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Was Ācārya Śaṃkara Responsible for the Disappearance of Buddhist Philosophy from India?

The disappearance of Buddhism from India is one of those enigmas defies explanation. For more than fifteen hundred years, it dominated the Indian scene and has left unbelievable marvels in the realm of sculpture, architecture and painting that it is difficult to understand how the faith that created this ceased to function as a living force in the very country where it originated. Sanchī, Bhārhut, Ajantā are names to conjure with. And, there are many more located all over India testifying to its glorious presence everywhere in the country. Yet, it all disappeared as if it had never existed sometime around 1000 A.D.

All attempts at explanation flounder against the single fact that the other great śramaṇic religion still flourishes in India. There are not only various Jain communities in all parts of India, but some of them even proclaim their identities by calling themselves “Jain”. And they are Jains. Unlike the so-called neo-Buddhists who not only know nothing about the great traditions of Buddhism in this country but do not seek, or want to seek, any such thing as Nirvāṇa, even during in

their life: They have no monks or monasteries or systems of meditation, nor do they have a monastic discipline as the outwards manifestation of the inner seeking of the Great Buddha.

And it is not only the Jains who flourish and survive, but also the Zorastrains, the Syrian Christians, the Jews, the Armenians and many other. The synagogues of the Jews in Kerala are well known, but the Armenian Church in Calcutta, established long before the coming of the British, deserves equal attention.

The myth of Vedic Hinduism, “swallowing up”, all the other non-Hindu religious traditions in India, so persistently propagated by certain vested interest, is really a myth, unsubstantiated by any evidence to the contrary. There has, of course, been conflict and controversies, even violent ones, but never “religious wars” in the form they have occurred in the West. Yet, it remains a fact that Buddhism did disappear from India, the land where it originated and flourished for more than fifteen hundred years. But though the causes of the disappearance are little known, one has still some substantial knowledge of the reasons for the disappearance of Buddhist philosophy from the Indian scene where it had a visible dominating presence so long. And, it is with this issue that we are concerned in this paper.

Normally, the dramatic disappearance of Buddhist philosophy from the philosophical scene of India is ascribed to Śaṃkara who refuted the Buddhists in such a decisive way that they could not hold their own after their defeat by him. It is also alleged that as, through a subtle diplomacy, he had assimilated all the crucial elements of their distinctive thought in his own system which he ascribed to the Upaniṣads, the *Brahma Sūtras* and the *Gītā*, there was nothing here for the Buddhists to claim as distinctive in their philosophy. Yet, however, widespread the thesis, it does not even *prima facie* make any sense, for Śaṃkara refuted not just the Buddhists but almost all the other schools of Indian philosophy as well. But it in spite of his refutation they continued to flourish in India. Why should there have been an exception in the case of Buddhism? Normally philosophy schools do not die of criticism. Rather, they get new life and vigour as they try to meet the challenge and usually introducing interesting modifications in their positions or

different arguments in support of the old one. The history of philosophical schools in all traditions, is the history of argument and counter-argument and there is no reason to support the notion that Buddhism was an exception to this, especially when it was the main protagonist in the philosophical debated of the pre-Śaṃkara era of philosophy in India.

Even if we disregard these considerations, the history of Buddhist philosophy after Śaṃkara completely refutes the claim that it disappeared from the Indian philosophical scene because of his decisive demolition of their position by his arguments. In fact they did not disappear. Rather, it continued to flourish for almost five hundred years after Śaṃkara is supposed to have finally driven them away from the philosophical scene in the country. Not one, not two, but literally scores of Buddhist thinkers flourished during this period and if one compares them with those who followed in the steps of Śaṃkara's thought, one is amazed as to how such a contention could ever have been made by any one.

Potter's *Bibliography of Indian Philosophy* (3rd ed.) lists at least forty four important Buddhist thinkers from the eighth century to the first quarter of the thirteenth century, that is, 1200 A.D. The list includes such well known names as: Śānta Rakṣita, Kamalaśīla, Dharmottara, Mallavādin, Jitendra Buddha, Yaśomitra, Prajñākara Gupta, Paṇḍita Ashoka, Jñānaśrī Mitra, Atisa, Ratnakīrtti, Mokṣākaragupta and Aniruddha. If we break the list century wise, we find that from 700 to 800 we have eight thinkers, from 800-900 seven thinkers, from 900-1000 five thinkers, from 1000-1100 thirteen thinkers and from 1100-1200 there are eleven thinkers.

It may be remembered in this connection that only one thinker is listed in the *Bibliography* after 1200, the date usually given to the destruction of Nālandā by Bakhtiyār Khiljī in the standard books on Indian history. This would mean that from 1150-1250, the *Bibliography* lists six thinkers, most of whom have written on Aniruddha who is supposed to have flourished around 1120 and is said to have been a Sthaviravādin. In fact Aniruddha seems to have been a subject of intensive discussion among Buddhists as even earlier the two thinkers

who succeed him, Vimalabuddhi and Sumaṅgala II, had written on him. This shows how alive the Buddhist philosophical tradition was even at this late period; what could be a surer sign of intellectual vitality than the sustained discussion of a thinker by his contemporaries and successors? In fact, the Buddhists seem to have had a lively tradition or discussion regarding the important thinkers who occurred both during the post-Śaṃkara period and the outstanding ones in the pre-Śaṃkara period such as Nāgārjuna, Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Buddhaghōṣa, Dinnāga, Chandrakīrtti and Dharmakīrtti.

It is obvious even from a cursory glance at this data that there can be no question of the disappearance of Buddhist philosophers and philosophy from India during the post-Śaṃkara period so that the question of ascribing to Śaṃkara the reason for this disappearance does not arise. A comparative study of the *Advaitika* thinkers influenced by Śaṃkara during this period may be helpful in understanding the relative position of these two important philosophical tradition.

A close look at the data about the *advaitins* given in Potter's *Bibliography* reveals, surprisingly, that if we exclude Śaṃkara and his immediate disciples, the total number of *Advaitika* thinkers hardly exceeds five during a period that covers roughly five centuries, that is, from 750-1250. The important *Advaitika* names during this period are those of Jñānaghana (900 A.D.), Vimuktātman (950 A.D.), Vācaspati Mīśra I (960 A.D.), Sarvajñātman (1027 A.D.) and Gangādhara (1137 A.D.). The situation does not change very much even if we include Maṇḍana Mīśra, the author of the *Brahmasiddhi* in this list, or include Sureśvara, Padmapāda, Hastāmalaka and Troṭaka, Śaṃkara's immediate disciples. To have had not more than half a dozen thinkers during a period of almost five hundred years does not speak very highly of Ācārya Śaṃkara's *Digvijaya*, so loudly proclaimed not only by his disciples, but others, in the Indian tradition.

There can thus be no ground for ascribing to Śaṃkara the responsibility for the disappearance of the Buddhists from the philosophical scene of India as is usually done by both scholars and laymen alike. It is a myth like many other myths and should be recognized as such. The cause of its disappearance lay in the

destruction of Nālandā, the inter-nationally acclaimed intellectual centre of Buddhism in 1200 A.D., though even that leaves many questions unanswered such as why, unlike Jainism, it had only one centre in the whole country. But, whatever may be the answer to this question, there can be little doubt that Ācārya Śaṅkara had no hand in its disappearance from India.

Is Nyāya Realist or Idealist?

Nyāya is usually described as a realist system by most people who write about it in the English language. In fact, many consider it as a realist system *par excellence*, and even identify the one with the other so completely that the two terms seem interchangeable to them. But, is it really so?

Nyāya is supposed to maintain that everything that is real is knowable and nameable. If we keep aside the issue of 'nameability' for the present and confine our attention to 'knowability' alone, then the contention that 'to be real' is 'to be knowable' seems suspiciously close to the idealist contention that 'esse' is 'percipi'. 'To be, is to be perceived' is the well-known Berkeleyan formulation in the western tradition. 'To be perceived' of course means 'to be known' in this context. However, as Berkeley's discussion of the problem is in the context of Locke's distinction between primary and secondary qualities on the one hand, and their inherence in a substance which is 'known' only as their substrate and is expressly designated as a 'know-not-

what' outside this reference to its being the 'support' for the qualities that inhere in it, it may appear that the 'qualities' about which both Locke and Berkeley are talking are the sort of qualities that can be apprehended through perception, and perception alone. But if there are qualities which need not be known through perception, or which cannot be known through sense perception, then the Berkeleyan formulation is obviously inadequate and the Nyāya formulation in terms of knowledge superior to that of Berkeley.

'To be known', however, is different from 'to be knowable' and the Nyāya position is supposed to be the latter rather than the former. But a reformulation of Berkeley's position in terms of 'the perceivable' rather than 'the perceived' would bring it closer to the Nyāya formulation. The distinction will become even less if we remember that for Berkeley, God's '*percipi*' cannot be 'sense perception' and that his '*percipi*', therefore, has to be understood as 'knowledge' rather than 'perception'. 'To be', thus, would either be 'to be known' or 'to be knowable'. The latter, of course, would be true only for finite minds like those of human beings. In the case of God, the distinction between 'known' and 'knowable' is irrelevant as everything is supposed to be 'known' by him. It is only in the case of human beings that this distinction may be said to make any sense.

It is not clear whether God plays any such analogous role in Nyāya as it does in Berkeley's system. Perhaps the issue did not engage the attention of the Nyāya thinkers not only because they did not see the problems posed by the distinction between 'knowing' and 'knowability', but also because the issue of the 'independence' of the object of 'knowing' from the 'act of knowing' does not seem to have been focally raised in the tradition, as it was by Locke in the context of 'secondary qualities' in the British empiricist tradition. The notion of '*buddhyapekṣā*', which comes closest to Locke's distinction, does not appear to have triggered the same set of problems as it did in the western tradition. But if the notion of '*buddhyapekṣā*' is accepted in respect of some qualities, then at least in respect of those qualities Nyāya could not be regarded as holding a 'realist' position.

Moreover, even the contention of the essential 'knowability' of

'reality' in the Nyāya context implies that the structure of 'knowing' and the structure of 'reality' are isomorphic in the sense that the *sattā* must be of the nature of *dravya* which is related to *guṇa* and *karma* by *samavāya*. The 'real', thus, has to be 'rational', and as Nyāya does not accept the notion of an 'unknowable thing-in-itself', there is no distinction between 'phenomena' and 'reality' or noumenon, as in Kant's case. If this is not out-and-out 'idealism', what else is it?

The term 'idealism' and 'realism' had arisen in the context of western philosophizing to describe certain philosophical positions which make sense in the perspective of question that were being debated in that tradition. In traditions where this sort of questions did not trouble the thinkers, it may not be illuminating to describe their position in those terms. But as the term 'realism' has been used to describe the Nyāya position by almost everybody who has written on it in the English language, it may not be remiss to raise a question about its adequacy in describing the position which is usually ascribed to Nyāya thinkers in the Indian tradition.

The following issues, therefore, need to be clarified before any reasonable answer may be attempted to the question regarding the adequacy of the characterization of the Nyāya tradition of philosophical thought in India as 'realist'.

1. Is it correct to say that Nyāya holds that anything which is 'real' is also 'knowable' and 'nameable'?
2. If so, what exactly is meant by the terms 'knowable' and 'nameable' in this connection?
3. Are the two terms 'knowable' and 'nameable' independent of each other? In other words, can something be 'knowable' without being 'nameable' and *vice-versa*?
4. If all that is 'real' is 'knowable' and 'nameable', then is that which is 'unreal', 'unknowable' and 'unnameable'?
5. Is the relation between that which is 'real' and that which is 'knowable' and 'nameable' symmetrical? In other words, is everything that is 'knowable' and 'nameable' also 'real' by virtue of that very fact?

6. In case there is complete symmetry between them, are they just different words with the same semantic import and thus synonymous with each other except in their pragmatic associations and visual or auditory identities?
7. In case the 'nameability' condition is essential to 'reality' for Nyāya, how will this be compatible with the definition of perceptual knowledge as given in the *Nyāya-Sūtra* 1.1.4, if *avyapadeśya* is understood as that which cannot be 'named'?
8. What exactly is meant by '*buddhyapekṣā*'? Does Nyāya accept this notion in the context of some qualities, and not of others? What is the ground of the distinction? And, in case it does accept the notion, does it not affect its so-called 'realist' position in the sense of 'independence' of the object 'known' from the 'act of knowing'?
10. What exactly is meant by this 'independence' on which the usual claim for Nyāya being a 'realist' system is generally based?

These are some of the issues that need to be clarified before we may meaningfully characterize Nyāya as an 'idealist' or 'realist' system.

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Can Navya Nyāya Analysis Make a Distinction between Sense and Reference?

Can Navya Nyāya analysis make a distinction between sense and reference? If it cannot, should it not be regarded as idealistic *par excellence*. On the other hand, if it can, how will it do so, particularly when it does not accept the idea of an identical propositional meaning conveyed by different linguistic formulations even when the same 'fact' is supposed to render the two different 'knowledges', 'true'? Or, in other words, can Navya Nyāya analysis ever accept the 'meaning equivalence' of two *differently* formulated linguistic expressions, or in which the *anuyogi* and the *pratiyogi* are different?

Is Udayana a *Pracchanna Advaitin*?

Udayana, by common consent, is usually regarded as the last of the Naiyāyikas of the old school before Gaṅgeśa started what is called the Navya Nyāya or the new school of Nyāya which replaced older Nyāya completely. Yet, Udayana, in his *Atmatattvaviveka*, gives six stages

of realisation of the self in ascending order out of which the third and the fifth are described by him as *advaitika* positions and the fifth is considered only one step lower than that of the Nyāya which occupies the highest position in his system. As the difference between the two is only marginal, that is, whether the self when completely established in itself without any relation to any object whatsoever can still be regarded as conscious in any relevant sense of the term. Not only this, he closes the book with the recommendation to meditate on the self and suggests the gradual stages of realisation which would occur during the course of meditation. In the light of all this, would it not be more proper to treat him as almost an *advaitin* who is concerned with the realisation of the self and believes that it can only be so realised through the usual meditational practices associated with the *advaita* Vedantins who deny the awareness of any object including the self in such a realisation? Where is the *Naiyāyika* in all this? And, should not we, therefore, call him almost an *advaitin*, a *pracchanna advaitin*?

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Did the Gopīs Really Love Kṛṣṇa?:

Some Reflections on Bhakti as a Puruṣārtha in the Indian Tradition

The Gopīs are the perfect example of the ideal that *bhakti* as a *puruṣārtha* is supposed to seek in the Indian tradition. And, amongst the Gopīs, it is Rādhā who exemplifies it to perfection. The exemplification of the ideal, however, divides into two neatly separated parts, the one when Kṛṣṇa is there and the other when he leaves the eternal abode of love and the Gopīs have to live without him. The former is the land of eternal dalliance; the latter of the eternal memory which recreates and relives in it. In the former state, Kṛṣṇa seeks the Gopīs as much as they seek him, though the texts do not clarify whether the seeking on both the sides is equal, reciprocal and complementary. But though there may be some doubt about this in the first state, there can be hardly any doubt about its absence in the second state. Here, *only* the Gopīs pine for him; he hardly remembers them and scarcely, if ever, remembers the delightful days he had passed in their company.

Yet, though the Gopīs are shown as “living” eternally in the memory of those days they had passed with Kṛṣṇa, they never make

the slightest effort to seek him out and meet him once more, or even try to find where he is or how he is.

It is, however, not only the Gopīs who seem totally disinterested in finding where Kṛṣṇa is or in making any effort to meet him, even though they remember him all the time and, in fact, live in his memories. Nanda and Yaśodā, who are both his foster-parents and with whom he has grown up as a child, do the same. There is no evidence that either Yaśodā or Nanda ever tried to meet Kṛṣṇa or even tried to find anything about him. Parents are normally over-anxious about their children even when they have grown up, but Yaśodā and Nanda are never shown as being such. In fact, they are not shown even as ‘living’ in his memory or pining for his presence, as the Gopīs invariably are. This is, or should be, surprised as all the childhood stories of Kṛṣṇa are always narrated and sung in the context of Yaśodā’s love for him as a child.

The same is true of all his boyhood friends as none of them try to meet him. They are not even shown as remembering or pining for him. Sudāmā, of course, is the exception, but he was a friend of student days and though the story is generally treated as a great example of friendship, it is nothing of the kind. Not only is Kṛṣṇa shown as thinking of Sudāmā or talking about him before he comes to meet him on the insistence of his wife, but even *after* the visit Kṛṣṇa neither tries to establish any contact with him nor makes any effort to meet him.

Thus, neither the Gopīs nor the foster-parents, Nanda and Yaśodā, nor the friends of boyhood or student days ever make the slightest effort to meet Kṛṣṇa *after* he has left them for the adult world that he inevitably encounters as he leaves childhood and adolescence behind him. Kṛṣṇa, on his part, *never* looks back—no, not even to Yaśodā who loved him so much as a child, or even the Gopīs who loved him so intensely in another way.

The adult loves of Kṛṣṇa are dyed in a different colour: they lack the intensity and passion of adolescent love. Also, they end in marriage and thus, do not symbolize what Rādhā has come to epitomize in the *bhakti* tradition of India. Who ever thinks of Rukmaṇī or Satyabhāmā or the innumerable other wives (whom) he had in the context of the ideal state of loving consciousness’ imagined in the Indian tradition?

Yet, as everybody knows, Rādhā is a latecomer in the “crafting” of the ideal and one wonders what happened to the Viṣṇu-centered *bhakti* of the *Pañcarātra* tradition opted for and fostered by all the non-*advaitika ācāryas* before Vallabha and Caitanya appeared on the scene.

The replacement, or even the identification of *brahman* with Viṣṇu and later of Viṣṇu with Kṛṣṇa in the Vedāntika tradition of India has seldom been noticed or emphasized. The unbelievable assertion of Madhusūdana Saraswatī, the author of the *Advaitasiddhi*, that he did not know of any reality other than, or superior to, Kṛṣṇa; (“*Kṛṣṇāt param kimapi tattva ahaṃ najāne*”) attests to this. The cult of Viṣṇu was, of course, far more widespread than the belief in *brahman* which had few takers even among the philosophical community in India before Śaṅkara appeared on the scene in the early eighth century A.D., as shown by the absence of any commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras* before him. But though Kṛṣṇa was regarded as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, it was the latter who was the object of devotion and worship as is evident by the fact that the eminent *ācāryas* from Yāmuna onwards opted for devotion and worship of him rather than of Kṛṣṇa.

This, in a sense, is surprising as it was in the south that we find the earliest evidence of intensely passionate, devotional love poetry addressed to Kṛṣṇa. Also, it was there that the fountainhead of all *bhakti* texts in the *bhakti* tradition, that is, the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*, was composed. The name of Andal, the Mira of the South, is well known in this connection and Wilhelm Hardy has discussed most of the related facts in his book *Viraha Bhakti* which is devoted to this subject. Also, all the *ācāryas* accepted the authority of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* and yet, for some reason, opted for the *bhakti* of Viṣṇu rather than that of Kṛṣṇa in their writing, as we noted earlier. Possibly they did not like the amorous element and the erotic flavour of the Andal tradition and hence chose as object of their worship and devotion a god who had hardly any association with romantic passion.

If the successive replacement of *brahman* by Viṣṇu and of Viṣṇu by Kṛṣṇa have not been the subject of much discussion or investigation in the literature concerned with the development of the *bhakti* tradition in India, the replacement of the Kṛṣṇa of the *Mahābhārata* first by that

of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavada* and then by that of the *Gīta Govinda* has hardly attracted any attention either. It is true that Bankim made a valiant attempt to resuscitate the Kṛṣṇa of the *Mahābhārata* in the present century but, as everybody knows, he hardly had any success in his enterprise. The attempt of many others to do the same through emphasizing the *karma*-centric message of the *Gītā* met the same fate. In fact, the well-known commentators on this text have systematically ignored its incorporation in the *Mahābhārata* and the context in which it was delivered.

The complete overshadowing of the Kṛṣṇa of the *Mahābhārata* by that of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavada* and the *Gīta Govinda* is a phenomenon that has not received sufficient attention by the students of the *bhakti* tradition in India. What exactly was that element in the later texts which increasingly appealed more and more to those who wanted to pursue the feeling-centered path of devotion in the Indian tradition? Did the personality of Kṛṣṇa as depicted in the *Mahābhārata* have elements which were incompatible with the development of an intensely emotional, and even passionate relationship to him in the usual sense of these words?

These are questions that need to be discussed and explored in detail if one wants to understand the ideal of *bhakti* as a *puruṣārtha* in the tradition.

The Kṛṣṇa of the *Mahābhārata* is not a child or a young adolescent whose life is centered in play or dreams of love. He is a fully grown, mature adult deeply immersed in the political events of his times and engaged in the most difficult problem of tackling the moral conflicts that arise therein. The issues relating to *dharma* in the field of public life are his central concern and all these converge in the central issue of whether war should be waged in the defence of *dharma* or not.

But how can such a Kṛṣṇa be the object of that passionate yearning and love which is at the heart of that which is symbolized by Gopīs in the Indian tradition? The *Mahābhārata* does not breathe the atmosphere of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavada* much less of the *Gīta Govinda*. There is no doubt that the aura of divine supereminence surrounds his personality and that there is Arjun who may be said to be the closest to what is

regarded as a *bhakta* in the tradition. It is the *sakhā bhāva*, the friendly mode of devotion, recognized as one of the five modes which *bhakti* may take in relation to the Lord. But friendliness is a different thing from love'. Is it being suggested that the one possible *bhakti*-relationship with the Kṛṣṇa typified in the *Mahābhārata* can only be that which is represented by Arjuna? The relationship itself is referred to by Arjuna in those terms, specially in the context of the *Viśva-rūpa darśana* in the eleventh canto of the *Gītā*. The *viśvarūpa* occurs twice in the *Mahābhārata* and twice in the *Bhāgavada*. The first time it occurs in the court of Duryodhana when he tries to prevent Śrī Kṛṣṇa from leaving after the failure of his last attempt to avert war between the two camps. It is a poor first draft of the later magnificent version that occurs in the eleventh canto of the *Gītā*. There he begs to be forgiven if he had said anything jokingly, or in jest or play, not knowing the 'real' nature of Kṛṣṇa. But what is more disturbing in the situation is that this "real" reality which cannot be seen by ordinary eyes, is so 'frightening' that Arjuna implores him to assume his previous form so that he can have normal feelings towards him.

But the *viśvarūpa* was the 'real' Kṛṣṇa, and to behold it one had to be given '*dīvyā cakṣu*' or divine eyes, since no normal eye could ever see it. Not only this, if Arjuna's statement is to be believed, one could not even have normal human feelings towards that "real" reality of Kṛṣṇa which was embodied in the *viśvarūpa*. Does it, then, mean that as a human being one cannot 'love' the 'real' Kṛṣṇa, not even as a friend, much less as a 'lover'? The Gopīs did not seek Kṛṣṇa after he left Vrindāvana as they wanted to preserve unsullied the memory of the Kṛṣṇa they had loved. Had they gone to seek and find him perhaps they, too, like Arjuna, might have said "Kṛṣṇa assume thy original form so that we may love thee as we had done before." The 'real' form of the adult Kṛṣṇa would have been as inimical to their love, as the *viśvarūpa* was to Arjuna's feeling of friendship towards him.

The *Śrīmad Bhāgavada* has also two versions, both shown to Yaśodā by the child Kṛṣṇa. The first occurs while the baby Kṛṣṇa just yawns, while the other appears to be more deliberate as it occurs when he is accused of eating earth and asked to open his mouth to prove that he has not done so. (See the *Śrīmad Bhāgavada*, X Canto). These two

viśvarūpas, however, arouse only wonder and not terror, as is the case with the two *viśvarūpas* in the *Mahābhārata*. They also seem more mature as they are more unitary in the sense that Yaśodā sees herself along with all the others in both of them. But the element of Death and Destruction is missing in them. There is no vision of Time, the All-Destroyer, as was asserted in the *Gītā*. Perhaps, the moral is that there is no “one” *viśvarūpa* of the Lord but whichever it be, it can arouse only terror or wonder, not love or friendship which alone can blossom when the vision is delimited to the human form. Love is a human emotion felt only in the human context, but it has an immanent ideal, which all *bhakti* seeks as its ultimate end.

The analogy is not entirely forced, even though there is little evidence to show that the Gopīs ever wanted to seek or find Kṛṣṇa after he left Vrindābana. The sort of love they had for him could hardly be sustained outside the ‘closed’ world which nourished it and let it grow to absolute purity. The fact that the Gopīs were already married made the situation more romantically poignant, though there is hardly any evidence that their husbands were ‘resentful’ or jealous because of their love for Kṛṣṇa. Rather, they all seemed to have ‘connived’ at it, if such a word can be used to describe the situation.

There is, of course, some evidence from the South which suggests that at best one of the Gopīs named Nappin Nayi was married to Kṛṣṇa. But such attempts remained only marginal and never formed the hard core of the relationship which the Gopīs in general and Rādhā in particular symbolized for the *bhakti* tradition in India. It was the *parakīyā* character of the relationship which became paradigmatic, even though there is little evidence to show that the fact of their being ‘married’ stood in the way of their relationship with Kṛṣṇa.

The love of Kṛṣṇa for the Gopīs has nothing to do with the *parakīyā bhāva* which came to be cultivated and valued in the *bhakti* tradition and theoretically elaborated by the Goswamis after Caitanya gave a new turn to the movement in India. As for the *parakīyā bhāva* about which Dr. Mukund Lath has written, it obviously could not have been there as Kṛṣṇa was not married during his Vrindābana days. The perfect matching of the true relationship regarded as ideal for the

fostering and cultivation of the emotion of love would perhaps occur if both the parties to the relationship happened to be married or, better still, be in the situation depicted in *Romeo and Juliet* by Shakespeare. But, the notion of *parakīyā* will have to be given a wider interpretation than has been done until now.

The idea that the emotion of love can only achieve its utmost intensity when there are formidable obstacles in the way of being one with the loved one, or that it flowers only in separation, is met with in all the literatures of the world and the literature on *bhakti* in India seems only to have cultivated and developed it more than anywhere else in the world. Yet, in the context of the cultivation of *bhakti*, it raises a problem which, as far as I know, has never been seen in the tradition.

Bhakti, as is well known, is not confined to what is called “*mādhuryā bhakti*” or the one that is symbolized in the relation of Rādhā and the Gopīs to Kṛṣṇa alone. It has other forms which are equally valid. But none of the *bhaktas* require for their intensive cultivation, the modality of separation or the existence of obstacles, whether social or otherwise, for the emotion to deepen and activate that passionate intensity which it would never have without that. In fact, the term ‘passionate intensity’ seems somehow inappropriate in their context. Who would ever think of ‘friendly relations’ or motherly love, or the relation of a servant to a master in those terms? The English equivalents hardly convey the modalities of *bhakti* that are conveyed by the terms ‘*sakhya*’ or ‘*vātsalya*’ or ‘*dāsya*’; there can be little doubt that the whole drama invoked by the terms, ‘*viraha*’ and ‘*parakīyā*’ is totally absent from them.

There is, however, another difference which has hardly been noticed in the writings on the *bhakti* traditions of India. None of the various forms of *bhakti*, except the one that is found preeminently amongst the Gopīs, requires the intense cultivation and development of separation from the Lord. Rather, they want to be *with* the one towards whom they have these relationships and would like to cultivate them further. There are, of course, deep, internal differences between these relationships and we need not go into them as they do not affect the

basic difference which all of them share in respect to the *mādhurya* relationship, as pointed out above.

The problem is complicated by the fact that neither Nanda or Yaśodā or any other playmates of Kṛṣṇa seek him after he has left Vrindāvana. *Vātasalya* perhaps ceases when one is no longer a child and grows up into adulthood, but can one say the same thing about the parental relationship? Do not parents normally continue to be fond of their children and want to see them at least occasionally even after they have grown up? There is also a converse relationship and one has to ask not only why Yaśodā did not try to find him or call him, but why Kṛṣṇa did not do so either? The Gopīs are at least remembered as Uddhava is sent to them, not so much for consolation as for teaching him what real *bhakti* is and how it is greater than all the wisdom and knowledge that he cherished.

The obvious objection to all this is that the very presuppositions of our formulation are totally mistaken: we are treating characters in a literary creation as if they were actual persons and asking questions which are meaningful *only* with respect to the latter and not to the former. But even if this is accepted, the question remains as to why the literary imagination chose to pursue a certain ideal in the cultivation of *bhakti* and not others. Or, why the others even when they actually existed, gradually became secondary and were soon almost completely forgotten. After all, there *was* the Kṛṣṇa of the *Mahābhārata* and everybody knew about him, as the story of that epic is as central to the imaginative tradition of India as the *Rāmāyaṇa* is supposed to be. Yet, the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* replaced the Kṛṣṇa of the *Mahābhārata* by deliberately ignoring the later life of Kṛṣṇa and invoking the early life of his childhood and youth for which there was little warrant in the other early work. There was, therefore, a freedom to interpret and develop it in the way one liked and it is both interesting and instructive to see how the author of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* did it. He subtly interwove the innocent playful theme of childhood and the enchanting eroticism of youth with the cosmic presence and play of the divine in such a way that the two got inextricably intertwined in a manner that is not found in any other civilization.

The cosmic and devotional background which preponderates and pervades the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*, however, gradually recedes into the background in the subsequent literature which is devoted to the early life of Kṛṣṇa and the erotic element, already legitimized by it takes over and there remains little to distinguish between this and the other love poems except the name of the hero and heroine. The *Gīta Govinda* is a classic example in this connection as it provides the model for all subsequent works that are written on this theme. The *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* itself had provided a basis for this in its well-known *Uddhava-Gopī Samvāda* where Kṛṣṇa is not only portrayed in purely erotic terms but also depicted as the eternally inconstant male ever seeking new loves just for their own sake. Yet, the Gopīs at least should have known that Kṛṣṇa could not have been otherwise for, if he had been different, he would have been loved by *only* one of the Gopīs and not all of them. In fact, wherever Kṛṣṇa is, the Gopīs are bound to be as he is conceived to be ever-loving and loving without discrimination, provided the others love him completely and without reservation and belong to the gender to which Gopīs belonged. It is surprising, therefore, that one does not hear of Gopīs outside Vrindāvana and that they not only did not ever leave it, but inspired no one else to be like them in their own lives.

The *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* self-consciously attempts to supersede the Kṛṣṇa of the *Mahābhārata* by denigrating the whole of the later work itself, as even after composing it, its author had found no peace and found himself to be totally distracted. The Nārada-Vyāsa episode at the very beginning of the work is not just a clever rhetorical device or what may be called *arthavāda* in the Mīmāṃsā sense. It is there to make Vyāsa see the futility of his *dharma*-centric reflection and the drama of the conflict between *dharma* and *adharmā* on a grand epic scale unparalleled in world literature. The world of socio-political action was once again relegated to meaninglessness and unreality. The enterprise of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* was far-reaching as it continued with the Advaitic denigration of the world of action and created that deep distrust of the life of action which the Upaniṣadika and Śramaṇa traditions had long cultivated and fostered in India. The non-Advaitika Vedāntika ācāryas from Yāmuna to Vallabha did little to redeem the

situation. Around the beginning of the second millennium A.D., there occurred one of the greatest movements that has taken place in the life of any civilization. The denial of the importance of the life of action appears unchallenged, at least in the philosophical works produced in those times. There was, of course, the old *smārta* tradition which continued to stress the values of living in the world of family and society. Besides this, there is some evidence of a conscious revival of the Vedic tradition as evidenced in the Vijayanagar empire and even earlier by a number of new commentaries on the *Vedas* that began to be written during the time. There is also the additional evidence from the legal texts, particularly the *Nibandha* literature, which shows a spectacular increase from this period onwards. All this evidence, however, has yet to be critically examined and evaluated, particularly against the background of the vast political changes that first start to occur in North India around 1200 A.D., and extend to the south, though never engulfing the whole of what is at present known as 'India' at any one time.

The exact balance between the two trends is difficult to determine. The same is true regarding the interaction and relationship between the two. But it would not be unfair to say that after the appearance, first of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavadā* and then of the *Gīta Govindā* there was a remarkable shift in the religious and spiritual atmosphere in India so that even such a great Advaitin like Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, as pointed out earlier felt like saying "*Kṛṣṇat param kimapi tattva aham na jane*". But, which Kṛṣṇa? Certainly, not the Kṛṣṇa of the *Mahābhārata*, but only the, one of whom Caitanya sang; that is, the one for whom Rādhā pined in separation and eternally longed for. Rādhā lived perpetually in the remembrance of the memory of their union but did not make the slightest effort to see that it was realized and actualized once again as in the *Gīta Govindā* which focuses on the centrality of union rather than separation in love.

The *Gīta Govindā*, however, did more than this. In the opening verses it summarised the long prelude spread over nine cantos in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavadā* describing the various *avatāras* of the Lord, skipping all the childhood scenes of the tenth canto, and concentrating on the episode with the Gopīs, making Rādhā the central figure, and taking

over the whole paraphernalia of Bharata's *Nāṭya Śāstra* especially in the context of *śṛṅgāra rasa* along with the subtleties introduced by the *Kāma Sūtra* and the *Alaṅkāra Śāstra*. A masterpiece was produced, blending poetry and music in such a way that the diverse emotions involved in an intensely felt passionate love could be depicted through dance which concretized the whole thing as a 'living presence' before the enraptured audience.

Poetry, music and dance, however, have a dramatic underpinning in the *Gīta Govindā* which is introduced by the element of the jealousy which is felt by Rādhā in respect to the other Gopīs whom Kṛṣṇa loves. In the *Śrīmad Bhāgavadā* the Gopīs do not show any such internal jealousy amongst themselves. In fact, the whole relationship amongst the Gopīs and Kṛṣṇa would become impossible if there were any such feeling. They, of course, reveal such feelings in the *Uddhava-gopī Saṁvāda*, but it is only in respect to the women of Mathura who know more about the ways of enticing men than those who know only the rural ways of Gokul and Nandagāon. They are, thus, outside the circle of Gopīs amongst whom no such feeling could ever be entertained, as that would break the enchanted magical circle of the *rasa* and destroy it by mutual bickerings and suspicion.

The closest feeling that is depicted in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavadā* to jealousy is the one that the Gopīs evince for the preferred one whom Kṛṣṇa takes along with him when he disappears from amongst their midst. But it is a feeling of envy rather than jealousy as they all feel that she, the preferred one; must have adored, worshipped and loved him more and so she became the chosen one. Yet, just as she was forsaken because of feeling the same pride that they had felt at being the chosen ones of the Lord, they all ultimately are cured of their pride, and so the famous *rasa* begins in the light of the full autumn moon where everything blooms and bursts with love.

The whole episode occupies only five chapters of the tenth canto (29th to 33rd) and consists of just 174 *ślokas* out of 18,000 which constitute the whole of *Śrīmad Bhāgavadā*. Yet, in spite of this negligible proportion, the incidence has been treated as the central message of the whole work and the pivot around which the story revolves. This

might have had some justification if the story had ended there but, as everyone knows, Kṛṣṇa leaves both Vṛndāvana and Gokula for ever, moves to Mathura and then Dwārka and marries many a time and takes part in the political events of his time. For him, it is a passing episode, even if it is not so for the Gopīs and the other playmates of his Vṛndavana days. But the fact that it is this episode along with those relating to other childhood pranks, which have captured the imagination of succeeding generations speaks volumes for the understanding of the development of *bhakti* as a *puruṣārtha* in the Indian tradition. It is the *vātsalya* and the *mādhurya* which dominate the life of feeling, and it is these that have to be cultivated in relation to the Lord, as he alone can be the adequate *ālabhana* for the enhancement of emotions.

Ultimately, the message of the Gopī episode in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavadā* is that the ideal of love is the loving state of consciousness which can only be cultivated through a constant remembrance of and dwelling in the memory of those moments which one fortunately had with the person one loved. It is the imaginative reliving and embroidering of those subtle shades of consciousness which lie between the anticipation and fulfilment. In the words of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavadā*, “यथा दूरचरे प्रेष्ठे मन आविश्य वर्तते । स्त्रीणां च न तथा चेतः सन्निकृष्टेऽक्षिगोचरे ॥ 35 ॥ (अध्याय 47, दशम स्कन्ध) ”

The imagined world is more ‘real’ as far as the realm of feelings is concerned than the so-called ‘real’ world which alone is supposed to be the object of the cognitive enterprise of man. The perennial attraction of the former is an evidence of this.

But such a view of *Bhakti* assumes that one had the experience in the remembrance of which one lives and which is imaginatively recreated in diverse ways that become as, or even more ‘real’, than that which was originally experienced. The Gopīs were fortunate in this as they had at least some time with Kṛṣṇa before he left Vṛndāvana forever. This, however, is not the case with other ordinary mortals, unless we share with Plato and Abhinavagupta the idea that we all were Gopīs in some transcendent Vṛndāvana where we sported with him. The remembrance of the transcendent episode, whether true or not, was rediscovered by those 174 verses of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavadā*,

and the Gopīs’ experience as described therein became the model for the experience to be relived and imaginatively recreated by the devotees who came after them in this world. The creation and recreation of that ‘experience’ in myriad forms not only in the *Gīta Govinda* but also in other innumerable works after it, is the story of the development of *bhakti* as a *puruṣārtha* in the Indian tradition. It is the story of the elaboration of a *puruṣārtha* in the realm of feeling, in terms of an ideal value immanent in it, as against the *puruṣārthas* involved in the realms of ‘knowing’ and ‘willing’.

The story of the development of the exploration of each of these *puruṣārthas*, their conflict and their inter-relationship is yet to be written; so also is the investigation of the uniqueness of the Indian exploration in these domains of human seeking when seen in a comparative perspective of what was sought in those very domains in other cultures and civilizations.

All these are, however, primarily concerned with issues pertaining to the history of thought in this domain. The more fundamental philosophical problems, on the other hand, relates to the relationship that holds between the ‘experience’ and the ‘object’ in the modalities known as ‘knowing’, ‘feeling’, and ‘willing’. K.C. Bhattacharya and, following him, Kalidas Bhattacharya, have explored this in great depth and detail. But their observations have not been subjected to critical scrutiny or developed further by subsequent thinkers in this country. One of the interesting suggestions made by them in this regard relates to the fact that in feeling the experiencing consciousness wants to become totally ‘free’ of the ‘object’ so that it does not depend on it for its being what it is. This, of course, would be true only of those states of consciousness which are primarily experienced as positive in character. The ‘experiencing consciousness’ is itself regarded as intrinsically valuable and its dependence on an object which is essentially independent of it is felt as a limitation which is to be absolutely overcome if *mokṣa* in this realm is to be achieved.

Was it, then, that Gopīs symbolized the quest for ultimate liberation in the realm of feeling, which was called ‘*bhakti*’ in the tradition? And, is the supersession of the Kṛṣṇa of the *Mahābhārata* is a

supersession of *dharma* as a *puruṣārtha* where the ideal of freedom was to be achieved through the practice of *niskāma karma* as propounded in the *Gītā*? The opening of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavadā* suggests something like this and the *bhakti* tradition has never known what to do with the moral dimension of consciousness where the feeling of obligatoriness towards the ‘other’ reigns supreme.

The immanent ideal involved in seeking complete freedom from all dependence on the object in the realm of feeling finds its culmination in the idea of *Advaita bhakti*, though it has seldom been seen in this way. Yet, if the *puruṣārtha* of *bhakti* is to become completely free of the ‘object’, even in its imagined form, then it suggests that man is never satisfied with the ‘real’ world revealed to him by his cognitive enterprise. He uses this cognitive knowledge of the world primarily to gain mastery over it so that he may rebuild it nearer to his heart’s desire. But whatever he does is limited and constrained by the causal nexus in which it exists. The art “object” is also situated in this world, but it touches it only marginally and tangentially and varies in different art-forms.

The freedom which man seeks from the space-time causality nexus in which biological life is ‘lived’ and to which it is necessarily a subject is, however, only partially achieved through these art-creations, as the world of feelings one desires, or aspires to have, is still too closely dependent upon and bound up with the ‘object’ that is created. To free oneself even from that bondage, one would like to live in a world of feelings which is a completely autonomous, self-subsistent and self-sufficient. This is the *puruṣārtha* which the ideal of *bhakti* seems to seek in the Indian tradition and the Gopīs seem to symbolize to the fullest possible extent. The route to such independence was sought through pure imagination, completely free from all-biosocial constraints of space, time and causality. But no ideal is ever completely achieved and there is always a challenge to explore and articulate the *puruṣārtha* which alone makes life worth living at the human level.

19

The *Varṇāśrama* Syndrome of Indian Sociology

There can hardly be any doubt that to a large extent, what has come to be known as the ‘sociology of India’ or ‘Indian sociology’ has revolved around the concepts of *varṇa*, *āśrama* and *puruṣārtha*, which are supposed to encompass Indian thinking about man and society on the one hand, and describe the actual living reality of man and society in India from the vedic times to the present, on the other.¹ But a concept in a descriptive context is not the same as a theoretical context, and one is supposed to distinguish between the two at the cost of utterly confusing both oneself and others in case one fails to do so. The questions that should have been asked about these concepts, then, relate to, the function they perform in the cognitive enterprise of understanding man and society in the Indian tradition. Are these concepts descriptive in the sense that any positive instantiation of them exhausts their meaning? Or, are they some sort of ‘ideal type’ constructs helpful in theoretically understanding empirical phenomena, but nowhere being completely illustrated by them nor ever meant for any such purpose? Or, are they ‘ideal evaluative terms’

prescribing what ought to be, created in the service of thinking about an ideal utopia and not for purposes of any cognitive enterprise whatsoever? Or, is it all the three at the same time, so compressedly intermixed that it is impossible to separate them from each other even if we thought it desirable to do so?

The descriptive, the theoretical and the prescriptive use of concepts, it may be contended, was never distinguished before recent times. It may also be contended that to ask for such a distinction is itself a sign of being a victim of the positivist fallacy which thrives on the illusion that value-free thinking is possible in the social sciences, or perhaps even in all sciences. But the issue is not whether the distinctions were drawn in the classical texts dealing with these matters or even whether or not the drawing of such distinctions is desirable, but whether we are clear about what we are talking about or what we want to do with these concepts which have been handed over to us by the Indian tradition of thinking about man and society. And, the first thing that we should be clear about in this connection is whether our own interest in these concepts is textual-historical-archival, that is, what they possibly meant to the writers of the texts. Or, if one does not believe in 'writers' and their 'intentions', but believes that the texts are 'autonomous' or *apauruṣeya* as the Mīmāṃsakas thought about the *vedas*, then what was or is the immanent meaning in the text assuming that all the problems regarding the 'textuality' of the text have been settled to some extent? And, even if one rejects the notion of an isolated text having an immanent meaning of its own, independent of any considerations concerning who was the author and what he wanted to say through the writing of that work, and opts instead for the belief that all the texts in their totality convey a meaning that is expressed *in* and *through* them, one would not only have compounded the problems a thousandfold, but also added the insoluble problem of deciding at what point to treat the text *paramparā* as closed and to assume arbitrarily that no such text or texts would be written in the future.

But all this exercise is, or should be, irrelevant to the sociologist who is neither a historian nor an Indologist. He is supposed to be a social scientist and concerned with the study of society in India. Although the relevance of text and context for the study of Indian society

has been a burning issue amongst those who have tried to study it during the past few decades, it has not been recognised that the problem is posed in terms of the accidental situation where a large number of students of Indian society happened to be those who were alien to it. Surprisingly, the trend and the debate have continued even amongst those who have belonged to this society in the sense of having been born and grown up in it. These latter seem to have been so 'socialised' into their discipline that they have not even cared to ask about the texts' and 'contexts' in terms of which the British or French, the German or US societies *are*, or *ought* to be, studied. And, if those societies can be studied without reference to any text or texts, why should it be considered necessary to do so in the case of Indian or, for that matter, any non-Western society which has such texts from its historical past?

To ask these questions is to realise how much the study of Indian society has been influenced by the unique situation in which the British rulers tried to 'understand' an alien society for purposes of governance. How much of this continues in the 'foreigner's' study of India can only be known through empirical investigation, but it seems clear that the Indians' own study of their society has, by and large, not been able to overcome the '*varṇāśramapurūṣārtha* framework' provided by early students of the subject. Two recent books, *Way of life: King, householder, renouncer* (Madan 1952) and *Non-renunciation: Themes and interpretations of Hindu culture* (Madan, 1987) are sufficient evidence of this. Even a brief reflection at the title of these works would reveal the enormous 'blindness' with respect to the framework which seems to have been so unquestioningly accepted by such eminent students of Indian society. After all, is not the king a householder, and, if so, what is the point of contrasting the two in the very title of the book? What about kings who have been supposed to be renouncers. renouncers of attachment and of the fruits of action, like Janaka and Kṛṣṇa in the Indian tradition? And, why does a sociologist feel the need to entitle his book *Non-Renunciation* in the year 1987 unless he believes that most of his fellow sociologists consider Indian society to be full of 'renouncers' or at least regard 'renunciation' as the highest value in life? Finally, what could be the possible grounds of such a belief except the oft-repeated *mantra*-like recitation regarding *mokṣa* as the

highest *puruṣārtha* and *sanyāsa* as the culminating *āśrama* for all who subscribed to, or were born into, the vedic or the *śramaṇic* tradition in India?

It is good to find Madan questioning the self evident axioms of Indian-society. But, first, the conclusion is based on a study of Kashmiri Paṇḍits only and, second, it ignores not only the peculiar history of Hinduism in Kashmir but also the fact that the Hindu community in Kashmir does not even theoretically, conceive of itself as consisting of all the so-called four *varṇas* of the accepted Hindu classification regarding possible groups in society. The latter characteristic it seems to share with Hindu community in south India in general and Tamil Nadu in particular, where the main line of division and demarcation is supposed to be between Brahmins and non-Brahmins, and not between the so called three upper *varṇas* and the fourth *varṇa*, that is, the *sūdras*. The main strand of Hindu thought in Kashmir that is, Kashmir *śaivism*, is itself so radically different from most of the other schools of Indian philosophy that it should come as no surprise if the life-ideal of the Kashmiri Paṇḍits is found to be different from that ascribed to the orthodox world-view of the Brahmins in other parts of India. Consciousness, it should be remembered, is conceived of as essentially active, dynamic and creative in Kashmir *śaivism* as distinct from the inactive and passive way it has been treated in other systems. Also, the personality of Abhinavagupta, the outstanding personality of Kashmir *śaivism*, and the life-style ascribed to him, must have provided a different model of the ideal human personality than that found in other traditions in India (Madan 1987-21).²

But Madan need not have gone to the Kashmiri Paṇḍits to find that 'the life of the man-in-the-world epitomised in the role of the householder, though arduous, is the moral and good life' (Madan 1987: 47). He could easily have found it in the heroes of the two great epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, including those who are regarded as incarnations of God Himself, that is Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. For a theoretic formulation and justification of the life of action, he could easily have gone to the *Bhagavadgītā* where Kṛṣṇa himself propounds the ideal of detached action in the socio-political world and denounces that renunciation as false which desists from the usual duties of a vedic

householder or from action in general. Perhaps Madan's is only an empirical study of the actually prevalent attitude about the ideal of renunciation amongst a community where the normally expected attitude would have been the reverse of what he found. But what led him to expect that the attitude towards renunciation would have been different from the one he found? Were there some empirical studies supporting the hypothesis that renunciation is accepted as the ultimate ideal of life by most Hindus or even by most Paṇḍits in other parts of India? As far as I know, there have been no such studies. At least, he does not refer to them in the essay concerned. On the other hand, it could have been the generally accepted view about the ideal life supposedly propounded in the authoritative texts of Hinduism which might have led him to see whether it was actually true in the case of a community which he was best fitted to investigate. But, as everyone knows, there are no real authoritative texts of Hinduism; or, there are so many, each for one's own *sampradāya*, that one may pick and choose whichever one likes for one's purpose. But, even assuming that there are such texts and that they do say what the *varṇāśrama-puruṣārtha* theory asserts about them, why does Madan or anyone else think that empirical social reality amongst the Hindus would or should exemplify it to any extent? This, as far as I know, is not the normal practice amongst serious students of other societies, even though stray studies of religious beliefs on economic or scientific activity might have been investigated. The relation between Ideology and Actuality may be a subject of legitimate investigation but it will be so for *all* societies and not only for *some*. In any case, one would have to distinguish between the ideal and the actual, and not confuse the two. Also, one would have to distinguish between ideals and ideologies, reasons and rationalisations, given categorial structures in which people articulate reality and the alternative ways in which it can be categorised for cognitive purposes.

The reason why these considerations have played only a marginal role in the study and understanding of Indian society may be said to be in the condition that all non-Western societies are so radically different from Western societies that they have to be understood in a radically different way, and within a radically different perspective, from the Western ones. These are the 'traditional' societies and they have to

be understood in terms of their *past* as they are constituted by it. This past, of course, has been modified by the impact of the West during the last two and a half centuries when its civilisation spread over the rest of the world militarily, economically and culturally. This is the 'tradition-modernity' syndrome in terms of which most social scientists in the West have articulated their vision of the contemporary world and which has been uncritically accepted by most social scientists in the non-Western world as well. And, as far as India is concerned, the tradition is that of *varṇāśrama-puruṣārtha par excellence* and Indian society has to be understood in its terms. But what is the evidence for this supposed tradition, and is it as unambiguous as has been generally assumed?

First, it is not quite clear what is meant by *varṇa*. If it is taken to mean 'colour' of the skin then obviously there would be as many *varṇas* as there can be colours of the skin of man. As, in this context, men are generally divided into fair and dark, there would be two *varṇas* only, fair and dark. Unfortunately, this does not help much and the *Puruṣa-Sūkta*, which is usually quoted to justify the divine origin of the four *varṇas*, nowhere mentions it. In fact, if the *Puruṣa-Sūkta* is to be taken seriously, then many of the usual hypotheses about the Śūdras cannot even be entertained. How can they, for example, be regarded as non-Āryans when they were an integral part of the *puruṣa* which divided itself or begot from itself the so-called four *varṇas*? How could they even be identified with the conquered peoples whom the Āryans are supposed to have made their slaves? In fact, as Romila Thapar said in her Sardar Patel Memorial lectures, 'The historian . . . cannot but doubt the theory that a large number of Āryans conquered northern India, enslaved the existing population and thereby established their language and culture both entirely alien to the indigenous tradition' (1979: 26).³ But the issue in the context of the *Puruṣa-Sūkta* is obviously not historical, but theoretical. One cannot accept the *pramāṇatva* of the *Sūkta* and simultaneously treat Śūdras as outside the Āryan fold, whatever the term '*ārya*' may mean in this connection. In fact, as *puruṣa* of the *Puruṣa Sūkta* hardly be regarded as an *ārya* in the cultural, racial or linguistic sense of the term, the division into *varṇas* can only be regarded as constitutive of and

coterminous with any human society.

But what is the exact purport of the *Sūkta* and what exactly is its authority as belonging to the *Śruti*, if any? According to the Mīmāṃsā, as it is not a *vidhi-vākya*, it can only be an *arthavāda*, that is, metaphorical in nature. It should be remembered that, according to the Mīmāṃsā the *vedas* strictly construed consist only of injunctions and prohibitions and not of any declarative statements concerning matters of fact regarding which questions of truth or falsity may possibly be raised. And, in any case, if any such statements are found to exist, they are to be interpreted, not literally, but only metaphorically, and that too in the context of an explicitly injunctive text. For the later Mīmāṃsā or the Vedāntika tradition on the other hand, the vedic texts are supposed to be authoritative only when they talk of transcendental matters such as *Brahman* or *ātman*.⁴

The *Puruṣa-Sūkta*, thus, cannot be treated as authoritative either by Mīmāṃsā or Vedānta on the basis of their own criteria of what is to count as a *śruti-pramāṇa* in their own systems. But even if it were to be accepted as a proper *śruti* text, it cannot support the theory of *varṇa* as it is usually presented in textbooks, for surely nobody would like to treat his feet as less important than other parts of the body and, if one does, one can be made to realise the absurdity of one's position by making one lose one's feet and see the consequences.

In fact, the Mīmāṃsā may even be said not to recognise the so-called theory of the four *varṇas*, for though it talks of the four *varṇas* it is prepared to accept a fifth or even a sixth *varṇa*. Basically, it is not interested in the *Puruṣa-Sūkta* or any other statements of the *Samhitās*, but only in those which are directly related to the performance of *yajñas*, particularly as laid down in the *Brāhmaṇa* texts. Thus, when the *śruti* text says that 'the *Rathakāra* should install the fire during the rains',⁵ it is prepared to accept *Rathakāra* as a separate *varṇa* on the grounds that 'the Installation of Fire by the *Brāhmaṇa*, the *Kṣatriya*, the *Vaiśya* has been already laid down in another text (as to be done during spring, summer, and autumn)' (Jha n.d.: 1008). The final Siddhānta as propounded by Śabara in this connection reads, 'From all this it follows that the installation spoken of in the sentence in question is that by persons who do not belong to any of three higher castes, and who are

also not *Śūdras*' (Ibid., 6.1.50, 1010). Similar is the case of Niṣādasthapati (the Niṣāda chief) 'who does not belong to one of the three higher castes', and presumably not to the fourth *varṇa*, that is, the *Śūdras* either. Yet, 'he is entitled to perform the "*Raudra-sacrifice*"' (Jha, n.d.: 1011).⁶ Thus, we would have at least two more *varṇas* if we accept Jaimini's position as explicated by Śabara besides the usually accepted four *varṇas* supposed to have been exhaustively enumerated in the *Puruṣa-Sūkta* referred to by everybody. Furthermore, these are the two *varṇas* which alone are entitled to perform certain *yajñas* as against the three *varṇas*—*Brāhmaṇa*, *Kṣatriya*, *Vaiśya*—which alone are supposed to be entitled to perform all the sacrifices, if they so choose. In fact, the general entitlement of these three *varṇas* seems to be restricted not only in these cases, but also in the case of another form of sacrifice where not only are all *Kṣatriyas* and *Vaiśyas* excluded, but also all *Brāhmaṇas* not belonging to the *Viśvāmītra gotra* (Jha n.d.: 1168).⁷ In fact, according to the *Mīmāṃsā-Sūtras*, they have to belong not only to the *Viśvāmītra gotra*, but also to the same *kalpa* (Jha, n.d.: 1153).⁸

But it is not only that one has to accept more than the so-called four *varṇas* if one takes Jaiminī or Śabara seriously, but also that in order to be a *mantradṛṣṭā*, one need not be a *Brāhmaṇa* at all, or even belong to the *Kṣatriya* or *Vaiśya varṇas* which alone are usually regarded as privileged to undertake vedic studies. The well known story in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* attests to this. It should be noted that the *Brāhmaṇa* specifically characterises Kavaṣa as '*dāsyāḥ putraḥ*' (the son of a maid-servant), '*kitavaḥ*' (gambler) and '*abrāhmaṇaḥ*' (one who is not a *Brāhmaṇa*)⁹ (*Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* 1979: 216). Yet, these characteristics do not deprive him of the *yogyatā* for being a *mantradṛṣṭā*. Further, the story specifically makes the point that the so-called *Brāhmaṇas* who had not let him partake in the *sattra* on these grounds were mistaken. A similar story is that of Satyakāma Jābāla in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* which also supports this, just as the stories of the *Kṣatriya* kings teaching *Brāhmaṇas* the new doctrine question the proclaimed identification of the *Brāhmaṇa* with the teaching function and the respective roles assigned to them in the usual presentations on the subject.¹⁰

In fact, as early as the *Yajurveda*, a large number of professional castes appeared to have come into being about whom the author of the thirtieth *adhyāya* seems to be in some doubt as to the *varṇa* in which they were to be placed. If the text is to be taken seriously then all the names mentioned after the first clear enunciation of the four *varṇas*, *Brāhmaṇa*, *Rājāṇya*, *Vaiśya* and *Śūdra*, would have to be taken not only as designating *varṇas* or *jātis* other than them but also as born of *Prajāpati*, as it ends by calling all of them '*prājāpatyāḥ*'. Both the *Śukla Yajurveda* and the *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda* have the extended list, though in varying order, and with some omissions and additions in the respective texts of the two *Vedas* (*Śukla Yajurveda* n.d.: 126-27; *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda* 1979: 957-73). In fact, the list in the *Śukla Yajurveda* surprisingly ends by characterising *puṅścalī kitavaḥ*, and *klība* as a *Śūdra* and a *Brāhmaṇa* (*māgadhaḥ puṅścalī klībośūdrā abrahmaṇāste prājāpatyāḥ*).

The inadequacy of the four-fold *varṇa* scheme to adequately accommodate all empirically existing groups or classes in society continued to plague the Indian theoretical *Dharmaśāstra* thinker since its very inception. One of the most curious specimens of this difficulty may be found in Vijñāneśvara's perplexity regarding the determination of the *varṇa* of a *ganikā*, that is, a courtesan in traditional Hindu society.¹¹ It may be remembered that a *ganikā* or *veśyā* was considered an integral part of Hindu society, so much so that there are explicit provisions for taxing her income in Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* and even explicit instructions in some texts to build special quarters for them along with the sacred temples for the deities.¹² The problem of the *ganikā's varṇa*, thus, is internal and not external to the theoretician of the system. The conclusion that Vijñāneśvara reaches in his *Mitākṣarā* commentary on the *Yājñyavalkya-smṛti* is that she should be regarded as a fifth *varṇa*. In fact he quotes from the *Skandapurāṇa* wherein it is said that *veśyā* is a fifth *jāti* (*Yājñyavalkya-smṛti* 1967: 302). The reason advanced for the strange contention in the *Skandapurāṇa* is, of course, gratuitous in that they are supposed to be the progeny of *apsarās* named *Pañcacūḍā*, for even if this be granted it does not in any way affect the empirical fact that all *veśyās* are not always born of *veśyās*, and that male children may also be born of them. They obviously would not be *veśyās*, unless a separate category of male *veśyās* is

accepted and appropriate functions prescribed for them. The exact quotation from the *Skandapurāṇa* given by Vijñaneśvara reads: *Pañcacūḍā nāma kaścanāpsarasah, tatsaṅgati veśyākhyā pañcamī jātiḥ*. It may be noted that the term *jāti* is here used in the sense of *varṇa*, as otherwise there would have been little point in calling it as the fifth *jāti*, particularly when so many other *jāti*s were already known as early as *Yajurveda* itself, *vide* the references already given earlier. In fact, it has not been noticed by most people that the thirtieth *adhya*ya of the *Śukla Yajurveda* (n.d.: 127) wherein all these different groups are mentioned ends by calling them 'asūdra and abrahmaṇa' (Lath 1989).

It is obvious that the negative prefix here cannot be taken to mean that they are, therefore, to be considered either as Kṣatriyas or Vaiśyas, but rather, that they should be treated as belonging to a *varṇa* other than these four.

The classificatory problems of the so-called *jāti*s into *varṇas* has plagued the Indian sociologist, if we may call the social thinkers of the past by that appellation, from the very beginning and has continued till the present times. The problem is, in a sense, endemic to all classifications, for once a classification has been made there are always some phenomena which refuse to fit neatly into any one of them. But the problem with a social classification like *varṇa* is that it is simultaneously ascriptive and prescriptive possessing both a factual and ideal element in it. This may not seem so obvious in the case of the classificatory categories of Vaiśya and Śūdra, but it is only because these have not been given the attention they deserve. Just as the empirical life of man centred around the functions of the body has not had the attention of the philosophers, except very recently and that too perfunctorily, the valuational problems relating to the Vaiśya and the Śūdra have not been paid much attention by the classical social thinkers of India.

But whatever might be the source of the problems, the simple solution would have been to revise the classification or expand it, instead of forcing the recalcitrant phenomena into the strait-jacket of the existing classification. The reason that this was not attempted by the classical thinkers of India except in the purely cognitive domains

such as *Nyāya* and there too most reluctantly, may lie perhaps not just in the desire to provide a seeming continuity to the *paramparā* or tradition in these fields, but also in the fact that these classifications had become social realities by which people actually understood the classification as implying a hierarchy in terms of status and valuation. But what exactly was being classified and ordered and evaluated? Was it, for example, the functions associated with the *varṇas* and the *jāti*s which concretely embodied those functions? But the *jāti*s have proliferated all the time. and hence the deeper question is, how do new *jāti*s come into being? Is it a case of an existing *jāti* splitting into two or more because of various reasons, or two different *jāti*s amalgamating into one, or a separate group not having a *jāti* structure becoming a part of the Hindu social fabric or coming under its influence and gradually becoming one, or all of these together? Also, if *jāti*s are assumed to perform some functions in society, then not only would the differentiation of existing functions lead to the creation of new *jāti*s but the emergence of new functions would also result in the coming into being of new *jāti*s. Similarly, the disappearance of old functions due to, say, the emergence of new technology either because of immanent innovation in the culture itself or from borrowings from abroad, may lead to the disappearance of old *jāti*s. Old *jāti*s may, of course, take on new functions, particularly those that are in consonance with their old skills, but the fact of the emergence of new *jāti*s can hardly be explained by this.

The tradition was, of course, aware of the problem, and Manu's is perhaps the classic attempt to explain it all from mixed marriages of men and women belonging to the different *varṇas*. The attempt, though taken seriously by most of the classical social thinkers of India and even by many of those who consider themselves as such in modern times, flies not only in face of the fact that a large number of *jāti*s outside the four *varṇas* are mentioned as early as the *Śukla Yajurveda*, but also that if the upaniṣadic story about Satyakāma Jābāla is taken seriously and read along with the story in the *Mahābhārata* about the origin of the institution of marriage, a picture of society emerges where legitimate sexual relations between persons of all sorts of *varṇas* and/or *jāti*s was a widely prevalent phenomenon. The stories of the various *ṛsis*, and of the way they were born and the manner in

which they behaved or misbehaved, only tend to confirm this. Beyond this, there is, of course, the biological fact that it is difficult to determine who is born of whom, particularly for the reasons given by Satyakāma Jābāla's mother, except through the recently discovered paternity tests. The deeper irrelevance of Manu's argument in the context of the tradition itself would perhaps emanate from the fact that the alleged *Puruṣa-Sūkta* story of the creation of the *varṇas* does not explicitly state that, the creation was of the persons of the opposite sexes belonging to each of the four separate *varṇas* or that there was any prohibition of their having an inter-*varṇa* progeny from amongst themselves.

Manu's silence about both the vedic and the upaniṣadika counter-evidence casts grave doubts not only on his honesty as a thinker, but also on the *Śruti-prāmānya* of the *Smṛti-Śāstras*, just as Śaṅkara's deliberate mistranslation of the upaniṣadika story casts doubts not only on his intellectual honesty but also on his genuine acceptance of the *prāmānya* of the upaniṣads, which alone were pre-eminently the *śruti* for him, or on his faith in the relevance of *advaita* for the *vyavahārika* realm. The latter point needs to be emphasised, as none of the *advaitika* thinkers of the past drew any conclusions from it regarding changes in the Hindu social organisation, as was done by the so-called neo-Vedāntika thinkers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in India.

The deeper problem, however, is that the *śruti* cannot, in principle, provide any guidance for the *smṛti*s, both for the Mīmāṃsā and the Vedānta the authority of the *Śruti* is primarily confined either to the performance of the various *yajñas* mentioned in it or to the transcendental issues concerning the relation between the *ātman* and the *Brahman*. The socio-political life of man cannot be ordained by the *śruti* except in a tangential manner as, for example, when it prescribes what *yajñas* are to be performed by what *varṇas*, or whether they can be performed by some *varṇas* at all. Thus, the attempt of the classical social thinkers of India to ground the *smṛti*s in the extant *śruti*s or to postulate some lost *śruti* for them if the extant ones were found to be insufficient, was not only a vain attempt but also rested on a misunderstanding regarding the nature of *śruti* itself, if it were to be understood as the Mīmāṃsā or the Vedānta understood it.

Furthermore, it was not even seen that to postulate a lost *śruti* text to ground the authority of the *smṛti*s was to reduce the notion of *śruti* to a farce and introduce the conflict amongst the *smṛti*s into the *śruti* itself. Finally, it would make the *śruti* or the *smṛti* completely irrelevant, for if one only duplicated the other, what would be its need as a *separate* authority?

The incessant proliferation of *jātis* and the attempts to classify them under some *varṇa*, along with the repeated failure of this attempt, dates back to vedic times. So also has failed the attempt to rank them, both by themselves and others, either horizontally or vertically. These rankings, it should be remembered, have seldom been clear cut or uniform over different regions and times, or undisputed, or treated as having a validity in all contexts. Everyone knows, or should know, that there is no such thing as an all-India caste, or merely Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas. Śūdras, or anything else. Each caste not only has an immanent in-built plurality, but is also confined to a region and its reference point in terms of relevant hierarchical status consists primarily of those which are adjacent to it in terms of its region and caste identifications. The conscious awareness of differential status in the context of caste identification in an actively functional form is related to what may be considered as cognate castes with which one is in some sort of active competition for status by virtue of one's membership in a particular caste. However, such a relationship is not exactly fixed or static; for, if it were, there would be no competition and no variation in relative status over time. Caste rankings other than these are either at such a remote and abstract level as to be mostly theoretical and non-functional in nature or confined to specific, segregated, ritualistic occasions and determined both by text and tradition in various combinations.

The impulse to see all the diverse *jātis* in India through the lenses of the *varṇa* theory has led scholars to force the intricate complexity of the situation at the ground level, varying from place to place and region to region, into a uniform perception dictated by the requirements of a particular reading of the theory based on certain selected texts, or even of only certain portions of them, ignoring the counter-evidence of the other texts or of the other portions of the same text, or of the facts actually prevalent at a certain level or in a certain region, or

even of a different interpretation of some or all of these together. Dumont and Marriott, for example, are perhaps the most well-known amongst those who have held well-defined opposite positions on many of the issues relating to the structure of the caste system in India. Yet they both share certain common presuppositions and seem unaware that not only much of what they say is open to question but also that they are not discharging the minimum obligation of anyone seriously claiming to be in the cognitive field, that is, to look for counter-evidence to test their hypothetical formulations for adequacy. Instead of asking, for example, what are the relations between Brāhmaṇa and Kṣatriya, whether in terms of 'superior-inferior' or encompassing-encompassed', Dumont should have asked what are the relations between different castes which consider themselves and are considered by the relevant others as Brāhmaṇas. Similarly, Marriott should have looked for 'interaction', not between the members of castes assigned to different *varṇas*, but amongst those belonging to *different* castes assigned to the same *varṇa*, or even between different individuals or groups belonging to the same caste. We are, of course, talking of the Marriott prior to his article entitled 'Constructing an Indian ethnology' (Marriott 1989), which marks a departure in his attempt to understand Indian society.

The Brāhmaṇas are not a unified caste, nor have they ever been one. Even in the vedic period, there is substantive evidence to show that the relations between different Brāhmaṇa castes were far from equal. There seems to have been a certain amount of hostility to the *Rgveda* amongst the practitioners of the *Sāmaveda* and attempts to prove the superiority of the latter to the former. The Jaiminiya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa has two interesting stories suggestive of this relationship. The stories are given in the *prathama khaṇḍa* of the fourth *anuvāka* of the first *adhyāya* and in the second *khaṇḍa* of the sixth *anuvāka* of the third *adhyāya*. The attempt in the stories is to assert the essential independence of the *sāma* from its accidental involvement with the *mantras* of the *Rgveda*. In fact, the latter are compared to the body, and the *sāma* to the soul inhabiting it. In the story, after the soul has left, the various parts of the body get scattered, after which they are collected by Prajāpati and given the form of the *Rk Saṁhitā*.

The conflicting hierarchical claims between the varieties of

different *saṁhitās* extend not only to the different *sākhās* of the same *saṁhitā*, but also sometimes to disapproval or prohibition of marriage relations between them. At a lesser level, of course, it is well-known that all the Brāhmaṇa castes, even when they belong to the same region, do not marry amongst themselves or, at least, do not regard such marriages as the most approved or desirable from considerations pertaining to the supposed status-equality of the concerned castes alone. In fact, they seldom regard themselves as equal in caste status, even though they may belong to the same *varṇa* and may be called Brāhmaṇas. The same is the situation with all the other castes which ascribe themselves and are ascribed by others to the same *varṇa*. The interactionist model of Marriott does not seem to fare any better than that of Dumont when applied to castes within the same *varṇa* or to different families within the same caste or even to members of the same family. There are Svapākī Brāhmaṇas who will not only refuse to eat food in any other Brāhmaṇa family even if it belongs to their own caste, but even in their own household unless they themselves cook it, or it is cooked by just one or two other members who must prepare it in a special manner. It is also common knowledge that in many traditional households, the mother-in-law would not eat *kaccā* food cooked by the daughter-in-law, or even by her own daughter. As for the inter caste group interactions, Marriott might have reached a *different* conclusion, had he paid attention to the various types of associations of men of different castes for the achievement of any particular end, mentioned as early as Pāṇini and so well-documented by Radhakumud Mookerji (1927).

But there is no point in multiplying instances. This is not a battle of books or of countering one anthropological observation with another. The conflicting plurality and variety of both the texts and the reality at the ground level is known, or should be known, to every student of the subject. Yet, in the interest of some preconceived notion, the counter-evidence is either underplayed or ignored. And, all this in the name of the 'scientific study of 'society'. But any honest intellectual enterprise has not only to account for, but also actively search for, the counter-evidence and the counter-argument. And, if one thinks that the task of a social anthropologist studying an alien society is to build a plausible

picture of it, and if one claims to be engaged in a cognitive enterprise, one's responsibility to oneself and one's readers demands that one also talk of alternative pictures and indicate why, in one's opinion, they are not as adequate to the evidence as one's own. But, surprisingly, nothing of this kind seems to obtain in the world of socio-anthropological research on India. Dumont, for example, hardly takes into account the critical comments and observations of the ten distinguished persons who chose to write on his book *Homo hierarchicus* in the December 1971 issue of *Contributions to Indian Sociology*. In a twenty-page reply (Dumont 1971), almost eight are devoted to discussing Marriott who had not even contributed to the volume. Dumont raised some fundamental methodological issues as when he wrote, 'It is once again the old fallacy of producing the whole from the elements, ideas from behaviour ...' (ibid.: 65). And, 'It is true that it has become fashionable to pretend that asking new questions is as important as solving old ones. This is *perversion*' (ibid.: 67, emphasis added). But why? What is wrong with analysis? How do we know about ideas? And, *why* should new questions be taboo? It is not at all clear what is gained in terms of intellectual clarity by labelling these as 'fallacies' or 'perversions'. Such statements do not help intellectual exploration of an issue. Rather, they display an attitude of 'take it or leave it', 'I have intuited the truth and nothing more can be said about it'.

The attitude and the self-complacency do not seem confined to the big names alone, who perhaps have at least earned some right to it. It seems to be an endemic disease of the profession itself. What shall one say, for example, or Raheja's recent article (1989) where she shows an awareness of other socially structured situations where no one caste may be said to hold the central status of being a *jajamāna* to all the rest of the castes as the Gūjars are supposed to be in Pahansu. But these villages, such as Karimpur and Kishangarhi, according to her, obscure and hide the *real* situation regarding caste relations which are revealed clearly in Pahansu. But why should Pahansu be taken as a model mirroring the pure, pristine reality of inter caste relations of vedic India and others treated as aberrations, when it is highly probable that there are far more villages of the Karimpur-Kishangarhi type than those represented-by Pahansu? And, how does she come to equate

all *dāna* with 'the giving away and dispersal of evil and inauspiciousness' which seems to her so characteristic of the prestation relations between the Gūjars and the other castes in Pahansu? If she does this on the authority of Heesterman when she quotes to this effect, then one might question Heesterman's grounds for saying so. Surely, as everyone knows, most of the vedic *yajñas* were done to secure some specific fruits for oneself, both *dr̥ṣṭa* and *adr̥ṣṭa*, and the R̥tviks were engaged to perform the *yajña* on the payment of a fixed prescribed fee called *dakṣiṇā*. Even the daily *agnihotra*, which is not done to achieve anything specific as is the case with most other *yajñas*, is not done to avoid evil or inauspiciousness. Even the ritual actions performed to remove the *pratyavāya* or the possible obstructions cannot be assimilated to the warding or removal of an already existent evil or inauspiciousness. Further, even the distinction between the *jajamāna* and the R̥tviks becomes blurred in certain *yajñas* such as the *jyotiṣṭoma* and vanishes completely in the *sattra* type of *yajñas*.

All this must have been known to Heesterman, as also the well-known story utilised by Eliot in *The waste land in What the thunder said* and other such innumerable stories where *Dāna* is not given to get rid of evil or inauspiciousness, or the well-known three-fold distinction between different kinds of *dāna* elaborated in the *Gītā*. But neither he nor Raheja seem to make any attempt to controvert this counter-evidence or even make their readers aware that there is such a counter-evidence. Furthermore, Raheja does not even see the problem involved in saying that *dāna*, in her sense, is given by members of one caste to members of another caste for removing the inauspiciousness or evil which affects or may affect the village as a whole when both the communities are themselves integral parts of the village and, in a sense, constitute the 'wholeness' of it as a whole. Surprisingly, she does not even ask the question: what do the non-Gūjars do to remove their affliction of inauspiciousness or evil? Presumably they suffer from it as much as the Gūjars do in Pahansu. What makes one 'digest' the evil or inauspiciousness which one is 'obliged' to take from others? Why is one 'obliged-to do so? Cannot some members or even all members of a caste give up this 'obligatoriness' to receive evil or inauspiciousness from other castes over a period of time? Even Susan Wadley and

Bruce Derr (1989) believe 'the *jajamānī* system in Karimpur has attenuated greatly since Wisner (1958) wrote on the working as seen in the 1930s'. But if this can happen in Karimpur, why not in Pahansu? And, what would the Gūjars then do to get rid of their evil and inauspiciousness?

The absence of the historical dimension from much of the study of social reality in contemporary India, particularly in the work of social anthropologists who have intensively studied some particular village or community, seems to have obscured not only the changing relations between castes, their rise into prominence or decline from it, but also the births of new castes in Indian society. Neither the text nor the context, therefore, can provide the clue to the understanding of social reality in India. For it is not only both plural and diverse in character, but also because the social reality which, at one level, articulates itself in terms of caste, is itself fluid and changing in character. If social reality be treated as a text, as many tend to do these days, then it will be well to remember that it is a text that is not only being continually created but which, following current hermeneutic orthodoxy, cannot, in principle, be interpreted in only one unique way.

The issue in the case of Indian social reality, however, is why it tends to articulate itself primarily in terms of 'caste', and 'see' itself predominantly in its terms alone. But however natural this manner of putting the question might seem to a foreign student of Indian society, it is strange to find that professional Indian students of Indian society find nothing incongruous or unnatural about it. Normally one would have expected them, born and socialised as they have been in Indian society, to ask why other societies do not articulate themselves in terms of caste or 'see' themselves in its terms. That this has not happened suggests that in their case 'intellectual socialisation' has overcome 'cultural socialisation'. But how such a situation has come into being and what tensions and discontinuities it has introduced into the personalities of the sociologists and the work they have produced should be a subject of interesting sociological investigation.

It may perhaps be said that as Western societies have not been the subject of study by Indian sociologists or social anthropologists, the question we are suggesting may not have arisen. But then, the

question arises, why have Western societies not been the subject of study by Indian students of society even when they have had the opportunity of doing so in their long sojourns abroad? That, barring a few exceptions, such a situation has not obtained speaks volumes for the deep, unconscious effect of the type of 'intellectual socialisation' that most students undergo in our society.

Imagine a counter-scenario. Suppose our social scientists were to ask: who are the Brāhmaṇas, the Kṣatriyas, the Vaiśyas and the Śūdras in modern Western societies? Or, what are the āśramas and the *puruṣārthas* has found therein? Shall we regard professors and teachers in the universities and colleges there as the Brāhmaṇas of that community? Or shall we regard the clergy of the various churches as such? Or, shall we regard them both as Brāhmaṇas, one specialising in ritual knowledge and performing special functions at the occurrence of such crucial events in the life-cycle as baptism, marriage and death, while the other engages in the teaching and the creation of śāstras in various fields of knowledge. Where, then, shall we place doctors, lawyers, judges and administrators? The persons in the army, the navy and the air force shall, of course, all be Kṣatriyas. But so shall the politicians and the rulers, including the Legislators and the top executives. Shall we then divide the Kṣatriyas into two major subdivisions just as we had earlier divided the Brāhmaṇas? Persons in trade and industry will, of course, all be Vaiśyas. But will we require to make important distinctions between them as well? The workers will, of course, all be Śūdras. But what about the distinction within this large residual class? There is already a distinction between the 'blue collar and white collar' workers and those engaged in the service industries. But what about those who are engaged in agriculture? Shall they be treated as a separate fourth group amongst the Śūdras? And, what about the sub-castes, and the sub-sub-castes amongst all these groups and the relations amongst them?

To ask these questions is to begin to see Western societies in a different way. This will have an effect on our own perception of Indian society as well. We may find that 'caste' is not confined to India alone, that certain occupations are not rated very high in any

society, that perhaps more than four *varṇas* are needed to meaningfully accommodate the diversity of 'caste', that in certain contexts and for certain purposes a person may be regarded as belonging to more than one *varṇa*, that even whole people, races and nations may begin to have some sort of caste relations amongst themselves. There may be nations which have a Śūdra status in the international order of things, only the terminology used may be different. Why should the term LDC's, for example, when used for a large number of countries in the world today, be seen as essentially different from the Śūdra nations', if it were to be used for them?

Objections are bound to be raised that we are using the terms 'varṇa' and 'caste' too loosely, ignoring the specific meaning they have in the Indian context, and that we have blurred the distinction between 'caste' and 'class', which mean radically different things. But our contention is just this. There are no fixed culture-specific meanings of these terms which refuse a cross-cultural or transcultural application except in the generalised sense in which everything is 'culture-specific', entailing the strange consequence that nothing can be meaningfully said about all cultures, except this statement itself. If 'class' is universal, so is 'caste' and so is 'varṇa'. The same is true of 'āśrama', 'puruṣārtha' and 'karma'. It is a separate question whether the classifications traditionally associated with these, or the theories regarding them, are adequate or not.

The issue, of course, is not confined to these particular concepts alone. Rather, it concerns the whole set of conceptual and theoretical structures elaborated by non-Western civilisations over more than two millennia of their cognitive enterprise concerning man, nature and society, in which each culture has necessarily to engage as it consists of self-conscious human beings who do not merely undergo the process of 'living', but also *think* about it, and pass on the results of such thinking to successive generations either orally or in a written form or both, who, in turn, add, modify, or change it in the light of their own experience of those perennial dimensions which permanently define the human situation. The dialogue between these diverse conceptual articulations and theorisations, and the problem of commensurability or comparability between them, may await not only

their articulation in the contemporary cognitive context, but also their modification and development in the light of the experience these cultures have undergone during the last few centuries of their existence.

Notes

1. There have been dissenting voices, but they have hardly challenged the situation to any substantive extent. Ronald Inden (1990), for example, has questioned this way of looking at Indian society in his book *Imagining India; Contributions to Indian Sociology* (n.s.) 26, 2 (1992) Sage Publications, New Delhi/Newbury Park/London.
2. Madan refers to Kashmir saivtism, but does not seem to show any awareness of the radically different view of consciousness in that thought system.
3. She, however, adds that 'it has to be conceded that, if there was a conquest, it was limited to parts of the extreme north'. And, it is more likely that groups of Āryan speaking peoples migrated into northern India, settled and mixed with the indigenous populations. But if there is no evidence, how can the hypothesis be entertained? Perhaps it is all a world of conjectures. but some consistency may be expected, even demanded, from such a world, particularly when it claims a cognitive status.
4. It is not quite clear why the vedāntic tradition does not accept *svarga* as transcendental. Also, it is not quite clear if the Mīmāṃsā's distinction between *dr̥ṣṭa* and *adr̥ṣṭa* is the same as the vedāntika distinction between *vyavahāra* and *paramārtha*. In any case, the Mīmāṃsaka does accept the authority of the vedic injunction even when it is made in the context of attaining what can only be called a *dr̥ṣṭa phala* or empirical goal such as begetting a son or having rain.
5. See Jha (n d: 1008). The problem arises because the text lays down clearly that the Rathakāra shall install the fire in the rainy season, and as all the three varṇas have already been assigned the task of installing the fire in spring, summer and autumn, and as Śūdras are prohibited from performing sacrifices, there is no option left but to treat the varṇa of the Rathakāra as separate from the four varṇas usually mentioned.

6. It may be noted in this connection that Śabara uses the terms 'varṇa' and 'jāti' interchangeably and does not distinguish between them as later writers tend to do.
7. The sūtra explicitly excludes persons belonging to the Bhr̥gu, Sunaka and Vasiṣṭha gotras. The Sanskrit text uses the strong term 'anadhikārah' for them.
8. There seems to be an apparent conflict between Sūtras 6.6.1 and 6.6.26 as the former does not lay down any restriction with respect to gotra. In fact, as only two kalpas are mentioned, that is, the Nārāśamsa and the Tantrapāt, it may be assumed that Sūtra 6.6.1 only says that the Brāhmanas performing the sattra should belong only to one of them and not to both. But, as the Nārāśamsa kalpa does not contain people of the Viśvāmitra gotra, it is obvious that Brāhmanas belonging to that kalpa cannot perform the sattra according to Sūtra 6.6.26. But, if so, what is the point of Sūtra 6.6.1 unless those belonging to the Viśvāmitra gotra could belong to two different kalpas. Vasiṣṭha and Śunaka are explicitly mentioned as belonging to Nārāśamsa kalpa, but this does not help matters.
9. Chāndogya upaniṣad, Adhyāya IV. Part IV. It is interesting to note the various ways in which the commentators try to hide from themselves and their readers the obvious fact which Satyakāma's mother is trying to tell him and which he truthfully tells his teacher, and thereby gets his approbation and is accepted as a student by him. If all the twists that Śaṅkara gives to the story to make it morally acceptable were true, then there would be no point in praising Satyakāma for telling the truth. The point of the praise is that most people including Śaṅkara, would not have been able to publicly say that they did not know their gotra because their mother when asked had said, bahavaan caranti paricārini yauvane tvāmālabhe Sānamatanna veda yadgotrastvāmasi. It may be noted that in this case also, it is the Gods who instruct and enlighten Satyakāma as in the story referred to earlier.
10. It is true that there seems to be an ambiguity in both the cases, as in the case of Satyakāma Jābāla the teacher says that he must have been the son of a Brāhmana as he is speaking the truth and the kṣatriya kings hesitate to impart the knowledge saying that this would involve the reversal of the accepted functions. But the ambiguities are seeming only, for it is not being denied that Satyakāma Jābāla is the son of a mother who does not belong to the Brāhmana varṇa and that the

11. There may have been a confusion of the devadāsīs with the ganikā in this context.
12. As the exact reference and page number of the Skandapurāṇa is not given in the text, it is not easy to determine the context in which the statement is made. See in this connection the detailed article on the subject by Mukund Lath (1989).

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‘Shock-proof’, ‘Evidence-proof’,
‘Argument-proof’ World of
Sāmpradāyika Scholarship of
Indian Philosophy

It is both ‘gratifying’ and ‘shocking’ to read the responses and comments of well known scholars to the article that I wrote some time ago. “Gratifying” because such outstanding scholars of Advaita Vedānta as Prof. Balasubramanyan, Prof. K. Saccidananda and Prof. G.N. Mishra not only read the article but chosen to respond to it. “Shocking” as I thought I was merely recording “facts” from sources which are accepted to be authoritative by the scholarly world in the field of Indian philosophy all over the world. Potter and Nākāmura are highly respected for their objectivity, impartiality and comprehensive scholarship in respect of the things they have written about. Potter’s is the most comprehensive bibliography of Indian philosophy that exist in the English language. There is no other source of information available at present except that of Thangaswami

(Some reflections on the comments and responses to the article entitled “Vedānta in the First Millennium AD: The Case Study of a Retrospective Illusion Imposed” published in JICPR, Special Volume).

Sarma's which have been written in Sanskrit and covers only Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Advaita Vedānta and Mīmāṃsā up till now. As for Nākāmura, who would dare dispute his commitment to the cause of Indian philosophy spread over his whole life time resulting in monumental works of scholarship and insight such as was evident long ago in his work entitled *Ways of thinking of eastern people*. Both of them, of course, may be wrong here and there, for they are human beings like all of us. But before one disputes them, one should take special care and show why they are mistaken or wrong.

The main contention of the paper was that, on all available evidence, the presence of *Vedānta* in the first millennium AD is far *less* than that of other schools in Indian philosophy during that period and that it does not enjoy the *same* supremacy as it did in second millennium AD particularly after 1200 AD. This, obviously, is a comparative, quantitative statement and hence, as to be contested on that ground *alone*, all other considerations are irrelevant as far as the contention of the paper concerned.

The simplest way of refuting the contention would have been to show that it is incorrect. Comparatively speaking, the quantitative works which may be considered to be Vedāntika in nature were actually far greater than the other schools of Indian philosophy taken singly, or even collectively. *This has not been done*. The only exception is G. Mishra who has quoted a statement from *Śrībhāṣyaprakāśikā* of Śrinivāsacārya which states that "There existed ninety-six *bhāṣyas* on the *Brahmasūtras* before Rāmānuja who refuted all those views in his *Śrībhāṣya*."

If the statement of the author of *Śrībhāṣya-prakāśikā* is correct then, obviously my main contention stands refuted. But there remain many questions still to be answered both by Prof. G. Mishra and others who accept the truth of this statement. First, the statement is not of Rāmānuja himself but of a commentator on Rāmānuja's work whose exact date is, incidentally, not given by Prof. G. Mishra. Secondly, as Śrinivāsacārya has stated that "Rāmānuja refuted all these views in composing his *Śrībhāṣya*", it is incumbent on Prof. Mishra to find out where exactly these refutations occur and on what

grounds, they are to be referred to *separate* earlier *bhāṣyas* on the *Brahma Sūtra*. This is important as mere refutation of a position does not entail that the view so refuted belongs to a separate independent text, unless the name of the author is specifically mentioned by the person who is refuting the views. Many a time, as Prof. Mishra knows very well the views which are being refuted are imagined as *Pūrva Pakṣa* by the author himself. Also, it was a common tradition to refer to persons by name whose views were being refuted along with the general statement that some persons held the view, though their names were not mentioned. It will be interesting to find what exactly were the views which Rāmānuja was refuting and what are the grounds for the conjecture that Śrinivāsacārya has made in making such a statement in his work.

Besides these, it may be assumed that if Rāmānuja was refuting these views they must be non-viśiṣṭādvaitika in character and as we know that no other non-viśiṣṭādvaitika schools of vedāntin existed before Rāmānuja except that of Śaṅkara, they may be presumed to be *advaitika* in character. This will mean that all these 96 *Bhāṣyas* were *advaitika* in character and must have been written between Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja, if Śaṅkara's writings do not show any awareness of them. But if they "really" existed during this period then there must be any evidence of them in the writings of both the advaitins and the other schools of Indian philosophies which flourished during this period. It is unbelievable that Rāmānuja was aware of *all* of them, but none of his predecessors knew about them. And what about the successors? Does Madhva or Vallabha or anyone else show any awareness of them and try to refute them in their writings from the view point of the position held by their own *Sampradāyas*? Surely, *Vyāsātīrtha* II, the author of *Nyāyāmṛta*, may be expected to know about at least some of them and refute the *advaitika* arguments in his well-known work on the subject. To say, or suggest as Prof. G. Mishra seems to do that all of them were 'lost' is to ask for an "act of faith" which sounds so improbable that no one can be expected to take it seriously.

The only other text that Prof. Mishra refers to is *Śrīvidyārṇava* of *Vidyāranya* which says that "There were five famous Ācāryas between

Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara.” The statement of Vidyāraṇya [once again, Prof. Mishra does not give the date of Vidyāraṇya who seems to be a different person from the well known author of *Anubhutiprakāśikā* (1350 AD) or information about the publication of the work he refers to] does not exactly entail the conclusion which Prof. Mishra wants to draw from it for, obviously, the period from Bādarāyaṇa to Śaṅkara includes the period from Gauḍapāda to Śaṅkara in it. Hence, it is not as if the five *ācāryas* who are supposed to have occurred between Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara are in addition to the other five that Potter is supposed to have mentioned between Bādarāyaṇa and Śaṅkara in his bibliography. Prof. Mishra could have easily found the number of persons mentioned by Potter between Bādarāyaṇa and Gauḍapāda and seen how far the total exceeds the number mentioned by us on the basis of Potter’s reference.

The only person about whom there can be no dispute that he occurred between Bādarāyaṇa and Gauḍapāda (525 AD) is Bodhāyana (350 AD). All others, in case we accept the current chronology, occur either after Gauḍapāda or may be regarded as his contemporary. The four *advaitins* whose dates are also given by us occur in the period between Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara, thus, leaving only one extra *advaitin* not mentioned by us during the period from Bādarāyaṇa to Śaṅkara so if we accept Vidyāraṇya’s statement then the total number of *advaitins* comes to 6 and not 5 as we had mentioned in our article. The correction is gladly accepted but does it affect the comparative picture we have drawn in any way what so over?

Prof. Mishra tries to suggest that one may ‘legitimately’ explain the non-availability of the *Bhāṣyas* on the *Brahma Sūtra* before Śaṅkara by postulating the hypothesis that *all* of them were “lost” due to various reasons. He writes for example that “Those commentaries might have been lost due to the ravages of time and numerous other factors such as constant quarrels among the scholars nourished by their patrons, kings, which went to the extent of destroying the existing literature of opposing school” (page 140). This perhaps, is also meant to apply to all those 96 *bhāṣyas* which, according to Prof. Mishra, must have existed because they have been referred to in *Śrībhāṣyaparakāśikā* of Śrinivāsačārya. Such a staggering

loss of material which was known to Rāmānuja needs to be explained on more substantial grounds than saying that all of them must have been lost due to the attitude of the patron kings which “went to the extent of *destroying* (emphasis mine) the existing literature of opposing schools.” The destruction of these 96 *advaitika bhāṣyas* could only have been done by the non-*advaitika vedāntins*, who at that time, most probably would have been *viśiṣṭādvaitins* as the other non-*advaitika* schools of Vedānta had not appeared on the scene. I wonder if the followers of Rāmānuja would like the charge made against them by Prof. Mishra which is transparently implicit in what he had said on the subject.

The hypothesis of ‘Loss’ to account for the absence of the *advaitika* texts before and after Śaṅkara have been resorted to by other persons also who have responded to my article on the subject, but all of them, including Prof. Mishra, forget that the hypothesis can equally be applied to the texts of other schools also. After all the so-called ‘ravages of time’ do not distinguish between the *advaitika* and the non-*advaitika* texts and as for the patrons, they belong to all schools of Indian philosophy and there is written evidence to show that most of them were hostile to *Advaita* and *advaita* only. In fact, the charge of deliberate destruction of the texts of other *Sampradāyas* is a slur on Indian system of patronage which generally supported the scholars of all persuasions and there is little evidence of any large scale mass destruction of books in this country.

The quantitative counter-evidence given by Prof. Mishra, thus, does not seem to support what he is trying to establish. There is, however, another objection which questions the very legitimacy of the quantitative approach that I have adopted in the article concerned. The urge that it is ‘quality’ and not ‘quantity’ that matters in all fields, including that of philosophy. I would readily accept this, as I do not believe that quantity *alone* connotes something important except in a marginal manner. Quantitative indices are important in certain contexts and they can not be ignored. It may be remembered that the comparative context in which the article was written has an essential quantitative aspect and to deny its relevance in that context is, to my mind, utterly meaningless.

But even if we bring in considerations of quality, how shall one ever be able to determine the quality of works that are just not there. And, secondly, who dare to deny the quality of thinkers like Vasubandhu, Dinnāga or Dharmakīrti or Udyotkara or Akalaṅka, to name but a few. The *advaitika* insight may be qualitatively, of the highest order but philosophically it has to be exhibited in concrete works which are to be found in works before Śaṅkara that can reasonably be considered Vedāntika in character. The appeal to the 'quality' of works that are supposed to be lost, is an appeal which no one can take seriously in a cognitive context as literally 'nothing' can be said about it.

A more fundamental objection has been raised by Prof. Balasubramaniam to my contention that "The presence of Vedānta in the first millennium AD thus can only be understood in terms of what happens to the *Brahmasūtras*, and the attention they aroused in the philosophical world of India after they were composed." (page 202) According to him, "The relation between the Upaniṣads and *Brahmasūtras* is such that it is neither possible nor desirable to separate them" (page no. 141). The same is said, in a sense, by Prof. K. Sachchidanand Murthy when he concedes that *If* Vedānta is considered to be that doctrine alone which is propounded in the *Brahma Sūtra* then it will be certainly correct to say that it is not very conspicuously present in the first millennium AD. The obvious implication of Prof. Murthy's statement is that the situation will drastically change if the Upaniṣads were also to be taken as the legitimate source of what is known by the name of 'Vedānta' in the philosophical tradition.

Prof. Balasubramaniam's objections to my separation of the *Brahmasūtra* from the Upaniṣads for the treatment of Vedānta as a 'philosophical' school appear to be the following. According to him the Upaniṣads and the *Brahma Sūtra* are related in such a way that two can not be separated in any meaningful way and that the attempt to do so is "the fallacy of separating the inseparables". He has given the examples of gold and bangle, clay and pot and, at a more abstract level matter and form to explain his contention. The argument reminds one of the well known contention of the *advaitins* where the "reality",

that is, Brahma which itself has no form, *appears* to have form because of the *upādhīs* which ultimately hide its reality instead of revealing it. This analogy will be totally unacceptable to any *advaitin* as he would not like to relegate the *Brahma Sūtra* to the 'illusory' status which the "world" is given because of the *upādhīs* in the *advaitic* system.

On the other hand, the relation between matter and form to which Prof. Balasubramaniam takes recourse will not be helpful either. This is so for the simple reason that the same matter can take different forms and that the same form can be exhibited in different material. This is involved in the very notion of form as it is an abstraction which can be exhibited or exemplified in different materials. As for 'matter' it is ultimately a residual category, something absolutely formless, a pure potentiality—a point that Aristotle emphasized long ago. The mother in the story, which Prof. Balasubramaniam told to exemplify his view, could easily have satisfied the child by giving her a glass bangle instead of gold one.

It is bound to be objected that we are taking literally the example given by Prof. Balasubramaniam and not seeing the essential point which he is making. After all his main contention is that the Upaniṣads and the *Brahma Sūtra* are so integrally and intimately related to each other that the one can neither be separated nor understood without the other. The contention, if taken in its 'strong' sense, could imply not only that the *Brahma Sūtra* can not be understood without the Upaniṣads but also that the *Upaniṣads* can not be understood without the *Brahma Sūtra*. Prof. Balasubramaniam may find this very satisfactory, but it will entail the conclusion that nobody could understand the *Upaniṣads* before the *Brahma Sūtra* was composed. This is important as no one will deny that the *Brahma Sūtras* were composed after the *Upaniṣads* and are a human creation. Thus, there is a radical difference between the *Upaniṣads* and *Brahma Sūtra* especially for those who consider the former as *Śruti*, as the latter can never achieve that status being the work of a person called Bādarāyaṇa who tried to understand them according to his own insights. But if this is accepted then the *Brahma Sūtra*, being the work of a human authority, can neither exhaust nor completely unfold

the meaning of the *Upaniṣads*. Infact, alternative 'human' understandings of the *Upaniṣads* are implicit in the situation and even the earlier analogy of matter and forms demands it as there is no reason why one particular form *alone* should exhibit or embody all the possibilities inherent in the substance to which it is trying to give a form. As a matter of fact, the work itself refers to earlier attempts of understanding the upniṣads and gives reasons for disputing their understanding. But if Bādarāyaṇa can do it, so can others and there is no reason why the authority of Bādarāyaṇa should be invoked to preclude this possibility in principle. The idea of there being other *Brahma Sūtras* then the one ascribed to Bādarāyaṇa is not as preposterous as it may appear to be at first sight. The *Gītā* itself refers to the *Brahma Sūtra* in 13.4, a fact mentioned by Prof. G. Mishra in his comment on my paper. This according to Prof. Mishra may point to the "...availability of some other *Brahma Sūtras* which were know to the author of the *Bhagvadgītā*." (page 139) Śaṅkara, according to him thinks otherwise and believes that the reference in the *Gītā* is not to the text known as *Brahma Sūtra* but to *Brahman*. This, of course, seems improbable as such an interpretation of the *śloka* does not make any sense, particularly if the phrase हेतुमद्भि is taken seriously.

Perhaps, the simple way out of the difficulty would be to assume that the author of the *Gītā* has inadvertently referred to the *Brahma Sūtra* of Bādarāyaṇa and thereby revealed both the human authorship of the work and the relative date when it was composed which, on such an interpretation, will have to be assigned to a time which is later than that of the *Brahma Sūtra*. This, of course, would be anathema to all those who treat the *Gītā* as the word of the Lord himself and assign it to sometime at the end of the *Dwapara* age when the *Mahā-Bhārata* war supposed to had been fought. These people, then, would have either to assign the *Brahma Sūtra* to an even earlier date than that of the *Mahābhārata* war or treat the *Upaniṣads*, where *alone* we find a distinctive reference to *Brahman*, as being earlier to the war described in the famous epic.

The problem has a simple solution, but nobody would like to "accept" it because it will make the *Gītā* a "human document" written after the composition of the *Brahma Sūtra*, and not the word of the

Lord himself who delivered it at the beginning of the battle of the *Mahābhārata*. The *Gītā* also has many *ślokas* which are a verbatim repetition of those given in the *Upaniṣads* and one has the problem of either treating the *Upaniṣads* as having being composed later than the *Gītā* or vice-versa. But, whatever the alternative one chooses, it creates insuperable problems for those who want to treat the *Gītā* as the message of the Lord delivered to Arjun at the battle-field of the Kurukṣetra.

There is another problem in the *Gītā* which has generally not been faced. On the one hand, it claims for itself, or others have tried to claim for it, the status of an *Upaniṣads* which deals with *Brahmavidyā*. A claim which is not recognised by anyone in the Indian tradition as it has always, been recognised as a *smṛti* and not as a *śruti* in it. The other well-known statement that "the *Gītā* gives the essence of all the *Upaniṣads*" makes it rival of the *Brahma Sūtra* which attempts to do the same thing and thus, suggests that the author of the *Gītā* was not satisfied with what the *Brahma Sūtra* had done or conversely the author of the *Brahma Sūtra* was not satisfied with what the author of the *Gītā* had done.

The relations between the *Upaniṣads*, the *Brahma Sūtra* and the *Gītā* are, thus, very complex and can not be treated in the simplistic way as has been done by Prof. R. Balasubramaniam and Prof. G. Mishra. There are other problems which have not been seen by them or anybody else. If the *Upaniṣads* and the *Brahma Sūtra* are "inseparable" as Prof. Balasubramaniam has asserted, then the simple question as to which of the *upaniṣads* are related in this "inseparable" way to the *Brahma Sūtra*, will have to be faced by him and all those who accept what he had said in this connection. There would have been no problem if there was only one *Upaniṣad* or only a limited number of the *Upaniṣads* written before the *Brahma Sūtra* the essence of all of which was given in the *Brahma Sūtra*. But as this is not happened to be the case, it has the texts known as the *Upaniṣads* continued to be written long after the *Brahma Sūtra* and even after Śaṅkara, the problem is almost insoluble in nature. The *Brahma Sūtras*, according to analysis of Nākāmura, refer only the following *Upaniṣads*—*Bṛhadāranyaka*, *Chāndogya*, *Aitareya*, *Kauṣītakī*,

Taittirīya, *Īśa*, *Kāṭhaka*, *Muṇḍaka*, *Praśna*, *Śvetāśvatara* and *Mahanārāyaṇa*.¹

As will be evident from this, the *Brahma Sūtra* does not refer to two important *Upaniṣads*, the *Māṇḍūkya* and the *Maitrāyaṇi*, thus creating the problem that its author perhaps did not consider them to be of sufficient importance to be referred to in his work. On the other hand, Śaṅkara is supposed to have written independent commentaries on a number of *Upaniṣads* and also written a *Bhāṣya* on the *Brahma Sūtra* in which he has referred to the various *Upaniṣads* which he must have considered authoritative. However, recently, doubts have been raised regarding the authenticity of ascription of some of these works to Śaṅkara, mainly because of the critical textual works on these by Paul Hacker and Mayada. Prof. Potter has summarized the position in his discussion on the subject in his volume entitled "Advaita Vedānta up to Śaṅkara and His Pupils" in the *Encyclopaedia of Indian Philosophies* edited by him (Moti Lal Banarsidas, 1981). He writes, 'The upshot of the most careful scholarship to date of the works of Śaṅkara, therefore, is that the following may without question be accepted as the works of the author of the *Brahmasūtra bhāṣya*. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka upaniṣad bhāṣya*, the *Taittirīyopaniṣad bhāṣya*, and the *updeśasāhasrī*. There seems no real reason to question the inclusion of the *Aitareyopaniṣadbhāṣya*, the *Chāndogyopaniṣadbhāṣya*, the *Muṇḍakopaniṣadbhāṣya* and the *Praśnopaniṣadbhāṣya* in this list. Beyond this point, however, is only speculation.' Thus, it seems that both the author of the *Brahma Sūtra* and Śaṅkara accept only the authority of certain *upaniṣads* and not of others even if they existed before the *Brahmasūtra* was composed. There seems, thus, to have been a "selective attitude" adopted by both in respect of the *upaniṣads* that they chose to regard as *Śruti* for their purposes. This raises some fundamental questions regarding the so-called "integral" and indissoluble relationship between the *upaniṣads* and the *Brahma Sūtra* for which Prof. Balasubramaniam has contended. The "relation" has already been separated at least relation to certain *upaniṣads* by the author of the *Brahma sūtra* itself. In case we accept that those *upaniṣads* existed *prior* to the times when the *Brahma Sūtra* was composed. The selection, in fact, exists

even in respect of the *upaniṣads* which are referred to in the *Brahma Sūtra* as some are openly being treated as major sources for what is being said and others treated only as minor (See Nākamura, page 466-67).

This, of course, would not have mattered if the *upaniṣads* were not being treated as *Śruti*, because if some text or texts are considered in that way, all of its or their parts will have to be treated of *equal* importance. If something is a *Śruti*, then one can not regard some parts of it as having greater authority than others.

The relation of the *Brahma Sūtra* to the *upaniṣads* that existed before it, is thus not only selective but also "imposes" on them a structure which they themselves did not have. This structural organisation consisting of *adhyāya*, *pada* and *adhikaraṇa* undoubtedly "manifest", as Prof. Balasubramaniam has pointed out, what was implicit in the *Upaniṣads*. However, it does not and can not entail the conclusion that this is the *only* structure that is there, or that no alternative structural organisation is implicit in the text or texts concerned. The structural organisation of the *Brahma Sūtra* not only constraints us to see, the *upaniṣads* in a certain way but also creates the illusory impression that there is, and can be, no other way or ways of seeing the text/texts.

There is a close parallel between what the *Brahma Sūtra* has done in the context of the *upaniṣads* and what the other *sūtra*-texts have done in the case not only of other schools of Indian philosophy but also of all the other cognitive disciplines in the Indian tradition. After all, everyone admits that there was a lot of discussion regarding the problems which the *Mīmāṃsā Sūtra* or the *Nyāya Sūtra* or the *Vaiśeṣika Sūtra* or the *Yoga Sūtra* deal with before they gave a systematic organisation and presentation to what had gone before in their works. But once they were written, a *Śāstric* form was given to the disorganised, scattered heterogeneous thinking regarding them which had occurred earlier. And, this was the reason why they became the points of departure for all subsequent thinking in the tradition by replacing completely whatever was written earlier on the subject. A *Śāstra*, gives a systematic structural organisation to what had been

thought earlier and, in that process selects, and highlights only those issues which it considers important, rejecting the others or neglecting them all together. The clearest example of such a phenomena occurs in *Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī* in the Indian tradition. Everyone knows that, after *Pāṇini* there was introduced a radical distinction among the ways Sanskrit was spoken or written, a distinction which can be seen even today amongst the traditional scholars of the language when they point out to each other that such a *prayoga* is *apāṇinīya* or *non-pāṇinīya*.

The same thing happens after the composition of the various *Śāstric* texts in different fields of knowledge, as they not only superceded the earlier scattered pieces of knowledge relating to the subject, but also provided a model for what was to be regarded as "Knowledge", in the strict sense of the term, in that domain. The same may be presumed to have occurred in the case of the *Brahma Sūtra* as they, after the composition, became the standard "reference point" for what was to be regarded, as the *Śāstric* form of knowledge. The *Upaniṣads*, of course, continued to have an independent existence and source of inspiration for all those who were interested in what was contained in them. But this was not 'knowledge' in the *Śāstric* form, a point which is ignored by those who argue, like Prof. Balasubramaniam for their co-ordinate authority with the *Brahma Sūtras*. This 'independence' of the *Upaniṣads* from the *Brahma Sūtras* can easily be recognised by the fact that many people read the *Upaniṣads* without recourse to the *Brahma Sūtras* and that the latter are *only* important for those who care for the *Śāstric* form of knowledge of what has come to be called *Vedānta* in the Indian philosophical tradition.

The same, in fact, is the case with the *Gītā* which, though included in the so-called *Prasthāna trayī* by many of the vedāntins, as an independent status of its own and does not even have a 'Śāstric' form of organisation of the material. The simple point is that the *Brahma Sūtras*, because of the *Śāstric* form of their structural organisation, can not be treated on a par which either the *upaniṣads* or the *Gītā* which have a totally different form from that of the *Brahma Sūtras*.

There is, thus, a strict sense of the term philosophy which, if taken seriously, would include only the text known *Brahma Sūtras* under it. In a loose sense, however, the term may be applied to the *Upaniṣads* as they also treat of many of the same subjects which are treated in the *Brahma Sūtra*. But, as pointed out earlier, there is the insoluble problem of what *Upaniṣads* to include and what to exclude. Śaṅkara, for example, is supposed to have referred to Pāṇinī and Jābāla (Page 46, Nākāmura) *Upaniṣads* which find no place in the *Brahma Sūtras*. Not only this, he writes an independent *Bhāṣya* on Māṇḍūkya *Upaniṣads*, which has not been referred to in the *Brahma Sūtras*, according to Nākāmura. As for Rāmānuja he said to have quoted "Garbha Cūlikā, Mahā and Subāla Philosophy"² which find no place either in Śaṅkara or in *Brahma Sūtra*.

This obviously, creates another difficulty for the thesis that the *Brahma Sūtra* are so inseparably related with the *Upaniṣads* that they can not be considered independently of each other. There is, however, another fact to which little attention have been paid by all those who argued for the "inseparable" relation between the *Upaniṣads* and the *Brahma Sūtra*. This concerns the status of the *Māṇḍūkya Kārikā* in the Advaita tradition. Normally it is supposed to be almost of equal importance to the *Brahma Sūtra* particularly in view of the fact that Śaṅkara himself has said to have been influenced by it in the interpretation of the *Brahma Sūtra* because his own teacher Govinda Bhagvatpāda belong to the tradition deriving from that work. But, the *Māṇḍūkya Kārikā* is, prima facie, a work on *Māṇḍūkyopniṣad* which finds no place in the *Brahmasūtra* itself. Thus, the tradition of *Advaita* may be said to derive from two sources, the one; from the *Brahmasūtra* and the other from *Māṇḍūkyakārikā*. The situation becomes a little clearer if we remember that Śaṅkara himself wrote an independent *Bhāṣya* on the *Māṇḍūkyopniṣad* even though, if Nākāmura's analysis is to be believed, he does not refer to it in the *Bhāṣya* on the *Brahmasūtra*. In any case, as there are so many *Upaniṣads* and most of the thinkers adopt a selective function in respect of them, nothing definitive can be said regarding all of them in their totality or of their relation to the *Brahma Sūtra* or what has come to be called 'Vedānta' in the Indian philosophical tradition. The situation is further complicated by the fact

that the texts known as *Upaniṣads* continued to be written not only long after the *Brahma Sūtra* was composed but even after Śaṅkara had written his *Bhāṣyas* on some of the most important in them. There is another aspect relating to this whole issue which has not been paid attention to even though I had brought it to the notice of the scholarly world in my article entitled "The *Upaniṣads*—what are they?" Many of the important *Upaniṣads* are a "selection" from earlier texts and the selection, as pointed out in my article, is arbitrary as it does not sometimes include those portions in the original which explicitly proclaim themselves to be *Upaniṣads*. As for the term 'vedānta' there are so many problems in respect of it as pointed out in an even earlier article of mine entitled, "Vedānta—Does it really mean anything at all?", which as far as I know, have not been squarely faced by scholars who concerned themselves with such issues.

But, whatever may be the problem or problems concerning the relation of the *upaniṣads* and the *Brahma Sūtras*, little difference is likely to be made even if we accept what Prof. Balasubramaniam has said on the subject. For a moment we ignore all the objections raised above and accept his contention that the *Upaniṣads* and *Brahma Sūtra* are so integrally related to each other that any attempt to separate them will be "to separate the inseparable". This would only amount to accepting the *upaniṣads* as an integral part of the vedantic tradition along with the *Brahma Sūtras*. But does this "acceptance" change in any way the situation prevailing in first millennium AD in respect of what is come to be called Vedānta in Indian tradition? There are, as far as we know, no independent *Bhāṣyas* on the *Upaniṣads* during this period. There is, of course, an isolated reference to a work of Tanka (500 AD) on Chāndogya *Upaniṣad* the *New Catalogues Catalogorum* as mentioned in Potter's Bibliography. There might be a few others, but would their inclusion change the "comparative" picture of the presence of the Vedānta in the first millennium AD in any way whatsoever? The "inclusion" will certainly highlight the presence of the awareness of the *upaniṣadic* stream in Indian philosophy during the millennium but it will not establish its dominant status there in any way, particularly, if it is compared with those of other schools of Indian philosophy. The term "*aupaniṣadika*" certainly

occurs and as pointed out by Nākāmura, it refers to a school of thinking who are associated with the idea that the reality is one and hence non-dual in character. (Nākāmura page 252) This certainly is closed to *advaitika* position but the 'school', though known, hardly exercised any influence on dominant philosophical trends in the millennium before Śaṅkara appeared on the scene. In fact there are no independent works on either the *Upaniṣads* or the *Brahma Sūtra* during this pre-Śaṅkara period and though one may postulate, innumerable "lost" *bhāṣyas*, *Vartikas*, *ṭikās* etc. on them, this can change the situation only for those who want to believe in something which is against all evidences and arguments in this context.

The situation certainly changes after Śaṅkara, but as we pointed out in our article, it does not affect in any substantive way the 'comparative' strength of the so-called Vedānta *vis-a-vis* other philosophical schools which flourished during that period. It is true that there is a substantial change in the awareness of Vedānta and the concern with it after Śaṅkara, but this in no way affects the truth of the contention that we had made in our article regarding the comparative status of Vedānta in the first millennium AD.

Prof. Balasubramaniam had objected to my use of the word *adhyāsa* as according to him "*Adhyāsa* is perceptual error, which is different from errors in reasoning as well as errors in interpretation." (page 137) Prof. Balasubramaniam is an eminent authority on the subject but I would like to suggest that even if he is correct, there can be "extended" use of the term, especially if the "extension" preserves the essential character of that in the context of which the original usages were adopted. Ultimately *adhyāsa* is a term for erroneous cognition and there is no reason to confine it to the realm of perception alone.

However, there is a problem in the traditional usage of the term in Advaita Vedānta itself to which I would like to draw his attention and of the other specialists in Advaita Vedānta who share his views regarding this issue. Śaṅkara himself raises the question at the very beginning of his *bhāṣya* and had given the reply to the objection that how could there be *adhyāsa* between the *Ātman* and the object when

the *Ātman* is not an object of perception. The reply is at two levels. The first is to show that *Ātman* is an object of perception because it is an object of the "*Asmadpratyaya*". Now this implies that '*Pratyakṣa*' can *only* be that which is a *viśaya* of some *pratyaya* or other. But the moment such a definition of perception is accepted there can be no realm in principle which can be excluded from being an object of perception except the *Nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa* which by definition is supposed to be the content of no concept what so ever.

However, it is his reply at the second level which interest us more in the context of our discussion and it leads in direction which may shake the very formulation of *advaitika* thought as it has been developed up till now. Śaṅkara observes that there is no such rule that the *adhyāsa* shall occur only in relation to an object which is present before our consciousness. It is not easy to give the exact translation of what is meant by the original text in this connection which reads as follows: "न चायमस्ति नियमः—पुरोऽवस्थित एव विषये विषयान्तरमद्यसिततव्ययमिति।" He does not just say this but gives a concrete example to illustrate his point. The example chosen is that of "*Ākāśa*" which, according to him appears to be '*Malina*' and also have a "*tala*" in it, even though it is not an object of perception. The exact wordings are as follows: "अप्रत्यक्षेऽपि ह्याकाशे बालास्तलमलिनताद्यध्यस्यन्ति।" The statement obviously suggests that it is only the "ignorant" who "erroneously ascribe" (अध्यस्यन्ति) '*Tala*' or '*malinatā*' to *ākāśa* which can not, in principle, possess this property as it is not an object of perception. The statement raises enormous problems, but we are not interested here in pursuing them. The point we want to emphasize is that, according to Śaṅkara, *adhyāsa* can occur even in respect of an object that is not an object of perception and that, hence, the objection that both the objects have necessarily to be perceptual in nature for *adhyāsa* to occur is untenable. In the example that he gives only one of the objects is non-perceptual in character, while the quality that ascribed to it happen to be perceptual in character. But the restriction is not necessary, even if Śaṅkara's example may be said to imply. A non-perceptual object may also have non-perceptual qualities ascribed to it which, on reflection, are discovered to have been erroneously attributed to it. Śaṅkara does not seem to have considered the problem

of *adhyāsa* in the context of properties that are essentially relational in character, the relation being different from "*Samvāya*" that is said to be obtained between properties and objects in the Nyāya tradition. But whatever may be the complexities produced by the introduction of these issues, there can be little doubt that Śaṅkara does not seem to subscribe to the position of Prof. Balasubramaniam in this connection. Śaṅkara may have changed his position later, or the *advaitins* may have adopted a non-Śaṅkarite position on this subject later but, as far as these statements are concerned they do not seem to support Prof. Balasubramaniam's contention. Ultimately, the problem relates to erroneous cognition in general and not to that which occurs in the context of perception alone. If the term *adhyāsa* is to be restricted to the perceptual field alone then we'll have to coin another term for erroneous cognition that occur in other fields. But what would be given by it, only Prof. Balasubramaniam can tell.

Prof. Suresh Chandra has disputed the claim that the so-called *Digvijaya* of Śaṅkara during his own times and even later is hardly attested to by the facts as they are known today. He asks, "Was there any other scholar of Śaṅkara's time whose work excelled that of Śaṅkara both in quality and quantity? Was there... Vedānta philosophy?" (page 127) Surely, Prof. Chandra could have found the facts for himself. Had he taken the trouble to do so? The dates and period of Śaṅkara's time are not so well established as he seems to assume but most scholars, who have written on the subject, agreed that there were outstanding contemporaries, both senior and junior, who are said to have belonged to the same time as Śaṅkara and who were outstanding philosophers by any standards. Kumāriḷa is a well-known example, and so are many others. In fact, he has not even taken the trouble to find that the so-called account of Śaṅkara's *Digvijaya* is based on a work that was written much later than the Śaṅkara's time. Prof. G.C. Pande in his recent work on Śaṅkarācārya has examined in detail the whole question and concluded that "It (*Śaṅkara Digvijaya*) could belong to a fairly extensive time bracket, viz., from the 14th to the 17th centuries" (page 12 G.C. Pande)³. But even if we accept the earliest date, it would still have been written after at least six hundred years after Śaṅkara. It can, thus, hardly be cited as a reliable evidence as a contemporary observer of the scene.

As for the so-called “failure” of the “academic empire” of Śaṅkara, Prof. Suresh Chandra does not seem to know the stature of a Padmapāda or a Sureśvara in the tradition of Advaita Vedānta, not to talk of Mandana Mīśra, in case he is supposed to be different from Sureśvara tradition of Advaita after Śaṅkara and his immediate disciples fairly strong as we find at least three persons before Vācaspati Mīśra I, who supposed to have occurred around 960 AD and wrote his famous commentary on the *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya* of Śaṅkara. As the date of Sureśvara is given as 740 AD, this will mean a time-lag of about 200 years during which, if Potter’s bibliographical information is accepted, we have three persons known as “advaitins” who have written on the subject. One of them, that is, Gyānottama, is said to have written on the *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya*, while the other two, that is, Gyānaghana (900 AD) and Vimuktātman (950 AD) are said to have written “Tattva (pari) Śuddhi”, and “Iṣṭasiddhi” respectively. Of these three, the work of Gyānottama, that is *Vidyāśri*, has not been published, even though it is supposed to be a work on the *Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya* on Śaṅkara and might provide an interesting link between the works of Padmapāda, Sureśvara, and Maṇḍana Mīśra on one hand and Vācaspati Mīśra I on the other. The real impact, however, appears in the works of non advaitika, and even anti-advaitika, thinkers such as Jayanta and Udayana, a fact already mentioned in our article. Yet, all these are significant pointers to the spreading influence of Śaṅkara. They, in no way, mitigate the fact that all these thinkers taken together do not stand anywhere near the quantity and quality of work produced by others. The most surprising fact in this connection is that even Vācaspati Mīśra I, whose outstanding stature amongst the post-Sureśvara *advaitins* is acknowledged by everyone, also wrote on both Nyāya and Samkhya with “equal” authority.

Prof. Suresh Chandra, thus, does not seem to have made slightest effort to find out the facts by himself which he could have easily done if he seriously wanted to know what he was writing about. The ‘free-association’, the ‘free-wheeling’ method adopted by him, can hardly help matters. What, for example, can one say about the way he has dismissed the evidence of Hari Bhadra Suri in this regard, who occurred just after Śaṅkara and must have been a contemporary of

both Padmapāda and Sureśvara if the chronological dates of Potter are accepted. He writes in this connection that, “Haribhadra’s work can not be considered as the ‘general survey’ of the schools of philosophy existing at his time. It was simply a survey of the philosophical system of his choice” (page 129). Suresh Chandra should have known that a “survey” is generally made by a person as objectively as possible and not determined by any subjective, personal whim on one’s part. After all why should one write a survey? And Haribhadra Suri was not an ordinary name in Jain tradition. What is even more surprising is to find Suresh Chandra writing, “The best way to reject a philosopher is to ignore him. *But motives should not be imputed*” (page 129). He conveniently has forgotten that Haribhadra Suri was not writing about individual philosopher but generally accepted schools of Indian philosophy in his times. And, who is imputing motives, if not Suresh Chandra himself? As he just writes after this that the survey he had written was not objective but only a result of his “choice”. If this is not imputing motives than what it is?

Prof. Suresh Chandra has made another distinction which he thinks is of crucial importance in the context of the article I had written. This is the distinction between the “common practitioner” and one, “who knows vedānta by philosophical arguments concerning the identity of ‘I’ with ‘Brahman’ ” or, in other words the distinction between the “lay-man” and the “professional philosopher” who specializes in Vedānta as a school of philosophy with ratiocinative, argumentative, expository sense of the term. He draws this distinction in the very beginning of his article, but forgets that it is totally irrelevant in the context of the contention that I had made in my article on the subject. After all, I was concerned only with the latter and not the former and, in fact, it could not have been otherwise as the question of the comparative presence of Vedānta in the first millennium AD can not be decided by any appeal to empirical facts concerning the “common-practitioners” about whom Prof. Chandra is talking and whose beliefs he is worried about. He has not asked himself even the simple question as to how such an empirical investigation can ever be carried out in respect of persons who are dead and gone and about

whose beliefs no record had been left, as far as I know. Perhaps, Suresh Chandra knows about these records and, if so, he will enlighten us by his empirical investigation on the subject soon. But I hope that even he will accept the distinction which is obtained at all levels and in all fields between what may be called, to use Indian term, the “*Śāstrika*” a tradition of knowledge and the common beliefs of the people who generally do not entertain one set of beliefs only, but have an amalgam of them, little caring for the consistencies in them. The question, then, was how to find the presence of “*Śāstrika*” tradition of Vedānta in the first millennium AD, and I will suggest that not only Suresh Chandra, but also all the others who have commented on my paper *indentently* undertake this work and come to conclusion on their own on the basis of evidence that is available for them. I look forward to their investigations and conclusions and I will be happy to revise my own judgement in the light of the conclusions they reach. I may make it clear that I am neither a “Vedāntin” nor “anti-Vedāntin” and that I myself had shared the view prevalent in this regard as I had read the same books which my colleagues had read. They can not imagine the surprise and the shock received when I accidentally stumbled on the evidence which, at least to my mind, lead to a different conclusion and “demanded” to be brought to the attention of the scholarly world so that they may deal with it as honestly as possible. I would like to add that in all intellectual matters one has to have what I have called “Niḥsanga buddhi” which is analogous to what the Lord had called “Niṣkāma Karma” in the *Gītā*. And, I may add one thing more that for a ‘real’ *advaitin*, it should not be difficult, for his consciousness ultimately is not “attached” to any specific *nāma, rūpa* or doctrine what so ever.

Notes

1. See Nākāmura, *A History of Early Vedānta Philosophy*, pp. 466-7.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
3. G.C. Pande, *Life and Thought of Śaṅkaracārya*, p. 12.

∞ 21 ∞

Nyāya; Realist or Idealist: Is the Debate Ended, the Argument Completed?

Nyāya, by common consent is regarded as a realist system *par excellence* by everybody. In fact, it is contended that if any philosophical system can be described as “realist” at all, then Nyāya is one. The queries raised by me under the above heading in two parts in JICPR volumes [(i) Nyāya: Realist or Idealist? (XII-I, pp. 161-163) (ii) Can Navya-Nyāya make distinction between sense and reference?(XII-3, p. 157)] do not seem to have disturbed the self-evident, axiomatic belief in the characterization of Nyāya as mentioned above. Normally, when five such knowledgeable persons reject the very possibility of doubting such a characterization, one should accept that the grounds of one’s “doubting” had no foundation at all.

Yet, there seems to have been some slight shakings of the foundation of the belief in the responses of all these Naiyāyikas, though expressed in different ways. Prof. Chakroborty, for example, concedes, “The canonical western characterization of realism as the thesis that objects exist mind-independently is difficult to apply to Nyāya” (p. 154 JICPR-