar which the students have not yet learnt, when it appears in the given texts. In the reading courses, students also have to learn how to use dictionaries and other tools. Although translation of the text covers most of the time, we still leave time for some of the six forms of the above-mentioned exercises, as well as learning by heart and reciting some text portions.

Conclusion

As we have seen, there are a lot of possibilities for the teaching of Sanskrit following modern methods of language pedagogy. With the above-mentioned methods, it is feasible to lead students to a reading competence in approximately two thirds of the time (2 terms, 2 hours per week) elsewhere devoted to teaching. In conclusion, we strongly advocate teachers of Sanskrit to accompany their textbooks with additional teaching-/ learning-materials and to enrich their courses with a variety of exercises to avoid a methodological “monoculture”. This will lead to an improvement both in terms of efficiency and popularity.

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