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Half-yearly Indological Research Journal

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No. 1

Editor

Dr. V. Nithyanantha Bhat



यज्ञं दधे सरस्वती

SUKṚTĪNDRA ORIENTAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

(Research Centre recognised by the University of Kerala
and Mahatma Gandhi University.)

Kuthapady, Thammanam, Kochi-682 032, Kerala, India.

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Viṣṇu's Virtuosity and Valour:

Evaluating the Dimensions and Domains of Vaiṣṇavism in the Gupta Age

Arindam Chaturvedi

Vaiṣṇavism, during Gupta Age, prevailed across all strata of Ancient Indian society. From a minor divinity in Ṛgveda,¹ Viṣṇu went on to acquire positional centrality in Later Vedic Period,² and assumed ritual stardom by the commencement of Gupta period. The attribution of Gupta Age as primarily Vaiṣṇavite has almost taken the form of gospel truth in historical annals and discourses, without being adequately substantiated. In this paper, an attempt shall be made to explicate the overarching constructs of Vaiṣṇavism, through Multidimensional analysis- *firstly*, we shall briefly explain the mytho-cultural structuration of the sacred-complex of Viṣṇu, and its presence during Gupta epoch. *Secondly*, we will apply Multidimensional analysis³ on existent evidential records of Gupta Age, in order to reach proximity with contextual delineations of Gupta Vaiṣṇavism.

I. Structuration of Vaiṣṇavite Overlord: Viṣṇu, Nārāyaṇa and Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa

Viṣṇu's three strides, exhibiting solar connotations, were his defining attributes in Early Vedic Period. Later, he was identified with Nārāyaṇa and Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, mentioned for the first time in the *Taittirīyāranyaka*, and eventually forming into a cult of his own. Some texts state that at the time of creation, Viṣṇu, desirous of creating the universe, became threefold, and the Purāṇic triad was but the threefold manifestation of Viṣṇu himself.⁴



Fig. 1: The duo of Nara-Nārāyaṇa, depicted on the Southern wall of Daśavatāra Temple, Deogarh (Courtesy- Madhya Pradesh, Dept. of Tourism © Govt. of Madhya Pradesh).

The earliest reference to Nārāyaṇa is to be found in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, where He is described as *Puruṣa*, the cosmic man. Taking Nārāyaṇa as the name of a gotra, derived from *Nara*, some scholars⁵ regarded Him as a

deified human being. However, semantic analysis of Nārāyaṇa presents it as an apparent compound of *Nara* (man) and *āyaṇa* (incoming). Consequently, it could be seen that Nārāyaṇa was a god of sacrifices, to whom men were offered for ritual appeasement (*Āraṇyakaparvana* ch. 226. 18) Textual sources clearly refer to the *criminality* of such sacrificial victims, a cultural phenomenon observed throughout the Ancient World.⁶ The identification of Viṣṇu with Nārāyaṇa is mentioned in the *Taittirīyāraṇyaka* (VI. 4), the *Baudhāyana-Dharmasūtra* (XVII. 4, 6), and the *Mahābhāratam*. In the Hathibada-Ghosundi inscription⁷ of Sarvatāta, the place of worship for Samkarṣana and Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa is called *Nārāyanavātaka*, which shows that, by this time, the Vṛṣṇi hero too had come to be identified with Nārāyaṇa.

Vasudeva-Kṛṣṇa, a *pūrṇāvatāra*, is centrally worshipped in Bhāgavatism. It is generally believed that Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa was the hero of the Yādava-Sātvata-Vṛṣṇi tribes was deified later, though some believe that Vṛṣṇi hero was identified an even earlier deity. He seems to be identical with Kṛṣṇa-Devakīputra, the disciple of Ghora Angirasa (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*), and the impact of the teachings of Ghora are seen in Bhāgavata tenets like Ahimsā, Tapas, etc. In epics, His greatest exploit was His slaying of Kaṁsa. He humbled the pride of Indra, and assisted and guided the Pāṇḍava brothers in the Bharata war. According to the *Mahābhāratam*, He preached the *Bhāgavadgītā* to Arjuna.

By the commencement of Gupta-era, Vaiṣṇavism had acquired much rapport and repute amongst royal echelons.⁸ Prayāga Praśasti explicitly draws equivalence between Samudragupta and Viṣṇu.⁹ Inscriptions of Chandragupta II refer to him as *Paramabhāgavata*, Tumain Inscription describes benevolent deeds of Kumāragupta I towards the Vaiṣṇava creed. Gadghwa stone inscriptions of Chandragupta II and Kumāragupta I describe how both emperors promoted Vaiṣṇava theology by organizing Sattrā sacrifices. Junagadh Inscription of Skandagupta alludes to the Vaiṣṇava inclination of Guptas in many interesting ways.¹⁰

II. Subjecting Vaiṣṇavism to Multidimensional Analysis: *Explorations and Explanations*

It would not be, in a way, wrong to say that Viṣṇu not only ruled as predominant sovereign of masses, but also found a special place amongst the elites of Gupta Age. However, a sect that lacked comprehension and coverage in commoner echelons could not have survived long. The imperial irresistibility of Viṣṇu, thence, comes from the widespread sanctity that was accorded to Him by the spirit of Gupta Age, illustrated here through Multidimensional analysis.

Ritual Dimension:

Rituals define the standard practices of reverence, and crystallize the variegated ideas and thoughts into a

harmonious communion, that creates clarity of vision. Out of all religio-cultural worldviews Vaiṣṇavism attracted maximal attentional economy, and presented an eclectic admixture of old with the new.¹¹ For understanding the ritual structuration of Vaiṣṇavite symbols and narratives better, it is pertinent to study some rituals that were practiced by all sub-sects of Vaiṣṇavism-

Pūjā

Viṣṇu-Smṛti (dated c. 5th-6th Century CE) describes invocation of deity offering of Arghya¹² and incense, ornaments, garments, flowers, etc., and worshipping Him with lamp. While *Viṣṇu-Smṛti* enjoins recital of Vedic mantras, it is *Viṣṇu-dharmottara Purāṇa* and *Vaikhānasa Gr̥hyasūtra*¹³ that sanction use of sectarian eight/twelve syllabled mantras offering of betel (*tāmbūla*) to deity.¹⁴ The practice of chewing betel leaves became popular in early centuries of first millennium CE,¹⁵ and perhaps it was during this period that rites image-worship werestandardized into sixteen acts of worship (*upacāras*) of Vaiṣṇavism. Vedic hymns of Viṣṇu were contextually collated to pay obeisance to Nārāyaṇa and Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa too, but without access to women and Śūdras to Vedic rituals, barring upper three varṇas.¹⁶ However, frequent inscriptional reiteration of *Varṇa-saṅkara*, suggests blurring of caste-distinctions, further highlighted passage by Bhāṣa,¹⁷ *Purāṇas* and *Pāñcarātra-Saṃhitā*.

Cāturmāsya

Cāturmāsya, also called *Varṇāmāsavrata*, finds much significance in Purāṇic legend.¹⁸ Purāṇas narrate that the god Viṣṇu goes to sleep on the eleventh day of bright fortnight of Āṣāḍha for four months and wakes up again on the eleventh of bright fortnight of Kārtika, and during his sleep Indra does His work.¹⁹ The legend is referred to in *Meghadūta*, *Mudrārākṣasa* and the *Bṛhat-saṃhitā*. An inscription dated c. 424-25 CE alludes to the awakening of *Madhusudana* (Viṣṇu) in the month of Kārtika. It bears the date of 13th of bright fortnight of Kārtika and records erection of a Viṣṇu temple. *Viṣṇudharmottara* relates how king Bharata of Ikṣvāku lineage observed this festival: celebrations began on the 11th of bright fortnight of Āṣāḍha and continued for five days during which Bharata ate only at night, made land-gifts and worshipped *Janārdana*. He abstained from eating meat and honey (*madhu*). At the approach of the end of the bright fortnight of Kārtika, these observations reached absolution on full-moon day after five-days of celebration. On the final day, Bharata performed *Mahādāna*, i.e. gave away wealth and land to the Brāhmaṇas. The description may be applicable to the practice prevalent in Gupta age, and epigraphs indicate that land-grants were made and pious deeds performed during the festival.²⁰

Doctrinal Dimension:

If rituals shape religious experience, doctrines give it sanction and stabilize sectarian worldview around commonly accepted tenets. In this connection, two doctrines could be positioned as forming definitional edifice of Vaiṣṇavism in Gupta Age-

Avatāra

Ṛgveda gives earliest reference to Avatāras of Agnī and Soma.²¹ Later, Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa mentions Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, and Vāmana Avatāras, while *Taittirīyāranyaka* mentions Varāha and Narasiṃha Avatāra. However, these 'descents' are in connection with Prajāpati, not Viṣṇu. Possibly, they became linked to Viṣṇu after absorption of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa and Nārāyaṇa into Vaiṣṇava fold. Number of Avatāras of Viṣṇu vary in different texts. *Nārāyaṇīya* section of Mahābhārata enumerates four Avatāras of Viṣṇu—Varāha, Narasiṃha, Vāmana, and Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa; another passage adds Parśurāma and Aikṣvāku Rāma.²² However, *Daśāvatāra* of Viṣṇu became stereotyped.²³ Avatāra vāda gained popularity in the reign of Imperial Guptas, on accord of the unlimited potential of allusions it allowed the imperial paraphernalia to assume.

Vyūha

Pāra-Vasudeva, the highest form of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, projected his *ichchhā*, or divine will, towards His consort,

Śrī-Lakṣmī, who received it in Her 'dual aspect' of *bhūti* (matter) and *kriyā* (action). Six ideal Guṇas—*jñāna* (knowledge), *aiśvarya* (lordship), *śakti* (ability, potency), *bala* (strength), *vīrya* (virility), and *tejas* (splendour) came into existence on accord of differential combination of these three powers—*icchāśakti*, *bhūtiśakti*, and *kriyāśakti*. Vāsudeva is believed to have possessed all these six Guṇas. From Him arose Samkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha, each believed to possess two of these six Guṇas—Samkarṣaṇa Jñāna and bala, Pradyumna aiśvarya and vīrya, and Aniruddha possessing śakti and tejas. Around the time of the Imperial Guptas, the Pāñcarātra dharmācāryas started increasing the number of vyūhas, implicitly highlighting ritual focus and royal interest in revering Viṣṇu in his myriad forms.²⁴

Bhakti

Bhakti evolved as a concept, from being materialistic to metaphysical. Initially, Ṛgveda postulated *Bhakta* as 'one who is to be given a portion' of accumulated wealth, obtained either through production, or more efficient loot/plunder through raiding neighbour settlements. Agni initiated the process of distribution, while Mitra officiated and sealed contract for future liaisons. However, Varuṇa too embodied these functions, whilst also exhibiting many features which later became more commonly associated with Viṣṇu. With emergence of States in c. 6th Century BCE, this devotion brought communities close together

by reducing possibilities of schism, inspired loyalty and dedication to a central authority. Bhakti in Gupta era could be regarded as either a structural perspective, or cultural strategy. The latter assertion is confirmed through architectural design of Gupta Temples, Sanchi Temple No. 17, which features a portico in front of the sanctum sanctorum, where all the devotees sat together, in perspectival alignment with the chief-deity, to directly gain His grace and benediction.

Ethical Dimension:

In this dimension, we mostly consider the rescripts on morality, categorical examples of which exist in case of Vaiṣṇavism, where it is averred that a Vaiṣṇava can only gain spiritual advancement through adherence to Ahimsā.

Ahimsā simply means non-violence. However, this element of non-violence in Vaiṣṇavism was targeted towards ceasing of sacred violence, along with promotion of vegetarianism. The origins of first can be gleaned from texts- Nārāyaṇīya section of Mahābhārata shows prominence of Ahimsā through the story of Vasu Uparichara, a noble king who was caught between the conflicting case of adoption of innovative doctrine of Ahimsā, and retention of Vedic ideas. On defying sages' will, he was cast into a pit, wherefrom he was rescued by Viṣṇu. With transition of Indian society from pastoral

to agrarian economic-system, and emergence of family proprietorship against earlier collective ownership, cattle, the primary object offered in most Vedic sacrifices, became a family's property, who were themselves heavily dependent on them, and thence could not have shared them for ritual killing with ease. Newer heterodox cults offered an alternative in the form of negation of sacrifices, which attracted interests of Vaiśyas. The cult of Nārāyaṇa, which was not a product of Brāhmaṇical belief-system and hence highly malleable, offered a new pathway of ritual engagement without the use of cattle-wealth, which certainly increased the prominence and approach of Brāhmaṇical deities in total. It is here Ahimsā became enshrined as a central principle and core ethic of Vaiṣṇavism.

Experiential Dimension:

The grace of Viṣṇu could have been felt through the worship of His image. Being at the forefront of new religio-cultural ideas, Vaiṣṇavism incorporated the ideal notion of incorporating behavioural pattern and mythological supremacy of Viṣṇu together into one.

The figure shows floor-plan of Tigawa, first temple that allowed devotees to move around the central deity-figure, by circumambulating Him, commonly called *Nirarpita*. This exhibited not only the supreme powers of Viṣṇu, but allowed his Bhakta to feel the grace of god,

proclaimed as protector in Purāṇas. The source behind this idea was definitely Buddhist Stūpa, where circumambulation performed a different function, i.e. paying final respects to deceased person buried in the mound, an allusion drawn straight from *Atharva-Veda* (X..15). However, later Buddhist monuments embellished the circular movement with narratives and stories from the Buddhist Jātakas, which amplified the attitude of reverence.²⁵ Probably, it was this perspectival inspiration that led architects to include this element into temple-plan.

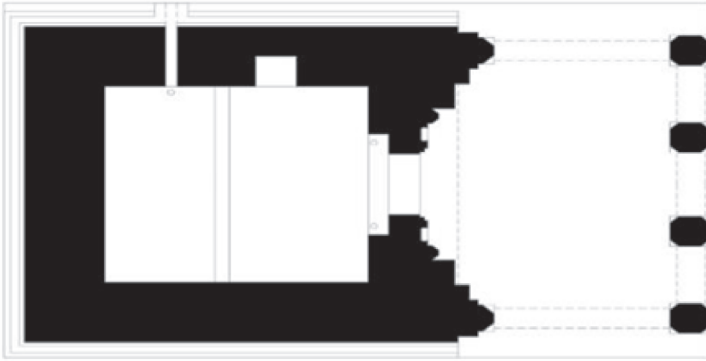


Fig. 2: Floor plan of Tigawa Temple, Madhya Pradesh (Courtesy- S.P. Gupta and S.V. Vijayakumar © *Temple Architecture of India*).

Institutional Dimension:

Institutional affiliations of Viṣṇu could be extended to two structuring streams— royalty and the people. The institutional linkages and dynamics of Vaiṣṇavism operated in a two-way, transactional relationship. This interaction perceivably entailed involvement of divine

intervention, associations and connections, besides human element. Through land-grants, construction of sanctuaries, temples, massive sculptures, and organizing grand-scale sacrificial ceremonials to offering alms to priestly-class, it was believed that the divine grace of Viṣṇu would help in redressing travails of mortal Kings, sought immortality in public memory. The monarchical set-up also had some basic human needs, which we often overlook. They needed gods for alleviation of doubts, assurance against uncertainty. The element of personal devotion is often construed as possessing some hidden agenda, which may not always be the case. The personal element predominates the political in construction of personal shrine of Prabhāvatī-guptā on Ramagiri Hill.²⁶

To discuss about 'masses'-by c. 2nd-3rd Century BCE, Vedic sacrifices, which involved animal-killing, had become quite unpopular, and idolatrous cults were gaining people's favour. Buddhism and other hetero-dox sects effected authority of Vedic institutions. Brāhmaṇic ritual-order, grunted by decrease in demand for sacrifices, became compelled to turn their attention to cults of tribal and non-Aryan divinities. Brāhmaṇa infiltration into these cults could not have been sudden, probably some Brāhmaṇas had earlier assumed priestly-roles therein, but the movement to accord orthodox sanction to these divinities seems to have begun only when new economic and political factors challenged social-order. We witness

rise of new crafts, progress in commerce between c. 200 BCE-200 CE, which inevitably and especially improved social-status of Śūdras. Foreigners' influx in society further loosened the chimerical bounds of Brāhmaṇical social system. Vedic conservatism towards lower varṇas was inadequate to cope with newer socio-cultural force. To combat concomitant popularity of Buddhism, and preserve Vedic ritual-order, certain concessions were made, which watered down traditional exclusivism.

Bhāgavata creed, unlike Sātvata, enjoyed an advantage- it was linked to supreme lord Viṣṇu, and had evolved out of Vedic rituals, which made it suited to institutional requirements. The Guptas, who eagerly sought association with Vedic milieu due to unorthodox background, preferred to call themselves *Paramabhāgavata*. Nārāyaṇīya section of Mahābhārata informs us about genesis of Bhāgavata cult. Herein also referred is Sātvata dharma [=Pāñcarātra]: Kṛṣṇa was prince/head of Vṛṣṇi clan of the Yādavas, and was said to belong to Sātavatas. However, in the *Nārāyaṇīya* the name 'Kṛṣṇa' is not prominent; on the contrary, Vāsudeva is the central figure as he explains to his bhakta Nārada (as Nārāyaṇa) in Śvetadvīpa: his is the religion where everything revolves around Viṣṇu, the supreme god.²⁷

Mythological Dimension:

The mythological dimension may be explained through Purāṇic literature, visualization of which occurred

frequently in annals of Vaiṣṇavite ideas and symbols. On this basis, we get two stories to stand out amongst many-

Varāha Avatāra of Viṣṇu supposedly occurred to rescue Bhūdevī from Hiraṇyākṣa, a demon king, who had kidnapped Earth-Goddess and incarcerated her under oceanic waves. After a brutal fight, Varāha defeated the demon and lifted Bhūdevī atop his tusks, marrying her afterwards.²⁸ The legendary rescue of Bhūdevī assumed remarkable significance in Gupta period, due to symbolic appeal (*cf.* Udaygiri Cave No. 05), while that of his son, i.e. Naraka became appealing for the dynasties of Kāmarūpa, who sought Vaiṣṇavite cognizance and tribal interlinkage through mutated form of this legend²⁹. By mentally substituting Varāha with Gupta King, and Bhūdevī with Gupta Empire, the visual representation of this legend became an exercise in promotion of almost semi-divine royal power, surreptitiously garbed in symbolic metaphor, and enunciated routinely with a touch of piety.

Narasimha Avatāra of Viṣṇu was a direct consequence of multi-communal amalgamation. Its conditionality relied upon divine-boon motif, lifted directly from Ṛgvedic legend of Namūchi,³⁰ though the annihilator of demons herein was Indra. This relation was altered in Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, where Viṣṇu is mentioned in the conditional arrangement. Jaiswal speculates that absorption of tribal legends with pillar-breaking³¹ mythic

iterations also brought narrative novelty in Narasiṃha legend, though it must be conceded that in the Purāṇic corpus, there is little evidence of this Avatāra breaking the pillar, which has probably come from legends prevalent amongst the Śabara tribes of Odisha.³²



Fig. 3: Narasiṃha (possibly, Sthauna Variety), Kevala Narasiṃha Temple. Nagpur, Maharashtra (Courtesy- Hans T. Bakker © *The Vākāmakas: Essays in Hindu Iconology*).

Legends of Rāma and Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa acquired significance in sculptural and epigraphical records. The Epic-Purāṇic legends of Rāma were used in discursive structuration of dynastic politics, evident in *Raghuvamśam*,³³ while those of Kṛṣṇa occupied popularity among masses.³⁴ We can realize impact of Purāṇic literature on poetic and popular imagination, from averments of D.R. Patil- "For all epochs of Hindu History after c. 3rd Century CE, all mythology is Purāṇic mythology... Purāṇic legends not only stole the hearts and

minds of common people, but also effected Kings, and possibly even gods. Even new entrants inside Hinduism had access to Purāṇas, and thus not wonder possessed the conceptual designs that Purāṇas told the rest. These stories were redacted, revised, recited, and unfailingly correspond with the Hindu spirit of each age. Thence, it would be unmistakable to call Purāṇa as the heartbeat of Hinduism, partially recorded *in-situ*, and partially looked upon in a new way in a new dawn."

Material Dimension:

Material evidence of sects presents evidence about their influence in an epoch. Vaiṣṇavism has left behind a rich ensemble of material testimony of its hold over Gupta Age. For brevity, we would take interesting and substantial examples.³⁵

In the first image, we have Viṣṇu possessing iconographical attributes of Sūrya. This confirms the mytho-cultural absorption of Chakravartin traits by Viṣṇu from Sūrya in his quest to assume supreme significance.³⁶ The image has two, almost similar faces. The location of this image in Pawaya, Madhya Pradesh is also important, for it provides a poignant link between Viṣṇu, Sūrya and Chakravartin. It would not come as surprising if future researches highlight the role of Samudragupta behind this image, as it was his successor Chandragupta II who judiciously linked the two deity-figures together at Udaygiri.

In the second image, we see Anantaśayina Viṣṇu seated with Lakṣmī. Śiva, Kārttikeya and Brahmā are shown in panel, seated on Vāhana with their consorts. At bottom, we see Āyudha of Viṣṇu in personified form. Chakra-Puruṣa holds significance, for it presents semiotic proximity with eponymous coin-type of Chandragupta II. Furthermore, it shows that iconographical conventions of gods/attributes, alongside canonical texts had achieved fruition, since images hereafter bear similar posture. What differs is the manner of plastic handling, in which Gupta Art was undoubtedly nonpareil.



Fig. 4: (Left) Viṣṇu shown with the features of Sūrya, Pawaya (Courtesy- Saurabh Saxena, Puratattva 2023 © Indian Archaeological Society). (Right) Anantaśayana Viṣṇu with other Hindu gods, Deogarh, Madhya Pradesh (Courtesy- Bob King 2019 © World History Encyclopedia).

Conclusion:

Using Multidimensional-analysis, we get a comprehensive picture of manner through which Vaiṣṇavism attained highest positional status in the context of Brāhmanical ritual-order, and attracted both patronage and piety of Guptas, alongside their subordinates. The cross-connections made plainly evident in the aforementioned paragraphs also highlight categorical interlinkages amongst State, society, kings and common masses in elevating Viṣṇu to assume supreme status in actual realm, as it was in literary sources. Functional aspects of this epistemological phenomenon can be gleaned from religio-cultural developments in experiential, material, ethical and doctrinal dimensions, Purāṇic trends in mythological dimension, and ritual advancement in matters of rites and praxis, all of which worked harmoniously to make him the Vedic, Brāhmanical, Purāṇic, and people's God par excellence.

Notes & References

- ¹ There is little sign of those futures of Viṣṇu in the Ṛgveda, which contains only a half-dozen hymns dedicated to Viṣṇu or to Indra and Viṣṇu (1.154, 155, 156, VI.69, VII.99, 100). Viṣṇu often appears alongside Indra, especially in his battle with Vṛtra (IV.18.11, VI.20.2, VIII.100.12), but he is also Indra's ally generally. When paired with Indra, he is the subordinate partner in the Ṛgveda (e.g., 1.85.7), in direct contrast to the Mahābhārata (XIII.135.30) and later texts, in which he has become atindra, the one "surpassing Indra." Surprisingly, Viṣṇu is also associated with the Maruts (V.87.4), since they are the

natural allies of Indra. Many scholars consider them as either symbolizing or defying the new conscriptions and recruits that were assembled in the Janapada army under Senānī, which makes their allusion to Viṣṇu even more reasonable, since they, like Viṣṇu, are called upon to help Indra in his dangerous liaisons and rendezvous.

- ² In the middle Veda, Viṣṇu becomes a deity-figure enjoying much centrality and attention, as the embodiment of the sacrifice itself and therefore of a power that can surpass even the mirth and might of the gods. In Classical India, by which one may refer to Gupta times, He finds an even great destiny since He essentially transforms into and becomes the supreme divinity. Characteristic of Him are his three strides or three steps. With these strides Viṣṇu encompasses the earth, and with his third step he disappears into a realm where none can follow (1.155.4-5). Or he enters into heaven where there is the "wellspring of honey," the source of soma (1.154.5), or into the highest cattle-pen (III.55.10). He is therefore the god who is wide-ranging (Urugaya) and wide-striding (urukramā). The purport of his strides is to create space and a place for people to live and move (1.155.4, VI.49.13, VII.100.4). This purpose could explain Viṣṇu's close connection with Indra in the fight with Vṛtra, since Vṛtra represents what binds, confines and hinders and Viṣṇu's strides what opens and frees it.

- ³ Multidimensional analysis is an interdisciplinary method to anthropologically study constituting components of Religion, and derive inferences that can be applied on specific space-time contexts. It was developed by Ninian Smart, who gave a detailed exposition of its applicatory aspects in his magnum opus, *Dimensions of the Sacred: Anatomy of the World's beliefs* (Berkeley: University of California Press. 1996). This approach incorporates differing vantage points of consideration, that permit one to utilize available data regarding all major and definitive frames of viewing Religious-Systems. For the topic at hand, using this method and applying it on the evidential

contours of Vaiṣṇavism offers two obvious advantages- 1) *comprehensive coverage*, in the sense that Multidimensional analysis of religion leaves no perspectival stone unturned, and covers all conceivable (from material to philosophical) relevant to draw a complete and wholesome picture of Religion, or its subsidiaries or sects thereof, and 2) *contextual construction*, which allows us to tap into the formative context and contextual contents of a particular period, and thereby help us reconstruct fundamental elements of Religion, as they existed in the period concerned (here: The Gupta period), based on evidential materials.

⁴ Goyal, S.R. *Fundamentals of Paurāṇik Hinduism*. Jodhpur: Kusumanjali Prakashan. 2009, p.89.

⁵ Cf. MacDonell, *Vedic Mythology*, pp.88-90.

⁶ Durrant, *Story of Civilization*, pp.199-205.

⁷ Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, p.80.

⁸ The causes of rise of Viṣṇu would further throw much revelatory light on this proposition. Time and again, they have been examined in great detail by many scholars. We express agreement with the tentative, albeit forceful suggestions of J. Gonda (1954)-1) Viṣṇu was given the functions of Prajāpati, when the latter, along with Indra and Agni, lost his authority over many domains, 2) the change in character of Viṣṇu, who was not 'rigid' like other Vedic Gods, who explicitly demanded remuneration in the form of sacrificial merit; unlike them, Viṣṇu offered his 'divine service' to anyone who expressed his/her devotion with pure conscience. To this, we would like to add some more, such as- 1) the introduction of Nārāyaṇa cult within Viṣṇuism, that made the sectarian structuration of latter more forceful in matters of ritual sacrifice, 2) absorption of Goddess Lakṣmī, whose existent association with wealth and prosperity made even Viṣṇu supreme even in matters of royalty and imperialism.

⁹ Gupta, *Imperial Guptas*, p.49.

¹⁰ The Junagadh Inscription of Skandagupta makes frequent reiterations to Viṣṇu- 1) Victorious is that Viṣṇu, who, for the sake of the happiness of (Indra) the lord of the gods, snatched away the royal dignity of Bali, which was admitted to be worthy of enjoyment and which has more than once been wrested (from them)-who is the permanent abode of (the goddess) Lakṣmī, whose resting-place is the water lily-who overcomes affliction and is the consummate victor. 2) In the first fortnight of the month (called Āṣāḍha- [close to rise of Viṣṇu from his long slumber]) and belonging to the hot season, on the first day, he, having put forth careful efforts and made an immeasurable expenditure of wealth, in two months, laboriously built up a hundred cubits in all in depth, and sixty-eight in breadth, and seven (?) men's height in elevation (of the breach into the embankment) of two hundred cubits, having done honour to the kings, built with great labour, with stone well laid, (so that) the lake, not evil by nature, became renowned as Sudaraśana (of good appearance) for all eternity (a very clever play and pun of words). 3) By his son, who is endowed with his own good qualities-whose life has been dedicated at the feet of (the god) Govinda.... 4) And by that Chakrapālita, who is of a straightforward mind, who causes townsmen to bow down by his own prowess, having acquired there at the lotus-like feet of Viṣṇu....has been caused to be built a temple of (the god) Chakrabhṛt, who carries the discus.... with a great expenditure of wealth and after a long time, when one hundred and thirty-eight years (had elapsed) (according to the calculation) of the Gupta era.

¹¹ Suvira Jaiswal comments in this regard- Purāṇas state that there are two modes of worship, Vedic and Tantric. Sometimes a third type, a combination of the two (miśrita), is also enumerated. The Vedic worship of images requires the recitation of various Vedic mantras (hymns) on the occasion of the performance of different acts of worship. But the relation of the mantra with the rite, to which it is

assigned, is plainly superficial, and the sole reason of its selection for the purpose seems to be that a word having some affinity with the act occurs in it although the meaning conveyed by the entire hymn is absolutely irrelevant and inappropriate. The arbitrary nature of this connection undoubtedly proves that the Vedic mantras are a superimposition upon an extraneous ritual with which originally these had nothing to do.

¹² Srivastava, *Sun Worship*, p.172.

¹³ Rao, *Hindu Iconography*, p.111.

¹⁴ Jaiswal, *Origins of Vaiṣṇavism*, p.133.

¹⁵ Chandra, *Trade Routes*, p.177.

¹⁶ Jaiswal, *Caste- Origins, Functions*, p.95.

¹⁷ One passage in a play of Bhāṣa (dated c. 3rd-4th Century CE) highlights how a Śūdra worshipped vyūha form of Viṣṇu without reciting Vedic hymns (see Bakker, Hans T. *Vākāmakas: Essays in Hindu Iconology*. Groningen: European Historical Research Council. 1997, p.56).

¹⁸ M. Willis (2009) has narrated excellently how the rite was astronomically calibrated with the site of Udaygiri, and further linked intricately with the conceptualization of Chakravartin during the reign of Chandragupta II.

¹⁹ The site of Udaygiri was specifically calibrated astronomically to focus solar rays on the sculpture of Anantaśayana Viṣṇu in cave No. 15, whereas the grandiloquent Varāha sculpture overwatched the hillocks, and was the locus of ritual performed through water that percolated through rock-crevices. On most occasions, the reigning Gupta King was compared to Indra. In a way, the thematic combination of Varāha and Chāturmāsya ritual positioned Gupta King as "Indra who caressed the Earth like Viṣṇu/Varāha, in his absence".

²⁰ Jaiswal highlights the following evidential pieces- "The Eran stone pillar inscription of c. 485 CE records the dedication of a flagstaff

of Viṣṇu by Mahārāja Mātṛ viṣṇu on the twelfth of the bright fortnight of the month of Āṣāḍha, and dowager queen Prabhāvatī-guptā seems to have made regular donations on or just after the sacred eleventh of the Kārttika. One of her inscriptions suggests that the gifts were first offered to the deity and then were accepted by the priests. An inscription of c. 490 CE records the grant of a village named Purohita-pallikā by king Vyāghra Sena to a Brāhmaṇa Nāgaśarman on the fifteenth of the bright fortnight of Kārttika, and it is suggested that Nāgaśarman was the family priest (purohita) of the king. Some other inscriptions of the fifth-sixth centuries recording land gifts refer to the last day of the festival as Mahākārttiki or Mahā-Kārttika Pūrṇmāsī."

²¹ Jamison and Brereton, *Rigveda*, pp. 58-67.

²² A third passage makes a further addition of the Matsya, Kūrma, Haṃsa, and Kalkin, and takes the number of Avatāras of Viṣṇu to ten. One list of the Bhagavatapurāṇa enumerates 24 Avatāras of Viṣṇu, while the Ahirbudhnyasaṃhitā and the Sātvatta Saṃhitā refer to 39 vibhavas of Viṣṇu.

²³ The Daśāvatāra include Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Narasiṃha, Vāmana, Parśurāma, Aikṣvāku Rāma, Vāsudeva-Ṛṣṇa, Balarāma, and Kalkin, with Buddha replacing Balarāma in some texts. Viṣṇu is supposed to assume the form of the tenth Avatāra, that is Kalkin, at the end of the Kali age.

²⁴ According to the *Ahirbudhnyasaṃhitā*, from Para-Vasudeva emanated Keśava, Nārāyaṇa, and Mādhava; from Samkarcana emanated Govinda, Viṣṇu, and Madhusūdana; from Pradyumna emanated Trivikrama, Vāmana, and Śrīdhara; from Aniruddha emanated Hrishikeśa, Padmanabha, and Dāmodara. The number of the vyūhas of Viṣṇu was finally fixed at 24, by regarding Puruṣottama as an emanation of Vāsudeva; Adhokṣaaja as an emanation of Samkarṣana; Narasiṃha as an emanation of Pradyumna; Achyuta as an emanation

of Aniruddha; and Janārdana, Upendra, Hari, and Kṛṣṇa as emanations of Puruṣottama.

²⁵ Fisher, *Buddhist Art*, p.153.

²⁶ Bakker (2017) writes- "In one of her inscriptions Prabhāvatī seems to give some additional information regarding the nature of this main sanctuary, when she declares that the charter was issued from the 'soles of the feet of the Lord of Ramagiri, which echoes an earlier character by her in which it is said that the grant had first been offered to the 'soles of the feet of the Lord. With regard to a tablet containing a pair of footprints that was found at the foot of the hill in Nagardhan..... It may be advanced that the footprint icon may represent a miniature version of the sanctuary on top of the hill. If this conjecture is correct, we could answer the question as to how the ramagirisvamināḥ pādamūlam sanctuary, in which Prabhāvatī Gupta worshipped, should be conceived. It might have been a square enclosure giving access to a square platform on which an altar containing the footprints of the Bhāgavata, the Lord (Svāmin) of Ramagiri, was installed, squared in by a low railing or wall, rather than being enshrined in a temple. This sanctuary may have been replaced in Yādava times by the Rāma temple that is still crowning the hill. The legend that connected the hill with a visit of Rāma makes it plausible that these footprints were conceived, by some at least, as those of Viṣṇu's incarnation Rāma as depicted in the Rāmāyaṇa".

²⁷ In MBh. 12.332.13-18 the Sātvatta path to Vāsudeva, a theological variant of the early Sāṃkhya, is described in detail. As Bakker proclaims- "The sinless devotees go, without merit and demerit (punyapāpavivarjita), along the good path to the sun (after death, though an esoteric interpretation is possible). The sun (Āditya), which destroys all darkness, is called the gate. It burns their bodies and, invisibly (adṛśya), having become atom-like, they enter the deity, i.e. Āditya. Leaving him again they stay in the body of Aniruddha. Then having become manas they enter Pradyumna. Leaving him they enter

Samkarṣana, the jīva; after having left their triguna nature behind them, they finally enter the Kṣetrajña, that is Vāsudeva."

²⁸ Sarma, *Womb' of the Earth*, pp. 91-98.

²⁹ Soifer, *Narasimha and Vāmana*, pp. 37-39.

³⁰ In a recent study, it has been shown that the entire region extending from Sabarinārāyaṇa in Dakṣiṇa Kośala to Mahendragiri in Kalinga was inhabited by the Śabara tribes in the early centuries of the Christian era, and they worshipped deities in the form of wooden pillars. With the rise of Brāhmaṇical dynasties in this region, tribal deities became aryanised, nevertheless the famous Puri triad consisting of three small pillar-like wooden images of Jagannath, Subhadra and Balabhadra show unmistakable traces of Śabara origins. The aboriginal hill tribes of coastal Andhra and Kalinga still worship their gods in the form of wooden pillars and the practice can be traced back to earlier times. In the fifth-sixth centuries in the eastern Deccan there were rulers who described themselves as worshippers of the goddess Stambhesvari, i.e., Pillar-goddess. Later the Sulkis who claimed to be ruling over the whole of Gondrama, regarded goddess Stambhesvari as their family deity. Since inscriptions contain reference to eighteen Gondrama, the term has been interpreted in the sense of Gond tribes; although some scholars are of the opinion that it denotes territory. According to one view the entire tract extending from Bansi and Barma in the north to Jaypore in the Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh was included in the Gondrama region.

³¹ See Mahapatra, S.K. *Chāmūṇḍā*, p.21-27.

³² While narrative tales, stories and legends of Rāma are voluminous and abundant, those of his ancestors and successors fall short in creating a sufficiently constructed Canto. Probably, this structural fault gave Kālidāsa the right occasion to recruit circulating histories of Gupta Kings in his epic poem. Moreover, this would have given some thought to common men who knew such historical legends well. For

Kings, it would have crafted and imperial continuity that gave their dynasty and deeds and antiquarian look. If the observations of Mazumdar (1909: 66) are taken into account, then Raghuvamśam was intentionally modelled after Gupta Kings, and thereby, barring Daśaratha and Rāma, used legendarium and imagery of these kinds in modelling remaining Ikṣvāku Kings included in the narrative. While Purāṇic records did exist, its inconsistent list complicated genealogical tracking. Singh (2017: 98) made an interesting observation, that Raghuvamśam does not include all Ikṣvāku rulers, but only select ones, who probably enjoyed a historico-mythological reputation akin to Gupta king, as seen in case of Raghu and Samudragupta.

³³ Glukllich, *Strides of Viṣṇu*, p. 97.

³⁴ We have left coins out of consideration, as they have been analysed and studied time and again by multiple scholars. Interested parties are redirected to Altekar (1954) and Kumar (2024).

³⁵ Gonda, *op.cit.*, p.32.

³⁶ Altekar, *Coinage*, p.143; Kumar, *Treasures*, p.355.

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The Concept of *Sat*: Exploring Reality in Indian Philosophy

Dr. Syamala K.

The direct and transcendent experience for the reality beyond the material and logical domains is both the source and ultimate goal of the systems of Indian thought. The mind and its senses are the necessary tools initially used in the process of attaining this highest state, but they are not competent means to attain the final goal. Transcendent insight alone provides the whole truth or ultimate reality which is often called *Sat* in Indian thought. This concept of *Sat* provides a philosophical framework for understanding the nature of reality, truth and existence. The focus of this paper is to analyze this concept *Sat* in Upaniṣads and the different systems of Indian thought.

Upaniṣads:

The Upaniṣads contain the essence of ancient Indian thought. The Upaniṣadic philosophy is simple and quite fascinating. Reality is declared to be one without a second

and this reality is identified with the spirit or the self. Behind the external world of change, there is an unchanging reality which is identical with the essence of man. The Upaniṣadic doctrine revolves around two central ideas, the Brahman and the Ātman. They have been described as 'the two pillars' on which rests nearly the whole edifice of Indian philosophy. Brahman and Ātman means a 'spiritual reality, interpreted from the objective and subjective standpoint. The identity between Brahman and Ātman carries with it an important implication. Brahman is the cosmic principle and not spiritual in nature. But when it is identified with Ātman, it becomes spiritual. Again, the conception of Brahman being objective has no certainty with it. It is only a hypothesis. But by its identification with Ātman, this uncertainty disappears because Ātman is the most indubitable reality in the universe. The conception of Ātman is that it is finite. But when Ātman is identified with Brahman this difficulty also disappears. Thus when the two conception of Brahman and Ātman are combined, a third one is reached which is without the flaws of either taken by itself. Like Ātman, it is spiritual, it is infinite unlike it. It is also indubitable since it is identical with our own self. It is this highest reality which is represented by the classical phrase, '*Saccidānanda*.' It is described as '*sat*, '*cit*, and '*ānanda*. '*Sat*' means being, '*chit*' means consciousness and '*ānanda*' means peace.

Sat as an Eternal Reality in Advaita Vedānta

The quintessence of Śaṅkara's philosophy was stated by himself in half-verse: '*Brahma satyam jaganmithyā, jīvo Brahmaiva nāparaḥ.*' Brahman, the absolute, alone is real; this world is unreal (*māyā*); and the *jīva* or the individual soul is not different from Brahman. There is a special meaning attached to illusion here. He does not deny the world as such and at the same time he does not regard the world as eternal. Śaṅkara's conception of '*Sat*' or real is that of an eternal and changeless being. In that sense Brahman alone is the truly real thing the only eternal and changeless entity. The objects of the physical world are subjected to change and decay. Hence, the world is not real or *sat*. Similarly, Śaṅkara's conception of *asat* or unreal is that of absolute nothing. For Śaṅkara a hare's horn or a sky flower or castle in the air or a barren woman's son is *asat*. They are totally non-existent. The world is not *asat* because it has a certain practical value. According to Advaita Vedānta, the *Ātman* is changeless and eternal and so Śaṅkara termed it as *Kūṭasthanitya*.

In Advaita metaphysics Brahman—*Ātman* alone is the real and eternal. *Ātman*, which is also the Brahman, is the Universal self as well as the Supreme reality. Śaṅkara starts with the existence of *Ātman* which is self proved. Its nature is explained clearly by J.Sinha when he wrote, "The *Ātman* is one, eternal, homogeneous consciousness in its essential nature (*nityaikaṛasavijñāptimātrasattāka*).

It is of the nature of eternal consciousness (*nityabodhasvarūpa*). It is the witness of all cognitions (*sarvapratyayasākṣin*). It is their knower (*sarvapratyayadarsin*). Its essence consists in the mere power of consciousness (*cicchaktisvarūpamatra*). It is pure (*śuddha*) or transcendental, undifferentiated, eternal consciousness devoid of origin and destruction. Presentations appear and disappear. But the Ātman is the eternal principle of consciousness which reveals and apprehends them. It is the eternal, universal consciousness, which is self-luminous. It shines by its own light. It is not revealed by any other consciousness. It reveals all cognitions. It reveals all objects which cannot reveal themselves. It is neither subject (*grāhaka*) nor object (*grāhya*). It is the eternal consciousness which is present in the adjunct of the internal organ (*buddhi*), and reveals all its modes (*busshipratyayasāksin*). The distinction of subject and object is due to *avidyā*. When *avidyā* is destroyed, the distinction vanishes. The Ātman is of the nature of pure consciousness (*caitanyamātrasvarūpa*). It is of the nature of eternal consciousness (*nityadrksvarūpa*). It is eternally pure, conscious, and liberated. It is eternal, unchangeable, irrelative, formless, one, supreme reality."¹ Therefore Śaṅkara considered Ātman or self as *Kūṭasthanitya* or absolutely eternal.

Sat as eternal reality or Parināmanitya in Sāmkhya

According to Sāmkhya, the entire universe is composed of objects which are effects and have their

origin in material cause, Prakṛti. Prakṛti is unborn, independent, absolute, one eternal and beyond creation and destruction. It is the cause of all objects and substances of the universe. Being subtle, it is not perceptible. All material effects are the manifestation or *pariṇāma* of Prakṛti. They pre-exist in the eternal bosom of Prakṛti and simply come out of it at the time of creation. The spiritual substance, namely Puruṣa does not undergo any change. Prakṛti is the first cause, the root from which the entire universe has sprung. Hence it is called *moola-prakṛti*. Prakṛti is one and complex. It is complex because it is constituted of three *guṇas*. Here *guṇa* does not mean quality. It means here a component part. The three *guṇas* are *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. They are like three strands that are woven together to make up a rope. Prakṛti is thus a unity in trinity. According to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, "the Sāṃkhya attempts an explanation of nature as an immense complexity of elements which is ever changing. The hierarchy of forms from physical matter, which is itself a product of sub-material elements, is represented as an unfolding of the resources of nature. If all effects are latent in their causes, and if infinite regress is to be avoided, there must be an uncaused cause. From the principle of causality it is deduced that the ultimate basis of the empirical universe is the unmanifested (*avyaktam*) prakṛti. The Sāṃkhya assumes the continuity of the world from the lowest to the highest. The products evolve and dissolve in a definite order. The

world is said to be the *pariṇāma*, or transformation, or prakṛti, which is its cause."² So we can say that according to Sāmkhya philosophy, Prakṛti is eternal in the sense of 'enduring through change' or it can be termed as *pariṇāmanīya*.

From the above account, it becomes clear that both in Advaita Vedānta and in Sāmkhya, 'Sat' is an eternal reality though it is from different standpoint.

Sat as both eternal and non-eternal in Jainism

The philosophical outlook of Jainism is that of realistic pluralism because it recognizes the reality of external world and it believes in the reality of both matter and spirit. The concept of *Sat* has an important place in the metaphysics of Jaina tradition. *Sat* or Reality is very peculiar and unique and it is different from the doctrine of reality in other systems of Indian thought. It acts as a foundational stone in explaining the basic concept of Jainism. According to it, an entity is said to have an existence which is known as *Sat*. But it continuously undergoes many changes and in this process of change, its old form is destroyed and a new form is evolved. A thing has many characters and it exists independently. It persists in and through attributes and modes. Out of these innumerable qualities, some are permanent and essential, while others are changing and accidental. The former are called attributes or *guṇas* and the latter is called modes or *paryaya*. According to J.Sinha "A substance (*dravya*)

has the characteristic of existence (*sat*). It is permanent (*nitya*).... modes (*pariyaya*). There are certain qualities of substance which remain unchanged in the midst of modifications."³ So the substance or entity is said to have three aspects *utpāda*, or origination, *vyaya* or destruction and permanence or *dhrauvya*. As stated by Hiriyanna, "Reality is defined as that which is characterized by birth (*utpāda*), death (*vyaya*) and persistence (*dhrauvya*). It means that though eternal in itself, reality shows modifications which come into being and pass out of it. A *jīva* for instance has several embodied conditions— one for every birth it takes, and each of them has its beginning and end; but as soul itself, it always subsists. To suffer change and yet endure is the privilege of existence. The changes or modes are known as *pariyayas*, which, as distinguished from the enduring substance, come into being, persist for at least one instant and then disappear."⁴

Hence we can say that *sat* in Jainism is characterized by origination, destruction and permanence. *Utpāda* is the modification of a substance without giving up its own nature. *Vyaya* is the loss of the former mode in destruction and *dhrauvya* is neither annihilation nor origination of the inherent nature but is the permanent quality of a thing. It follows that an existing reality in order to maintain its permanent and continued existence must necessarily undergo change in the form of origination can destruction and this is the concept of *sat* as eternal and non-eternal in the Jaina metaphysics.

Sat as non-eternal and momentary in Buddhism

Unlike the founders of other religions, Buddha grounded his teachings on rational reflection and not on divine revelation. Even though there is no explicit metaphysics in Buddha's teachings, there are certain metaphysical doctrines implicit in it. Here let us look into the concept of *Sat* in Buddhism.

Theory of momentariness or *Kṣaṇika vāda* is an important doctrine of Buddhism. Everything is momentary nothing is permanent; there is neither being nor non-being, but only becoming. Reality is a stream of becoming. It is applicable to both mind and matter alike. For Buddha individual self is only a bundle of ideas which are constantly changing. The seed becomes the tree through different stages. Rapidity of succession gives rise to the illusion of permanence.

Everything in this world is merely a conglomeration of perishable qualities. According to J. Sinha, "Existence is impermanent. All is flux. Nothing is permanent. All things, material and physical, are transitory. They do not endure for long. They are transient and fleeting. Impermanence is the inexorable law of all existence. There are five things which are inevitable. What is subject to old age must grow old. What is subject to sickness must be sick. What is subject to death must die. What is subject to decay must decay. What is liable to pass away must pass away. These cannot be over-ruled by supra-mundane

god or by any mundane agency. Brahmanism accepts the perpetual cycle of birth and death. Buddhism stresses the perpetual succession of Becoming. There is no Being. There is only Becoming. Some believe in Being. Some believe in Non-Being. Both are extreme views. Buddhism believes in Becoming. Everything is: this is one extreme view. Everything is not: this is the second extreme view. Avoiding both these extremes, Buddha teaches the Norm by the Mean. And the gist of the doctrine of the Mean is that life is a becoming. Everything is becoming, change, flux. It is a phenomenon enduring for a moment and then passing away. It is produced by preceding phenomena..... The changes are causally connected with one another. Each component state is absolutely determined by its antecedent conditions. It is not a causeless event. The world of becoming is governed by the Law of Causality (*pratītyasamutpāda*). It is without beginning or end."⁵ This doctrine of *anityavāda* of Buddha was given the form of the doctrine of Momentariness by his disciples. As a matter of fact the doctrine of momentariness follows from the principle of dependent origination. Whatever is born will also be destroyed and whatever may be destroyed cannot be thought to be permanent. Hence everything is momentary. Thus the doctrine of momentariness goes further than the principle of impermanence. It not only means that everything is impermanent, but according to it everything exists only for a moment. All things of the world are momentary. From the above account it follows

that according to Buddhism, the *Sat* is follows not eternal, but is a series of momentary entities.

Vaiśeṣika view on the nature of and classification of Padārthas

The Nyāya system which began as a science of logic in Indian thought required a metaphysics acceptable to it which it found in the Vaiśeṣika. The consequence was a combined system of Nyāya Vaiśeṣika. In this, the Vaiśeṣika develops metaphysics or the exposition of reality. The Nyāya Vaiśeṣika system is realistic and pluralistic. It is realistic since it believes in the independent existence of the external world. This system is pluralistic it says that the ultimate reality is not one but many. The Vaiśeṣika system divided the world into seven categories or padārthas. A category is what can be known and named or denoted. A padārtha is a namable and denotable thing. The seven categories are (1) Substance (*dravya*), (2) quality (*guṇa*), (3) Action (*karma*), (4) Generality (*sāmānya*), (5) Particular (*viśeṣa*) (6) Inherence (*samavāya*), (7) Negation (*abhāva*). Kaṇāda the founder of Vaiśeṣika system brings all object of valid knowledge under six categories and does not mention non-existence or negation (*abhāva*). But later Udayana add this seventh category of *abhāva*.

These seven categories into which this system divides the world of experience clearly show the realism and pluralism of the Nyaya Vaiśeṣika system. According to

J.Sinha, "the first six categories have existence (*astitva*), nameability (*abhidheyatva*) and knowability (*jñeyatva*). They are objects of the positive notion of being. They can be known without depending on their counter-entities. They are capable of being expressed by names. They are capable of being known, though they exist independently of being known. They are not subjective notions but ontological entities. The three categories of generality, particularity and inherence are related to themselves (*svatmasattva*); they are devoid of relation to being hood. They are neither causes nor effects. They are eternal. They cannot be expressed by the word 'object' (*artha*). They are independent of time and space. They are ontological categories. They are non-spatial and timeless entities. Substance, quality and action are causes capable of producing effects and liable to destruction. They exist in time and space. Eternal substances are not liable to destruction."⁶

To sum up the preceding analysis, it can be stated that the seven categories taken together compose the universe and in their primordial form they are real and eternal.

Conclusion

From the above account we can see that the concept of *Sat* is a complex notion that has been explored by various philosophical traditions of India. Here we can see that *Sat* represents the ultimate reality and in all the Indian

traditions discussed above *Sat* is the central concept that guides the philosophical inquiry. It encourages us to look beyond the surface level of things to understand the deeper reality that underlies all existence.

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The Syānandūrapuravarṇanasamuccaya: A Historical and Literary Source of Padmanabhaswamy Temple and Travancore History

Dr. Suma Parappattoli

Introduction

The Syānandūrapuravarṇanasamuccaya, though unpublished, combines Purāṇic narrative with historical detail, especially concerning the Padmanabhaswamy Temple. The author sought not merely to glorify the temple but to document its history, rituals, and associations. Its colophon preserves vital political, social, and cultural data of 11th–12th century Travancore, making it invaluable for regional historiography.

Authorship and the Maṇigrāma tradition

The Samuccaya, does not name its author, but the colophon states he was a Brahmin from Maṇigrāma in Tulu country, son of Viṣṇu and disciple of Mādhava:

ग्रामे महाजनपदे तुलुराज्यलक्ष्मीः
 भूते मणौ महितपादपरस्य विष्णोः।
 पुत्रस्य माधवपदस्य महामहिम्नः
 पादाब्जसङ्गि शिरसा कृतिनीदृशी या॥

This is significant, as "Maṇigrāma" appears in many South Indian records. While often interpreted as a guild of Christian merchants, inscriptions show it was a guild of leading merchants in general. Gopinatha Rao argued it never denoted a Christian community alone. The Samuccaya, however, suggests Maṇigrāma was also a village in Tulu country, indicating the poet was likely a Tulu Brahmin.

Dating of the work

The colophon records that the work was completed and recited before King Udaya Mārttāṇḍa Varma in his court on the 25th day of Kali year 4269 under the Punarvasu asterism. Scholars examined it and it was dedicated to Śrī Padmanābha. Thus the text can be securely dated to the King's reign in the 12th century AD.

Structure and contents of the Samuccaya

The work consists of 25 Adhyāyas. The first chapter, Syānandūra Kṣetravarṇana, gives a general account of the temple. Historically significant is the author's attempt to explain the etymology of the name Syānandūra:

आनन्दोऽस्य न दूरे स्यात् पुरस्येति मुमुक्षुभिः
पुराणे मुनिभिर्भक्तैः स्यान्दुरपुरं स्मृतम्॥

According to this, the name arose because sages considered *Ānanda* (transcendental bliss) not far from there. The original name seems to have been *Ānandapura*, later *Ānantapura*. The *Samuccaya* thus derives the place name from *Ānanda*. The attempt clearly seeks to cast a spiritual halo on the name, though the author himself also refers to the place as *Ānandapura*.

The second chapter describes *Padmanābha Śayana*, the reclining posture of *Viṣṇu* as *Padmanābha*; the third deals with *Padmanābhārādhana*. The fourth outlines the limits of *Syānandūra* city, marked by the *Brahmakunḍa* in the southwest and the *Paitāmahathīra* in the northeast. The fifth, *Syānandūra Maryādāvarmaṇa*, continues this specification. Chapters six to eight describe the various *tīrtha* tanks within these limits. The ninth chapter is devoted to the *Jātakunḍa*; the tenth to the *Cakratīrtha*; the eleventh, to the *Tīrthasnānavidhi*. Chapters twelve to fifteen discuss the rare merits of *Dānas* such as *Vidyādāna*, *Godāna*, *Hiraṇyādāna*, and *Kanyādāna*.

Subsequent chapters treat topics including *Kṣetravāsaniyamavidhi*, *Padmanābha Yogopanyāsa*, *Kṣetralakṣaṇa*, *Jambūkopākhyāna*, *Syānandūrastava*, *Kṣetrasāmarthya*, *Pūjotsavavarṇana*, *Bali-sevā Praśaṃsā*, and *Kṣetrasāmarthyaika Praśaṃsana*. The work concludes with a colophon of supreme historical importance.

Historical Significance and Genealogy

The Samuccaya sheds immense light on the history of Venad in the 12th century AD, primarily through its colophon, which is a mine of information. The historical verses describe King Goda of the Yādavakula, ruler of the Velaviṣaya (identified with Venad).

श्रीपद्मनाभपदपङ्कजधूलिभाजा
 वेलाधिपेन गुणरत्रसदाकरेण ।
 सत्पात्रसन्निहितशुद्धधनप्रभेद-
 सम्पादिताखिलसुरेश्वरवैभवेन ॥

King Goda had four sons. The eldest, Vīra Kerala, rebuilt the Padmanabhaswamy temple, while the youngest, Udaya Mārtāṇḍa Varma, became the patron of the Samuccaya. Udaya Mārtāṇḍa Varma is described as a devotee of Śrī Padmanabha, a repository of virtues, a terror to his foes, conqueror of the Pāṇḍya and Cola forces, learned in Śruti, Smṛti, Purāṇa and Śāstra, respectful to Brahmins, patron of letters, and a generous philanthropist.

The genealogy presented in the Samuccaya is corroborated by contemporary epigraphs, which also provide the names of two princesses not mentioned in the text. Chronologically, the account is consistent. The Samuccaya states that Kota Varma had four sons, the eldest being Kerala Varma and the youngest Udaya

Mārtāṇḍa Varma. Inscriptions confirm that Udaya Mārtāṇḍa Varma reigned between 343–371 M.E., with 354 M.E. specifically attested.

The Colapuram inscription of 302 M.E. mentions Vīra Kerala Varma, who can be identified with the elder brother in the Samuccaya. Thus, 302 M.E. marks the earliest known date for the first son, while 371 M.E. marks the latest for the youngest. Between these dates, inscriptions record two more rulers: Kota Aditya Varma and Kota Ravi Varma. The Suchindram inscription of 320 M.E. refers to Vīra Kerala as "Kota Kerala," and the Trivandrum Gośāla inscription mentions Vīra Udaya Mārtāṇḍa Varma. From this evidence, Kota Varma's four sons were, Kota Kerala Varma, Kota Aditya Varma, Kota Ravi Varma, Kota Mārtāṇḍa Varma.

Padmanabhaswamy Temple History and Ritual Practices

Regarding the Padmanabhaswamy Temple, the Samuccaya provides valuable data on five aspects of its history: royal benefactions, major ceremonies, temple glories, antiquity of legends, and the sacred tanks. Most significant is its record of the temple's reconstruction by Vīrakerala Varma, indicated by the adjective - अभिनवीकृत पद्मनाभ सन्मन्दिरोत्तम

The second half of the ninth colophon verse describes Vīra Udaya Mārtāṇḍa Varma as having installed the

image of Amburuhākṣa in Paṅkeruhodbhava-saras, identified with Brahmakuṇḍa:

पङ्केरुहोद्भवसरोनिकरे अम्बुरुहाक्ष-
समस्तापराधिकृतजन्म महाफलेन॥

The Samuccaya records numerous temple rites, foremost being Trikāla-bali-sevā, noted in the Pūgotsava-varṇanā. Other ceremonies include bali-sevā, dhvajoddhāpana, and pūjāvasāna-praṇāma. The Padmanabha festival is said to have been attended not only by the Kūpakas, Pāṇḍya, and Cola kings but also by other pious rulers. Significantly, the Samuccaya contains the earliest reference to the Ārāṭṭu procession of Śrī Padmanābha, as indicated by yātrābhīryāmaavidhīcu puṇyairavabhṛtairapi.

The Samuccaya frequently extols the temple's glories and attests to the antiquity of two legends: the Fox-tale and the reclining stretch of Śrī Padmanābha. The Jambūkopākhyāna is narrated at length in chapter 20. Tradition holds that Padmanābha reclines northward from Trivandrum, with His head at Tiruvallam and feet at Trippādapuram (Trippappūr). The text further identifies Pura and Kṣetra with the deity's own body, affirming Padmanābha as Kṣetrajña:

पुरक्षेत्रशरीरादिशब्द एकार्थवाचकः।
मम क्षेत्रं शरीरं मे तत्र क्षेत्रज्ञाता मम॥

It adds

क्षेत्रज्ञाभूतचैतन्यं व्याप्तमेकं विदुर्बुधाः।
अस्मिन् क्षेत्रे च वर्तेहं व्यापकत्वेन सर्वदा॥

The verse affirms the belief that Padmanābha's reclining śarīra pervades His Pura, the Syanandura-kṣetra. The Samuccaya defines this kṣetra as extending from Matsya-tīrtha (Tiruvallam) in the south to the Mahānadi (Attingal river) in the north, on whose southern bank stands the Śrīpādam palace, residence of the Travancore royal women. Thus, the text attests to the prevalence of this belief even in its own time.

The Samuccaya lists several temple tanks revered as tīrthas: Brahmakuṇḍa, Agastyakuṇḍa, Pitṛtīrtha, Śūrpākara-tīrtha, Rāmasaras, Varāhatīrtha, Kaṇvatīrtha, Jamākuṇḍa, and Cakratīrtha.

Social and Cultural Context

It also offers insights into Travancore's social history, emphasizing the merit of kanyādāna. He further mentions dedicating girls as dāsīs to temples. It shows both the religious value of kanyādāna and the role of female service in temple culture. The Samuccaya prescribes that only Śūdra girls be dedicated to temples, particularly Padmanābhaswamy. This practice reveals a patriarchal order where lower classes were subject to aristocratic control. Fathers could sell or surrender daughters, showing

that matriarchy had not developed among Śūdras, whose women were available for upper varṇa cohabitation. In contrast, under matriarchy, women retained individuality and inheritance rights.

The Samuccaya confirms that in 12th-century South Travancore, Śūdras had not adopted matriliney. It notes the Pitṛtīrtha at Tiruvallam, where only Śūdras performed śrāddha, as traivarnikas and lower castes were excluded. The rite involved sons offering piṇḍa to Viṣṇu in Matsya form—something inconsistent with matriliney, where nephews held that right. Inscriptions further prove that Kota Varma's four sons succeeded him patrilineally, showing that royal succession, like that of commoners, was patrilineal.

Political geography and regional identity

Politically, the Samuccaya equates Venād with Kūpaka, a debated issue in Kerala history. Scholars like K.K. Pillai and T.K. Velupillai noted the Venād rulers' Kūpaka connection, and the text confirms their identity. It describes the Malaya mountains, source of the Tāmraparṇī, as the boundary between Kūpaka and the Pāṇḍya kingdom:

पाण्ड्य कूपक राष्ट्रे द्वे विभजन्निव संस्थिता ।।

It also mentions the river Ghṛtamālā (Neyyar), sanctified by Agastya, flowing from Malaya to the sea:

स्यानन्दूरपुरक्षेत्र प्रकाराः प्रियो मम
अवतीर्य गिरेःशृङ्गान् मलपस्य महानदी
घृतमाला स्वनाम्नैव समुद्रमभिसर्पति
कुम्भयोनिपदाम्भोज प्रक्षालन शुभोदकः॥

Thus, Malaya denoted the Western Ghats from Agastyakūṭa to the Tāmraparṇī. The territory west of it south and northeast of Trivandrum belonged to Kūpaka, proving Venād and Kūpaka were one. The text also specifies the limits of the Syānandūrakṣetra:

घृतमालाब्रह्मकुण्ड-मलयाम्बोधि मध्यगम्
यत्क्षेत्रं प्रथितं पृथ्वी तत्र तिष्ठामि मे शृणु॥

Here, Ghṛtamālā formed the southeast boundary and the sea the southwest:

पूर्वदक्षिणभागस्य मर्यादात्वं बिभर्ति या
प्रत्यग् दक्षिणभागस्य मर्यादाम्भोनिधिस्वयम्॥

The western limit ran between Brahmakuṇḍa and the Ghṛtamālā's mouth:

आब्रह्मकुण्डात् पूर्वोक्तात् आ च नद्याः घृतसरः
सङ्गमादम्बुधिस्मीमा मम क्षेत्रस्य सुन्दरी॥

Although the northern limit (Brahmakūṇḍa) is unclear, the territory corresponds to later Trippappūr svarūpam, a compact cultural and linguistic unit.

Finally, the Samuccaya mentions King Udaya Mārtāṇḍa Varma hearing it recited before a royal court of scholars, who reviewed the work. The colophon states:

आकर्णिता गुणगणार्जितकर्णवैरि-
यन्त्रप्रपितमनसा ससभासदयं
आलोचिता यतिभिः कृतिरेवमेषा
संस्थापिता जलजनाभकृते च तेन॥

This provides the earliest record of a Travancore royal court of poets and scholars, which later became renowned.

Conclusion

The Syānandūrapuravarnanasamuccaya stands as a testament to the deep interweaving of spiritual, political, and social life in medieval Travancore. Its poetic form does not diminish its historical credibility; rather, the work exemplifies how Purāṇic narrative forms can convey authentic historical data. The text not only illuminates the religious life of the Padmanabhaswamy Temple but also provides critical data on royal lineages, temple patronage, and social customs, particularly regarding women's roles in temple service. As such, the Samuccaya is a foundational text for historians and scholars of religion alike. Future critical editions and translations of the Samuccaya are essential for advancing the historiography of South India and understanding the layered heritage of Travancore.

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The Enduring Echoes of Ancient India: Unpacking the Global Reach of the Indian Knowledge System

Dr. Mahesh Ramaswamy

Introduction

Indian Knowledge System IKS is the buzzword in today's academia. It is getting its due recognition better late than never. The knowledge system hails from a country whose civilization is so unique of being the only one in the universe to exist continuously. The Indian knowledge system is one of the oldest and most comprehensive in the world, with roots stretching back thousands of years. It constitutes one of the significant cultural and philosophical contributions of Ancient India. It encompasses a wide range of disciplines. Central to this system is the concept of holistic understanding, interconnectedness, and the pursuit of truth through various paths. The only method of transfer of this

knowledge was through oral tradition, and evolved through a continuous process of preservation, transmission, and renewal. It's a broad conceptual term that has gained prominence, especially in recent years, to refer to the rich and diverse intellectual heritage of India.

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) refers to the traditional systems of knowledge, practices, and wisdom that originated and evolved in the India over millennia. One of the foundational texts of Indian knowledge is the Vedas, which are ancient scriptures containing hymns, rituals, and philosophical teachings. These texts serve as the basis for various schools of philosophy, including Vedānta, Sāṃkhya, Yoga, and Nyāya, each offering distinct perspectives on the nature of reality, the self, and the ultimate purpose of life.

Another important aspect of the Indian knowledge system is the concept of 'Dharma', which refers to ethical and moral duties that govern individual and societal conduct. Dharma forms the basis of social order and harmony in Indian society and is reflected in various religious and philosophical texts, such as the Bhagavad Gītā and the Manusmṛti. Indian art and literature are also rich and diverse. These artistic expressions often serve as vehicles for spiritual and philosophical themes, reflecting the interconnectedness of the material and the spiritual worlds.

Overall, the IKS embodies a synthesis of spiritual wisdom, intellectual inquiry, and practical knowledge, offering insights into the nature of existence, human consciousness, and the pursuit of a meaningful life. Its enduring legacy continues to influence and inspire people around the world.

This study aims to address this scholarly gap by systematically investigating the channels through which IKS was transmitted to Arabia, emphasizing the roles of oral traditions, manuscript cultures, trade routes, and Arab intermediaries in facilitating cross-cultural knowledge flows. This transmission played a pivotal role in shaping the intellectual foundations of the medieval Islamic world and, subsequently, the European Renaissance, yet specific mechanisms, routes, and contexts of this intercultural exchange have often been generalized or overlooked. It seeks to identify the specific fields—such as mathematics, medicine, astronomy, philosophy, literature, art, and political science—where Indian knowledge made significant contributions to Arabian intellectual and cultural development.

Research Objectives

The principal research objectives of this article are as follows:

- * To analyze the mechanisms through which the Indian Knowledge System was transmitted to pre-Islamic Arabia

- * To identify and evaluate the specific domains of knowledge

- * To assess the cultural and intellectual consequences of these knowledge exchanges

- * To examine the processes of adaptation, transformation, and reinterpretation

- * To address existing gaps in the historiography of knowledge transmission

Collectively, these objectives seek to deepen our understanding of the foundational role played by ancient India not only in fostering knowledge within its own borders but also in shaping the broader fabric of global intellectual history through dynamic and enduring cross-cultural interactions.

Issues with IKS

Fragmentation and Loss of Knowledge is the basic issue concerning IKS today. Over time, much of the traditional knowledge embedded in the Indian knowledge system becomes fragmented or lost due to various factors such as colonization, modernization, urbanization, and globalization. Traditional knowledge systems like Āyurveda, Yoga, and others often lack institutional support, recognition, and funding compared to scientific disciplines constitutes yet another issue. Lack of awareness amongst present day Indians has been another

issue due to lack of availability of reliable sources. Added to this is language barrier. The final straw is its Integration with Modern Science. While traditional knowledge systems offer valuable insights, there is often disconnected or lack of integration with modern scientific paradigms. If these issues are transcended, the dissemination of IKS becomes ease.

Transmission of IKS during Ancient Times

In ancient times, Indian knowledge systems were transmitted to various parts of the world. The transmission to the Middle East, particularly during the early Islamic period symbolises a vital chapter in human-driven global intellectual history. Pre-Islamic Arabs in Arabia depended on India for all their daily needs as there were only two things in abundance-Dates and Palm with which self-sufficiency couldn't be achieved. India being geographically near as well as self-sufficient was its natural choice. Pre-Islamic Arabs organized themselves into groups (later on termed as Caravans) started moving towards India for procurement of essentials. Initially it was restricted for personal consumption. As time evolved, the idea of becoming agents crept in. Hence they enhanced their procurement, dumped certain parts in their courtyard, availed much needed break (after a tedious to & fro journey) and continued their journey towards 'Souks' (open-air marketplace) spread across Middle East. Watt, W. Montgomery who has written extensively on this

provides scholarly overview, including detailed sections on the social, economic, and religious landscape of pre-Islamic Mecca and the Arabian Peninsula. It is a highly influential work that rigorously analyzes the economic conditions of Mecca and the nature of its trade, challenging some traditional narratives.

Thus inherent geography of Arabia converted Pre-Islamic Arabs from wanderers to merchants instead of only being consumers. The Arabs knew every nook and corner of India. Because of this regular contact, they became carriers of Indian knowledge system (IKS) initially to Arabia and later to Europe. The irony of it all is that they did not identify themselves as 'carriers of knowledge' but projected themselves as 'originators of knowledge'. The whole world believed this until recently, when research proved Arabs were mere carriers and Indians are the founders of IKS.

Conditions of Arabia

Pre-Islamic Arabia often referred to as the "Age of Ignorance" (Jahiliyyah) by later Islamic tradition (Armstrong 30), was a diverse and complex region characterized by a blend of nomadic Bedouin tribes and settled urban communities (Hoyland 110-112). Politically, there was a notable absence of centralized authority across most of the peninsula, with power fragmented among numerous tribes and clans (Watt, Muhammad at Mecca 15-20). Loyalty to one's tribe was paramount, and inter-

tribal feuds (blood feuds) were common, often leading to cycles of violence (Donner 27-29). Socially, it was a patriarchal society where tribal lineage defined identity and protection. Women generally held subordinate positions, and practices like female infanticide were not uncommon (Armstrong 32). Slavery was also an established institution (Donner 30-31).

Religiously, the dominant belief system was polytheism, with various tribes worshipping numerous idols and deities, many of which were housed in the Kaaba (Watt, Muhammad at Mecca 33-38; Hoyland 140-145). However, monotheistic influences, primarily Judaism and Christianity, were also present, particularly in certain urban centres and along trade routes, coexisting with indigenous pagan practices and the presence of 'hanifs', individuals who believed in one God but did not adhere to established religions (Donner 35-40). Donner's work offers a thorough examination of the religious and social environment in which Islam emerged, including the diverse religious practices of the time. His comprehensive survey covers the history of the Arabian Peninsula over a vast period, with excellent sections on the political, social, and economic structures immediately preceding Islam.

Economically, the region was sustained by a mix of nomadic pastoralism (raising camels, sheep, goats), limited agriculture in oasis like Yathrib (Medina) and Ta'if (near Mecca), and crucially, long-distance caravan trade

(Crone 1-10; Hoyland 125-130). Mecca, in particular, flourished as a significant mercantile hub due to its strategic location on trade routes and the presence of the Kaaba, a revered sanctuary (Crone 20-25). Pre-Islamic Arabia's economic backbone was significantly defined by its vibrant trade and commerce, acting as a crucial bridge between East and West. The peninsula's strategic location facilitated extensive caravan routes, most notably the "Incense Route" that traversed from Yemen northwards to the Mediterranean. Major hubs like Mecca capitalized on their positions, becoming bustling centers where goods from distant lands converged.

Traders, often organized into powerful tribal caravans, moved an array of commodities: frankincense and myrrh, indigenous to Arabia, alongside African gold, ivory, and slaves. The connection with India was particularly significant and multifaceted. Arabian merchants were key intermediaries in the maritime spice trade, importing coveted Indian spices like pepper, cinnamon, and cardamom, as well as fine textiles (cotton, silk), precious stones, and pearls from the Indian subcontinent. These goods were then transported overland across Arabia to markets in the Levant, Egypt, and the Roman/Byzantine empires. Conversely, Indian markets received Arabian horses, frankincense, and other regional products. This extensive commercial network fostered not only economic prosperity for leading merchant families, like the Quraysh of Mecca, but also facilitated cultural exchange, the flow

of ideas, and the spread of diverse religious influences across the ancient world.

IKS Knowledge Transmission: Mathematics

The transmission of mathematical concepts stands as a major hallmark of Indo-Arabic knowledge exchange. Indian mathematicians developed the decimal system and the concept of zero as early as the 5th century CE, pivotal advancements that reached the Middle East through scholarly and merchant interactions. Prominent works, such as Brahmagupta's "Brāhmasphuṭasiddhānta," introduced sophisticated arithmetic and algebraic concepts to Persian and Arabic scholars in the 8th and 9th centuries. This transmission is well documented in the works of Al-Khwarizmi, whose treatise "Al-Kitab al-Mukhtasar fī Hisab al-Jabrwal-Muqabala" (The Compendious Book on Calculation by Completion and Balancing) drew heavily from Indian sources. The Indian numeral system, integrated and disseminated as "Arabic numerals," became the foundation for mathematical advancement in both the Islamic world and, via further transmission, medieval Europe (Ifrah 73-75; Joseph 244-247).

IKS Knowledge Transmission: Medical Treatises and Their Exchange

Indian medical treatises, particularly those in Āyurveda, formed another crucial domain of knowledge transmission. Texts like "Charaka Samhita" and "Sushruta Samhita," renowned for their systematic approach to

diagnosis, pharmacology, surgery, and wellness, were translated into Arabic beginning in the Abbasid era (8th-9th centuries). The court of Caliph Harun al-Rashid and later his son Al-Ma'mun became vibrant centres for translation and adaptation. Indian physicians like Mankah and IbnDhan played esteemed roles at the Baghdad court, facilitating the transmission of medical knowledge from Sanskrit into Arabic. This cross-pollination enriched Islamic medical literature, with classic works such as "Kitab al-Hind" and the medical encyclopedias of Al-Razi (Rhazes) and IbnSina (Avicenna) bearing substantial Indian influence (Saliba 102-105; Pormann and Savage-Smith 87-89).

IKS Knowledge Transmission: Philosophical Texts and Cross-Cultural Dialogue

Philosophical texts and traditions also moved across cultural boundaries via the Middle Eastern trade routes. Indian schools of thought, particularly Sāṃkhya, Nyāya, and Advaita Vedānta, influenced medieval Arabic philosophical discourse. Translations of treatises such as the "Pañcatantra" and "Yoga Sūtra" into Arabic and Persian not only inspired ethical and political thought but also contributed to the development of Sufi mysticism and Neoplatonic traditions in the Islamic world. Tales from the Pañcatantra (or Kalilawa Dimna in its Arabic translation) became immensely popular, transcending linguistic and cultural barriers to become a staple of Arabic literature, later spreading to Europe.

Notable figures, such as Al-Biruni, spent years in India to study Sanskrit philosophical works; his critical work "Kitab fī Tahqīq ma l'il-Hind" (Researches on India) remains a vital source for understanding the depth of Indo-Arabic philosophical dialogue. This intellectual osmosis provided shared vocabularies and concepts for subsequent theological and metaphysical debates throughout Eurasia (Hayton 45-47; Chattopadhyaya 201-205).

IKS Knowledge Transmission: Astronomy and Calendar Science

Indian achievements in astronomy significantly shaped the course of medieval Arabic scientific progress. Seminal Sanskrit works such as Brahmagupta's *Brahmasphuṭasiddhānta* and Āryabhaṭa's *Āryabhaṭīya* were rendered into Arabic, acquiring new titles like "Sindhind" and "Arkand," primarily during the Abbasid era in Baghdad. These treatises introduced advanced models of planetary motion, methods for predicting eclipses, innovations in time-keeping, and systems for calendar computation. This Abbasid translation movement integrated these Indian astronomical theories into the intellectual mainstream of Islamic institutions, so profoundly that Indian methods of celestial rotation and mathematical astronomy became fundamental for subsequent developments in both practical chronology and theoretical inquiry (Pingree 23-27; Kennedy 132-134).

IKS Knowledge Transmission: Political Thought and Statecraft

Indian treatises on governance and administration, most notably Kaṭilya's Arthaśāstra, provided sophisticated analyses of political, economic, and legal theory. While few direct Arabic translations are documented, indirect channels facilitated the transfer of key concepts, particularly during the Abbasid period. These included pragmatic strategies in negotiation, legal codification, and economic planning, which subsequently enriched Islamic political philosophy. Indian traditions of statecraft found resonance within emerging bureaucratic and governmental frameworks in the Islamic world (Boesche 92-94; Crone 176).

Result and Discussion

The multidimensional transmission of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) to pre-Islamic Arabia reveals the complex nature of intellectual exchange between these civilizations. The study's findings demonstrate that Indian contributions in fields such as mathematics, medicine, astronomy, philosophy, literature, art, and political thought were not merely adopted but actively adapted and transformed within Arabian contexts, facilitated by vibrant trade networks and scholarly intermediaries. The Abbasid-era translation movement, for instance, exemplifies how Sanskrit works laid critical foundations for the flourishing

of Islamic science and philosophy, which later influenced European intellectual traditions. While gaps persist in fully tracing precise transmission routes and intermediary roles, this study highlights the indispensable role of IKS in shaping early global knowledge networks. Such insights enrich current historiographical debates and underscore the relevance of intercultural dialogue in understanding the evolution of pluralistic intellectual traditions.

Conclusion

The dissemination of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) to pre-Islamic Arabia and the wider Middle East represents a pivotal episode in the history of global intellectual exchange. This multifaceted engagement encompassed not only core domains such as mathematics and medicine but also extended into astronomy, literature, the arts, and political philosophy. The translation and assimilation of seminal Sanskrit works into Arabic laid the groundwork for significant scientific and cultural progress during the Abbasid period, fundamentally shaping the intellectual milieu of the medieval Islamic world and beyond.

This intercultural interaction highlights the dynamic processes involved in knowledge transmission, moving beyond simplistic one-directional models of influence. Indian intellectual contributions were central to the emergence of early globalization, fostering rich exchanges

of ideas among diverse civilizations. Investigating these interactions broadens our comprehension of the cosmopolitan foundations underlying many scientific, philosophical, and artistic traditions that remain relevant today.

In sum, the lasting impact of IKS's transmission accentuates the vital role of ancient intercultural dialogues as pillars of contemporary global knowledge frameworks. This historical insight encourages continued interdisciplinary inquiry and a reevaluation of intellectual histories, thereby promoting a more inclusive and nuanced recognition of the shared human legacy in scholarship, innovation, and culture.

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The Mahābhārata: A Timeless Epic of Indian Philosophy and Cultural Integration

Dr. Sandhya B. Nair

Introduction

The Mahābhārata is the greatest epic of India and the biggest of the world's epics. The beginnings of epic poetry in India are to be found in the early Vedic literature. The *R̥gveda* contains hymns of a narrative character, and short legends in prose and verse, called *Gatha-s*, *Itihāsa-s*, etc. *Itihāsa* is an ancient historical or legendary tradition, turned to creative use as a significant myth or tale, expressive of some spiritual or religious, ethical or ideal meaning and thus formative of the mind of the people. *Purāṇa* and *Itihāsa* are forms which literally indicate an old story. *Itihāsa* (*iti-ha-sa*) is interpreted as 'so indeed it was'. These terms are found associated with each other in early literature in general.

The *Mahābhārata* represents the past, present and future aspirations of crores of people in India. It is a

literary monument, a cultural scripture, that influenced India to mould her destiny. The *Mahābhārata* is a treasure house of ancient Indian culture, both secular and sacred. The epic has provided the material for numerous narrative poems and dramas of classical Sanskrit literature. The translations of this classic became the foundation for many of the Indian vernacular languages in the formative phases of their evolution, and generated once again a vast body of narrative poems and dramas in these languages too.¹

The *Mahābhārata* is regarded as the sole source of life that flows in the subcontinent. The culture embedded in the *Mahābhārata* serves as a major unifying factor that brought about our national integration. So, it is acclaimed as the store-house of political wisdom, the repository of philosophical doctrine, the code of religious dogma; at the same time, it is a specimen of literary art, exercising tremendous influence on different forms and patterns of subsequent literary compositions in Sanskrit.² Besides, it serves as an authoritative book on law, social and political, morality, and ideas of philosophy. As a '*Dharma śāstra*', the *Mahābhārata* enumerates the different types of religious beliefs and customs.

The *Mahābhārata* is undoubtedly an important encyclopaedia of our rich cultural heritage. '*Mahā*' means great and '*Bhārata*' means the descendants of Bharata. Thus, the title indicates the story of the great descendants of Bharata. The bulk of the epic, composed by

Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana Vyāsa, the son of Parāśara and Satyawati, in not less than one lakh verses describes the struggle between the unrighteous *Kauravas* and the righteous *Pāṇḍava-s*.³

The purpose of the epic

Itihāsa-s are not just war stories; they have a message to the whole society and to every individual. They teach and instruct what to do and what not to do. The *Mahābhārata* has been called '*Itihāsa*'. There is however, a controversy with regard to this ascription because it does not always conform to the modern definition of history. But *Itihāsa* is an Indian term and it should be accepted in the Indian context of the definition.

धर्मार्थकाममोक्षाणां उपदेशसमन्वितम्।

पूर्ववृत्तकथायुक्तं इतिहासं प्रचक्षते॥

Puruṣārthas, viz., *Dharma* (duty), *Artha* (wealth), *Kāma* (pleasure), and *Mokṣa* (liberation) are the four legitimate ends of man's life. The *Mahābhārata* culminates in *Mokṣa* which is believed by Indians to be the ultimate goal of human beings. *Kāma* and *Dharma* form an integral part of this epic. Ascetic poetry contained in the *Mahābhārata* represents the attitude of the Indian mind towards the higher thought and wisdom. The ultimate goal of life is expressed in various terms such as *Nirvāṇa*, *Ānanda* and *Amṛta*. The heaven of various gods, the world of fathers and the hell of devils find their places in it.

The goal of humanity is to avoid them and to become free from the series of births and sorrows. It has been pointed out that both pleasure and pain are ephemeral (*anitya*).⁴ The *Mahābhārata* paves the way to attain the four *Puruṣārtha*-s or human ends. *Dharma* is the code of life, the bond which keeps society together. The *Mahābhārata* defines *Dharma* as follows.

धारणाद्धर्म इत्याहुर्धर्मो धारयते प्रजाः।

यत्स्याद्धारणसंयुक्तः स धर्म इति निश्चयः॥ (*Mahābhārata* 8.69.58)

Dharma is the genus that applies to all the *Aśrama*-s and *Varṇa*-s alike. It is generally ordained that one should observe rules of caste. The ascetic poetry found interspersed in the epic takes a broader view and reveals a generous mind. It is said that truth, self-control, asceticism, generosity, non-violence, constancy are virtues for success. They are not dependent on caste or family.

सत्यं दमस्तपो योगः अहिंसा धर्मनित्यता।

साधकानि सदा पुंसां न जातिर्न कुलं नृप॥ (*Mahābhārata* 3.179.3)

The *Mahābhārata* states that *Kāma* and *Artha* should be practised on the basis of *Dharma*. Of these, the last, supreme beauty, is attained by very few. *Mokṣa* is the final stage and the earlier stages are the way to the last stage. *Mokṣa* is realised in the worldly life itself, and it is a stage in which all desires become extinct. A person who attains *Mokṣa* remains in the world as a saint, जीवन्मुक्त स्थित who has nothing to achieve or to lose.⁵

Epic is a purposeful literary creation which deals with human nature, to show how it can be used for good or for evil. It is such a massive poetical record ensouling the nation's hoary and still living tradition that it is the nectarean clue connecting the present with the past and the future. By virtue of its vast philosophical depth and sheer magnitude of a consummate embodiment of the ethos of not only grand India, but of Hinduism and the Vedic tradition, the *Mahābhārata's* scope and grandeur are best summarised by one quotation from the beginning of its first *parvan* यदिहास्ति तदन्यत्र यन्नेहास्ति न तत्त्वचित्। What is described here may be found elsewhere; what is not presented here cannot be found anywhere.

The *Mahābhārata* is the largest epic in its size and strength, as Sukthankar says. It is the golden treasury of ideals of Indians at their best. This book offers to all what they need and what they can digest.

Message of the *Mahābhārata*

Dharma is the foundation of the *Mahābhārata* and it is the message of the great epic. The epic itself explains the greatness as follows. "In the realm of religion and ethics (*dharma*), of material progress and prosperity (*artha*), of the enjoyment of pleasures of personal and social life (*Kāma*), and spiritual emancipation (*Mokṣa*), whatever is embodied in this epic may be found elsewhere, but what is not found in this epic, cannot be

found anywhere."⁶ So, it is an authoritative book of law, morality, social and political, laying down rules for the attainment of *Trivarga*, i.e., *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kāma*, and also showing the way to liberation, and expounding the highest religious philosophy of India.

The *Mahābhārata* expresses the importance of *Dharma* in all activities. It means that the *Veda*, truth, and *dharma* are one. Therefore, the *Mahābhārata* says, Victory is there where *Dharma* is — यतो धर्मस्ततो जयः।" It is the book of *Dharma* and is called *Dharmagrantha*. Here, the hero Yudhiṣṭhira, also called Dharmaputra, is the upholder of *dharma*, a word that includes law, religion and the norms of right conduct. In the *Mahābhārata*, the battle is *Dharmayuddha* and hence the battle field is called *Dharmakṣetra*. The very soul of the *Mahābhārata* is Śrīkr̥ṣṇa, who tried to restore *Dharma* on earth.⁷

The *Mahābhārata* explains many kinds of *Dharma* or duties, viz., *Rājadharmā* (duty of rulership), *Prajādharmā* (duty of citizen), *Dānadharmā* (ethics of charity), *Āpaddharmā* (conduct at times of distress), *Strīdharmā* (duty of a woman), *Mokṣadharmā* (conduct for liberation from the cycle of birth and death), etc. These guide one to deal with various situations in life.

The central theme of the *Mahābhārata* is the story of the great war between the *Pāṇḍava-s* and the *Kaurava-s*. The fight between the gods and demons, described in the

Vedas, is transmitted in the *Mahābhārata* into a struggle between righteousness and unrighteousness, good and evil, justice and injustice, knowledge and ignorance. The *Pandava-s* respect *Dharma*, which alone is the path of God. Duryodhana, his brother, and his allies represent *Adharma*. Vyāsa sang the greatness of Lord Vāsudeva and the truthfulness of the *Pāṇḍava-s*.⁸ Lord Kṛṣṇa, Bhīṣma, Vidura and Droṇa try their best to save Duryodhana by pointing out to him the superiority of *Dharma*.

The *Mahābhārata* teaches us universal morality, love to all human beings and renunciation of worldly attachment. All these come under the category of *Nīti*. The *Mahābhārata* enunciates the doctrine of *Karman* and states that by knowledge a person becomes free from the bond of rebirth. There is a general tone emphasizing the doctrine of *Ahimsā*. The summum bonum of life is to have perfect peace of mind and bliss, which do not know sorrow in this world. It is the *Mahābhārata*, which, for the first time, taught the liberal doctrine that there is no barrier of caste, creed or sex in the pursuit of emancipation.

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* teaches us the philosophy of religion through the doctrines of three *Yoga-s* or modes of life, namely *Karmayoga*, *Bhaktiyoga* and *Jñānayoga*. It seems that the whole attempt of the *Mahābhārata* is to bring together the diverse religious concepts of ancient India.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa who represents the soul of the epic, declares that he has come down to re-establish *dharma* on earth by protecting the good and annihilating the wicked.

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।

अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥ (*Bhagavad Gītā* 4.7)

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the paradoxical unity in diversity, the source and goal of all existence. The *Bhagavadgītā*, which occurs in the *Bhīṣmaparvan*, the first of the battle books, is a very edible part of the *Mahābhārata*. The *Bhagavadgītā*, the *Upaniṣads* and the *Brahmasūtra* are the three recognized authorities on the Vedānta philosophy. The *Bhagavadgītā* describes the philosophy of the self that gives self-reliance, self-respect, self-restraint and self-confidence, so essential to life. So, the message of the *Bhagavadgītā* is *Dharma*.

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।

धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे ॥ (*Bhagavad Gītā* 4.8)

"For the protection of good, for the destruction of evil-doers, for the firm establishment of *dharma*, I am born in every age." Śrī Kṛṣṇa represents the soul of the great epic. The *Bhagavad Gītā*'s philosophy teaches that: "Live rightly, act selflessly, understand the self, and surrender to the Divine." It harmonizes multiple spiritual paths — action (*karma*), knowledge (*jñāna*), and devotion

(bhakti) into a universal guide for living a purposeful and liberated life.

The *Mokṣa Dharma* depicted in the *Śāntiparvan* of the *Mahābhārata* provokes *Ānandavardhana*, the greatest of the Sanskrit literary critics. In his *Dhvanyāloka*, *Ānandavardhana* establishes *Śānta* as the chief sentiment of the *Mahābhārata* on the basis of internal and external evidences. Since the *Mahābhārata* skillfully describes all aspects of ancient Indian culture, it can well be placed on record as the cultural encyclopaedia of India in the bygone ages.

Conclusion

The *Mahābhārata* enjoys a very unique place as the longest literary work in the world, consisting of one lakh verses. As available now, it is encyclopaedic in character. The epic itself declares that whatever is found in it can be seen elsewhere and whatever is not in it, cannot be found elsewhere. The *Mahābhārata* is an *Itihāsa* in the sense of archetypal or *Sanātana* history. It is a poem which expresses a vision of the struggle and destiny of man in terms of a mythopoetic and demiurgic creativity. It is a work of authority, that is, a śāstra embodying an ancient tradition of wisdom. The whole work is cast in the form of unforgettable images of scenes and persons.

The *Mahābhārata* discusses various concepts on the political, economic, philosophical and ethical life of

ancient India. So, the *Mahābhārata* is known as the encyclopaedia of moral teaching which gives great emphasis on righteousness. That is, the epic attaches great importance to ethical virtues. The fact that the world-famous work, The *Bhagavadgītā*, which is one of the fundamental texts of Vedānta and represents the Indian *Darśana-s*, comes in the *Mahābhārata* shows the importance of the epic. The *Mahābhārata* stands as a monumental text that unites philosophy, mythology, and culture, bridging the ancient and the modern. Its universality and depth make it a timeless epic, not only for Indians but for all of humanity seeking wisdom, introspection, and the path of dharma.

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यदिहास्ति तदन्यत्र यन्नेहास्ति न तत्क्वचित्॥ MB1.56.33
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दुर्वृत्तं धार्तराष्ट्राणामुक्तवान्भगवानृषिः॥ MB 1.1.60

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Indian Itihāsas: The Gateways to Puruṣārthas

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In the metaphysical framework of Hindu philosophy, human existence is delineated by four primary aims, known as the Puruṣārthas. This foundational Sanskrit concept translates to the cardinal "goals" of an individual's life. The four Puruṣārthas—*Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma*, and *Mokṣa*, encapsulate a comprehensive teleological structure for a balanced and fulfilling existence, representing righteous living, material prosperity, aesthetic pleasure, and spiritual liberation, respectively. Over millennia, these four aims have been exhaustively expounded upon in sacred scriptures, rigorously debated by philosophers, and profoundly woven into the cultural fabric, thereby illustrating a deeply nuanced understanding of the human condition and its highest aspirations.

The Indian Itihāsas (epics), comprising the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, serve as foundational texts that encapsulate the society's core philosophical, religious, and moral tenets. These narratives transcend their literary

function, acting as profound repositories of cultural memory and as didactic instruments for transmitting a collective moral and ethical consciousness across generations. They are indispensable for comprehending the rich tapestry of Indian cultural traditions, rituals, and social norms. Fundamentally, they serve as didactic vehicles for transmitting core moral and ethical values such as duty, honour, loyalty, and justice, while also exploring profound philosophical concepts of life, death, and salvation. Consequently, a scholarly engagement with these epics is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the cultural heritage and spiritual ethos of India. Collectively, these epics provide critical historical insight into ancient Indian societal structures, political dynamics, and governance. These narratives function as normative guides for ethical conduct, providing profound insights into the ideals of the Puruṣārthas.

The Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata are canonical literary works that originate from ancient Indian history and serve as the foundational bedrock of Indian culture and literature. The authorship and chronology of these epics, however, remain subjects of scholarly inquiry. The Rāmāyaṇa is traditionally ascribed to the sage Vālmīki, while the Mahābhārata is attributed to the sage Vyāsa. While a precise historical timeline for their composition is not definitively established, a broad scholarly consensus places their written compilation during the late Vedic

period, a period spanning approximately 500 BCE to 100 BCE. It is widely understood that these narratives were transmitted through a rich oral tradition long before their formal textualization.

The Rāmāyaṇa, a sacred chronicle of divine virtues, depicts the life of Rāma, detailing his exile, the abduction of his wife Sītā by the demon king Rāvaṇa, and his subsequent quest to secure her release. This epic is not a singular, monolithic text but a dynamic cultural artefact. As the scholar A.K. Ramanujan observes, "The epic is not a static object but a living tradition, a vast and variegated river of stories that adapts to local contexts while retaining a core narrative" (23). The Rāmāyaṇa thus offers a foundational narrative for understanding the ideals of *dharma*, ethical conduct, and familial duty.

The Mahābhārata, narrates the intricate dynastic conflict between the Paṇḍavas and Kauravas for the throne of Hastinapura, culminating in the epochal Kurukshetra war. Embedded within this extensive narrative is the Bhagavad Gītā, a sacred dialogue on duty and righteousness that profoundly shapes Indian metaphysical and ethical thought. The epic's complexity lies in its moral ambiguity, which challenges simplistic interpretations of virtue. The narrative, as scholar Wendy Doniger notes, "does not offer easy moral lessons but presents a world of ethical dilemmas where all participants are flawed and the very concept of *dharma* is subject to intense debate" (54).

In the grand narrative architecture of the Indian epics, structure and language serve as a testament to their profound cultural and literary significance. The Rāmāyaṇa, is meticulously organized into seven distinct *Kāṇḍas* (books), each section advancing the epic's profound moral and spiritual journey. The Mahābhārata, a sprawling and intricate account of cosmic conflict, is similarly partitioned into eighteen *Parvas* (books), with each *Parva* contributing to the epic's vast and complex tapestry of human and divine action.

Both epics are characterized by a sophisticated literary form, primarily composed in highly refined verse that employs rich poetic language and intricate meters. While prose is occasionally utilized for narrative clarity or explanatory interpolations, the extensive use of dialogue is a cornerstone of their narrative technique, serving not only to propel the plot but also to facilitate the didactic and philosophical discourse that defines their essence.

The fundamental medium for this literary grandeur is Sanskrit, a language of immense antiquity and precision. Far more than a mere vehicle for communication, Sanskrit functions as a sacred and foundational language, its phonology and grammar believed to possess inherent spiritual power. The epics' composition in Sanskrit imbues their narratives with an immutable authority and a timeless resonance, ensuring that the philosophical tenets and

moral lessons they convey are transmitted with an unparalleled linguistic grandeur that remains central to India's cultural and spiritual ethos.

The exploration of *dharma* constitutes the foundational and most profound thematic concern within the Indian epics. Far more than a mere concept of duty or righteousness, *dharma* serves as a comprehensive metaphysical and ethical framework that governs the entire socio-cosmic order. It represents the moral imperative that guides an individual's conduct, dictating responsibilities and proper actions across all dimensions of life—be it as a ruler, a warrior, a family member, or a spiritual aspirant. The faithful adherence to this principle is portrayed not only as a path to personal integrity and spiritual fulfillment but also as the essential mechanism for ensuring the stability and harmony of society. The pursuit of *dharma* is thus the teleological purpose of human existence, with the epic narratives functioning as a grand inquiry into its complexities, conflicts, and ultimate triumph.

The principle of *karma* constitutes a profound and ineluctable cosmic law of causality, wherein every action, whether physical, verbal, or mental, is inextricably linked to its consequences. This grand metaphysical framework asserts that virtuous deeds inevitably generate positive outcomes, while malevolent actions lead to detrimental repercussions, thus forging an inexorable chain of cause and effect. The concept of *karma* therefore serves as a

moral imperative, underscoring the fundamental significance of ethical conduct and establishing the ultimate accountability of the individual for their choices within the universal order.

The concept of *Artha* represents the pragmatic pursuit of material well-being, encompassing wealth, security, and economic prosperity. As one of the four Puruṣārthas, or human aims, it is recognized as an indispensable imperative for a life of fulfillment. The acquisition of *Artha* is considered essential not only for an individual's personal sustenance and comfort but also for the effective maintenance and prosperity of one's family and the broader society. However, this pursuit is not an unfettered objective; it is critically and indispensably bounded by the ethical framework of *dharma*, ensuring that the generation and accumulation of wealth are achieved through righteous, just, and morally sound means. The epics, therefore, present *Artha* as a necessary and legitimate goal, but one that must always be subordinate to the overarching principles of ethical living to avoid moral corruption and social discord.

Within the grand philosophical framework of Indian thought, *Mokṣa* stands as the ultimate and most transcendental objective of human existence. It signifies the definitive liberation from the *samsāric* cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, and the attainment of a state of spiritual enlightenment marked by profound detachment and a

complete cessation of suffering. This state represents not merely an end but an ontological unity with the divine, a merging with the "Supreme". The path to achieving *Mokṣa* is predicated upon an intensive process of self-realization, an epistemological journey to apprehend one's true nature. This requires a profound and systematic detachment from all worldly and material desires, which are seen as the primary fetters binding the individual to the temporal realm.

The characters within these epics function as archetypal role models, upholding the *Puruṣārthas* in every deed, and providing a framework for societal expectations and individual conduct. Rāma, the embodiment of ideal kingship and rectitude; Sītā, the personification of unwavering devotion and purity; Kṛṣṇa, the divine guide of duty and philosophical wisdom; and Arjuna, the quintessential warrior navigating moral ambiguity, serve as enduring exemplars. Their actions and decisions continue to influence behaviour, shaping a collective consciousness regarding what constitutes *dharma* and a virtuous, principled existence. The epics' sustained relevance lies in their ability to present these ideals through compelling human and divine narratives, making complex moral tenets accessible and deeply resonant across generations.

The Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata stand as pillars of Indian civilization, their significance transcending mere

literature to become an inextricable component of the nation's cultural and spiritual ethos. Beyond their moral teachings, these epics function as invaluable historical and mythological chronicles, offering rich insights into ancient Indian society, politics, and the art of warfare. Their literary value is immeasurable as masterpieces of ancient literature, they are celebrated for their rich poetic, narrative, and dramatic elements, which have profoundly influenced subsequent generations of literature and the arts. Their religious influence is equally central, with the Rāmāyaṇa venerating Rāma as an avatar of Viṣṇu, and the Mahābhārata housing the sacred philosophical dialogue of the Bhagavad Gītā. Finally, these epics possess immense philosophical depth, as they confront profound existential questions and offer timeless guidance on life, duty, and the human condition, solidifying their role as essential educational and social texts that continue to provide enduring inspiration and moral guidance.

The intellectual and spiritual traditions of ancient India constitute a cornerstone of global human thought, offering a profound set of answers to the fundamental inquiries concerning the nature of the cosmos, the purpose of existence, and the principles of a virtuous life. The Indian epics are not mere narratives, but a complete microcosm of the universe, encompassing every conceivable aspect of human experience and the cosmic order. One needs only to immerse oneself in its vast expanse

to find solutions when confronting moments of profound existential darkness. For instance, in grappling with the finality of mortality and the irreversible severance of a beloved connection, the epic offers more than solace; it provides a profound philosophical framework. From the cosmological vision of the sages Vālmīki and Vyāsa, one can receive illuminating insights that enable a more rigorous exploration, a deeper comprehension, and, ultimately, a meaningful reconciliation with the ultimate truth of life itself. Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata emphasise that a harmonious pursuit of all the four Puruṣārthas leads to a well-rounded and meaningful life. In instances of conflict between these aims, however, classical thought accords precedence to *Dharma* as the guiding principle, while designating *Mokṣa* as the ultimate and transcendental objective of life.

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Topographical Imagery in the Principal Upaniṣads: A Study of Rivers, Islands, and Mountains in Philosophical Discourses

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Introduction:

The Upaniṣads represent the sublime doctrines of Vedānta, offering deep insights into the nature of the Self (ātman), ultimate reality (Brahman), and the path to liberation (mokṣa). These texts are grounded in the lived experiences and cultural milieu of ancient Indian sages. Consequently, references to natural elements such as rivers, islands, and mountains occasionally surface not as mere geographical observations but as potent symbols that reflect the inner journey of the seeker. This paper begins with the hypothesis that the rare geographical references in the Upaniṣads deliberately carry profound symbolic significance. By decoding these references and aligning them with Advaita Vedānta's non-dualistic philosophy,

especially as interpreted by Śaṅkara, this study seeks to uncover the multidimensional role these symbols play in shaping spiritual discourse. It also explores the continuity and transformation of these motifs across different strata of Indian sacred literature.

1. Rivers in the Upaniṣads:

Among the natural features referenced in the Upaniṣads, rivers appear most frequently and symbolically. They are traditionally associated with life, movement, purification, and the dissolution of boundaries. In the Chāndogya Upaniṣad (6.10.1–3)¹, rivers flowing into the ocean serve as a metaphor for the merging of the individual souls (jīvas) into the infinite Brahman, losing their distinct identities just as rivers lose their names and forms upon entering the sea. This metaphor encapsulates the core Advaitic notion that the individuality of the self is ultimately an illusion, veiling the one undivided reality.

In the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (4.4.5)², a similar imagery is employed, reinforcing the idea of non-difference (abheda) between the Ātman and Brahman. Śaṅkara's commentary on these passages underscores that just as rivers retain individuality only in name, so too does the jīva appear separate only due to ignorance (avidyā)³. Once knowledge (jñāna) dawns, the illusion is dispelled, and unity is realized.

It is mentioned in Kaṭhōpaniṣad (1,3,2)⁴ the Naciketa sacrifice is a bridge (setu) for the sacrificers to attain the imperishable supreme Brahman. The word 'setu' and 'titīrṣā' (literally means one who wants to reach the shore and here for those who want to be emancipated from the bondage of life) suggests an image of a river and it is significant.

Sarasvatī, while not geographically detailed in the Upaniṣads, is implicitly present in Chāndogya (7.1.1)⁵ where the goddess associated with speech and knowledge is invoked. Her presence signifies the flow of wisdom and articulation, linking reverie movement with intellectual illumination.

Rivers thus function as metaphors for both the individual's journey and the dissolving of ego-bound identity. Their directional flow represents the progression of consciousness, from multiplicity toward unity, and from bondage toward liberation.

2. Islands in the Upaniṣads:

The Principal Upaniṣads rarely mention islands (dvīpa) in literal terms, yet the notion of isolation and self-containment resonates deeply with the inner yogic journey they advocate. The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, especially in verses 5–6)⁵, describes the deep sleep (suṣupti) and turiya states—dimensions of pure consciousness devoid of duality, distraction, or external engagement.

These states resemble the idea of a spiritual island: untouched, indivisible, and inwardly complete.

The symbolic 'island' thus becomes a metaphor for the detached state of the realized soul, who remains unaffected by the turbulence of the world. In Advaita Vedānta, such isolation is not escapism but the affirmation of one's non-dual essence. Śaṅkara elaborates that the jīvanmukta (liberated while living) stands apart from the flux of saṃsāra much like an island in the sea.

Furthermore, the notion of the self as 'dvīpa' or refuge is echoed in Buddhist and later Vedāntic literature, suggesting a shared spiritual geography in Indian thought. The Upaniṣadic silence on literal islands thus paradoxically speaks louder, allowing symbolic layers to surface through philosophical context.

3. Mountains in the Upaniṣads:

Though direct references to mountains such as Meru are absent in the Principal Upaniṣads, the imagery of ascent and elevation is latent in the structure of spiritual instruction. The gradation of reality from gross to subtle, and finally to the unmanifest, mirrors the climb up a metaphysical mountain.

For instance, the Taittirīya Upaniṣad's model of the five sheaths (pañca kośa) leading to the realization of Brahman parallels a step-wise ascent from the physical

(annamaya) to the blissful (ānandamaya) self. Each layer is a higher elevation in consciousness. Śaṅkara interprets this movement not merely as didactic but as symbolic of the aspirant's inner elevation toward the summit of self-knowledge.

Similarly, the Kaṭha Upaniṣad (2.3.1)⁶ compares the spiritual path to a razor's edge, difficult and steep, another mountain-like image evoking challenges and the need for steady resolve. Mountains here become metaphors for tapas (austerity), perseverance, and elevation of consciousness. Another hymn says — as the rain water fallen on a high mountain peak runs down to the hill sides variously, even so, he who sees the attributes as different, verily runs after them. (2, 4,14)⁷

In sum, although mountains are not named, their symbolic presence is felt in the layered, aspirational structure of Upaniṣadic teaching.

4. Integration with Śaṅkara's Bhāṣya:

Śaṅkara's commentaries on the Upaniṣads provide the most systematic method for decoding the symbolic meanings of natural elements. For Śaṅkara, rivers, mountains, and islands are not merely features of the external world but pointers to states of consciousness, epistemological processes, and metaphysical truths.

Śaṅkara consistently emphasizes the need to look beyond literalism to adhyātma-vidyā (inner knowledge).

For example, his explanation of river imagery in Bṛhadāraṇyaka 4.4.5 focuses on the concept of 'nāma-rūpa' (name and form) being superimpositions that dissolve upon realization of Brahman. Similarly, his commentary on the Taittirīya Upaniṣad's koshas reads the movement through layers as symbolic of moving past superficial identities toward essential unity.

Śaṅkara also frequently utilizes the language of ascent and withdrawal, not in a spatial but in a consciousness oriented sense. He thus reinterprets natural symbols as milestones on the path of jñāna-yoga, helping the aspirant transition from ignorance to self-realization.

5. Comparative Symbolism and Vedic-Purāṇic Continuity:

The Upaniṣads stand at a juncture between the ritual-heavy Vedas and the mythopoetic Purāṇas. In later literature, rivers like the Gaṅgā, mountains like Meru, and islands like Jambūdvīpa take on cosmic and ritualistic importance. In contrast, the Upaniṣads abstract these physical realities into metaphysical tools.

This shift reflects a change in spiritual focus, from external cosmography to internal psycho cosmology. Yet the underlying symbols remain. The continuity of geographical imagery across Vedic and Purāṇic texts points to a shared symbolic vocabulary, adapted to different stereological ends. The Upaniṣads spiritualize

geography, making the external world a mirror of the internal quest.

Conclusion:

Although sparse in literal references, geographical imagery in the Principal Upaniṣads serves profound philosophical purposes. Rivers signify the flow and dissolution of individuality, islands represent detached wholeness, and mountains embody the aspirant's path toward transcendence. Integrated through Śaṅkara's non-dualist lens, these symbols guide the seeker from ignorance to liberation, offering not a map of the world but a cartography of the soul. Through their metaphoric topography, the Upaniṣads bridge the physical and spiritual landscapes, reaffirming that the path to Brahman, though inward, is grounded in the elemental features of the world itself.

References :

1. इमाः सोम्य नद्यः पुरस्तात् प्राच्यः स्यन्दन्ते पश्चात् प्रतीच्यस्ताः समुद्रात् समुद्रमेवापियन्ति स समुद्रः एव भवति ता यथा तत्र न विदुरियमहमस्मीयमहमस्मीति। (Ch. U. 6, 10,1.)
2. स वा अयमात्मा ब्रह्म विज्ञानमयो मनोमयः प्राणमयः चक्षुर्मयः (Br. U. 4,4,5.)
3. य एवं संसरत्यात्मा ब्रह्मैव परं एव। (Br. U. 4,4,5. – Sankara bhasya)
4. यः सेतुरीजानानामक्षरं ब्रह्म यतपरं।
अभयं तितीर्षतां पारं नाचिकेतं शकेमहि॥ (Ka. U. 1,3,2.)

5. वाग्वाव नाम्नो भूयसी वाग्वा ऋग्वेदं विज्ञापयति (Ch. U. 7,2,1.)
6. उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान् निबोधत।
क्षुरस्य धारा निशिता दुरत्यया दुर्गं पथस्तत् कवयो वदन्ति॥ (Ka. U. 1,3,14.)
7. यथोदकं दुर्गे वृष्टं पर्वतेषु विधावति।
एवं धर्मान् पृथक् पश्यंस्तानेवानुविधावति॥ (Ka. U. 2,4,14.)

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The Concept of Mokṣa in Bharṭṛhari's Vākyapadīya

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Introduction

Vākyapadīya is a seminal work written by Bharṭṛhari, a renowned Sanskrit grammarian and philosopher who lived between 400 and 500 CE. The treatise focuses on the philosophy of language, especially the role of śabda (word/sound) in constructing reality. In the Vedānta tradition, śabda is not merely linguistic but cosmological — the very cause of the universe's origin and structure.

The work is divided into three major sections: Brahmakāṇḍa, Vākyakāṇḍa, and Prakaraṇakāṇḍa, comprising 1,860 verses. Bharṭṛhari also contributed to Vedānta, śabdavṛtti, devotional poetry (bhaktikāvya), and exegesis (bhojavṛtti), while engaging with diverse schools of Indian philosophy such as Saṅghātavāda, Ārambhavāda, Vivartavāda, and Pariṇāmavāda.

Philosophers have long debated the sphoṭa theory -
- Bharṭṛhari's unique contribution — according to which

meaning is revealed through a sudden burst or holistic understanding, rather than sequential decoding.

Concept of Salvation (Mokṣa)

For Bhartṛhari, grammar (vyākaraṇa) is not just a technical field but a spiritual discipline — an avenue toward mokṣa, or liberation. Unlike other schools, Bhartṛhari's Vākyapadīya envisions salvation through the philosophical inquiry into language. Insight (jñāna) derived from proper understanding of śabda leads to self-realization and ultimately liberation.

The universe is perceived through śabda, which creates impressions of pleasure, sorrow, and material entities. Since śabda is the basis for all cognition and experience, it follows that realizing its true nature leads to the realization of Brahman.

He frequently echoes the Vedāntic example: mistaking a rope for a snake in the dark is not due to the object itself but due to the observer's ignorance. In a similar way, multiplicity in the universe is illusion; all forms are expressions of Nāda-Brahma—the principle of sound.

Divisions of Sound

Bhartṛhari classifies sound into four levels:

1. Parā — the most subtle form, accessible only to yogis; originates in the navel.

2. Paśyantī — resides near the heart.
3. Madhyamā — located in the throat.
4. Vaikharī — audible speech, manifest around the lips and neck.

Only Vaikharī is perceptible to others, but true knowledge lies in tracing sound back to its most subtle origins. Through deep yogic insight, one attains Brahman by merging with the source of śabda.

Unity of Brahman and the World

The Vakyapadīya emphasizes non-dualism. Just as all earthen pots come from soil, and all clothing originates in yarn, every object in the universe is a manifestation of Brahman through the power of sound. The apparent diversity arises not from the essence of things but from their expressions, shaped by qualities like heat and cold, rooted in śabda.

Thus, the knower (jñātā), knowledge (jñāna), and the object known (jñeya) are not separate—they are manifestations of the same underlying principle.

The Power of Vyākaraṇa Philosophy

Bhartṛhari views vyākaraṇa not only as grammar but as metaphysics. The study of language enables us to understand the real nature of things, correct misperceptions, and engage with sacred texts properly.

Vyākaraṇa is essential not only for communication but for liberation. Correct understanding and usage of sound—knowing which sounds convey which meanings—lead to brahmajñāna (knowledge of Brahman), which is mokṣa.

According to the Vedas, “रसो वै सः” (rasaḥ vai saḥ) — Brahman is rasa (essence). Sound (śabda) must be sādhu (authentic), as it represents the ultimate sentiment and truth.

Conclusion

The correct interpretation of śabda through vyākaraṇa dispels ignorance and reveals light. This inner voice, not audible externally, dwells within the soul, guiding it toward Brahman. Sound, when properly understood, is not merely phonetic — it is ontological and metaphysical.

To truly grasp any branch of knowledge, one must first master language. Bhartṛhari's philosophy teaches that grammar is not just linguistic precision — it is the path to enlightenment.

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The Concept of Dharma and the Transformations of Citrāṅgadā: Through the Lens of Sri Aurobindo

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In fact, a major part of Sri Aurobindo's prose writings is poetry in sublime prose which is endowed with his elucidative and pictorial tones. Yet for whatever reasons, Sri Aurobindo as a poet has remained, seemingly, unknown to the literary world. Our literature has practically failed to acknowledge the vibrant beats and thrills of the acumen and rhythm of his compositions. His introspective and mystical compositions deserve more attention and wider reading. The present article is a rereading of Sri Aurobindo's creative opus "Chitrāṅgadā" grounded on the concept dharma.

Besides being the longest epic in world literature, Mahābhārata is a romance, telling the tales of heroic men and women. It is a whole literature in itself, including

a code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and exploratory thoughts on human problems. It is an embodiment of a scripture which offers traditional, ritual and mythical ground for all generations. Many women characters in Mahābhārata face crucial situations audaciously and even dare to question the male supremacy. They are not subordinate to men and they have their own identity. They face the challenges determinedly and excel in their roles as mothers, wives, and daughters. They exhibit ambition, intelligence, and internal strength which make their lives heroic.

The story of Citrāṅgadā can be found in the "Vana Parva" of Mahābhārata. Arjuna meets Citrāṅgadā during his exile from his kingdom Indraprastha. Arjuna goes into exile for twelve years. In his wanderings, he reaches Manipūr, ruled by the King Citravāhana. During hunting, he comes across Citravāhana's daughter Citrāṅgadā, the warrior princess of Manipūr. Being the only child of the king, Citrāṅgadā is trained to fit into the role of an unborn brother because according to the boon of Śiva, every king of Manipūr is destined to have only one child, who is appointed as the king's successor. Citrāṅgadā is not her father's natural choice as she is born defying Lord Śiva's boon. She has to camouflage as a male to make her acceptable as a ruler but she plays this role flawlessly. She does not defy her father and lives up to his expectations. Yet, Citrāṅgadā rises out of this male

dominated scenario and establishes herself as a true leader, who is loved and admired by the country. Being extraordinary in warfare and administration, she is the army chief of the country when she valiantly stops Arjuna:

Who art thou that with challenge insolent
Intruding, from what land of deathless gods
Stormest with disallowed exulting wheels
In white Chitrangada's domain? To death
Men hasten not so quickly, Aryan lord.
(Aurobindo 317)

Arjuna also gets impressed by the skills of Citrāṅgadā as she gives him a tough competition in archery. It is after seeing him she reacquires her hidden womanly qualities and feminine delicateness.

. . . my whole heart
And being like a sudden spring broke forth
To flowers and greenness at my sungod's touch,
Ceding existence at thy feet. (Aurobindo 314)

Sri Aurobindo indicates that Citrāṅgadā's love for Arjuna renovates her from a warrior princess into a more feminine, charming figure, but more importantly, it also awakens her to have a deeper understanding of herself and her role in life. Her love is not simply romantic but a means for spiritual growth. She invokes the God of love

Kāmadeva and the Goddess of beauty Rati to make her elegant and gorgeous to win the love of Arjuna. Pleased with her prayers, Kāmadeva granted her a beautiful appearance. When Arjuna notices the completely transformed Citrāṅgadā, he is enthralled with her charm. Her adorable beauty and skills make him fall in love with her. Though Arjuna rejects Citrāṅgadā's masculine form in the beginning he later realises her inner strength and character. This is how Aurobindo challenges conservative views of one's beauty and value.

Sri Aurobindo develops the poem in the form of a conversation between Arjuna and Citrāṅgadā. It begins at the moment when he decides to go away with his wanderings after staying with her for three years. She seems to be faltered with the departure of Arjuna. She knows that "this brief divorce" (Aurobindo 311) will not have a lasting impact in Arjuna's life as his "splendid fiery race" (311) through cities and regions will keep him engaged and busy. However, she holds her agonies back and gets herself reminded of her dharma as a wife:

Ah, quickly pass! Why shouldst thou linger here
Vainly? How will it serve God's purpose in thee
To tarry soothing for her transient hour
Merely a woman's heart, meanwhile perhaps
Lose some great moment of thy life which once
Neglected never can return. (Aurobindo 313)

Here Aurobindo emphasises the theme of dharma where Citrāṅgadā realises that Arjuna's destiny lies in accomplishing his heroic role in battle. She gets herself tied with a higher purpose.

Citrāṅgadā is a powerful woman who lives up to her father's expectations, protects her country, pursues her love and brings up a child, all by herself. This trait of leadership is very strong in Citrāṅgadā because she never leaves her subjects for her husband's home — she has duties to fulfil and promises to keep. Initially, Citravāhana is hesitant of getting his daughter married to Arjuna but later he agrees on a condition that Citrāṅgadā would not accompany Arjuna on his way back to Indraprastha and also he would not have any claim upon the child born of their union. Arjuna accepts Citravāhana's condition and getting married to Citrāṅgadā. It is to be noted that Citrāṅgadā has immense love and respect towards her father. She never betrays his idea to grow her like prince. In fact, she praises him as she believes now that she has been preserved for the mighty warrior:

I praise my father's wise and prescient love
That kept me from the world for thee, unsought
Amid the rugged mountains and fenced in
With barbarous inhospitable laws. (Aurobindo 314)

She is determined and dutiful to shoulder Citravāhana's will to make her the ruler of Manipūr. She is fearless

as well to express her unwavering love towards Arjuna before everyone else in her clan. However, when she gives birth to a son whom they named Babruvāhana, Arjuna decides to leave the country. Citrāṅgadā is left behind to rule and protect Manipur.

In the beginning of the poem, Citrāṅgadā renders the real aspect of humanity. She is motivated by self satisfaction and realisation of ego. But sooner she realises that she should yearn for something else and impelled to go beyond physicality. Remember how she bid farewell to her husband. The themes of duty, sacrifice, and the call of a higher purpose are highlighted as Citrāṅgadā identifies Arjuna's need to fulfil his destiny in battle. Thus she is attracted to spirituality through which she finds pure bliss.

Mahābhārata as a whole explores the complexities of Dharma, and Citrāṅgadā's story contributes to this exploration. The epic highlights Dharma as a dynamic and complex concept, requiring individuals to make difficult choices based on their specific situations and responsibilities. Citrāṅgadā's dedication to her kingdom and her family demonstrates a strong sense of Dharma, as she chooses to remain in her country to protect her people. Her willingness to marry Arjuna under specific conditions and her upbringing of their son display a strong sense of Dharma.

Inspired and intrigued by the persona of Citrāṅgadā, Aurobindo, gives a new dimension to the story and the poem is a lyrical expression of love and more importantly, a reflection of his naturalistic and philosophical thoughts. One major aspect of Sri Aurobindo's realizations inherent in the poem is its underlying feminist approach. The poem insists on education, social respect and empowerment of women. Sri Aurobindo reveals the unequal social structure and presents a courageous woman who challenges it. Citrāṅgadā desires to be an equal companion to the man of her choice while retaining her true identity.

Citrāṅgadā, exhibits the real substance and heroism in her character and proves herself emotionally, mentally and physically strong to deal with any situation. She is successful in changing the stereotyped image of a woman. Her individuality and faith in her power helps her to take bold decisions. She succeeds to make a place for herself and to exercise power. The poem is a narrative of Citrāṅgadā's inner journey, where she confronts her own desires, limitations, and aspirations. Her transformation from a warrior to a loving wife and then a woman who understands her husband's need to fulfil his destiny displays this journey to self discovery.

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The Purāṇas and Indian Culture: A Discourse on Mythology, Cosmology, and Ethics

Dr. Subhashis Banerjee

Introduction

The Purāṇas stand as monumental texts within the vast corpus of Indian literature, representing a civilisational archive of myth, philosophy, and ethics that spans centuries of cultural evolution. The term *Purāṇa*, derived from the Sanskrit root *purā* meaning "ancient," signifies not merely antiquity but continuity—a living tradition bridging the Vedic past with later social and religious realities. Composed over several millennia, these texts embody the spiritual imagination of India, serving as repositories of collective memory and blueprints for moral and cosmological order. In their layered narratives, they preserve the rhythms of human experience—creation, sustenance, decay, and renewal—echoing the cosmic cycles that define Hindu thought. As Ludo Rocher observes, the Purāṇas are "encyclopaedias of Hindu

tradition," integrating theology, cosmography, ritual, genealogy, philosophy, and social law within a unified literary framework (Rocher 3). Their oral origins, regional interpolations, and sectarian adaptations grant them a democratic dimension, allowing reinterpretation in changing historical contexts. The Purāṇas thus function as cultural organisms—textual embodiments of India's capacity for synthesis and adaptation.

Cultural and Literary Context

Occupying a distinctive position between *śruti* (revealed texts like the Vedas and Upaniṣads) and *smṛti* (remembered texts such as the *Mahābhārata*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, and *Dharmasāstras*), the Purāṇas evolved between roughly 300 CE and 1500 CE, an era of vibrant religious pluralism. Each Purāṇa articulates its sectarian worldview—Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, or Śākta—while retaining the overarching Indic cosmological and ethical frame. R. C. Hazra remarks that they "transcend sectarian boundaries by universalising dharma and rendering metaphysical truths into accessible narratives" (Hazra 29). Their literary style fuses mythic narrative with didactic exposition, where dialogues between sages, kings, and deities serve as pedagogical vehicles for ethical instruction. Alf Hiltebeitel notes that this dialogic mode "bridges cosmology and community," transmitting metaphysical ideas through socially intelligible forms (Hiltebeitel 42). In this synthesis of imagination and instruction lies the unique cultural power of the Purāṇic text.

Structure and Historical Evolution

Traditionally, a Purāṇa comprises five characteristics (*pañcalakṣaṇa*): creation (*sarga*), dissolution (*pratisarga*), genealogy (*vaṁśa*), cosmic cycles (*manvantara*), and dynastic history (*vaṁśānucarita*). These interwoven strands render the Purāṇas both cosmic mythologies and moral histories. Cornelia Dimmitt and J. A. B. van Buitenen argue that such structure "transforms myth into an instrument of order" by situating human action within a cosmic continuum (Dimmitt & van Buitenen 13). Emerging from oral traditions, the Purāṇas absorbed local legends, dialects, and customs. Wendy Doniger highlights their "multi-vocality"—the coexistence of multiple world-views within a single corpus (Doniger 128). This inclusivity made them the connective tissue of Indian civilisation, where elite metaphysics and folk imagination converged seamlessly.

Moral and Aesthetic Vision

Beyond mythological grandeur, the Purāṇas codify *dharma*—the moral and social order that upholds the cosmos. Their ethical dimension transforms abstract ideals into narrative exempla: figures such as Prahlāda, Dhruva, and Harishchandra serve as moral archetypes whose steadfastness embodies cosmic law. S. K. De notes that they "translate moral abstractions into lived experience" (De 87). Symbolically, episodes like the *Samudra Manthana* dramatise the tension between virtue and vice

as divine allegory. Edwin Bryant interprets such myths as dramatizations of the human aspiration toward transcendence (Bryant 74). Through metaphor and image, philosophical truths are made emotionally intelligible.

Religious Syncretism and Sociopolitical Thought

By incorporating regional cults and local deities into pan-Indian frameworks, the Purāṇas became instruments of cultural integration. A. K. Ramanujan's notion of the "fluid text" aptly captures this assimilative power (Ramanujan 91). Simultaneously, they functioned as political theology, granting divine legitimacy to kings while prescribing moral accountability. Sheldon Pollock identifies this as the essence of the "Sanskrit Cosmopolis," where political power derived sanction from textual authority (Pollock 98). Yet the same texts remind rulers that sovereignty is contingent upon *dharma*, thus balancing hierarchy with ethical restraint. In all spheres—religious, social, and political—the Purāṇas grounded authority in moral responsibility.

Narrative Strategies

The narrative design of the Purāṇas reveals an extraordinary sophistication. Through framing devices (*kathā-prasaṅga*), dialogues, and temporal layering, they convert storytelling into cosmological enactment. In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, the dying King Parīkṣit listens to Sage Śuka's recitations containing multiple embedded tales;

each narrative act mirrors creation itself. Hiltebeitel calls this ritual narration, where "word becomes world" (Hiltebeitel 112). Their cyclic temporality—rooted in *yugas* and *pralayas*—depicts time as a spiral rather than a line, a rhythm of decay and renewal. Bryant views this as "a recursive cosmology mirroring the universe's pulse" (Bryant 78). Allegory and symbolism translate metaphysics into pedagogy, while interpolation and orality ensure adaptability. Rocher's description of the Purāṇas as "palimpsests preserving earlier voices" (Rocher 64) encapsulates their layered vitality. Performance and recitation transformed narrative into collective ritual, where, as Laurie Patton notes, "the community becomes co-author of meaning" (Patton 79). Gendered stories—of Sītā, Sāvitrī, or Durgā—further extend the ethical discourse, revealing feminine divinity as both compassionate and assertive moral energy (Erndl 45). Narrative thus becomes ontology: each retelling reenacts creation, aligning imagination with cosmic truth.

Cosmological Frameworks

Purāṇic cosmology offers one of humanity's most intricate visions of existence. It conceives a cyclic universe sustained by Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva—the Trimūrti symbolising creation, preservation, and dissolution. Mircea Eliade terms this a "mythical ontology," sacralising time and space (Eliade 102). The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* describes the cosmos emerging from Viṣṇu's breath,

forming innumerable universes (1.2.15); the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* imagines each as an "egg of Brahmā." This cyclical cosmology embodies *ṛta*, the eternal order, where time itself is divine respiration. The Trimūrti's unity asserts metaphysical monism—"He who is Viṣṇu is Śiva," declares the *Śiva Purāṇa* (9.35)—and Śiva's dance becomes the symbol of creative destruction (Zimmer 41). The cosmic geography centred on Mount Meru and the seven *dvīpas* mirrors spiritual hierarchies. Rocher explains that Purāṇic space "translates spiritual hierarchy into spatial metaphor" (Rocher 77). Temples replicate this design, each a miniature cosmos (Kramrisch 112). Fourteen *lokas* and recurrent *Manvantaras* express moral evolution through time; decline across the four *yugas* culminates in *Kali*, only to invite renewal. Doniger sees in this moral entropy a precondition for regeneration (Doniger 139). Ultimately, cosmology becomes ethics: the microcosm reflects the macrocosm, and human duty (*svadharma*) sustains cosmic balance. As the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* declares, "He who knows the cosmos within himself knows the Lord who pervades all" (2.2.4).

Ethical Paradigms

Purāṇic ethics, grounded in *dharma*, fuses cosmic order with human conduct. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* defines *dharma* as "that which upholds the universe" (3.12.45). Hazra describes it as situational yet principled (Hazra 78). Universal virtues—truth, non-violence, compassion, purity,

generosity—coexist with contextual duties of age, caste, and vocation. Through narrative exemplars like Harishchandra and Prahlāda, morality becomes experiential. Pollock observes that they "teach virtue through emotional participation rather than command" (Pollock 119). The doctrines of *karma* and *saṃsāra* ensure moral accountability, making justice intrinsic to cosmic law (Bryant 91). The four *puruṣārthas*—*dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa*—provide a graded ethics balancing material and spiritual pursuits (Basham 164). Social harmony is maintained through *varṇāśrama dharma*, originally functional rather than hierarchical (Rocher 95), while gendered ethics evolve from idealised virtue to divine agency. The *Devī Māhātmya* elevates the goddess as moral force, and Erndl notes her transformation from "passive virtue to active agency" (Erndl 56). Ritual actions like *dāna* and *vrata* embody moral intention; the *BhāgavataPurāṇa* warns that "rituals without compassion are like a body without life" (11.11.2). Political ethics culminate in *rāja-dharma*, defining kingship as moral guardianship (Hiltebeitel 136). Thus, the Purāṇas offer an integrative ethic—individual, social, and cosmic.

Ritual and Cultural Praxis

For the Purāṇas, ritual is the enactment of cosmic law. The *Matsya Purāṇa* affirms that "ritual sustains the three worlds" (2.5.9). Sacrifice (*yajña*) evolves into selfless devotion: Viṣṇu declares "the sacrifice is my

body" (*Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 3.12.37). The essence lies in intention, not form (*Agni Purāṇa* 141.12). Vows (*vratas*) embody discipline aligning the personal with the cosmic, often sanctifying women's devotional agency (Erndl 73). Ancestral rites (*śrāddha*) maintain continuity between generations, expressing what Bryant calls "a moral ecology of remembrance" (Bryant 97). Festivals like *Navarātri*, *Dīpāvalī*, and *Govardhan Pūjā* ritualise myth into communal ethics (Patton 101). Pilgrimage (*tīrthayātrā*), elaborated in the *Skanda Purāṇa*, converts geography into theology, turning India into a moral landscape (Rocher 109). Temples embody cosmic architecture (Kramrisch 132), while ritual arts—music, dance, and drama—extend the Purāṇic ethos into culture. Ecological reverence pervades these practices: the *Padma Purāṇa* proclaims the Earth as goddess (1.56.23). Hiltebeitel interprets this as "an ecological covenant between man and cosmos" (Hiltebeitel 153). Through ritual, metaphysics becomes lived experience, and culture becomes ethics in action.

Contemporary Relevance and Conclusion

The Purāṇas endure not as relics but as living texts shaping India's moral imagination. Their adaptability ensures civilisational continuity through reinterpretation. Ramanujan's idea of the "fluid text" explains their perpetual relevance (Ramanujan 91). As Jan Assmann's *mnemohistory* suggests, they function as cultural memory-

—constantly renewed through storytelling and ritual (Assmann 47). Their ethical insights—truth, compassion, ecological balance—resonate globally. Matilal relates *dharma* to modern virtue ethics, while Bryant affirms that the Purāṇas "humanise the divine to make virtue accessible" (Bryant 102). Their ecological sensibility, explored by Vasudha Narayanan, anticipates sustainable ethics (Narayanan 84). Modern reinterpretations by Devdutt Pattanaik or Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni attest to their narrative elasticity; as Eliade notes, myth remains "a language of symbols through which eternal truths speak to the transient world" (Eliade 85). Feminist and postcolonial readings reclaim the goddess as emblem of resistance (Erndl and Pintchman 62). Dialogues with science reveal surprising convergences: cyclic cosmology parallels modern astrophysics, yet Rocher reminds us that the Purāṇas are "moral cosmologies, not primitive physics" (Rocher 117). Their vision integrates reason with reverence. In a globalising world, the Purāṇas exemplify cultural diplomacy rooted in pluralism; as Patton observes, "they teach that universality arises from the ability to speak through difference" (Patton 113).

Ultimately, the Purāṇas weave myth, ethics, and cosmology into a single tapestry of meaning. They reconcile opposites—spirit and matter, myth and history, tradition and renewal—affirming the sanctity of life and the rhythm of creation. As Hildebeitel concludes, "the Purāṇas are not the fossils of a lost faith but the living

conscience of Indian civilisation" (Hiltebeitel 159). To engage with them today is to recover an ethical and imaginative ecology that celebrates harmony, wisdom, and the regenerative power of truth.

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ओडिसीशास्त्रीयनृत्यम् – उद्भवः, विकासः वर्तमानाभ्यासश्च

अम्बिका प्रियदर्शिनी & डा. चक्रधरमेहेरः

भारतीयशिक्षापद्धतौ चतुर्दश विद्याः^१ चतुष्पष्टिः कलाश्च पाठ्यक्रमरूपेण उल्लिखिताः सन्ति । तत्र भारतस्य अष्टशास्त्रीयनृत्यपरम्पराणां^२ समृद्धचित्रे ओडिसी ओडिशाराज्यस्य प्राचीनमूलैः युक्ता विशिष्टकलारूपेण तिष्ठति । त्रिभङ्गमुद्रया (त्रिवक्रमुद्रा) द्रवरूपेण उपरिशरीरचालनेन जटिलपादसञ्चालनेन च ओडिसी न केवलं प्रदर्शनकलायाः अपितु पौराणिक-आध्यात्मिक-शिल्पकला-वास्तुकला-सङ्गीतादीनां समाविष्टकरणेन सम्पूर्णसांस्कृतिकव्यवस्थायाः प्रतिनिधित्वं करोति । नृत्यरूपस्यास्य ‘ओडिसी’ इति नाम “ओड्रदेशः” इति वर्तमानस्य ओडिशाप्राप्तस्य प्राचीननामतः प्राप्तम् । यद्यप्यस्य प्रलेखितेतिहासः द्विसहस्राब्दीपर्यन्तं विस्तृतः तथापि औपनिवेशिकशासनस्य कालावधौ ओडिसी अवनतिमेव प्राप्ता । स्वातन्त्र्योत्तरकाले पुनरुत्थानं प्राप्य साम्प्रतम् ओडिसी प्रादेशिकसीमाः अतिक्रम्य सम्पूर्णेऽपि विश्वे प्रशंसिता शास्त्रीयनृत्यरूपा अभवत् ।

लेखोऽयमत्र ओडिसीनृत्यस्य ऐतिहासिकगतिं, सौन्दर्यशास्त्रीयसिद्धान्तान्, पुनरुत्थानाभियानं वर्तमानाभ्यासं च परीक्षते ।

ओडिसीनृत्यस्य ऐतिहासिकगतिः विकासश्च

ओडिसीनृत्यस्य इतिहासः द्विसहस्रवर्षपूर्वमेव प्रवर्तते । नाट्यशास्त्रेऽप्यस्य नृत्यस्य सङ्केतः दृश्यते^३ । नाट्यशास्त्रे भरतमुनिना वर्णितनृत्यस्य लक्षणम् ओडिसीनृत्ये द्रष्टुं शक्यते ।

पुरातात्त्विकप्रमाणान्यपि साक्षिणः सन्ति यत् ओडिशायां नृत्यपरम्परा द्वितीयशताब्देः ईसापूर्वपर्यन्तं प्राचीनेति। उदयगिरिखण्डगिरिगुहासु विद्यमानशिलालेखाः मूर्तेः चित्राणि च समकालीन ओडिसीनृत्यसदृशीः नृत्यमुद्राः प्रदर्शयन्ति। भरतनाट्यशास्त्रे नृत्यपरम्परायाः उल्लेखाः प्राचीनसंस्कृतकलाशास्त्रग्रन्थे संकलितः यत्र प्रादेशिकनृत्यरूपाणि ओड्र-मागध्यादयः उल्लिखिताः। कोणार्कसूर्यमन्दिरे पुरीस्थजगन्नाथमन्दिरे च विस्तृतशिल्पमूर्तिचित्राणि प्रदर्शितानि। एताः शिल्पकृतयः प्रदर्शयन्ति यत् आधुनिक-ओडिसीनृत्ये विद्यमानानेकाः स्थितयः भावभङ्गिगमाश्च मध्यकालिनकालादेव सूत्रबद्धाः सन्तीति⁴।

ओडिसीनृत्यस्य विकासः अविभाज्यरूपेण ओडिशायाः मन्दिरपरम्परायाः विशेषतः जगन्नाथदेवस्य सम्प्रदायेन संयुक्तः। महारीभिः (मन्दिरनर्तकीभिः) कृतमानुष्ठानिकनृत्यं समकालीन-ओडिसीनृत्यस्य महत्त्वपूर्णतममूलेषु एकं भवति। एताः नार्यः देवसेवार्थं समर्पिताः मन्दिरप्राङ्गणेषु आराधनारूपेण नृत्यं प्रादर्शयन्। द्वादशशताब्द्याः “अभिनयचन्द्रिका” इति महेश्वरमहापात्रकृतः ग्रन्थः एभिः मन्दिरनर्तकीभिः अभ्यस्यमानानां नृत्यकलानां विस्तृतविवरणं प्रयच्छति। अयं ग्रन्थः आधुनिक-ओडिसीकलाकाराणां कृते मौलिकस्रोतः भवति। महारीपरम्परायाः समानान्तरं गोतिपुआ-नृत्यप्रणाली षोडशशताब्दीपरिमिते उद्भूता यत्र महिलावेषधारिणः तरुणाः बालकाः अक्रोबेटिक-नृत्यक्रमान् प्रदर्शयन्ति। इयं परम्परा मन्दिरनृत्यस्य अवनतिकालेषु नृत्यरूपस्य अनेकान् अंशान् परिरक्षितवती। अपि चेयम् ओडिसीनृत्यस्य पुनरुत्थाने महत्त्वपूर्णयोगदानं कृतवती।

ओडिसीनृत्यस्य सौन्दर्यशास्त्रीयसिद्धान्ताः

ओडिसी-नृत्यस्य सौन्दर्यशास्त्रीयसिद्धान्ताः
भारतीयनाट्यशास्त्रपरम्पराधारिताः तद्यथा -

गति-सौन्दर्यम्

अस्य वैशिष्ट्यं त्रिभिः प्राथमिकभङ्गीभिः युक्तम्।

* त्रिभङ्गः (त्रिवक्रमुद्रा)- एषा भवति विशिष्टा स्थितिः। ग्रीवायाम् उरसि जानुनि च वक्रतां समाविश्य शरीरे आकारस्य वक्रतां निर्माय मन्दिरशिल्पेषु दृश्यमानां कामुकमुद्राणां प्रतिबिम्बं करोति। इयमतीव स्त्रीरूपा च मुद्रा, प्रायः कोमलताकर्षणयुक्ता कामुकतादीनां भावानाम् अभिव्यक्तये प्रयुक्ता।

* चौकः (चतुष्कोणस्थितिः)- पुरुषोचिता भूमिसम्बद्धैषा स्थितिः। अत्र भारः उभयोः पादयोः समानयता वितरितः सन् जानू बहिर्वक्रौ शरीरं च सरलरेखायां संरेखितं भवति।

* सभङ्गः (सरलस्थितिः)- तटस्थकेन्द्रिता मुद्रा इयम्। अत्र शरीरभारः समानतया वितरितः भवति। एताः मौलिकमुद्राः नृत्यस्य विस्तृतशब्दभण्डारस्य चलनानाम् अभिव्यक्तीनां च आधारं निर्मापयन्ति।

रससिद्धान्तः⁵

ओडिसीनृत्ये नव रसाः - शृङ्गारः, वीरः, करुणः, अद्भुतः, रौद्रः, हास्यः, भयानकः, बीभत्सः, शान्तश्च दर्श्यन्ते। विशेषतः शृङ्गाररसः (शृङ्गारप्रधानतया राधाकृष्णलीलावर्णनम्) अत्र प्रामुख्येन तिष्ठति।

भावरचनाः

अत्र मुखाभिनयेन मुखविन्यासः दृष्टिचालनं च दर्श्यते। एषः भावः रसानुभूतिं जनयति।

हस्तमुद्रा

नृत्येऽस्मिन् अन्येषां शास्त्रीयनृत्यरूपाणामिव हस्तमुद्राः महत्त्वपूर्णा भूमिकां निर्वहन्ति। हस्तमुद्राः शरीरस्य गत्या मुखभावेन च आख्यानस्याभिव्यक्तये साहाय्यं कुर्वन्ति। इमाश्च हस्तमुद्राः - द्विधा वर्गीकृताः सन्ति। ताश्च-

*** संयुक्तहस्तमुद्रा-** द्वयोरपि हस्तयोः संयोगेन निर्मिता मुद्रा। पदमिदं सामान्यतः भरतनाट्यादिषु शास्त्रीयनृत्यशैल्यां प्रयुक्तं भवति। अत्र द्वयोरपि हस्तयोः अङ्गुल्यः विशेषरूपेण संयोजिताः भवन्ति येन विशिष्टः अर्थः भावः वा व्यक्तः भवति। अस्याः मुद्रायाः त्रयोविंशतिः प्रकाराः भवन्ति।

*** असंयुक्तहस्तमुद्रा -** एकेन हस्तेन निर्मिता मुद्रा। अत्रैकस्य हस्तस्य अङ्गुल्यः विशेषरूपेण संयोजिताः भवन्ति येन विशिष्टार्थः व्यक्तः भवति। अस्याः मुद्रायाः अष्टाविंशतिः प्रकाराः सन्ति।

अभिनयः

नृत्येऽस्मिन् चतुर्विधाभिनयः (आङ्गिक-वाचिक-आहार्य-सात्त्विकाः)⁶ दृष्टिगोचरमायाति। अत्र विशेषतः आङ्गिकाभिनयः (शरीरगतगत्यादयः) सात्त्विकाभिनयश्च (मनःस्थितेरभिव्यक्तिः) आधिक्येन सुस्पष्टः

मूर्तिशिल्पप्रेरणा

ओडिसीनृत्यमिदं ओडिशान्तर्गतमन्दिरमूर्तिकलाधारितमिति दृश्यते। नृत्यस्य भावेषु देवमूर्तिनां भावाः प्रतिपाद्यन्ते।

ताल-लय-संयोजनम्

तालः⁷ ओडिसीनृत्ये महत्त्वपूर्णस्थानं भजते। मर्दलवाद्यं संगीतरचनाश्च लयबद्धतया नृत्यस्य सौन्दर्यम् उद्दीपयन्ति।

गीत-नाट्यत्वम् (गीत-गोविन्दाधारितम्)

जयदेवकृतं गीतगोविन्दम् अस्य नृत्यस्य मूलगानरचनासु प्रमुखं स्रोतः अस्ति। राधाकृष्णायोः लीलानुभावः सौन्दर्यम् आवहति।⁸

ओडिसीनृत्यस्य गतिभेदाः

ओडिसीनृत्यस्य शरीरचलनानि विविधेषु वर्गेषु विभाजितानि । तद्यथा-

* **भूमिप्रणामः** एषः पृथिव्यां प्रति आदरभावः, प्रायः ललाटेन हस्ताभ्यां वा भूमौ स्पृश्य क्रियते ।

* **पादभेदाः** - पादचालनं ओडिसीनृत्यस्य गतीनां लयं प्रवाहं चावहति ।

* **भङ्गी** - ओडिसीनृत्ये शरीरस्य स्थितिः भङ्गी इत्युच्यते ।

* **चारि** - चारि इति नर्तकस्य मञ्चे गमनचलनानि निर्दिशति ।

* **उत्प्लवनम्** - नृत्येऽस्मिन् कूर्दनानां प्रकारा एव उत्प्लवनमित्युच्यते । शास्त्रीयनृत्यसिद्धान्ते विविधाः उत्प्लवनभेदाः वर्णिताः सन्ति ।

* **भ्रामरी** - नृत्ये शारीरिकसन्तुलितगत्या भ्रमणमेव भ्रामरीत्युच्यते ।

इमानि चलनानि विशिष्टकटिचलनशीलतया उपरिशरीराभिव्यक्तिभिः च सम्पाद्यन्ते ।

साङ्गीतिकप्रारूपम्

हिन्दुस्तानीकर्णाटकशास्त्रीयप्रणालीभ्यां सह ओडिसीनृत्यम् आंशिकतया सम्बद्धं सत् स्वीयां प्रादेशिकविशेषतां परिरक्षति । तत्र पारम्परिक-ओडिसीवाद्यवृन्दे समाविष्टं साङ्गीतिकप्रारूपं यथा-

* मृदङ्गः

* मर्दला

* वीणा

* वंशी

* हार्मोनियम्

* मञ्जीरा (करतालः)

* गायकाः

अत्र रचनाः प्रधानतया “चण्डीचौपदी” इति प्रादेशिकछन्दसि, अथवा संस्कृतश्लोकेषु स्थापिताः। लयात्मकसंरचना विशिष्टतालानां प्रतिरूपाणां प्रयोगं करोति, या ओडिसीपरम्परायै विशिष्टा भवति। अत्रैव एकतालीसहिताः (४ मात्राः), झूम्पा (१४ मात्राः), त्रिपटा (७ मात्राः) इत्यादयः अष्ट तालाः भवन्ति।

ओडिसीनृत्यस्य पारम्परिकप्रकाराः

समकालीन-ओडिसी-प्रदर्शनानि सामान्यतया पञ्च मौलिकांशान् समाविशन्ति। तच्च -

* मङ्गलाचरणम् - आह्वानकृतिः या देवतानां कृते प्रणामान् अर्पयति। सर्वेषां प्रति परोपकारस्य अभिप्रायेण क्रियमाणं नृत्यं मङ्गलाचरणं कथ्यते। नृत्यान्ते नर्तकः देवं गुरुं प्रेषकं च त्रिवारं प्रणामं कृत्वा मञ्चान्निर्गच्छति।

* बटु/स्थायी - बटुनृत्यं शिवस्य नाम्ना क्रियते। अस्मिन् नृत्ये भङ्ग्याः विस्तृतप्रयोगः दृश्यते। केषुचित् स्थानेषु पारम्परिकमुद्राणामपि प्रयोगः भवति।

* पल्लवी - नृत्यमिदम् ओडिसीनृत्ये कश्चित् सुरुचिपूर्णः खण्डः इति प्रसिद्धोऽस्ति। “पल्लव” इत्यर्थः कोमलपत्रम्। अस्मिन्नेव खण्डे नृत्य-सङ्गीतयोः सौम्यम् अस्ति। अत्र नृत्यस्य सङ्गीतं शास्त्रीयरागस्याधारेण भवति।

* अभिनयः - अभिनयः मुख्यतया भावनात्मकव्यञ्जने केन्द्रितः भवति। समकालीनप्रदर्शने भावात्मकतायाः प्रदर्शनं नृत्यशिक्षकाणां प्रशंसनीयः प्रयासः अस्ति, येन प्रदर्शने समुचितभावनानाम् अभिव्यक्तिः सुलभा भवति।

* **मोक्षः** - समापनकृतिः या आध्यात्मिकमुक्तिं प्रतीकात्मकरूपेण प्रदर्शयति। ओडिसीनृत्यं भारतीयजीवनदर्शनस्याधारेण सृष्टेः शाश्वतसत्यस्य चाधारेण निर्मितमस्ति। अस्य खण्डस्य नामकरणेन दार्शनिकदृष्टिकोणस्य सत्यतायाः पुष्टिर्भवति। ‘मोक्षः’ इत्यस्यार्थः ईश्वरं प्रति समर्पितः इति। नृत्यकलाकारः सजीवरूपेण मञ्चे प्रविश्य सङ्गीतस्य लयेन सह समन्वयितानि विविधानि नृत्यखण्डानि स्वयमेव समाहितेन स्वररहितेन मोक्षाय प्रदर्शनं करोति।

इदमेव संरचितं रूपं पारम्परिकप्रदर्शनानां समकालीनाविष्काराणां च कृते प्रारूपं प्रयच्छति।

ओडिसीनृत्ये वेषभूषाः अलङ्काराश्च

यथा चित्तं तथा वाचो तथा वाचस्तथा क्रिया

चित्ते वाचि क्रियायां च साधूनामेकरूपता।।⁹

अर्थात् वाचि क्रियायाञ्च साधूनामेकरूपतैव नृत्ये वेषभूषालङ्कारैः एकरूपस्य स्पष्टता भवति। वेषभूषाः अलङ्काराः च नर्तकस्याभिव्यक्तिं कथां च व्यक्तुं साहाय्यं कुर्वन्ति, येन नृत्यम् अधिकं सुन्दरं प्रभावशालि च भवति।

ओडिसीनृत्यं देवदासीपरम्परायाः मन्दिरनृत्यस्यांशं वहति। अस्य वेषालङ्काराः भारतीयपरम्परायाः सौन्दर्यबोधस्य, कलात्मकतायाः आध्यात्मिकतायाः च अद्भुतमुदाहरणम् अस्ति। एते अलङ्काराः न केवलं नर्तकस्य शरीरिकसौन्दर्यं वर्धयन्ति अपि तु नृत्यस्य भावान् रसान् चाभिव्यक्तुं साहाय्यं कुर्वन्ति। ओडिसीनृत्यं स्वयमेव समाहितं नृत्यरूपं यस्मिन् वेषभूषाः अलङ्काराश्च सर्वथा विशिष्टाः भवन्ति। यथा - **वेषः** - अभिनयचन्द्रिकाग्रन्थे वेषविषये लिखितम् - “वक्षःस्थलं नानारत्नैः अलङ्कृतेन सुन्दरेण सुरुचिपूर्णं

च काञ्चुलेन अलङ्कृत्य किङ्किनीयाः अधोभागं शोभयितुं, सुन्दरमेखलायां कटिमलङ्कर्तुं च आवश्यकम्” इति।

ओडिसीनृत्ये नर्तकः नर्तकी वा सम्बलपुरीशाटिकापरिधानं कृत्वा शास्त्रानुसारं वेषं धारयति।

अलङ्कारः - अभिनयचन्द्रिकाग्रन्थे शरीरस्य अलङ्कारविशेषः वर्णितः दृश्यते। अत्र “ललाटे गोरचना, भ्रूयोः मध्ये सिन्दूरबिन्दुः, हनुभागे कृष्णमक्षिकाचिह्नं, नेत्रयोः मत्स्यचिह्नं च भवति।”

ओडिसीनृत्यस्य स्वातन्त्र्योत्तरसंरक्षकाः

शास्त्रीयनृत्यरूपेण ओडिसीनृत्यस्य पुनरुत्थानं भारतस्य स्वातन्त्र्यानन्तरं गम्भीरतया प्रारब्धम्। अस्मिन् पुनर्जागरणे प्रमुखाः व्यक्तयः समाविष्टाः। ते च-

* **केलुचरणमहापात्रः** - अयं पूर्वगोतिपुआनर्तकः यः नृत्यरूपं सम्यक् व्यवस्थाप्य व्यापकशिक्षणपद्धतिं निर्मितवान्।

* **पङ्कजचरणदासः** - महारीकुटुम्बवंशजोऽयं प्रामाणिकमन्दिरनृत्यपरम्पराः परिरक्षितवान्।

* **देवप्रसाददासः** - पुरुष-ओडिसीरचनासंग्रहस्य कृते महत्त्वपूर्णयोगदानं कृतवान्।

* **मायाधररौतः** - पुनर्निर्मितनृत्यरूपे नाट्यशास्त्रस्य अंशान् समाकलितवान्।

* **सञ्जुक्तापाणिग्राहि** - केलुचरणमहापात्रस्य प्रथमा महिलाशिष्या या ओडिसीम् अन्तर्राष्ट्रीयमान्यतां प्रापितवती।

ओडिसीनृत्यस्य शास्त्रीयत्वम्

प्रत्येकमपि स्थानस्य नृत्यशैली तस्य राष्ट्रस्य परम्पराधारेण लोकसंस्कृतेश्चान्वेषणेन निर्मिता भवति। मानवविचारेषु निहितं सूक्ष्मं चैतन्यं नृत्ये प्रतिबिम्बितं भवति। प्राचीननृत्यग्रन्थानुसारं भारते नानाविधनृत्यरूपाः स्वस्थानस्य संस्कृतिं वहन्त तत्क्षेत्रस्य लोकसंस्कृतिं जनयन्ति। ऋषीणां नृत्यविशेषज्ञानाञ्च प्रत्यक्षनिरीक्षणे शास्त्रीयनृत्यरूपेण नृत्यम् आकारं प्राप्नोति। परन्तु एतान् सर्वान् शास्त्रनियमान् अनुसृत्य यत् नृत्यं प्रचलति तत् लोकनृत्यम् इत्युच्यते। यद्यपि लोकनृत्यस्य बहवः नियमाः सन्ति तथापि शास्त्रीयनृत्यवत् जटिलाः न भवन्ति। भारतस्य अन्येषां शास्त्रीयनृत्यानामिव ओडिसीनृत्यमपि शास्त्रीयनृत्यमस्ति। नृत्यमिदं भरतमुनेः नाट्यशास्त्रस्य श्रीमहेश्वरमहापात्रस्य अभिनयचन्द्रिकाग्रन्थे निर्धारितनियमानुसारं नन्दिकेश्वरप्राणीद्वारा अभिनयद्रापकणग्रन्थे निर्धारितनियमानुसारं क्रियते। अस्मिन् नृत्ये हस्तविनियोगः, भङ्ग्यानां प्रयोगः, नानाविधालङ्काराणां संयोगः, पादकर्म, अभिनयशैली च शास्त्रोक्तक्रमानुगुणं क्रियन्ते। एतद्विहाय प्रत्येकं शास्त्रीयनृत्यमिव अत्रापि चत्वारि अङ्गानि सन्ति येषां प्रकाशः अभिनयद्वारा क्रियते।

उपसंहारः

एवं रूपेण ओडिसीनृत्यस्य यात्रा देवालयपरम्परारभ्य विश्वस्तरीयप्रदर्शनकलापर्यन्तं सांस्कृतिकरक्षणस्य पुनर्जीवनस्य च जटिलानां प्रक्रियाणां दृष्टान्तं दर्शयति। एषः नृत्यरूपः सामाजिकपरिवर्तनसन्दर्भेष्वपि स्वस्य सौन्दर्यात्मकतत्त्वानि दार्शनिकतत्त्वानि च संरक्ष्य प्रासङ्गिकतां सङ्गृह्य अद्भुतम् अध्ययनम् उपस्थापयति। साम्प्रतीकम् ओडिसीनृत्यमिदं बहूनां कलाकाराणां, विदुषां, सांस्कृतिकसंस्थानाञ्च कठोरश्रमस्य साक्ष्यं अस्ति येन अस्य लुप्तप्रायपरम्परायाः पुनर्निर्माणं पुनर्जीवनं चाभवत्।

सन्दर्भसंकेताः

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धर्मशास्त्रं पुराणञ्च विद्या ह्येताश्चतुर्दश ।।
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सत्त्रिया इति अष्टविधानि शास्त्रीयनृत्यप्रकाराणि ।
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- 6 वाचिकमाङ्गिकमाहार्यं सात्त्विकं चेति चतुर्विधः ।
अभिनयो विज्ञेयो नाट्यवेदविचक्षणैः ।।
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न्यायदर्शनमनुसृत्य दुःखविचारः

डा. वी. के. भवानी

इह संसारे 'दुःखमेव सर्व'मिति वाक्येन जन्म एव दुःखमित्यन्वर्थमेव । जन्म हि शरीरप्राणसम्बन्धः आद्यशरीरप्राणसंयोगो जन्म इति । वयं खलु सर्वे सुखान्वेषिणः सुखलोलुपाः च भवामः । एकं पदार्थं दृष्ट्वा पदार्थं ज्ञानं जायते । स पदार्थः सुखं कर्तुं समर्थश्चेत् तं प्रति इच्छा जायते, ततः प्रयत्नः । सुखसाधनसम्पादनाय प्रवृत्तिर्जायते, एवं प्रयत्नं कृतवतां मनुष्याणां संसारयात्रायां दुःखमनिच्छयापि अस्माननुसरति । रागद्वेषमोहाश्चेति त्रयो दोषाः सन्ति । तत्र मोहकारणादेव रागद्वेषौ उत्पद्येते । तेषामात्यन्तिकफलं तु दुःखमेव । अस्मिन् प्रबन्धे न्यायशास्त्रे दुःखपदार्थः कः, तस्य प्रमाणं किम्, सुखलक्षणादिविचारः, दुःखं कथं जायते, कथं तस्य नाशः, न्यायेतरशास्त्रे दुःखं किमित्यादीनां विचारणमेव अत्र क्रियते ।

श्रीमदन्नभट्टविरचिते तर्कसंग्रहे द्रव्यगुणकर्मसामान्यविशेषसमवायाभावाः सप्तपदार्थाः सन्ति । तत्र दुःखं गुणे एवान्तर्भवति । रूपरसागन्धस्पर्शं संख्यापरिमाणपृथक्त्वसंयोगविभाग-परत्वापरत्वगुस्त्वद्रवत्वस्नेहशब्दबुद्धिसुखदुःखेच्छाद्वेषप्रयत्नधर्मधर्मसंस्काराः चतुर्विंशतिगुणाः । किन्तु श्रीगौतमविरचितन्यायदर्शने प्रमाणप्रमेयसंशयप्रयोजनदृष्टान्तसिद्धान्तावयव-तर्कनिर्णयवादजल्पवितण्डाहेत्वाभासच्छलजातिनिग्रहस्थानानि षोडशपदार्थाः सन्ति । तत्र दुःखं प्रमेये एवान्तर्भवति । 'आत्मशरीरेन्द्रियार्थबुद्धिमनः

प्रवृत्तिदोषप्रेत्यभावफलदुःखापवर्गास्तु प्रमेयम्' इति । पूर्वोक्तचतुर्विंशतिगुणेषु प्रुद्धयादयः
आत्ममात्र । दुःखपदार्थस्तु गुणेष्वन्यतमः जीवात्मनः विशेषगुणः भवति ।
चतुर्दशगुणाः सन्ति । तदुक्तं कारिकायां -

“बुद्ध्यादिषड्कं संख्यादिपञ्चकं भावना तथा ।

धर्माधर्मौ गुणा एते स्युश्चतुर्दश” ।

आत्मविशेषतज्ज्ञानसुखदुःखानां ज्ञानं शरीरं विना नोत्पद्यते,

शरीरावच्छिन्नात्मन्येव जायते जन्म इति कारणादेव । दुःखम् तु . गृह्यते ।

दुःखलक्षणम्

बाधनालक्षणं दुःखम् । प्राधना पीडा । सा लक्षणमस्येति स्वरूपम् । सर्वे
खलु सत्त्वनिकायाः सर्वाण्युत्पत्तिस्थानानि सर्वः पुनर्भवः सर्वोऽपि अयं दुःखसम्बन्धात्

बाधनालक्षणं । अथापि तादृशदुःखजनकत्वात् शरीरादिकमपि दुःख-
मित्युच्यते । ‘अधर्मजन्यं दुःखं’ इत्यनेन प्रतिकूलवेदनीयं यत् तद्दुःखस्वरूपमित्यर्थः ।

अनुकूलपदार्थसम्प्रन्धजन्यात्मधर्मविशेषो हर्षापरपर्यायः प्राणिमात्रप्रसिद्धः
कश्चित् तादृशसुखस्य हेतुभूतो यथानुकूलाः शब्दस्पर्शरूपरसगन्धादयः, कश्चित्
दुःखस्वो यथा प्रतिकूलपदार्थसंबन्धजन्यः क्लेशापरपर्यायः प्राणिमात्रप्रसिद्धः कश्चित्
तादृशसुखस्य हेतुभूतो यथा प्रतिकूलाः शब्द रूपरसगन्धादयः, विवेकिनः दृष्ट्या
च संसारे दुःखजनक एव पदार्थो उपलभ्यते । ‘उपघातलक्षणं दुःखं’ मिति
प्रशस्तपादाचार्याः । विषाद्यनभिप्रेतविषयसान्निध्ये सति
अनिष्टोपलब्धीन्द्रियार्थसन्निकर्षादधर्माद्यपेक्षादात्ममनसोः संयोगात्
अमर्षोपघातदैत्यनिमित्तमुत्पद्यते । तद्दुःखमतीतेषु सर्पव्याघ्रचौरादिषु स्मृतिजम् ।
अनागतेषु सङ्कल्पजमिति । स्वभावतस्तु ‘दुःखमेव दुःखम्’ इति वार्तिकम् ।

यथा मधुरसंयोगात् मधुरमित्युच्यते तथा। सोऽयं दुःखी सर्वं दुःखयुक्तमिति जानानः दुःखस्यानिष्टत्वात् दुःखं जिहासुः, जन्मनि दुःखदर्शी संसारात् निर्विण्णः भूत्वा विरक्तः सन् मुच्यते।

दुःखभेदाः

दुःखस्य एकविंशतिभेदाः सन्ति। तथा हि शरीरं षडिन्द्रियाणि, सुखं, दुःखं चेति। तत्र शरीरं दुःखायतनत्वात् दुःखम्। इन्द्रियाणि, विषयाः, प्रत्यक्षाणि च तत्साधनत्वात्। सुखं च दुःखानुषङ्गात्। दुःखं तु स्वरूपत एवेति। न्यायसिद्धान्तमुक्तावल्याः प्रभाव्याख्याने दुःखस्य द्वैविध्यमुच्यते वैषयिकं मनोरथं चेति। तत्राद्यं कण्टकसंयोगादिनिमित्तकम् अधर्मस्तु तत्सम्पादनद्वारा उपयुज्यते। द्वितीयन्तु व्याघ्रादिज्ञान-जन्यम् अधर्मस्तु तत्सम्पादनद्वारा उपयुज्यत इति बोध्यम्। सिद्धान्तचन्द्रोदये च दुःखं चतुर्विधमित्युक्तम्। दुःखत्रैविध्यमुच्यते आध्यात्मिकम् आधिभौतिकम् आधिदैविकम् चेति। द्विविधं शरीरं वातपित्तश्लेष्मणां वैषम्यनिमित्तम्। मानसन्तु कामक्रोधलोभमोहभयेर्ष्याविषादविषयशेषदर्शननिबन्धनम्। सर्वं चेतत् आन्तरोपाय-साध्यत्वात् आध्यात्मिकं दुःखम्। बाह्योपायसाध्यं च दुःखं द्वेधा। आधिभौतिकम् आधिदैविकम्। तत्र आधिभौतिकं, पशुपक्षिसरीसृपस्थावरनिमित्तम्। आधिदैविकं यक्षराक्षसविनायकग्रहावेशनिबन्धनञ्चेति।

दुःखकारणानि

पूर्वोक्तैकविंशतिप्रकारस्यापि दुःखस्य निर्वर्तकमसाधारणं कारणम् - अविद्या, तृष्णा, धर्माधर्मौ चेति। अविद्यानाम् अर्थस्य विपरीतज्ञानं, तत्संस्कारोऽपि अविद्यैव उच्यते। आत्मानमधिकृत्य यद्वर्तते शरीराद्यपवर्गपर्यन्तं तदध्यात्मम्। अध्यात्मविदैः प्रदर्शितम् —

“अस्थिस्थूणं स्नायुयुतं मांसशोणितलेपनम्।

चर्मावनद्धं दुर्गन्धिपूर्णं मूत्रपुरीषयोः।

जराशोकसमाविष्टं रोगायतमातुलम् ।

रजस्वलमनित्यञ्च भूतावासमिमं त्यजेत्” - इत्येवमादि ।

रागान्धानां तद्विपरीतज्ञानमुच्यते -

“अमृतस्यैवकुण्ठानि सुखानामिव राशयः ।

रतेरिव निधानानि योषितः केन निर्मिताः” इत्येवमादि ।

एवमात्मादिषु अपवर्गादिषु रागद्वेषमोहैरन्धीकृतानां विपरीतज्ञानं द्रष्टव्यम् । अविद्यातृष्णयोः निवृत्तावपि शीतवातधर्मसन्निपातादिभ्यो दुःखोत्पत्तिः द्रष्टुं शक्यते । एवं दुःखकारणत्वं । तृष्णा नाम पुनर्भवं प्रति सन्धानहेतुभूता । यथा विषसंपृक्तेषु अन्नपानविशेषेषु असंपृक्ताध्यवसायीति परस्वेषु अपरस्वाध्यवसायेऽपि वितृष्णो न प्रवर्तते । सोऽप्रवर्तमानो नानर्थेन युज्यते । तथा शरीरेन्द्रियादिषु यस्याग्रहोऽस्ति, स जन्मान्तरमपि प्रार्थयमानः तथा प्रवर्तते । यथा असौ पुनर्भवितुं कैरिष्टानिष्टस्थानशरीरेन्द्रियादिभिः युज्यते । वितृष्णस्य तु यदि क्वचित् कथञ्चिन्मोहोऽपि भवति, तथाप्यसौ वैतृष्ण्यात् अप्रवर्तमानः संसारं नाधिगच्छति इत्यतः तृष्णापि दुःखकारणम् ।

अविद्या तर्हि असमर्थेति चेत्, न वितृष्णस्यापि अविदुषो प्रवर्तमानस्यापि सर्पादिदुःखपरिहारसामर्थ्यवद् अन्यत्रापि असामर्थ्यात् । वितृष्णोऽपि निश्चलः स्थातुं न शक्तः, प्राणिधर्मत्वात् आवश्यकान्यपि कर्माणि विद्वान् विविच्य हिंसादिपरिहारद्वारेण प्रवर्तमानम् अनागतं दुःखं प्राप्नोति ।

एवं धर्माधर्मयोः कारणत्वमुच्यते - ‘तेषां मोहः पापीया मूढस्येतरोत्पत्तेः’ इति सूत्रेण रागद्वेषमोहानां मध्ये मोहः अत्यन्तदुष्ट एव, कुतः इति चेत् रागद्वेषजनकत्वात् । अविद्यातृष्णयोः निवृत्तावपि शीतवातधर्मसन्निपातादिभ्यो दुःखोत्पत्तिः द्रष्टुं शक्यते । एवं धर्माधर्मयोरपि दुःखकारणत्वं निश्चीयते ।

सुखस्यासाधारणो हेतुः धर्मः। अतः धर्मस्य दुःखकारणत्वं कथं वक्तुं शक्यते इत्यतः यश्चायं शरीरेन्द्रियविषयादिसम्पादनद्वारेण सुखहेतुः धर्मः सोऽत्रदुःखकारणत्वेन उक्तः। तस्य केनचित् व्यवधानेन महतः दुःखस्य कारणत्वात्। यस्तु शुद्धैः ईश्वरभक्तियोगाङ्गादिसाधनैः अकामितफलैर्जनितः तत्त्वज्ञानशमसन्तोषसुखहेतुः, स न दुःखस्य व्यवधानेनापि हेतुः निः हेतुरेवासौ। तथा च तदर्थं यमनियमाभ्यामात्मसंस्कारो योगाच्च अध्यात्मविध्युपायैः इत्युक्तम्।

सर्वेषामनुकूलवेदनीयस्य सुखस्य सर्वेषां प्रतिकूलवेदनीयस्य दुःखस्य चाविनाभावत्वमुच्यते। सुखं तु दुःखानुषङ्गात् दुःखम्। अविनाभावत्वमनुषङ्गार्थः सुखं भोक्तुकामिनामवश्यं दुःखं भोक्तव्यम्। दुःखं वा जिहासता अवश्यं सुखम् हातव्यं विवेकहानस्याशक्यत्वादिति। एवं सुखदुःखयोः परस्परं जन्यजनकभावोऽस्ति। यथा हि क्षुत्पिपासादिदुःखं विना अत्रपानादिना सुखं न भवति इति क्षुधादिदुःखस्यापि सुखहेतुत्वम्, तथा शरीरेन्द्रियविषयविशेषेषु स्नेहसुखं विना तद्वियोगतः तद्विरोधिसंसर्गतो वा दुःखं न भवतीति सुखस्यापि दुःखसाधनत्वम्। (प्रसववेदना दुःखकरी एव किन्तु प्रसवानन्तरं शिशोः मुखप्रसादादिना माता सुखं प्राप्नोति इत्यतः दुःखमपि सुखमिति वक्तुं शक्यते)। खड्गतप्तहारादिभ्यः सुखाभावेऽपि दुःखोत्पत्तेः। किञ्च यथा विषयोऽनुभूयमान एव दुःखहेतुः, न तथा दुःखं किन्तु सुखावगमात् दुःखमनुभूयते। अत एव सुखप्राप्तौ दुःखं न भविष्यति इति सर्वसंसारिणां भ्रान्तिः। विपाकफलोपभोगसुखवत् सर्वस्यापि विषयोपभोगसुखस्य परिणामे अतितीव्रदुःखहेतुत्वात्। अतः सर्वेषु सुखतत्त्वसाधनेषु आसक्तिप्रतिषेधार्थं च उभयोः समताभावनार्थं सुखमपि दुःखमेव इत्युक्तम्। दुःखं तु बाधनापीडासन्तापात्मकं मुख्यत एव दुःखमिति।

कथं दुःखस्य नाशः संभवति इत्युच्यते - धर्माधर्मा कामवैद्यशास्त्रैः उक्तानामुपायाना-मनुष्ठानेऽपि आध्यात्मिकादिदुःखविच्छेदार्थं हानम् भवति इति

तद्व्यवच्छेदार्थमात्यन्तिकग्रहणं, न हि ब्रह्मलोकादिप्राप्तस्यापि आत्यन्तिकं दुःखहानम् अस्ति, धर्मक्षयादाववृत्तिश्रवणात्, अन्योन्याभिभवव्याघादादिश्रवणाच्च। अपवर्गप्राप्तस्य तु दुःखहेतोः अविद्यातृष्णादेः अत्यन्तोच्छेदात् न कथञ्चित् दुःखसम्बन्ध इति। तस्य आत्यन्तिकदुःखहानस्य उपायः तत्त्वज्ञानम्। न्यायसूत्रकारेणापि एतदेव प्रदर्शितम् -

“दुःखजन्मप्रवृत्तिदोषमिथ्याज्ञानानामुत्तरोत्तरापाये तदनन्तरापायादपवर्गः” इति। यदा तु तत्त्वज्ञानात् मिथ्याज्ञानमपैति तदा मिथ्याज्ञानापाये दोषाः अपयान्ति। दोषापाये प्रवृत्तिरपैति प्रवृत्त्यभावे जन्मापैति, जन्मापाये दुःखमपैति, दुःखाभावे चात्यन्तिकापवर्गो निःश्रेयसमिति, इदमत्र बोध्यम्। योगबलेनापि आत्मतत्त्वसाक्षात्कारे सति तेन च सवासनामिथ्याज्ञाने ध्वस्ते

त बन्धनानां रागद्वेषमोहानां दोषाणामपायात् प्रवृत्तेरपाये तन्निबन्धनस्य जन्मनः अपाये तन्निबन्धनस्य दुःखस्यापायः इति तावद्वस्तुगतिः।

योगसूत्रे ‘हेयं दुःखमनागतमिति’ वक्ष्यते। अतीतं दुःखं प्रहीणत्वात् न हेयं वर्तमानदुःखम् उपभोगप्राप्तत्वात् उपेक्षां कर्तुं न शक्यते। अत एव तत्त्वविदः अनागतमेव दुःखं परिहर्तुं शक्यते इत्यभिप्रायः। वर्तमानमाध्यात्मिकादिदुःखं हिंसादिरहितेन मार्गेण परिहर्तुं न शक्यते, अहिंसादिक्रमेण च परिहरतः अनन्तमेव आगामिदुःखं परिहरन्ति। अनागतदुःखपरिहारं प्रति पूर्वोक्तम्। सांख्यमते तु दुःखं धर्म इति ज्ञेयम्। कणादश्च कण्ठतः सुखदुःखयोः मिथो भेदमाह। दुःखस्य कार्यञ्च दैन्यमुखमालिन्यादि इति प्रशस्तपादाचार्यादयः। कविकल्पलतायां लोकसिद्धानि कतिचिद्दुःखकारणानि दर्शितानि। तानि यथा पारतन्त्र्यमाधिः व्याधिः मानच्युतिः शत्रुःकुभार्याकुग्रामवासःकुस्वामिसेवनं बहुकन्याः वृद्धत्वं परगृहवासः वर्षाप्रवासभार्याद्वयं कुभृत्यः दुर्हलकरणकृषिः इति। एवं वराहपुराणादौ अपि कतिचिद्दुःखकारणानि उक्तानि तानि तत एव वेद्यानि।

उपसंहारः-

सुखसाधनेषु दुःखमविनाभावेन वर्तते। सुखमपि दुःखमिति कथयन्ति तद्वत् दुःखमपि सुखमिति कथयन्ति। दुःखम् विना सुखस्य मूल्यं कल्पयितुं न शक्यते। एवं सुखदुःखयोः जन्यजनकभावत्वं विद्यते। योग्यायोग्येश्वरपिशाचस्थूलसूक्ष्मादिवत् सर्वस्यापि अनुकूल-प्रतिकूलतया विपरीतपदार्थाः सन्ति। सुखदुःखयोः परस्परवैधर्म्यं यद्यप्यस्ति तथापि द्वयोः सम्बन्धः अभेद एव। सुखहेतुनां दुःखहेतूत्वमपि भवितुमर्हति। इत्थं जन्म एव दुःखं दुःखमेव जन्म दुःखमेव सर्वम् इति असारभूतः संसारः दुःखसागर इति नितरां वक्तुं शक्यते।।

सहायकग्रन्थाः

१. तर्कसंग्रहः - श्रीमद् अन्नंभट्टः।
२. न्यायदर्शनम्- श्रीगौतमः।
३. न्यायसिद्धान्तमुक्तावली - श्रीविश्वनाथपञ्चाननः।
४. न्यायभाष्यम् - श्रीवात्स्यायनः।
५. न्यायभूषणम् - स्वामि योगीन्द्रानन्दः।
६. महाभारतम् (शान्तिपर्व)

मत्तविलासप्रहसनम् मत्तविलासं कूटियाट्टञ्च समुद्दिश्य कापालिकयोः विवेचनात्मकम् अध्ययनम्

डा. श्रीनिवासन् पी. के.

प्रबन्धसारः

भारतस्य प्राचीनशैवसिद्धान्तविभागेषु अन्यतमं भवति कापालिकमतम्। कापालिकानां सिद्धान्तग्रन्थः एतावत् पर्यन्तं अथकपरिश्रमेणापि न प्राप्तः। भारतीयधर्मशास्त्रग्रन्थेषु, ब्रह्मसूत्रस्य व्याख्यानेषु च कापालिकानां केवलपरामर्श एव दृश्यते। कतिपयचरित्रकारैः कापालिकानां विषये तेषां मतं स्पष्टीकृतवन्तः। परन्तु पल्लवराजवंशीयेन राज्ञा महेन्द्रविक्रमवर्मणा विरचिते मत्तविलासप्रहसने तत्कालीनकापालिकानां जीवनरीतिनां चित्रणं यावच्छक्यं तत्रतत्र प्रदर्शितम्। कूटियाट्टमिति विख्याता रूपकाऽभिनयपरम्पराऽपि कापालिकानां जीवितमधिकृत्य वर्णितम्। मत्तविलासप्रहसने आगत कापालिकस्य जीवितनिष्ठायाः वर्णनं मत्तविलासम्, कूटियाट्टस्य कापालिकात् भिन्नम्। मत्तविलासप्रहसने, मत्तविलासं कूटियाट्टे च वर्णितयोः कापालिकयोः विवेचनात्मकम् अध्ययनम् भवति अस्य प्रबन्धस्य विषयः।

मूलपदानि - कापालिकः, मनुस्मृतिः, याज्ञवल्क्यस्मृतिः, मत्तविलासप्रहसनम्, मत्तविलासम् कूटियाट्टम्।

उपोद्घातः

भारतीयप्राचीनतमः सिद्धान्तविभागः भवति शैवसिद्धान्तः। कापालिकाः, कालमुखाः, पाशुपताः, कारुणिकसिद्धान्तिनः, काठकसिद्धान्तिनश्चेति शैवसिद्धान्ते बहवः अवान्तरविभागाः सन्ति। तेषु विभागेषु कापालिकाः अन्यतमाः। कपालं धारयन्तीति कापालिकाः। क्रिस्तोः पश्चात् ३००-४०० काले कापालिकाः प्राचुर्यमात्रेण भारतदेशे स्वमतं स्थापितवन्तः। कापालिकानां कृते स्वपरम्परागतमठाः सुव्यवस्थितपुरोहितवृन्दाः अपि आसन् (Upinder Singh: 2016:514)। अपि च कापालिकाः सनातन धर्मान्, निषिध्य बहिरागताः। मद्यमांसादिकं संसेव्य, मद्यदेवतादिकं सङ्कल्प्य, सम्पूज्य, चिताभस्म संधार्य, हस्ते दण्डं संस्थाप्य श्मशाने अटित्वा यक्षवत् आखेटनादिकं च कृत्वा कापालिकाः कन्दरेषु वसन्तीति चीनपर्यटकेन ह्वान् त्सांग् महोदयेन स्वकीये चरित्रे उद्बुध्यते (Beal Samuel: 1914:161)। तान्त्रिकविधिमनुसृत्य कापालिकाः भैरवादि क्षुद्रदेवताराधने वृषभ-मद्य-रक्तादिकं प्रयुञ्जानाः आसन्।

भारतीयधर्मशास्त्रग्रन्थेषु मनुस्मृत्यां, याज्ञवल्क्यस्मृत्यां, तद्वत् ब्रह्मसूत्रभाष्येषु च कापालिकान् अधिकृत्य कानिचित् सूचनानि परामर्शादिकानि च दृश्यन्ते। राज्ञा महेन्द्रविक्रमवर्मणा विरचितं मत्तविलासप्रहसनम् नाम ग्रन्थे कापालिकस्य जीवितचर्यादीनि बहूनि कार्याणि उपलभ्यन्ते। कूटियाट्टमिति संस्कृतरूपकावतरणस्य रङ्गाऽऽविष्कारे अपि मत्तविलासस्य कापालिकस्य वर्णनमस्ति। प्रथमतया मनुस्मृत्यादि ग्रन्थेषु कापालिकानां उल्लेखनमधिकृत्य विचार्यते।

भारतीयधर्मशास्त्रग्रन्थेषु कापालिकपरामर्शनम्

भारतस्य प्राचीनतमः धर्मशास्त्रग्रन्थः भवति मनुस्मृतिः। ग्रन्थस्यास्य रचनाकालः क्रिस्तोः पूर्वं द्वितीय शतके अस्तीति पण्डितानां मतम् (Joshi

Dinakar and Yogesh Patel: 2006:51)। मानवधर्मशास्त्रमिति नाम्नापि ग्रन्थोऽयं प्रसिद्धः। अस्य ग्रन्थस्य एकादशाध्याये ब्रह्महत्याप्रायश्चित्तविधौ शवशिरसः (कपालस्य) उल्लेखः दृश्यते-

ब्रह्महा द्वादश समाः कुटीं कृत्वा वने वसेत्।

भैक्षाश्यात्मविशुद्ध्यर्थं कृत्वा शवशिरो ध्वजम्॥ (मनुस्मृतिः ११-७३)

ब्रह्महत्या पापनिर्हरणार्थं वनं प्रस्थाय हतस्य शिरः कपालं धृत्वा द्वादशवर्षपर्यन्तं भैक्ष्यमाचरेत् इति नियमः। एवं कृते सः ब्रह्महत्यादोषात् विशुद्ध्यति। अत्र उल्लिखितः शवशिरः तु कपालमेव। तस्य ग्रहणत्वात् कपालीति अवगम्यते।

भारतीय धर्मशास्त्रग्रन्थेषु अन्यतमः भवति याज्ञवल्क्यस्मृतिः। ग्रन्थस्याऽस्य रचनाकालः क्रिस्तोः पश्चात् तृतीय-पञ्चम शतकानां मध्ये अस्ति (Olivelle, Patrick: 2006:176)। याज्ञवल्क्यस्मृतौ प्रायश्चित्ताध्याये कापालिकमधिकृत्य विवेचनम् अस्ति-

शिरः कपाली ध्वजवान्भिक्षाशी कर्म वेदयन्।

ब्रह्महा द्वादशाब्दानि मितभुक्शुद्धिमाप्नुयात्॥ (याज्ञवल्क्यस्मृतिः- ३/२४३)

महर्षिणा याज्ञवल्क्येन ब्रह्महत्यादोषनिवारणार्थं द्वादशसंवत्सरपर्यन्तम् एककालं भैक्षमशनीय शुद्धमाप्नुयात् इति स्वकीये स्मृतौ उपदिष्टमस्ति। अत्रापि शवशिरः तु कपालमेव। तस्मात् कापालिकार्थग्रहणम् स्पष्टम्।

ब्रह्मसूत्रभाष्येषु कापालिकोल्लेखनम्

आस्तिकेषु षड्दर्शनेषु वेदान्तदर्शनस्य मूलभूतसूत्राणां रचना ब्रह्मसूत्रम् इत्याख्यग्रन्थे महर्षिणा बादरायणेन कृता। ब्रह्मसूत्रव्याख्यातारः, ग्रन्थस्यास्य

पत्तुरसामञ्जस्यात् (२/२/३७) इति सूत्रस्य व्याख्याने, द्वैतसिद्धान्तानुयायिनः तद्वत् शिवम् आराधितवतः शैवविभागान् च अधिकृत्य विचारयन्ति। आदिशङ्कराचार्यः तान् विभागान् माहेश्वराः इति संबोधितवान्। पश्चात् आगतवन्तः अन्ये प्राचीननवीनव्याख्यातारः पत्तुरसामञ्जस्यात् इति सूत्रस्य शङ्करभाष्ये निर्दिष्टं माहेश्वराः इति पदं शैवाः, पाशुपताः, कारुणिकसिद्धान्तिनः, कापालिकाश्चेति चतुर्धा वर्णितवन्तः-

भामतीकारः वाचस्पतिमिश्रः माहेश्वराणां विषये स्वमतमेवं स्पष्टीकरोति-
माहेश्वराश्चत्वारः- शैवाः पाशुपताः कारुणिकसिद्धान्तिनः, कापालिकाश्चेति ॥
(भामती २/२/३७)

रत्नप्रभाकारः श्रीगोविन्दानन्दः अपि माहेश्वराणां विषये स्वमतमेवं प्रकटयति-

चत्वारो माहेश्वराः- शैवाः पाशुपताः कारुणिकसिद्धान्तिनः, कापालिकाश्चेति ॥
(रत्नप्रभा २/२/३७)

अत्र श्रीगोविन्दानन्दः, आचार्य वाचस्पतिमिश्रस्य मतमेव स्वीकरोति। आनन्दगिरेः न्यायनिर्णयव्याख्यानेऽपि माहेश्वराणां विषये आचार्य वाचस्पतिमिश्रस्य, श्रीगोविन्दानन्दस्य च मतमेव स्वीकरोति (न्यायनिर्णयः २/२/३७)। भास्कराचार्यः, यमुनाचार्यः, रामानुजाचार्यः च शङ्कराचार्येण निर्दिष्टं माहेश्वराः इति पदस्य व्याख्याने कापालिकान् अधिकृत्य परामर्शान् कृतवन्तः (Lorenzen David: 1972:1)। एवं पुरातनभारतीय शास्त्र, धर्मशास्त्रग्रन्थेषु कापालिकानां परमर्शनत्वात् अस्य सिद्धान्तस्य प्राधान्यं महत्त्वपूर्णमस्ति।

कापालिकानां प्रचारः दक्षिणभारते

दक्षिणभारते स्थितस्य पल्लवराजवंशस्य राजा सिंहविष्णुवर्मणः पुत्रः राजा महेन्द्रविक्रमवर्मा कापालिकानाम् आश्रयदाता आसीत्। कुतश्चेत् सः तु शैवमतं स्वीकृत्य आनन्दमनुभवति स्म। अतएव सः शैवमताऽन्तर्गतत्वात् कापालिकानामपि आश्रयं दत्तवान्। दक्षिणभारतस्य काञ्ची, तिरुवोरियूर, मयिलापूर, कोटुम्बालूर प्रदेशाः कापालिकानां प्रभवकेन्द्राणि आसन् (Minakshi, C:1938:181)। कापालिकानां धार्मिकग्रन्थाः अद्यावधि नोपलभ्यन्ते। राजा महेन्द्रविक्रमवर्मणा विरचितं मत्तविलासप्रहसनम् नाम ग्रन्थस्य अनुसन्धानेन, प्रहसनस्यास्य कथापात्राणां सूक्ष्मपठनेन च तत्कालीन कापालिकानां जीवितचर्याऽवगमनं स्पष्टतया ज्ञायते।

मत्तविलासप्रहसने कापालिकस्य चरित्रचित्रणम्

भरतमुनिना नाट्यशास्त्रे विवक्षितेषु दशरूपकेषु प्रहसनगणे अन्तर्भवति राजा महेन्द्रविक्रमेण विरचितं मत्तविलासप्रहसनम्। प्रहसने कापालिकः सत्यसोमः, तस्य कामुकी देवसोमा, नागसेनः इति बुद्धभिक्षुः, बभ्रुकल्पः इति पाशुपतः, उन्मत्तकश्चेति पञ्च प्रधानपात्रिणः अस्मान् तोषयन्ति। सम्प्रति कापालिकः सत्यसोमः स्वकपालं यत्रकुत्रापि स्थले संस्थाप्य मद्यपानवशात् व्यस्मरत्। तत् कपालानुसन्धानार्थं स्वकामुक्या देवसोमया सह काञ्चीनगर्याम् इतस्ततः अटति। एतस्मिन्नन्तरे नागसेनः इति बुद्धभिक्षोः हस्ते स्थितं कपालं स्वकीयमिति मत्वा कापालिकः सत्यसोमः नागसेनस्य निकटे वाक्, तर्कादिकं कृत्वा अन्ततः स्वकपालमपि सम्प्राप्य प्रहसनमिदं समाप्यते। सामूहिकविमर्शनात्मकं ग्रन्थः भवति मत्तविलासप्रहसनम्। तत्कालीन-बौद्धशैव विभागीयानाम् व्यवहारवैचित्र्यप्रदर्शनमेव अस्य प्रहसनस्य प्रधानविषयः। प्रहसनस्याऽस्य कापालिकस्य चरित्रचित्रणेन तत्कालीन कापालिकानां सामूहिककुरीतीनां ज्ञानमवगम्यते।

ग्रन्थस्य कापालिकः सत्यसोमः स्वकपाले मद्यं, मांसं च स्वीकृत्य भुञ्जन्नासीत्। काञ्चीपुर्यां स्थिताः कापालिकाः मांसभोजिनः, मद्यपायिनः च आसन्निति राज्ञा महेन्द्रेण प्रकाशितम्। सत्यसोमस्य विनष्टे कपाले आसन् शुष्कमांसखण्डानि। अतः तेन ऊहितं येन केनापि शुनकेन बौद्धभिक्षुणा वा इदं कपालं मुषितमिति। तत् कारणादेव बौद्धभिक्षुणा शुना उपमितः कापालिकः इति। गर्हणीयत्वम् उभयोः समानत्वं परिदृश्यते। अपि च कापालिकस्य पुनः पुनः बौद्धनिन्दया च तत्कालीनकापालिकानां विद्वेषं प्रकटयति बौद्धभिक्षून् प्रति। तद्वत् देवसोमा सत्यसोमस्य अनुगामिनी न तु भार्या। तत् कारणात् नारीभिः सह मेलनं तत्काले कापालिकाः अनुसरन्तीति ज्ञायते। कापालिकाः पाशुपताश्च भिन्नभिन्नगुणत्वात् उभयोः परस्परविद्वेषः तस्मिन् काले आसीदिति दृश्यते अस्मिन् प्रहसनग्रन्थे। स्वीयकान्ता देवसोमा अपहृता कापालिकेनेति, बभ्रुकल्पस्य विरोधः वर्तते कापालिकं प्रति। एतत् विरोधं मनसि निधाय सुहृदिति व्याजेनैव बभ्रुकल्पः सत्यसोमसहायार्थम् उद्युक्तः इत्येतत् अस्य उदाहरणं दत्तं लेखकमहोदयेन। एवमेव स्वनिष्ठायाः यथाविधिपालनं न करोति सत्यसोमः, तद्वारा तत्कालीनैः कापालिकैः समूहे कथं जीवनं यापितमिति प्रहसनस्य लेखकेन स्पष्टीकृतं च।

मत्तविलास-कूटियाट्टे कापालिकस्य विवेचनम्

केरलीयसंस्कृतरूपकाऽभिनयपरम्परा कूटियाट्टम् इत्यभिधीयते। कूटियाट्टम् इति पदं कैरली पदमस्ति। कूटि इत्यस्य मिलित्वा इत्यर्थः, आट्टम् इत्य

स्य अभिनयः इत्यर्थः। द्वयधिकपात्राणां मिलित्वा अभिनयत्वेन, चतुर्विधानाम् अभिनयानां मेलनत्वेन, वाच्यार्थस्य व्यङ्ग्यार्थस्य च मेलनेन अभिनयत्वेन च कूटियाट्टम् इति नाम संगच्छते। केरलदेशीयाः चाक्क्यार्,

नम्पियार् समुदायिनः कूटियाट्टम्कलायाः प्रयोक्तारः। कूटियाट्टस्य आविष्कारः सामान्यतः मन्दिरस्य नाट्यगृहे एव प्रचलति। तत्तु कूत्तम्बलम् इत्यभिधीयते। कूटियाट्टस्य अनुबन्धकलारूपम् भवति कूत् । प्राचीन काले कूटियाट्टम्, कूत् इति व्यपदिष्टम् आसीत्। कूत् इति पदस्य नाटकाभिनयः इत्यर्थः। कूत् अवतारणे एकपात्रम् एव रङ्गमञ्चम् आगच्छति अथवा कूत् इति पदेन एकपात्राभिनयः उद्दिश्यते। अङ्गुलियाङ्कम्, कूत्, मत्तविलासम् कूत्, मन्त्राङ्कम् कूत्, परक्कुम् कूत्, ब्रह्मचारि कूत् इत्यादीनि प्रसिद्धानि कूत्, अवतारणानि सन्ति। एतेषु कूत् अवतारणेषु अनुष्ठानप्रधानम्, अभिनयप्रधानम् च भवति मत्तविलासम् कूत्। मत्तविलासम् कूत् अवतारणस्य कथा प्रहसनस्य कथायाः भिन्ना। प्रहसनस्य सामूहिकविमर्शनात्मकत्वम् कूत् अवतारणे नैव दृश्यते। अत्र भगवान् श्रीपरमेश्वरं संप्रार्थ्य स्वब्रह्महत्यापापं दूरीकृत्य कापालिकरूपेण शिवसारूप्यं प्राप्तस्य ब्राह्मणस्य सत्यसोमस्य कथायाः आविष्कारः पूर्णतया भक्तिमार्गेण क्रियते। मत्तविलासम् कूत् अवतारणस्य कथा एवम् भवति -

एकस्मिन् दिने शिवमन्दिरगमनवेलायां ब्राह्मणः सत्यसोमः पलाशवृक्षस्योपरि आरुह्य पलाशशाखाच्छेदनकर्मनिरतान् कांश्चन ब्रह्मचारिणः ददर्श। ब्रह्मचारिणां वृक्षारोहणनिषिद्धत्वात् सत्यसोमः तेषां साहाय्यं कर्तुम् आरब्धवान्। ब्रह्मचारिणां कृते पलाशसमित् आहरणार्थं सः वृक्षारोहणं चकार। दौर्भाग्यवशात् तस्य हस्तात् कुठारिकां एकस्य ब्रह्मचारिणः कण्ठोपरि पतित्वा सः बालः पञ्चत्वं गतः। एतत् दृष्ट्वा दुःखितः सत्यसोमः वटोः मृतशरीरं स्कन्धौ धृत्वा ब्राह्मणसदसि गत्वा सर्वं वृत्तान्तं ब्राह्मणश्रेष्ठान् न्यवेदयत्। सर्वे ब्राह्मणाः सत्यसोमं ब्राह्मणकुलात् बहिः कृत्वा ब्रह्महत्यापाप-परिहाराय श्रीपरमेश्वरस्य तपः करणीयं इत्यवदन्। सत्यसोमः स्वपत्न्या देवसोमया सह परमेश्वरतपः कर्तुं मनसि निश्चित्य तपश्चरणार्थं गतः। तेन

शिवालये ब्रह्महत्यादोषनिवारणार्थं श्रीपरमेश्वरस्य कृपार्थं च तपः कर्तुमारब्धम्। सत्यसोमस्य तपसि संप्रीतः श्रीपरमेश्वरः सत्यसोमस्य पुरतः आगत्य तस्य कपालशूलादिकं शिवसारूप्यं च दत्तवान्। एतत् सर्वं श्रीपरमेश्वरस्य अनुग्रहः इति विचिन्त्य कपाले स्थितं मद्यं परमेश्वराय निवेद्य शिवपूजां च कृतवान् सत्यसोमः। एवं मत्तविलासप्रहसनस्य कापालिकः, मत्तविलासं कृत् अवतारणकात् कापालिकात् भिन्नः।

उपसंहारः

भारतस्य प्राचीनशैवसिद्धान्तविभागिनां कापालिकानां जीवनरीतयः, तेषां सामूहिकावस्थाः च मत्तविलासप्रहसनम् नाम ग्रन्थस्य कापालिकस्य सत्यसोमस्य जीवनचर्यायां सम्यक् ज्ञातुं शक्यन्ते। स्वभोगतृष्णां शमयितुं समूहे बहुविधानां कुरीतीनाम् आचरणं ते कृतवन्तः। कलहप्रियाः आसन् कापालिकाः। बौद्धादिभिः शैवमतस्यैव अवान्तर पाशुपतादिभिः च ते सदा कलहं कृतवन्तः। कापालिकाः स्वयमेव श्रेष्ठा इति प्रख्यापितवन्तः। बौद्धादीनां सिद्धान्ताः कलङ्कपूरिताः इति ते विश्वसितवन्तः। एतानि सर्वाणि कार्याणि मत्तविलासप्रहसनस्य कापालिकस्य सूक्ष्मपठनात् सम्यक् ज्ञातुं शक्यन्ते।

मत्तविलासस्य कूटियाट्टरङ्गाऽविष्कारे सामूहिकविमर्शनात्मकस्य अस्य प्रहसनग्रन्थस्य प्रधानकथापात्रस्य चित्रणं पूर्णतया भक्तिमार्गे परिवर्तनं कृतमिति विषयः अद्भुतजनकः। प्रहसनस्य तद्वत् कूटियाट्टस्य च कापालिकस्य नाम्नैव साजात्यमस्ति, उभयोः जीवितचर्यायाः, स्वनिष्ठायाः च पालने बहूनि वैजात्यानि दृश्यन्ते। प्रहसने सत्यसोमः स्वनिष्ठाचरणविमुखः, भोगप्रियः कापालिकः। परन्तु कूटियाट्टस्य सत्यसोमः स्वपापकर्मणि दुःखितः, प्रायश्चित्तनिरतः, पापमोचनार्थं स्वनिष्ठायाः पालने श्रद्धालुः च

भवति। प्रहसनस्य कापालिकः प्रणाशनस्य अधःपतनस्य च सूचकः, परन्तु मत्तविलासम् कूत् इत्यस्य सत्यसोमः स्वतपोऽनुष्ठानेन शिवसारूप्यं प्राप्तः कापालिकः। सः भक्तिमार्गानुयायी, भक्त्या स्वपापक्षालनं कृतवान् इति विशेषः। अपि च मत्तविलासम् कूत् सन्दर्भे देवसोमा, ब्राह्मणस्य सत्यसोमस्य जाया, परन्तु प्रहसने देवसोमा, कापालिकस्य सत्यसोमस्य कामिनी अस्ति। मत्तविलासप्रहसने एकेन कापालिकेन कथं न वर्तितव्यमिति सूचयति लेखकः, किन्तु कूत् अवतारणे यथार्थकापालिकः कथं स्यात् इति सन्देशं चाक्क्यार् महोदयः उपदिशति। कथायाः एवं रीत्या परिवर्तनं केन कृतं, किमर्थं कृतम् इत्यादीनि कार्याणि एतावत् पर्यन्तं नैव जानाति यःकोऽपि। याज्ञवल्क्यस्मृतौ प्रायश्चित्ताध्याये प्रतिपादितस्य ब्रह्महत्या-पापनिवारणस्य मार्गः एव कूत् अवतारणकथायां सत्यसोमेन क्रियते। अस्याः कलायाः संस्थापनार्थं येन केनापि चाक्क्यार् महाशयेन पुरा अस्याः कथायाः एवंरीत्या परिवर्तनं कृतम् इति मन्ये।

सहायकग्रन्थसूची

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