University of Mumbai

संभाषण
Sambhāṣaṇ

Sambhāṣaṇ

A Free Open Access Peer-Reviewed Interdisciplinary Quarterly Journal
of the University of Mumbai

Syncretic Legacies in India: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

Foreword by T.M. KRISHNA
Afterword by SAMBHAJI BHAGAT

A SPECIAL **DOUBLE ISSUE**

Volume 02 | Issue 1 & 2
January-March, April-June, 2021

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A Free Open Access Peer-Reviewed Interdisciplinary Quarterly Journal

On the occasion of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's 129th birth anniversary on 14th April 2020, the Office of the Dean, Faculty of Humanities, University of Mumbai has launched a free open access online journal, Sambhāṣaṇ. This interdisciplinary journal hopes to bring diverse disciplines in dialogue with each other through critical reflections on contemporary themes.

Note on image on the cover:
Digital Art created for title 'Syncretic Legacies in India: Critical Perspectives'

Sambhāṣaṇ or conversation as an art of dialogue has been crucial to the development of both Indian and Western thought. Dialogos in Greek literally means "through word", where one establishes relationships on the basis of conversations to initiate processes of thinking, listening and speaking with others. Thinkers such as Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu, David Bohm, Hans Georg Gadamer, Anthony Appiah and Martha Nussbaum have projected shared dialogue as a way of understanding the relationship between the individual and society. While Jyotiba Phule, Savitribai Phule, Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, Pandita Ramabai, Jürgen Habermas, Paul Ricoeur, Patricia Hill Collins and Judith Butler, to name a few, have started out anew through ruptures in conversations. The inevitability of conversation in academic life emerges from its centrality to human development and ecology. Conversations are not restricted to any single territory, but are enacted between global and the local topographies. This online English Journal aims at continuing and renewing plural conversations across cultures that have sustained and invigorated academic activities.

In this spirit, Sambhāṣaṇ an open access interdisciplinary peer-reviewed online quarterly journal endeavours to:

- be an open platform, where scholars can freely enter into a discussion to speak, be heard and listen. In this spirit, this journal aims at generating open conversations between diverse disciplines in social sciences, humanities and law.
- preserve and cultivate pluralism as a normative ideal. Hence, it attempts to articulate a plurality of points of view for any theme, wherein there is both a need to listen and to speak, while engaging with another's perspective.
- act as a springboard for briefly expressing points of view on a relevant subject with originality, evidence, argument, experience, imagination and the power of texts. It hopes that these points of view can be shaped towards full-fledged research papers and projects in the future.

Framework

- This journal is open to contributions from established academics, young teachers, research students and writers from diverse institutional and geographical locations.
- Papers can be empirical, analytical or hermeneutic following the scholarly culture of critique and creativity, while adhering to academic norms.
- Commentaries and reviews can also be submitted.
- Submissions will be peer-reviewed anonymously.
- Some of the issues will publish invited papers and reviews, though there will be a call for papers for most issues.
- There would be an occasional thematic focus.

Guidelines for Submission

- Original, scholarly, creative and critical papers with adequate references.
- All references to the author should be removed from the submission to enable the anonymous review process.
- There can be a limit of approximately 3500-4000 words (for papers) and 1500-2000 words (for commentaries) and 1000-1200 words (for reviews).
- Essays should follow the Times New Roman font in size 12 with double space, submitted in MS Word format.
- All contributions should follow the author-date referencing system detailed in chapter 15 of The Chicago Manual of Style (17th Edition). The style guidelines in this journal can be consulted for quick reference.
- Authors should submit a statement that their contribution is original without any plagiarism. They can also, in addition, submit a plagiarism check certificate.
- The publication of research papers, commentaries and book reviews is subject to timely positive feedback from anonymous referees.

Publisher

Office of the Dean of Humanities, University of Mumbai, Ambedkar Bhavan, Kalina Campus, Vidyanagari, Mumbai-400098

This journal accepts original essays that critically address contemporary issues related to social sciences, humanities and law from an interdisciplinary perspective.

“In an ideal society there should be many interests consciously communicated and shared... In other words there must be social endosmosis.”

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

Editorial Note

A legacy or heritage is most often a gift, bequeathed from the past with overlapping tangible and intangible dimensions. It is not a static Archimedean point with powers to determine and influence the course of life, whether human or cosmic. A legacy is not an entity that can be preserved without change, nor is it a piece of objective information known or knowable solely through cognition. Rather than being handed down mechanically, a legacy exists through the process of being made relevant in the present, which changes it, while at the same time references it as emanating from the past. Yet in the course of reconstructing a legacy in a contemporary manner, one cannot undermine its integrity. Thus, one has to actively engage with legacy and do things[1] with it. Inheriting a legacy requires interpreting it and even reinterpreting it, while understanding its relevance. In this the process, both incomplete and ongoing, but which nevertheless

enriches the very idea of legacy, there is a critical dimension as well. Critique, not simply as the act of criticism or interrogation, in the sense of finding fault (though this critical shade matters). Rather, critique in this context comprehends the conditions that made the legacy possible in the past, alongside discerning the contemporary conditions for its pertinence and reconstruction. Critique consists in exposing the circumstances, limits and conditions of engaging with the legacy, while reconstructing it[2] Thus, the critical aspect (in the spirit of Immanuel Kant) is a safeguard against speculative flights of the mind.

The Indian context is populated by diverse legacies encompassing heritage as "objects, ideas, practices" (Thapar 2018, 45). They envelop materialities of monuments, artefacts, artworks, texts and archaeologies, as well as, intangible cultures of poetry, philosophies, music, spirituality, performatives, oral narratives... and much more. A cursory glance at the Sramana traditions of Buddhism and Jainism, Vedic and Upanishadic texts, Islamic cultures, Sufi/Bhakti and Christian literatures (to illustrate on a very minuscule note) reveals a constant give and take between them. The process of renewing legacies tends to be syncretic (especially in the Indian context)[3]. As an intermingling of diverse (and even opposed) beliefs, syncretism emerged in the course of engaging with religious difference. Thus, the Hellenistic period saw the fusion of Greek and Christian perspectives (their tensions notwithstanding). In India, the horizons of Shaivism and Vaishnavism were fused in the Warkari Sampradaya[4], while religious traditions, such as Hinduism and Islam were integrated in Sikh, Bhakti and Sufi traditions. Yet the process of bringing together diverse legacies is not bereft of domination and struggle, since it is also frowned upon. Hierarchies and power struggles do influence their complex interactions, where the dominant legacy attempts to hegemonize through majoritarianism that nevertheless have hints of the less dominant traditions. But there is also plenty of evidence of reciprocal and egalitarian interface between

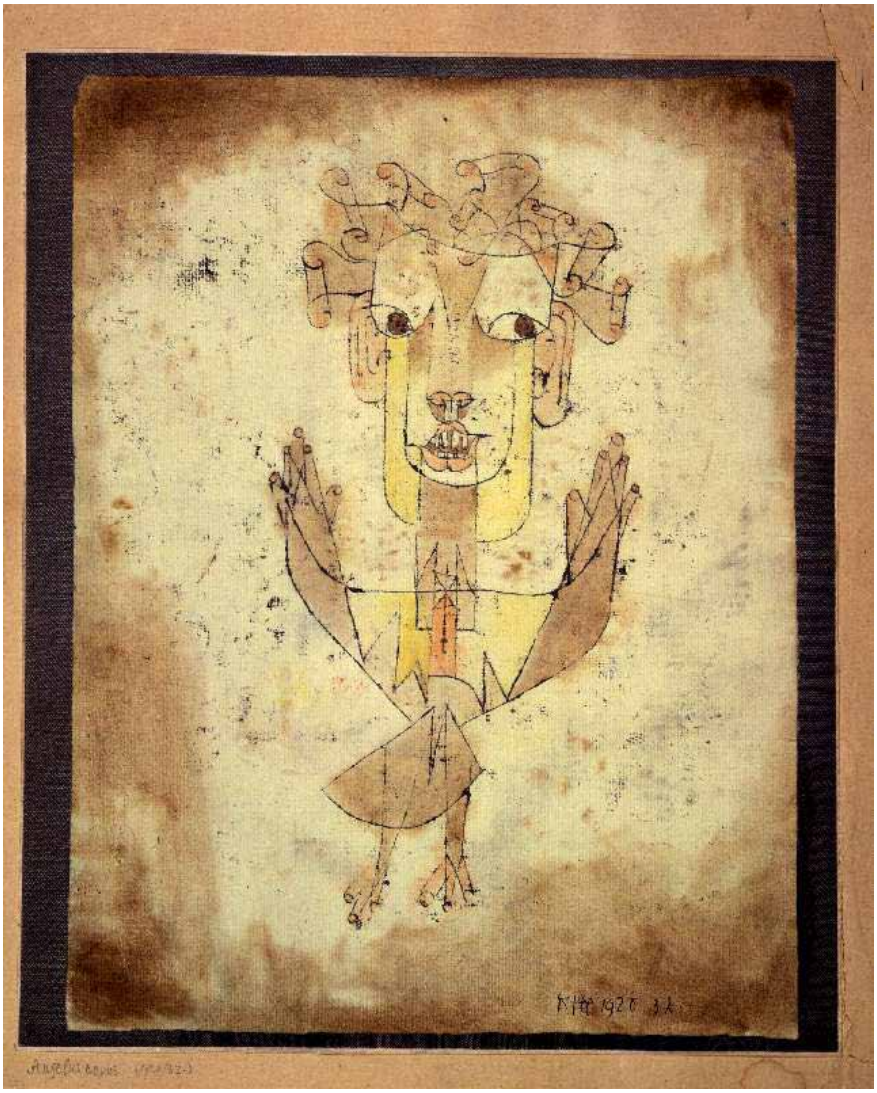
diverse traditions, whose conversations create new material/ cultural legacies. Under myriad forms of inflictions, confrontations, exchanges, negotiations or dialogues, the coexistence of diverse legacies are also reflections of syncretism. They cannot be homogenized without falling prey to simplistic reductionisms, even with reference to majoritarian hegemonic traditions. Nor can they be understood along a singular axis. Diverse syncretic legacies are often renewed through the lens of critique that unravels the fault lines of exclusion (of caste, gender, class, ableism...) that undergird them. Such renewals also create new legacies of writing and art from critical perspectives of those who are not a part of the mainstream such as women, tribals and Dalits.

Engaging with the past is especially difficult in the contemporary context because as Hannah Arendt observes, "our inheritance was left to us by no testament" (1961, 3)[5]. A testament hands over the past possession as an inheritance or legacy to heirs who are chosen, determined, marked, named and instructed. It connects the past with the present and future in a continuous way by naming and instructing the value of the treasure that is handed down. Testaments govern legacies and inheritances in the personal domain of property. However, the public domain of artistic, poetic, philosophical, spiritual legacies differ in that their value is not fixed and nor are their heirs; for there is no legal testament governing their relationship as past to the present (Arendt 1961, 5-6). They are without will or testament to govern their relationship to the future. Yet they depend upon memory to be recollected periodically, with effort from a few individuals, in fragmented flashes. As relics from the past, they are forces to which human beings are driven through actions anticipating the future. The past in this sense is not a freight that human beings have to faithfully carry or stave off. On the contrary, human beings are positioned in a rupture between the past and future, wherein the past does not determine the future in a continuous linear mode . Human beings are situated in the temporal "gap" (Arendt 1961, 12) between the past and future, "a

parallelogram of forces" (Arendt 1961, 12), rather than an interval. A third force emerges through the infinities of the past and future; it is a diagonal force that originates in the tension between the past and the future. The diagonal attempts to mitigate the tension, but it is without teleology, a set goal to move towards. Adding to Arendt, there is an entanglement of diverse legacies in the past contributing to the "parallelogram of forces". Consequently, the various interpretations, reinterpretations and reconstructions of the past are crystallizations occurring at the diagonal between past(s) and future. There are no human intentions governing these fragmented engagements with past(s). Following Arendt's reading of Benjamin's "Task of the Translator" (1992a) one could define such fragments as attempts to create meaning (1992, 52). For "No poem is intended for the reader, no picture for the beholder, no symphony for the listener."[6] The audience receiving legacies is often unpredictable and contingent with no access to ready-made meaning or causal connections between the past and the present. The fragments in question are quoted or envisioned or named from memory, often accidentally in instantaneous flashes (Benjamin 1992b 247) that have the potential for stepping into uncharted territories. To quote the past is also to deconstruct it, reconstruct it and critique it. The past is quoted, at times out of a despair with the present, or without any motive even, and not always in coherent ways or in appropriate contexts by predictable readers (Arendt 1992, 43).

The turn to fragmented past(s), as one moves into the future through momentary insights at present can be best captured by Benjamin's interpretation of Paul Klee's 1920 painting "Angelus Novus" as the angel of history (1992b, 249). It depicts an angel who is surrounded by a heap of fragments from the past. The angel's wings are spread out to indicate that although he (or indeed, she) would like to fly, the wings cannot close in. There are forces beyond the angel's control that impact the wings. The angel's fixated gaze also indicates the desire to look away and the open mouth is

perhaps an attempt to enunciate word and meaning. The angel's face is tilted towards the past without anchor, whose fragments lie in a heap before him/her. The angel cannot restore these fragments into a homogeneous whole. Nor for that matter can he/she put together the past in a sequential notion of time. For the angel is flung into the future, despite not facing it as the fragments from the past continue to pile. The angel looks back at the past, while being forced ahead into the future. Yet it is in such a moment that the fragmented past acquires meaning, albeit tenuous.



Klee, Paul 1920. Angelus Novus - *The Israel Museum, Jerusalem,* CC BY-SA 3.0 https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=25188355 (accessed on June 15, 2021)

On this Benjaminian note, this double issue (January-March, 2021 and April-June, 2021) of Sambhāṣaṇ brings together a set of diverse essays and disciplines that engage with the question of

"Syncretic Legacies in India: Critical Perspectives". The foreword by T.M. Krishna regards the past as living through embodied experiences in ways that are dynamic. He likens it to a river at a delta, where the diverse streams have their identities and do not coalesce into the sea. The various essays in this issue, in such a tenor of syncretic living pasts, emerge from multiple disciplines and preoccupations, both within and outside the academy. The issue begins with a focus on the ancient/early Indian time frame. Shalini Shah's paper asks whether there is anything like a homogeneous Indian culture, from the analytical category of gender. With meticulous textual evidence, she shows how gender neutral, misogynist ideologies are upheld in monolithic cultural contexts. These have been contested by cultural pluralism and syncretism to open up egalitarian possibilities. Pradeep Gokhale argues for the "interplay" of concepts from Sankhya and Buddhist philosophies in Patanjali's Yogasutra. He especially focuses on the difficulties of a hermeneutics that reads the Yogasutra from the perspective of diverse philosophical influences such as Vedanta. For the latter could inflict its own point of view on the text. Kamala Ganesh engages with the multiple receptions that the Alvar saint-poet Andal continues to generate in the 21st century. These "afterlives" as she puts it are not necessarily in harmony with each other. They have a tendency to conflict in the course of criss crossing. They also pose the question of the true meaning of Andal.

The section on the medieval period explores Sufi/Bhakti traditions. Irfan Engineer gives an overview of Sufi philosophy by bringing out its selfless and social critical perspective in spiritual seeking. He illustrates these abstract themes with insights from Sarmad Shahid and Rumi. Mehru Jaffer dwells on the abiding theme of friendship and love in the poetry of Nizamuddin Aulia and Amir Khusro. She reveals how their bond and verse from the 13th/14th century has immense relevance in the troubled times in which we live. Divya Jyoti's essay brings out the dimension of anti-caste egalitarianism in Kabir's poetry. She delineates Kabir's impact

on Ambedkar to show how their critiques were directed to the same orthodox frameworks of religious institutions. She dwells on the notion of bhakta as a significant normative framework for critiquing power hierarchies. Abhiruchi Ranjan defends Ravidas's humanism and status of satguru or teacher against hegemonic appropriative tendencies that reduce him to a follower. She explores the potential in his writing for critiquing dominant mainstream masculinites of extreme right.

The last part of the issue explores the reinterpretations of the past in contemporary figures such as Shivraj Mahendra, Rahul Sankrityayan, Debiprasad Chattopadhyay, Hansda Sowvendra Shekar, Ustad and Sambhaji Bhagat. Namrata Chaturvedi, thus, examines the impact of Hinduism on Christian devotional poetry such as that of Shivraj Mahendra and Sarojini Arya. She explores the space for intermingling of languages and cultures opened by Christian bhakti. Viplov Dhone investigates diverse contemporary Marxist receptions of Buddhism in the works of Rahul Sankrityayan and Debiprasad Chattopadyay. He asks whether the Buddhist notion of dialectic is the same as that of Western Marxism. Rashmi George examines the modes of agency and autonomy of the Santhal community depicted in Sowvendra's novel The Mysterious Ailment of Rupa Baskey. Their objectification through the colonial gaze is countered through narratives of their making choices such as contributing to the freedom struggle. Elroy Pinto articulates the myriad influences on the tabla player Nizamuddin Khan and his son Kamaluddin with reference to his film Kaifiyat. The interface between Buddhism, Bhakti and Sufi thought, among others, show ways of negotiating this diversity while creating great art. Putul Sathe delineates the emergence of Dalit cultural public spheres of resistance and critique through an analysis of Sambhaji Bhagat's Bhim Geet. She deftly weaves theory and practice in her attempt to flag syncretism. Mangesh Kulkarni reads Namdeo Dhasal's poetry as "deterritorializing" following Deleuze and Guattari. Dhasal, he upholds, draws upon diverse pasts such as Marathi saint

compositions, modern poetry and thinkers such as Ambedkar and Marx, while simultaneously rupturing with hegemonic pasts in envisioning an emancipatory future. Ramu Ramanathan's poem "A Warkari in Pandharpur" poignantly dwells on the angst of the contemporary Warkari pilgrim whose digital era worries remain in discord with memories of Saint Dnyaneshwar and Saint Tukaram. In the afterword, Sambhaji Bhagat ponders over Kabir as social critic and poet embodying the hopes and aspirations of oppressed castes and class. He believes that Kabir's message of love has a relevant meaning. Madhavi Narsale's obituary to Pandit Ghulam Dastagir Birajdar a Muslim Sanskrit scholar and her book review, along with, Kamala Srinivasan's and Sachchidanand Singh's extend these critical discussions of syncretism with reference to India's "contemporary pasts"[7].

This collection of essays embodying a Benjaminian relationship with Indian pasts, legacies and heritage of syncretism saw the light of print due to the creative energies of the authors and feedback of peer reviewers to whom we remain obliged for their knowledge, perceptiveness and expertise. We are grateful to T.M. Krishna and Sambhaji Bhagat for generously sharing illuminating insights emerging from their artistic practice, despite their overwhelming busy schedules. We put on record our thanks to the translators Saumitra Joshi and Sonalee Gujar for their accessible translation. Grazie to Biraj Mehta for her timely help. Shukriya to Indra Munshi for her motivating dialogues on bhakti syncretism that go back to 1997 and continue into the future. Our gratitude to Kamala Ganesh for her invaluable substantive guidance.

We thank the Vice Chancellor Prof. Suhas Pednekar and the Pro Vice Chancellor Prof. Ravindra Kulkarni for continuing to encourage this endeavour of writing. We are obliged to our team of Assistant Editors for their unconditional help in copyediting. Nendri to Prajakti Pai for design and layout, as well as, immense patience. Our Dank to our Review Editor and Editorial Team for suggestions and

advice. Dhanyavaad to Dr. Srivaramangai and Sanket Sawant for their help with uploading the journal on the University website. We have become a quarterly journal since 2021 with an occasional thematic compass.

Notes

1. This phrase is culled from Austin's work (1975) in which he shifts from a static to a dynamic understanding of language.

2. This account of critique is influenced by Immanuel Kant (1965, 9, 26-28)

3. Muslim poets such as Ras Khan have composed idealizations of Krishna, which are a repertoire in Hindustani music (Thapar 2018, 32). Gandhi's reinterpretation of Jainism, Pandita Ramabai's articulations of Indian Christianity, Ambedkar's reinterpretation of Gita through the Buddhist lens, as well as, his appreciation of Sankhya rationality in his neo-Buddhism moment are all contemporary continuations of syncretic legacies on a critical note. See Thapar (2018, 12-44) for a detailed overview of the Indian context.

4. The notion of "fusion of horizons" is derived from Gadamer (2006)

5. She quotes René Char.

6. Benjamin quoted by Arendt (1992, 52). Also see his 1992a.

7. This phrase is culled from Thapar's book (2018).

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Foreword

T.M. Krishna

Musician, Writer, Activist

The past is often perceived as an intertwined set of events that have already unfolded; a memorial of people, emotions and movements. But are they really motionless records? An occurrence ends, but the experience remains. And experience breathes life into the past through its various imaging faculties.

It is not imperative for you or I to have been physically present when that book was written, song was sung, revolution occurred or when some people were pushed to the margins. These impressions are carried forward through the rituals we conduct, the songs we learn, the dance that moves us, the poetry we recite, the stories that we are told again and again. The past also lives in our body. The scars and celebrations manifest in the way we stand, sit, smile, speak or in our inability to do any of the above. Experience is not a 'thing'; it is inherently an abstract imprint that allows individuals and communities to draw from it repeatedly at different times for different reasons. But, even in its abstraction, a foundational definitive core is retained. That base material feeds into everything else that is interpreted. When people die, this blueprint is passed on to the next generation. This also includes that which has been erased or forgotten. We

perceive memory as remembrance, but what about its loss? Forgetting is also a register; a ghost impression.

Who are the owners of all these impressions? We definitely do not own them; we live with, believe and create an entire way of life that emanates from carrying them forward. Since we have imbued our life with those etchings, we begin to believe that they define us. Through this belief, each generation passes on its sense of identity to the next. But, without doubt, there are always sets of people who curate that which gives us past-confirmation or denial. It is also distinctly possible that ownership changed hands causing turns and twists to what we determine as our past-continuous present. The thread that we hold on to has never been singular, with a constant texture or colour. The only overarching reality is that the thread that we consume as the authentic version is always printed by those who are powerful.

But even the powerful are not successful in destroying the forgotten. The ghost impression never really goes away. I am not using "*ghost*" as a term that suggests fear or danger. In fact, it is a truth that we seek to eliminate; it is the erased I refer to. Forgetting is also a *kavacha* (protective vest), a self-preservation technique. But somewhere, in someone, the forgotten remains hidden or subdued, waiting for the right moment to emerge. At times, while the socially powerful suppress communities overtly; a subversive lullaby is quietly whispered into the ears of a child. The unheard and the unseen continue to flourish within silenced cultures, kept away from what we have come to define as the mainstream. At the same time some of those who are kept away from collective memory respond with such vigor and vitality that their voice is heard far beyond their forced confines. Within the mainstream itself, alternatives are jotted down on the edges of the pages, in the books written by the mighty. The

brave ones scratch out phrases from the established dictum in crimson ink.

At every point in the past, there were people living in their present, asking questions of their memory. They looked further back into the past to understand all that they felt and did, refusing to parrot what memory prescribed. They were unsure of even the first typesetting. But much time has flowed between them and us, and we need to have the same courage to be able to rummage through our layers of conditioning and see and listen in abandon. This is not just another passage for remembrance. It is the opposite; it is, in fact, an act of agency, a reimagination. The acquired past is stopped in its seemingly unstoppable tracks, looked at from as many angles as possible, and buried and unheard voices resounding in their presence. From this moment new ideas, understandings, tunes, rhythms and dances emerge; each one distinct, contesting with the other in a matrix of equity and equality. Like a river at a delta, nothing remains static. But each stream holds its own and refuses to merge into that one swallowing sea.

This collection of essays, reflections and reviews are a coming together of ideational streams that look at the past and present with complexity and criticality. Every author has used a mirror to examine his/her own life experience while suggesting imaginative possibilities. The pieces complement and complicate each other and that makes for an enriching reading.

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A Free Open Access Peer-Reviewed Interdisciplinary Journal

Editorial Team

We gratefully acknowledge the constant support from Prof. Suhas Pednekar, the Vice Chancellor and Prof. Ravindra Kulkarni, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, University of Mumbai in publishing this journal.

In the footsteps of

Sant Kabir

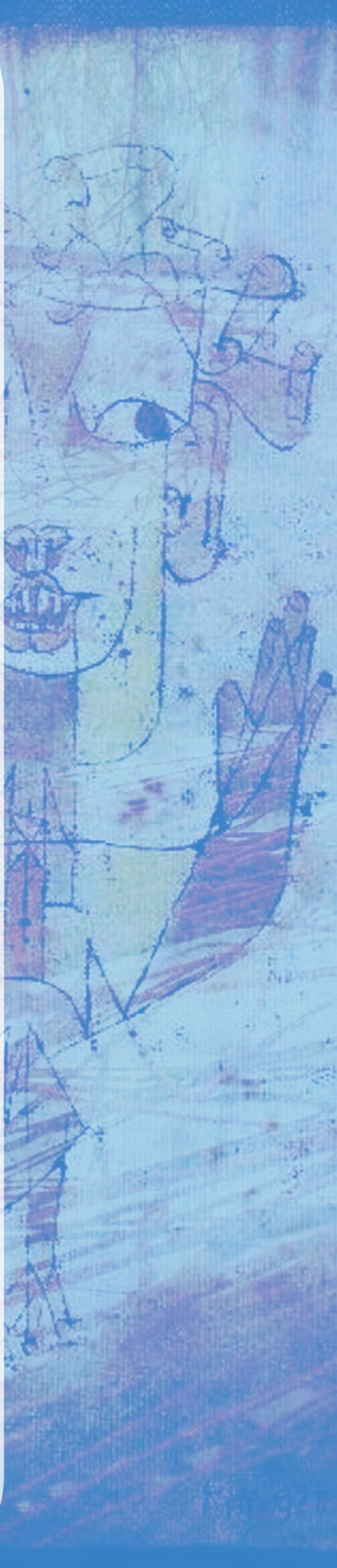
poet, philosopher, musician,

seeker, teacher, activist . . .

weaver of

syncretic legacies

and critical perspectives.



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Angelus Novus
Image source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angelus_Novus#/media/File:Klee,_paul,_angelus_novus_1920.jpg

MEDIEVAL PORTRAYALS

CONTEMPORARY RECEPTIONS

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ANCIENT / EARLY NARRATIVES

Is There a Monolithic Indian Culture? A Gendered Study of Ancient Indian Tradition

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For some time now, in an increasingly strident tone it is being projected that 'Indian Culture' is a monolith which owes its vital dynamism to glorious Sanskritic–Brahmanic roots. Not only is Sanskritic-Brahmanism being touted as the sole fountainhead of the Indian nation, but any contestations to this monolith are sought to be discredited as leftist propaganda, feminist carping, non-sanskritist's lack of understanding, and so on. In this era of post-truth, 'ultra-cultural nationalists' are seemingly having a field day. We are being encouraged to undertake a phenomenological analysis of ancient texts, instead of focusing on their historicity, or critiquing them from the 'outside' perspective of the present. But history has always been a dialogue of the present with the past, and when so much of our present hinges on the '*received wisdom*' (italics mine) from the past, it becomes that much more crucial to look at this past dispassionately.

In this essay I propose to critique the monolithic cultural ideal of 'Sanskritic Brahmanism' which was essentially a patriarchal ideology with the help of empirical data from Sanskritic sources themselves which show that there were discordant voices present not only within Sanskritic culture itself but also outside it which posed challenge to the 'Sanskritic Brahmanical' hegemony. This fact by itself is not surprising, because all societies at any given point of time, are witness to multiple norms and ideological strands which jostle with each other. While some become more dominant, few are subordinated, and still others are sought to be erased with a vengeance. For a historian, therefore, it is vital to take stock

of the process whereby normativity gets established even as these norms are contested and sometimes even successfully subverted.

I

An enduring cultural symbol of Indian civilization has been the '*Pativratā*' wife; a figure much admired by both early western Indologists and the indigenous ones as well like R.C Majumdar and Vasudevsharan Aggarwal (Shah 2012b, 77-78). Yet, a perusal of the Sanskritic sources themselves show that Pativratā, this high ideal of 'Hindu womanhood', was nonexistent in the Vedic corpus, and also in the post Vedic texts emerging as a cult only in the two epics. This ideal virtuous wife, forever kowtowing to the husband who was her personal God (*bhartā me daivtam param*) was deliberately constructed (Mbh: 3.197.29). This was done firstly in the interest of the stability of the patriarchal family, for as Suvira Jaiswal points out that while patriliny and patrilocality were well established in the Ṛgveda, one cannot say the same for patriarchy (Jaiswal 1998, 9). We come across contradictory evidence which suggests a possibility that more egalitarian gender relations prevailed. After all, *Ṛgveda* refers to more equitable *dampati* households as well where husband and wife are jointly the owner of the house *dama* and prayers are offered to make them of one mind-*samanasā* (Roy 1994, 247). Interestingly it is in the context of *dampati* household that desire for both *putra* and *kumārī* i.e son and daughter is expressed. The second reason for fashioning the cult of *pativratā* may have been the need to counter the Buddhist and Jaina heterodoxy's acceptance of the female renunciatory order where women by right could eschew family and kinship ties, and in the process jettison their primary caregiver role. After all, *patiśūśruṣā* was integral to the brahmanic notion of *pātivratya dharma* (Mbh: 3.205.3;3.197.28;11.25.39). *Manusmṛti*, defines a virtuous wife (*sādhavyā*) as one who serves her husband (*pati śuśrūṣte*) and she will for that reason alone be exalted in heaven (*yentenswargemahīyate*) (*Manusmṛti:* 5.154-155). Even in the secular *Arthśāstra*, punishment is prescribed for those who would induce a woman to renounce her role as a wife (*Arthśāstra:* 2.1.29). As Shandili notes in the *Mahābhārata* "I have earned my place in heaven by being a pativratā wife and not by wearing the ochre robes of the renunciate, the bark garments of the hermit, the matted locks of the ascetic, or by shaving my head" (Mbh: 13.124.8).

Irawati Karve in her brilliant analysis of kinship terminology in the Vedic texts refers to a wife who is *patighnī* (death of the husband), *patirip* (who cheats on the husband), *patidviṣa* (wife hated by the husband), and *parivṛktā* (forsaken wife) (Karve 1938-39, 130-31). While a wife with a living husband (*avidhvā, jīvapatnī, pativatī*) and one who has borne excellent sons (*suputrā*) is much admired in both Vedic and post Vedic texts, nonetheless *pativratā* does not figure anywhere in this long list of epithets for a wife (Monier -Williams 1994, 108, 422, 582, 1228). The *patighnī* of the Veda became or was made to become a distant memory, and was substituted with epithets like *pativatsalā*, *patidharmaratā*, and *pativratāparāyaṇā* (Mbh: 12.30.32; 12.142.6; 1.103.13,17). In other words, what happened historically, and is certainly attested to in the epics, is the process of 'pativratization'. This process of sanitization of truculent wives who could then be made to fit the *pativratā* mould, is particularly well brought out in the figures of Anasuya and Arundhati, both of whom have been enumerated among the great *pativratā* in the Indian Tradition. Yet, in the *Mahābhārata*, *Anasuya* is described as a *brahmavādinī* who left her husband with the firm intention that she would never allow herself to be dominated by him (Mbh 13.14.65-67). She prayed to Shiva, who granted her the boon that she would parthenogenetically have a son who would bear her name, and bring fame to her *vaṃśa*. The *Rāmāyaṇa* however, transforms Anasuya into Sita's exemplar on *pativratā dharma* resulting in famous Sita Anasuya *saṃvāda* where essentials of a dedicated wife's duties are laid threadbare (Rām: 2.117.19).

The *Ādi parva* of the *Mahābhārata* preserves an equally deviant memory of Arundhati (Mbh: 1.224.26-31). The epic tells us that Arundhati despised her husband sage Vashistha for no cause, and for this contempt, she became a tiny star enveloped in smoke that appears like a bad omen. What is truly interesting in this episode is the fact that the pole star Arundhati is seen here as inauspicious, because of its namesake woman's not so virtuous conduct towards her husband. Yet, in the *Aśvalāyana Gṛhyasūtra*, the bride is made to look at the pole star Arundhati and chant "may my husband live and I get offspring" (Aśvalāyana Gṛhya*sūtra:* 1.7.22).

Draupadi is the central female character in the main narrative of the epic *Mahābhārata*. And it is in her characterization, which swings from one extreme to another like a pendulum that the process of 'pativratization' is most clearly

apparent. Indologist Sally Sutherland says about Draupadi that coupled with her victimization is a strong realization of this victimization (Sutherland 1989, 72). Draupadi never accepts her humiliation lying down. She does not bewail her fate but calls Yudhishthira a fool (*mūḍha*), a gambler and attributes her sorrows to the fact that she was his wife (Mbh: 4.17.11,14; Mbh: 4.15.35; Mbh: 4.17.1). The other Pāṇḍava husbands are also berated by her for being like eunuchs (*klība*) (Mbh: 4.15.21-22). If *pativratā dharma* enjoins that a wife follows her husband at all times (*samayānuvartinī*) then Draupadi certainly does not bow to this commandment (Rām: 2.117.29). Yet in the vanaparva of the Mahābhārata the fearless and wise Draupadi is co-opted into the rarified community of great *pativratā* wives when she suddenly engages in a vapid dialogue with Satyabhama where she states "to live under husband's protection (*patyāśrayo*) is the eternal law (*sanātanadharma*) for women. Husband is the only refuge so what woman could displease him." (Mbh: 3.222.35) This was the female world of social contract under patriarchy which Draupadi was made to articulate.

But perhaps the most sensational makeover of a wife into a *pativratā* has been that of Shakuntala. In the *Ādi parva* of the *Mahābhārata,* Shakuntala walks into Dushyanta's court, a public site of kingly authority, all by herself while holding her son Bharata's hand (Shah 2012a, 91). She demands from her husband Dushyanta her due as his wife and mother of his son. When Dushyanta refuses, and instead abuses her calling her a *duṣṭa tāpasī* and a common whore (*puṃscalī*) Shakuntala remains unfazed and asserts "my *kula* is greater than yours", and curses her son's father "may your head break into a hundred pieces." (Mbh: 1.68.75;1.69.2; Mbh: 1.68.35) Shakuntala throws an open challenge to the king (one of whose prerogative is to decide on his successor), that even without his acknowledgment her son Bharata would one day rule the entire kingdom (Mbh: 1.69.27). Moreover, she has the last word when she tells Dushyanta that she would not like to stay with a man who abuses trust and is a liar (Mbh: 1.69.27). Kalidasa in his play *Abhijñāna Śākuntalam* emasculates *Mahābhārata*'s Shakuntala beyond recognition. In this play the setting of Shakuntala's meeting with Dushyanta is a more private spatial zone of *yajñaśālā* which precludes any possibility of public indictment or shaming of the unreliable king. Furthermore, Kalidasa presents Shakuntala as a devitalized *pativratā* who shivers with fear (*Śakuntalā bhitā vepate*), cries copiously and

instead of cursing Dushyanta curses her own fate (Abhijñāna Śākuntalam: Act V, 94, 90-91, 95-96). In this play as well like in the *Mahābhārata*, Dushyanta is depicted launching a tirade against Shakuntala's character, yet the only form of mild rebuke which she can come up with is to call him ungentlemanly (*anārya*) and a cheat (*kitava*) who thinks that everyone is as blackhearted as himself (Abhijñāna Śākuntalam Act V, 92-93). She tries desperately to convince Dushyanta of her identity so that he may accept her, even as her male escorts harangue her, blaming her for the predicament she is in (Ibid Act V, 91, 24, 27). This complete erasure of a virago of a wife by Kalidasa represents the ultimate triumph of patriarchal culture, where wife can only be an impotent and subservient creature. Therefore, Shakuntala's escorts insist on leaving her with Dushyanta because husband's authority over his wife is supreme (*dāreṣu prabhutā sarvotmukhī*) (Ibid Act V, 26). They also make it clear to Shakuntala that "It is better for a wife to stay in her husband's home even as a servant" (Ibid Act V,27).

II

The phallic cultural dominance has also resulted in the silencing of women. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, Gargi locked horns with Yajnavalkya in a public debate, and was able to pose some sharp questions to him (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 3.6.1). When Yajnavalkya was unable to answer them, instead of appreciating Gargi's intellectual brilliance he bullied her, and threatened her to keep quiet lest her head was chopped off. We do not hear of Gargi thereafter (*gārgī vācaknavyā upararāma*). Our sources do speak of low-voiced (*mandavākyā*) and mumbling (*antarmukhabhāṣiṇī*) women yet, even in this sea of stammer and silence, some women have cherished their right to speak (Kuṭṭanīmatam: verse 848; Shah 2009, 152). It is a truism that speech is empowering. When you can speak, you also learn to cultivate the mind which acts as an enabler to speech. Our sources refer to women who were not only articulate, but the script which they read was their own too. This fact is acknowledged by Dhanadeva, who refers to four poetesses by name who he said had attained proficiency in expressing everything (*viśvam vaktum yaḥ pravīṇasya*) (Krishnamchariyar, 1970, 391). Thus, poetess Vijjika quite self-consciously calls attention to her intellectual attainments. Disdaining Dandin's description of the goddess of speech Sarasvati as all-white (*sarvaśuklā*) in his text on poetics titled *Kāvyādarśa*, Vijjika declares "Not knowing that I am

dark like a blue lotus, Dandin has vainly said that Sarasvati is all-white". Vijjika's intellectual intransigence was such that she openly boasted about her genius, she says "one was born on the lotus, another on the beach and a third off the anthill, these three (Brahma, Vyasa and Valmiki) are great poets and to them I pay my homage, but if some later men should try to please us with prose and verse composition, well I place my left leg on their heads" (Raghvan 1934, 55-56)

III

Patrilineality has been vital to the institution of patriarchy. In order to ensure purity of patrilineage, control over female sexuality and harnessing that sexuality for reproductive purpose was the raison d'être of the masculine social order. As Manu (Manusmṛti: 9.76) notes quite unambiguously "to be mothers were women created" (*prajnārth striyaḥ sṛṣṭāḥ*). This reality has led feminist theorist Catherine Mackinnon to argue that "sexuality is to feminism what work is to Marxism; that which is most one's own yet most taken away". (Mckinnon 1982, 515) Reproductive role of women which results in the birth of sons *jīvasū vīrasū* (Mbh: 1.191.7) - the oft repeated blessing to women is so central to patriarchal culture that it builds a binary between fertile and infertile (*vandhyā*). Furthermore, patrilineal families also esteem the birth of a male child above all. *Manusmṛti* (Manusmṛti: 4.213) is quite categorical in asserting that a woman not blessed with sons (*avīrāyāśca yoṣitaḥ*) is impure whose food cannot be consumed by the brahmanas. It is also interesting to note that the Ayurvedic text *Mādhavanidāna* (*Mādhavanidāna: Nidānapariśiṣṭa, 27*) while enumerating nine types of vandhyā, lists a womb that bears only female (*strīprasūti*) among them. In the phallic culture then, the infertile women are inauspicious while motherhood is apotheosized and giving birth to sons bestows preeminence on the women. Yet this most cherished goal of patriarchy went abegging in the world of *veśavāsa* women, who simply mocked it. In Kshemendra's *Samayamātṛkā*, (Samayamātṛkā: 8.101) *veśyā* expresses the view that giving birth (*prasava*) is a curse (*śrāpa*) for a woman's youth (*yauvana*) being particularly harsh on her breasts. A bawd thus contrasts the physical attractiveness of the *veśyā* with a *kulavadhū* who was seen as constantly pregnant (*nityaprasūti*) with her youth destroyed (*yauvanahata*). And in Damodargupta's *Kuṭṭanīmatam*, a bawd firmly asserts that birth of a daughter alone is desirable (*duhitā eva ślāghya*) (Kuṭṭanīmatam: Verse 146).

Patrilineal patriarchal societies impose chastity but only on women, they also deny them desiring subjectivity, and are viciously ageist as far as women are concerned. But in spite of this, women have raised their voice against these norms. Story of Ahalya in the *Rāmāyaṇa* is noteworthy in this respect. (Rām: 1.48.19-20) Ahalya was not innocently compromised by Indra who visited her disguised as her husband sage Gautama. Ahalya's was a classic case of adultery and that too by a brahmin woman for whom the norms of purity must have been the strictest in a varṇa stratified society. Valmiki tells us quite unambiguously that she was aware (*vijña*) of Indra's identity and yet out of curiosity (*kautūhalāt*) and excitement entered into a sexual union with the king of Gods. Afterwards with her inner being satiated she tells Indra "I am satisfied (*kṛtārthosmi*) but now go quickly from here and protect yourself and me. Yogakarandika in the *Kathāsaritsāgara,* does not even resort to secretive stratagems, she states quite forthrightly "I lived with other men at my pleasure, and so did not cheat the elements of which I was composed and my senses of their lawful enjoyment". (Kathāsaritsāgara: Vol.1, 159)

The desiring subjectivity which some women claim in our sources, is also extended to older women. In majority of the masculine Sanskrit corpus, a youthful (*yauvanasthā*) and pretty (*surūpā*) woman is perceived as the best aphrodisiac (*vṛṣyatamā*) (Shah 2009, 101) for exclusively male erotic stimulation, while an ageing woman with sagging breasts (*bhṛṣṭapayodhara*) is equated with bad luck (*saubhāgyaguṇoanganānām naṣṭa*) (Sūktimuktāvali: 226.5). In fact, a frequently used epithet for a woman is one with high breasts (*pīnastanī*). Yet, poetess Shilabhattarika boldly questions the male prerogative to an erotic life even when elderly, though women are denied the same. She asks "how unjustified and improper is the decree of fate which makes men succumb to the sentiment of love even when they are too old for it, while women are denied this right?" (Chaudhuri 1941, Verse 83) This asymmetry of erotic desire in the masculine culture is also the reason why youthful females are seen as threatening to the *brahmacārī* deity of the Sabarimala temple and therefore barred entry (Shah 2021, 237). However, menopausal women who are undesirable to male eyes and therefore perceived as '*naturally celibate*' (italics mine) are allowed into the temple complex. Yet age could not circumscribe women's desire. In Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda* Radha is not only a *gopavadhū* but also an older woman who is sent as an adolescent Krishna's

escort by Nanda and she uses this opportunity to establish an adulterous but a mutually passionate and equitable erotic relationship with him. (Shah 2009, 180)

IV

Patriarchy constrains women in a variety of ways and one major form of policing is to deny them the autonomy of gaze. If the erotic gaze was the vehicle of passion, the means by which desire was constructed and maintained, then women have been denied this gaze. As John Berger pointed out in his seminal work *Ways of Seeing* that looking is always an act that involves a power relationship, so who looks and at what, highlights the dominant and dominated equation (Berger 1972, 8-9,47). Within masculine culture men alone had the right to look, and women could only be the fetishized object of that look. Thus, all the *nakha-śikha varṇana* that we get in our sources are of *nāyikā*. Sanskrit language abounds in many adjectival nouns such as *rambhorū* (thighs like plantain), *suśroṇi* (of good buttocks and loins), *candramukhī* (moon faced) and *ṣodaṣī* (sweet sixteen) and all these epithets are in feminine gender. No masculine equivalent of these occurs in Sanskrit language. Interestingly while one epithet *varāroha*/*varārohā* occurs in both genders it gives a completely different meaning (Monier-Williams 1994, 922, column 3). While for a woman it denotes 'one with fine hips'; for a man the same term means 'a fine rider.' In other words what is physical beauty in *nāyikā* denotes skill in *nāyaka* because his body cannot be similarly objectified in *nāyikā* 's erotic yearning. If at all male beauty is referred to in our sources as in the case of God/ King it is in the form of worship by devotee (female included) as a subordinate and no erotic relationship gets established (Shah 2009, 195).

It is true that Sanskrit texts refer specifically to female side-long glances (*kaṭākṣa*) which are also described as an embodiment of *Kāma* (Shah 2009, 196-197). As one verse in Vidyakara's *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* states "I sing the praise of lovely eyed women who are victorious over the three eyed Shiva, for by their glances they resurrect Kāma which Shiva had destroyed by his." (*Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*: verse 395). Nonetheless perusal of the sources makes it very clear that while the *kaṭākṣa* of women may be erotic they lack the power to objectify the *nāyaka* rather they invite him to objectify the *nāyikā.* One may then conclude that, within phallic

culture women exist exclusively as images that are displayed for the enjoyment of male and not as bearers of look (Mulvey 1989, 20). Yet poetess Vijjika in a unique verse which goes against the usual norm of androcentric erotic (*śṛṃgārī*) texts, claims the erotic gaze for herself. She wants to look with erotic passion that holds her man. Vijjika says, "erotic fulfilment lies in the mere interlocking of the eyes of men and women. If a man desires physical union even after being a target of a woman's love glances, then woman is at fault for after reaching below the buttocks (*nitamba*) even animals realize the sexual goal (*ratiphala*). This verse of *saṃbhoga śṛṃgāra* thus clamors for an emotional intimacy in the union, rather than a mere sensuous gratification brought on by the gaze. In other words, the *nāyikā*/poetess even as she claims the gaze does not objectify.

v

In the masculinist world to act on sexual desire by claiming erotic gaze whose focus is always a young and beautiful woman is an exclusively male prerogative and women are never seen as desiring subjects be they young or old. Nonetheless the somatophobic (*kāyājugupsā*) (*Yogavaśiṣṭha*: 1.18) and misogynistic renunciatory discourse in ancient India flipped this normative sexual cultural ideal ("still unborn man suffers a painful confinement in woman's foul womb"- *Śatakatrayam*: verse 199).

Within this discourse not only does the female body becomes an object of repugnance rather than desire but hitherto passive female is transformed into an active seductress becoming the chief cause of entrapment for the male ascetic. In *Vairāgyaśataka* Bhartrihari states "her face a vile receptacle of phlegm is likened to a moon, her thighs dank with urine are said to rival the elephant's trunk, mark how this despicable form (*nindyārūpam*) is praised by poets" (*Śatakatrayam*: Verse159). The ancient texts repeat ad nauseam "where there is a woman there is desire; If you renounce woman, you can renounce the world and renunciation brings happiness." (*Sūktimuktāvali*: 449.24-25 *yasyastrītasyabhogechā strīyamtyaktvājagatyaktam jagatyaktvāsukhībhaveta*).

This happiness could be in the form of disembodied *mokṣa* or place in heaven. Within the renunciatory tradition since the object of temptation is always a

woman while the subject of redemption is forever a man, it is not surprising that the male pilgrims to Sabarimala can proceed there at any age provided they have taken vow of celibacy. (Within Brahmanism women cannot renounce or be 'actively' celibate. Celibacy for women is an imposition-virgin daughters, chaste/ menstruating wives and widows of higher *varṇa)* The very young girls and old women who are not perceived as objects of male desire and therefore cannot be a source of temptation and entrapment for either the *brahmacārī* deity Ayyappa or the celibate male pilgrims, are allowed to undertake the trek to Sabarimala shrine.

The highly gendered renunciatory ideology of all hues be it Brahmanical or heterodox, was challenged throughout the ancient period by a number of philosophies like Lokayata, Tantric and Virashaiva. Because these belief systems eschewed both misogyny and somatophobia, they were ideologically equipped to call the bluff of masculine renunciatory tradition. Lokayata rejected any reality beyond sensory perception so neither body nor bodily pleasure were deprecated. (*Naiṣadhacarita*: 17.54; 17.48,50-51) Thus, a Carvaka asks jeeringly "have those otherworldly fellows renounced their passions? For even after death, they long for heaven, the quintessence of which lies in its gazelle eyed nymphs". (*Naiṣadhacarita*: 17.68)

In Tantric thought, sexual copulation (*maithuna*) was part of revered *pañcamakāra* and women in general and female principal in particular were apotheosized. (Shah 2009, 66-68) In early Medieval Karnataka the Virashaivas celebrated the physical body as an abode of god giving the slogan of '*kāyāve kailāśa*'. They also rejected the notion of the world as an illusion (*māyā*) and women as an embodiment of *māyā*. (Ramaswamy 1996, 8-9,18) Virashaivism became the most renowned ideology of gender emancipation. While it is true that *dharmaśāstra* valorize *gṛhasthāśrama* (*Manusmṛti:* 6.89) and therefore acknowledge women both for her reproductive potential and upbringing of progeny as also for providing companionship on life's journey; (Manusmriti, 9.27 - *utpādanamapatyasya jātasya paripālanam pratyahaṃ lokayātrāyāḥ pratyakṣṃ strīnibandhanam*) nonetheless they do not effectively critique the underlying misogyny of the renunciatory tradition. In fact, they reiterate it as *Manusmṛti* states: "it is the nature of women to seduce men in

this world...women are able to lead astray not only a fool but even a learned one and make him a slave of desire and anger." (Manusmṛti: 2.213-215)

VI

If patriarchy demanded chastity from wives, it also required unmarried daughters to kowtow to their father's authority in their marital alliance. *Brahma, daiva, prajāpatya* and *ārṣa* were the four approved forms of marriage in the brahmanical law books and underlined the authority (*svāmya*) of the father over his daughter who would be given away (*kanyādāna*) by him in marriage to a groom of his choice. In the *Mahābhārata*, maiden Satyavati is afraid of her father (*piturbhītā*) and therefore reluctant to enter into sexual liaison with sage Parashara as were Kunti and Tapati. (Shah 2012a, 72) In *Rāmāyaṇa* daughters of king Kushnabha reiterate the divine authority of their father (*prabhusmākam daivatam param*) who alone had right to bestow their hand in marriage and rejected outright any notion of personal choice (*swayam varamupāsmeha*) on their part. (Rām: 1.32.21-22)

While it is true that *gāndharva vivāha* or marriage by choice is listed in the *dharmaśāstra* among the eight forms of marriage, the social and familial hostility to it is fairly pervasive in ancient sources. Given the patriarchal Brahmanical ethics of smṛti texts *gāndharva* marriage is summarily dismissed as one which springs from mere desire, with sexual intercourse as its only aim. (*Manusmṛti:* 3.32 - *gāndharva sa tu vijñeyo maithunyaḥ kāmasambhavaḥ*)

Since marriage for smṛti writers is primarily a sacrament and its purpose is acquisition of merit and progeny, *gāndharva* marriage along with other less approved forms was seen as blamable marriage which would produce only blamable children. (*Manusmṛti*: 3.41-42) Manu is also quite categorical in asserting that where the girl chooses the groom herself, she is not allowed to take with her any ornaments from her natal family (which formed the primary corpus of her *strīdhana*) and if she did so, it was to be regarded as theft. (*Manusmṛti:* 9.92)

As if the economic deterrent was not enough, the social opprobrium and hence psychological pressure on a girl against free marriage is dramatically highlighted

in Kalidasa's play (*Abhijñāna Śākuntalam*: Act V.24). When Dushyanta fails to recognize pregnant Shakuntala whom he had married through gāndharva rite the male escorts of hapless Shakuntala are quick to castigate her for her impulsive (*cāpalam*) behavior. Ironically, Shakuntala herself rues the fact that Dushyanta's refusal to accept her will earn her the 'opprobrium' of a loose woman (*svachandacāriṇi*) (*Abhijñāna Śākuntalam*: Act V, 92).

In our own times, the 'Love Jihad' campaign is a conspicuous example of toxic patriarchy where marriage following mutual love between the couple is fast becoming a battleground., and where the biased state is becoming both a willing policeman and prosecutor on behalf of disgruntled parents. In such times it will do well to reflect on how some women have in the ancient past claimed their right to consent. Amba in the *Mahābhārata*, virulently denounced the charade of svayaṃvara marriage which refers to women's self-choice, but in reality, never gives it to them (Mbh: 5.173.3-5). She curses her slow witted and foolish father (*manda pitaram mūḍha cetas*) for having reduced her to the status of a strumpet (*paṇyastrī*), a mere prize for the feat of some manly valor (*vīryaśulkena*), and therefore thunders at the injustice (*anyāya*) of it all.

In *Yaśastilaka Champū*, we meet queen Amritmati who puts forward an extremely cogent critique of patriarchal marriage as a sacrament. (Handiqui 1949, 51) She characterizes such a marriage rite as being sold by parents in the presence of the God, brahmin and fire - *devadvija agnisamakṣam mātṛpitṛ vikṛtasya*. A husband in such a marriage could only be the master of his wife's body, but not of her heart. Amritmati asserts the reciprocity of love as an essential condition for conjugal harmony. She says that there is nothing in this world that men cannot do, except rekindle love in a heart filled with disgust; for who can unite two hearts that are like two iron balls, one hot and the other cold? In Amritmati's passionate plea we can see a complete change in the angle of vision which smṛti writers have brought to bear on marriage in general and on *gāndharva* marriage in particular. She restores individuals and their emotions over what are generic norms and that too gendered ones in the Brahmanical *dharmaśāstra*.

VII

Conformity from women in general, and wives in particular in thought, word and deed (*manasā vācā karmaṇā*), has been an article of faith in the patriarchal culture. Yet, in our sources, we come across a contestation of this norm of conformity. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* Sita who is celebrated as a compliant obedient wife actually dares to contest the hegemonic kshatriya prerogative of her husband Rama, to violently engage with the Rākṣasa in the Daṇḍaka forest. In the *Araṇyakāṇda* of the epic, she forcefully makes a case against the killing (*paraprāṇābhihimsanam*) (Rām: 3.9.9) of the *Rākṣasas* who are not Rama's adversary - *vinā vairam ca raudratā*, she asks. And therefore, entreats him not to indulge in any violent aggression against them. (Rām: 3.9.4) For Sita, the forest of Daṇḍakāraṇya is the abode of the Rākṣasa -*rākṣasān daṇḍakāśṛitāna*; (Rām: 3.9.25) therefore killing them, so to speak in their own home would not be considered an act worthy of a chivalrous man -*aparādham vinā hantum loko vīra na maṃsyate*. (Rām: 3.9.25)

Sita's objection to Rama's intent is also based on her perception of the forest as a peaceful place, a site of meditation (*tapaḥ*), and not an arena of war (*ka ca śastram ka ca vanam ka ca kṣātrama tapaḥ ka ca*). (Rām: 3.9.27) Sita, therefore, considers it against the norm (*deśadharma*) to indulge in any violent act within the precincts of such a place. Sita's voice, clear and cogent, has resonance even in our fractious present.

Some within academia (Samuel Huntington being the most prominent) and many more outside it (ultra cultural nationalists around the globe) have tried to perpetuate the myth of a pristine culture/civilization which has to fight/erase the "Other" in order to maintain its purity. But as I have tried to argue in this paper, that there has never been a singular culture (glorious or otherwise) or one unique idea in existence at any point of time. Just as all cultures are syncretic (for even the mighty Ganges is fed by many tributaries) all ideas have been contested, even ubiquitous ones like patriarchy.

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Interplay of Sāṅkhya and Buddhist Ideas in the Yoga of Patañjali (with Special Reference to Yogasūtra and Yogabhāṣya)[1]

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I

The question of the exact characterisation of philosophy in Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* does not seem to be settled as yet. The tradition talks of the dual system namely, Sāṅkhya-Yoga. Pantañjali's philosophy of Yoga has been sometimes called Patañjala-Sāṅkhya, but it is yet differentiated from Kapila's Sāṅkhya in that the former incorporates the concept of *īśvara* which the latter does not. On account of this difference Patañjali's Yoga has also been named Seśvara Sāṅkhya[2] or theistic Sāṅkhya.

But the description of Yoga as theistic Sāṅkhya does not seem to be correct because *īśvara* in Patañjali's Yoga is not God in the sense of the creator of the world or even the efficient or material cause of the world.[3] The *īśvara* of Yoga carries all the characteristics of Sāṅkhya *puruṣa* in their ideal form. The *puruṣa* of Sāṅkhya system, though free by its very nature, is apparently in bondage due to its union with *prakṛti*. The *īśvara* of Yoga is *puruṣa-viśeṣa* (a special conscious being) (YS 1.24) in that it is not even touched by any possibility of bondage in the form of afflictions, actions or latent impressions of past actions. In contrast, the *īśvara* of Yoga is not even touched by any possibility of bondage in the form of afflictions, actions or latent impressions of past actions. As a result, the *īśvara* is an ideal

puruṣa to whom Patañjali ascribes omniscience (YS 1.25) but not omnipotence. This *īśvara* is also supposed to be the teacher of teachers (YS 1.26), because as the ideal *puruṣa* free from ignorance, he can be looked upon as a guiding star, as an exemplar by everyone. But he is not an object of *devotion (bhakti)* in the traditional sense of the term. If *īśvara-praṇidhāna* means devotion to *īśvara*, then it is devotion in the sense of meditative surrender. Utterance of the word 'Om' which becomes a part of this devotion is for paying attention to its referent viz. *īśvara* (YS 1.27-28). The interpretation of *īśvara-praṇidhāna*, as surrendering all actions to Him (*sarvakriyāṇām arpaṇam*)(VB on YS 2.1), as offered by Vyāsa[4] and other commentators, is misplaced because it is contrary to Patañjali's concept of *īśvara* as a being completely untouched by actions. It is possible that these commentators being themselves under theistic influence have interpreted *īśvara-praṇidhāna* as theistic devotion. Some later commentators who were under the influence of Advaita-Vedānta have also projected their views on Pātañjali Yoga. The *īśvara* of Patañjali according to them achieves the status of omniscient, omnipotent and prime cause Brahman.

But the undesirable consequence of these influences was that the original conceptual setting of the *Yogasūtra* was disguised or even distorted by the commentaries written under these influences. It becomes necessary, therefore, to unearth the original setting of the *sūtra*s and to analyse its complex structure anew.

II

Though the legacy of Sāṅkhya in Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* is undeniable, it is visible mainly as forming the transcendental metaphysical framework of Patañjali's teaching. We find that the categories of Sāṅkhya system like *prakṛti, puruṣa, mahat*, and *ahaṁkāra* are mostly of transcendental (non-empirical) character. The Sāṅkhya way to the so-called emancipation (*kaivalya*: isolation of *puruṣa* from *prakṛti*) goes through the discriminative knowledge of these abstract categories. This emancipatory knowledge according to the Sāṅkhya is again not empirical or meditative but intellectual and speculative. The concept of meditative realisation is absent from the classical Sāṅkhya system. Patañjali's main teaching which is enveloped in this framework is, however, empirical and practical to a large extent.

Patañjali emphasises the goal called *samādhi* which one has to attain through practice and make it a matter of experience. The vision (*prajñā*) which one attains through the practice of *samādhi* is again a direct vision. It is not of an abstract or speculative kind.

In Sāṅkhyakārikā, *Īśvara*kṛṣṇa talks of eight forms (*bhāva*) of the intellect, four of which are *sāttvika* and four *tāmasa*. *Dharma, jñāna, vairāgya* and *aiśvarya* are the *sāttvika* forms (SK 23). Regulation of conduct comes under *dharma*, whereas the emancipatory knowledge is jñāna. In this Sāṅkhya system, *dharma*, though a *sāttvika* form of the intellect, is a means to bondage and only *jñāna* is the way to emancipation. So, moral regulation of conduct does not have any direct role to play in Sāṅkhya theory of emancipation. On the other hand moral regulation of conduct through *yamas* and *niyamas* is essential for mastering *samādhi* according to Patañjali.

The empirical-practical orientation of Patañjali's Yoga therefore does not seem to be rooted in Sāṅkhya. Though it is difficult to trace the exact source of this orientation, it seems certain that this source does contain many elements which can be traced to Buddhism and a few which can be traced to Jainism.

Some orthodox scholars of Yoga have a tendency to claim that Patañjali's Yoga being prior to Jainism and Buddhism the latter two might have borrowed many ideas from the former and not vice-versa. It is forgotten that the oldest commentary of Yoga, namely *Vyāsabhāṣya* interprets some aphorisms from the fourth chapter of *Yogasūtra* as Patañjali's criticism of Yogācāra Buddhism.[5] The modern scholars, on the other hand, accept 2nd to 5th century A.D. as the possible time of the creation of *Yogasūtra*. If this view is acceptable then our study of *Yogasūtra* will have to take a different form. The more important question, however, seems to be of identifying the background literature of *Yogasūtra*. *Sūtra* literature of any school is generally understood as crystallization or abbreviation of the elaborate background literature which is already available. For example, the background literature of *Mīmāṁsā-sūtras* is Brāhmaṇa texts and that of *Brahmasūtra* is Upaniṣads. Though elaborate literature of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika schools is not found before their *sūtra*s, at least their earlier forms are seen in works like Carakasaṁhitā. Now coming to *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali, its metaphysical

framework can be traced to Sāṅkhya literature which was already available. But when we search for the background literature of the practical and experiential aspect of *Yogasūtra*, we find it rarely in the orthodox (Vedic) tradition.[6] On the other hand, a large number of concepts constituting this aspect are found mentioned, explained and discussed elaborately in the literature of Śramaṇa tradition in general and Buddhism in particular. *Yogasūtra* therefore can be understood better in the light of Sāṅkhya, as well as, Buddhist (and Jaina) literature.

Both Patañjali in *Yogasūtra* and Vyāsa in his *Bhāṣya* use Buddhist terms, concepts and doctrines while explaining the empirical and practical aspect of Yoga. But they do not acknowledge the legacy of the Buddha or Buddhist literature anywhere.[7] What could be the reason? One might claim here that the Yogic tradition which was available to Patañjali and Vyāsa already contained many elements of Buddhism, but they were so assimilated with the Yogic tradition that their separate identity was blurred or vanished. This explanation is not fully satisfactory because there are clear indications of the fact that these authors were aware of the separate identity of Buddhism. They were aware of the Buddhist doctrine of momentariness and also of the idealist school of Buddhism and they were also critical about them.[8] It seems that they were ready to accept the Buddhist ideas concerning the theory and practice of meditation but did not want to accept the theories of 'mind only' and momentariness which were associated with them. There they wanted to stick to Sāṅkhya theory of Realism and two-fold eternality.[9] They might have thought that it is possible to accommodate Buddhist practical theory of meditation and still maintain the Sāṅkhya identity of the system. This could be the reason why they borrowed many themes from the Buddhist tradition but did not acknowledge them.[10]

Another related question is: If Patañjali and Vyāsa borrowed many things from the Buddhist tradition, what could be the Buddhist text or texts which they might have followed? They must not have followed Yogācāra or Mādhyamika texts. Some scholars have compared concepts of Pātañjali-yoga with Pali Buddhism. For example, La Vallee Poussin (Bhave 1992) has compared aphorisms of Yoga with *Abhidharmakośa*, as well as, Pali Buddhism. S. N Tandon (1998), on the other hand, has focused only on Pali sources. However, though the content of Pātañjali-yoga is close to Pali Buddhist texts, it is most likely that they did not follow the texts in Pali/Magadhi language, but some texts in Sanskrit Buddhism. The texts like

Yogācārabhūmi and *Abhdharmasamuccaya* of Asaṅga and *Abhidharmakośa* and *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya of Vasubandhu* seem to be very relevant in this context.

It is important to take the points of similarity between Pātañjali-yoga and Buddhism seriously not only in order to consider how Buddhist background literature on meditation might have influenced Patañjali and Vyāsa, but also in order to understand some of the concepts in Pātañjali-yoga in a right perspective. Take for instance the two technical terms, *nirodha* and *kleśa*, they are central to Pātañjali-yoga. I want to suggest that if these terms are interpreted independently of Buddhist background, they are likely to mislead us. In classical Sanskrit, *nirodha* is generally taken to mean suppression[11] and *kleśa* is taken to mean affliction or pain.[12] If we accept these meanings in the context of Patañjali's Yoga, then the definition of '*yoga*' as '*citta-vṛtti-nirodha*' will be understood as 'suppression of the states of mind' and the five types of *kleśa* will be understood as five types of afflictions or pains. As against this, *nirodha* in the Buddhist context means cessation and *kleśa*[13] means defilement or impurity. These meanings throw better light on the Pātañjali-yoga concepts. Yoga as the state of meditative trance makes better sense if it is understood as the cessation (which can be natural or spontaneous) of mental states, rather than their suppression (which is generally deliberate or forced).[14] Similarly it makes better sense to call misconception and desire as impurities rather than as kinds of pains. In fact there is scope for interpreting the whole of Pātañjali-yoga in the Buddhist light, as a synthesis of Sāṅkhya and Buddhism. It will be a big task worth undertaking by the scholars of Buddhism and Pātañjali-yoga.

Here I would like to focus on the theme in a limited way. I want to show that due to the dual influence of Sāṅkhya and Buddhism, we many a times find Patañjali's thought oscillating between the two systems of thought. Put it differently, we sometimes find a kind of interplay of Sāṅkhya and Buddhist ideas in Patañjali's *Yogasūtra*. In what follows I will try to understand this interplay of Sāṅkhya and Buddhist elements with special reference to three notions (a) *cittavṛttinirodha*, (b) the cause of suffering, (c) *avidyā* and prajñā.

III

(a) The notion of *citta-vṛtti-nirodha*

Patañjali defines yoga as *citta-vṛtti-nirodha*. The concept of citta, which is central to the philosophy of Yoga is not basically a Sāṅkhya concept. Were Patañjali under the full influence of Sāṅkhya, he would have used the term *buddhi* or *antaḥkaraṇa* in place of *citta*. The concept of *citta*, on the other hand, is of central importance in Buddhism. Patañjali's concept of *cittavṛtti* is closely similar to the Buddhist concept of *caitta* or *cetasika*. The difference is that Patañjali offers two different classifications of *cittavṛttis*. The five-fold classification[15] is oriented to epistemology, whereas the twofold classification into *kliṣṭa* and *akliṣṭa* (defiled and non-defiled) is oriented to moral psychology and soteriology. The fivefold classification is partly rooted in Sāṅkhya epistemology which accepts three means to knowledge namely *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna* and *āgama*. But it also seems to be influenced by the Buddhist epistemology in its acceptance of *vikalpa* (mental construction) as a cognitive state. However, unlike Patañjali's classification of *cittavṛttis*, the Buddhist classification of *caittas* is not primarily epistemic, but moral-psychological-cum-soteriological. Hence through the twofold classification of *cittavṛttis*, Patañjali seems to be synthesising Sāṅkhya epistemology with Buddhist moral psychology. Having identified cittavṛtti with caitta we can say that *cittavṛttinirodha* of Patañjali in Buddhist terminology will be *caittanirodha*. The highest state of meditative trance in the Buddhist theory of meditation is called *saṁjñā-vedayita-nirodha* (cessation of perception as well as sensation),[16] which according to Vasubandhu is *citta-caitta-nirodha* (cessation of mind and mental states).[17]

Patañjali, however, does not set aside the Sāṅkhya framework completely even while defining yoga as *cittavṛttinirodha*. In the very next aphorism (YS, I.3) he brings in the concept of the seer (*draṣṭā*) and describes its role in this highest stage of meditative trance. He points out that the seer, *draṣṭā* (which the commentators identify with *puruṣa*), who otherwise would assimilate the self with modifications of mind, remains in the original state (that of witness – consciousness) at this stage.

The notion of *citta-vṛtti-nirodha* does not presuppose any eternal entity by itself. *Citta-vṛtti-nirodha* in Pātañjali yoga is often identified with *samādhi*. *Samādhi* in Buddhism is defined as single-pointedness of mind ("*ekāgratā cittasya*"), where neither the mind nor the single object on which it concentrates is regarded as eternal. *Nirvāṇa*, which is identified with *nirodha* in Buddhism, is described in *Abhidharmakośa* as an unconditioned phenomenon (*asaṁskṛta-dharma*),[18] but it is described not as a positive entity, nor does it presuppose the existence of any eternal positive entity. As against this, Patañjali's description of *samādhi* in terms of *draṣṭā* (identified with the Sāṅkhya *puruṣa*) is eternalistic. Patañjali in this way tries to synthesise the non-eternalistic Buddhist model with the eternalistic Sāṅkhya framework.

(b) Duḥkha and its cause

The Buddha said that all composite things are objects of suffering. One of the explanations was that every composite thing (*saṁskāra*) is impermanent, and impermanence makes it unsatisfactory. Sometimes a broader explanation was given. According to it everything is an object of suffering in any of the three ways (i) *duḥkhaduḥkhatā*: certain things are objects of suffering because they are painful in themselves, (ii) *saṁskāraduḥkhatā*: certain things are objects of suffering because they are composite (*saṁskāra*) in nature (and hence are subject to destruction), (iii) vipariṇāma*duḥkhatā*: certain things are objects of suffering because they result into suffering. This threefold explanation of suffering is called the doctrine of *trividha-duḥkhatā*.[19] Following this Buddhist understanding, Patañjali maintains in *Yogasūtra* 2.15 that everything is an object of suffering according to a wise (discriminating) person. Here he supports this thesis by giving an explanation in terms of *trividha-duḥkhatā* ("*pariṇāma-tāpa-saṁskāra-duḥkhaiḥ*").

The above explanation of suffering appears to be largely empirical. Though Patañjali accepts it, he is not fully satisfied with it as he has also accepted at the same time the metaphysical framework of Sāṅkhya. Hence, in the same aphorism he supplements the empirical explanation with a typically Sāṅkhya metaphysical

explanation. He gives the latter in terms of mutual opposition amongst the strands of *prakṛti* (*guṇavṛttivirodhāt*).

Just as Patañjali brings the Buddhist and Sāṅkhya elements together in his explanation of the unsatisfactory character of all things, he does in his analysis of the origin of suffering, as well. In *Yogasūtra* 2.3 to 2.15, he gives a casual explanation of suffering in terms of *kleśas* (defects or defilements of mind) which is largely empirical and influenced by the Buddhist explanation. Asaṅga in *Abhidharmasamuccaya* refers to six *kleśas* (ADS, p. 43). In *Abhidharmakośa* Chapter V, Vasubandhu discusses six *anuśayas* (latent tendencies) which he identifies with *kleśas* (defilements).[20] They are *rāga* (desire), *pratigha* (hatred), *māna* (ego, pride), *avidyā* (misconception), *dṛṣṭi* (dogmatic view) and *vicikitsā* (doubt).[21] Except vicikitsā, the remaining five are comparable to the five *kleśas* namely *raga*,[22] *dveṣa*, *asmitā*,[23] *avidyā* and *abhiniveśa*[24] respectively from Patañjali's list. In Patañjali's explanation in terms of *kleśas*, *avidyā* stands for the fundamental defilement, the root-cause of all sufferings. (We shall see that Patañjali defines *avidyā* in a typically Buddhist fashion). The last three *kleśas* in Patañjali's list correspond to the three kinds of *tṛṣṇā* accepted in Buddhism, namely, *kāmatṛṣṇā*, *vibhavatṛṣṇā* and *bhavatṛṣṇā* (desire of pleasure, aversion and desire to be born that is, fear of death) respectively. In *Yogasūtra* 2.16 to 2.18, Patañjali comes back to the Sāṅkhya explanation of the cause of suffering. Here the union of *prakṛti* (*dṛśya*) and *puruṣa* (*draṣṭā*) is itself regarded as the cause of suffering that needs to be avoided.

Thus, we find that Patañjali presents Buddhist-style explanation and the Sāṅkhya-style explanation of the cause of suffering almost separately. He presents them in juxtaposition but does not relate them or formulate any clear synthesis of them. It is possible that Patañjali wants to arrive at a synthesis between the two by distinguishing between subtle and gross defilements. In *Yogasūtra* 2.10 and 2.11, he suggests that the gross manifestations of *kleśas* could be overcome with the help of meditation, but the subtle *kleśas* can be overcome only by the reverse process by which the manifestations of *Prakṛti* merge into their origin. Thus, the Sāṅkhya metaphysics seems to operate at a subtle level and the Buddhist theory and practice of overcoming sufferings at gross level. This the distinction made by Patañjali has its background in Vasubandhu's distinction between *bhāvanā*-

heya-kleśa and *darśana-heya-kleśa*.[25] For Vasubandhu, gross defilements such as lust and hatred can be abandoned with the help of meditation. But subtler defilements such as misconception and dogmatic views can be abandoned with the help of right vision. This right vision for Vasubandhu is the vision regarding the four noble truths and impermanence of all things. Though Patañjali accepts the basic distinction between the two types of *kleśas* to be abandoned by meditation and right vision respectively, he replaces the Buddhist conception of right vision by the Sāṅkhya concept of right vision, which consists in discrimination between *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* (which is followed by the merger of all manifestations into *prakṛti*: '*pratiprasava*'). Hence he replaces Vasubandhu's '*darśana-heya*' by '*pratiprasava-heya*'. The situation, however, seems to be more complex than this, because Patañjali's concepts of *avidyā* and *prajñā* are again dominated by Buddhist-style considerations.

(c) *Avidyā* and *prajñā*

The Yoga concept of *avidyā* has not always been understood very clearly. Vyāsa and other commentators have identified *avidyā* with *viparyaya*, one of the *citta-vṛttis*. But though *avidyā* could be construed as a special kind of *viparyaya*, it cannot be identified with viparyaya as such. Any false cognition or a misidentification is *viparyaya*. But *avidyā* which is at the root of all *kleśas* is a special kind of misidentification, which is quite different from the misidentification we come across in our daily life.

Though *avidyā* cannot be identified with *viparyaya*, which is a kind of *cittavṛtti*, it is not irrelevant to *cittavṛttis* in general. As we have seen, Patañjali advances two classifications of *citta-vṛttis*. One is a two-fold classification into *kliṣṭa* and *akliṣṭa*,[26] which has been made from a moral-spiritual point of view. The other is the five-fold classification into *pramāṇa, viparyaya, vikalpa, nidrā* and *smṛti* (YS 1.6), which has been made from epistemological point of view. That a particular state of mind is epistemologically veridical or non-veridical does not necessarily imply that it is morally-spiritually sound or unsound (respectively). *Pramāṇa-citta-vṛtti* (true cognition) is epistemologically sound. But a person may be inclined to

have a true cognition out of some desire or aversion or confusion about what is permanent and what is impermanent. In that case the same state of mind would be called defiled (*kliṣṭa*)– a morally-spiritually unsound state. On the other hand, certain illusions, though they are epistemologically non-veridical states of mind, may not be defiled states, as they may not involve desire or aversion. A stick half-immersed into water, for instance, looks bent even to an emancipated person.

Avidyā, according to Patañjali, is the ground of all other defilements. It is therefore more correct to include *avidyā* in the two-fold classification of *citta-vṛttis* into defiled and non-defiled (*kliṣṭa* and *akliṣṭa*) than in the five-fold classification into *pramāṇa, viparyaya* etc.

Though the concept of *avidyā* cannot be identified with the Yoga concept of *viparyaya*, it can be identified with the Buddhist concept of *viparyāsa*. Both the concepts, *avidyā* of Yoga and *viparyāsa* of Buddhism stand for wrongly identifying impermanent things as permanent, impure things as pure, unpleasant things as pleasant and soul-less things as soul-possessing.[27] This concept of *avidyā/viparyāsa* is a typically Buddhist concept in that it presupposes that all phenomena are non-eternal and non-substantial (soul-less). On the other hand, we have typically eternalistic and substantialist versions of *avidyā* upheld by the systems like Sāṅkhya and Vedānta. These systems accept the existence of both: an eternal reality on the one hand and the non-eternal phenomenal world on the other. They talk of beings possessing the substance called self or soul as against the empirical phenomena not possessing it. So, wrongly identifying the non-eternal as the eternal as well as the eternal as the non-eternal would amount to *avidyā* in these systems. Similarly, wrongly identifying soul-less things as the soul-possessing ones and soul-possessing things as the soul-less ones would amount to it. That Patañjali does not present his concept of *avidyā* in such an eternalistic fashion but presents it in a typically Buddhist fashion clearly indicates that there he is under the influence of Buddhism.

The Buddhist-style conception of *avidyā* which does not presuppose any eternal entity would be thought to be inadequate or at least incomplete in an eternalistic framework. And since Patañjali had accepted the eternalistic framework of Sāṅkhya, he might have felt unsatisfied with the non-eternalistic conception of

avidyā which he himself presented. This might have led him to come back to Sāṅkhya framework in the very next aphorism[28] where he defines the second *kleśa* namely, *asmitā* (ego). Patañjali defines it as a false union of *dṛkśakti* and *darśanaśakti*. By *dṛkśakti* Patañjali means *draṣṭā*, the seer, that is, *puruṣa*. By *darśanaśakti* he refers to 'seeing', which is the active aspect of cognition. *Darśanaśakti* thus refers to *buddhi* of the Sāṅkhya system, which is responsible for all cognitive activities. Vyāsa, the commentator, substantiates this interpretation by referring to Pañcaśikha's statement that the one who does not see *puruṣa* as distinct from *buddhi* regards *buddhi* as ātman that is, as one's own self.[29] The concept of *asmitā* as that of the false union of *puruṣa* and *buddhi*, gives us a typically Sāṅkhya conception of metaphysical misconception.

Patañjali in this way seems to present a two-fold conception of ignorance/ false conception which is at the root of suffering. The first aspect of it is the false conception of reality that consists in wrongly seeing something eternal, pure, pleasant and soul-possessing. Patañjali calls it *avidyā*. The second aspect consists in the metaphysical confusion between the pure, passive consciousness of *puruṣa* and the cognitive activity of the intellect (*buddhi*). Patañjali calls it *asmitā*. Patañjali presents the two aspects one after the other but does not bring out any clear relationship between them. In the bipolar structure of Patañjali's thought we have *avidyā* and *asmitā* as the basic forms of ignorance, on the one hand and *prajñā* and *vivekakhyāti* as the forms of wisdom, on the other. Patañjali's conception of *prajñā* as the emancipatory wisdom has its roots in Buddhism.

Three kinds of wisdom (*prajñā*) were recognised in Buddhism. In early stages of one's pilgrimage towards emancipation from suffering one is verbally/scripturally informed about the impermanent, impure, unpleasant and non-soul-possessing character of reality. The verbal/scriptural knowledge of this kind is called *śrutamayī prajñā*. This wisdom is later on strengthened with the help of reasoning. The form of wisdom which emerges through it is called *cintāmayī prajñā*. But even this form of wisdom is imperfect; it attains perfection through the practice of meditative concentration. Wisdom in its perfect form is called *bhāvanāmayī prajñā.* It is a direct vision of the reality.[30]

Patañjali accepts the same classification of prajñā and calls them as *śrutaprajñā*, *anumānaprajñā* and *ṛtambharā prajñā* (truth-bearing wisdom).

It is interesting to note that the three kinds of *prajñā* correspond (in reverse order) to the three *pramāṇas*, namely *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna* and *āgama* accepted by Patañjali. Interestingly again, these are the same *pramāṇas* which are accepted in Sāṅkhya system. But the functions of these three pramāṇas vis à vis emancipatory knowledge in the two systems namely, Sāṅkhya and Yoga are fundamentally different. In *Sāṅkhyakārikā* (verse 5) we are told that the objects which are subtle or transcendent are not the objects of direct knowledge, but that they are the objects of speculative reasoning (*sāmānyatodṛṣṭa anumāna*) or scriptural knowledge (*āgama*). So the Sāṅkhya-style emancipatory knowledge which consists in the discrimination between the ultimate transcendent categories, namely *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*, is ultimately intellectual or scriptural. On the other hand, the emancipatory knowledge according to Patañjali's Yoga is of meditative and direct character. *Ṛtambharā prajñā* of Patañjali's Yoga shares this characteristic with *bhāva*nāmayī prajñā of early Buddhism.

But *bhāvanāmayī prajñā* of Buddhism consists in seeing things as non-eternal, impure, unpleasant and soul-less. It represents the radical negation of *viparyāsas* (which Patañjali identifies with *avidyā*). It is clearly non-eternalistic. It is quite possible that Patañjali was not fully satisfied with it as he had accepted the eternalistic framework of Sāṅkhya. So, he frequently refers to *vivekakhyāti* (discriminative knowledge) which is a typically Sāṅkhya concept of emancipatory knowledge.

Patañjali introduces the concept of *prajñā* also in the second chapter of *Yogasūtra*, as sevenfold ultimate understanding (*saptadhā prāntabhūmiḥ prajñā*).[31] Vyāsa's explanation of this sevenfold understanding exhibits a synthesis of Buddhism and Sāṅkhya. In fact, here basically Patañjali and then Vyāsa use the framework of four noble truths in the form of *heya, heyahetu, hāna* and *hānopāya* (prospective suffering which is to be abandoned; cause of the thing to be abandoned; abandonment of the thing to be abandoned; the means of abandoning the thing to be abandoned). In Buddhism the four noble truths (suffering, the cause of suffering, cessation of suffering and the path leading to the cessation of suffering)

are further elaborated in terms of their nature, the treatment to be given to them and the state of having given the due treatment to them. In this way the four noble truths assume twelve forms. The Buddhist tradition holds that the Buddha had twelve-fold knowledge of the four noble truths.[32] The twelve-fold knowledge can be presented in the tabular form as follows:

Truth: The form of the truth to be known→	The nature of the truth (*satya*)	What is to be done with the truth (*kṛtya*)	What is to be done is done. (*kṛta*)
duḥkha	1. Suffering of various kinds	5. To be known fully (*parijñeyam*)	9. Is known fully (*parijñātam*)
samudaya	2. *Avidyā* or *tṛṣṇā* as the cause of suffering	6. To be abandoned (*prahātavyaḥ*)	10. Is abandoned (*prahīṇaḥ*)
nirodha	3. Cessation of suffering	7. To be realised (*sākṣātkartavyaḥ*)	11. Is realised (*sākṣātkṛtaḥ*)
mārga	4. Noble eight-fold path	8. To be practised (*bhāvayitavyaḥ*)	12. Is practised (*bhāvitaḥ*)

This is, thus, the background of Vyāsa's explanation of the seven-fold ultimate understanding.

Vyāsa here classifies the emancipatory understanding into two liberations, cognitive and mental liberation (*prajñāvimukti* and *cetovimukti*).[33] He includes four types of understanding under cognitive liberation and three types of understanding under mental liberation.[34] He explains the fourfold cognitive liberation as: *heya* is known fully so that nothing of it remains to be known; the causes of *heya* are destroyed so that none of them remains to be destroyed; the abandonment is realised by cessational absorption (*nirodha-samādhi*); the means to abandonment in the form of discriminatory knowledge is practised. The fourfold understanding clearly reflects the fourfold knowledge of the form, 'what is to be done is done', which is shown in the last column of the table above. Vyāsa then explains the threefold mental liberation (*cittavimukti*) as: the *buddhi* has fulfilled its function; the guṇas tend to merge in their causes not to emerge again; and *puruṣa* shines as a pure being without any relation to the guṇas. It can be clearly seen that he explains mental liberation vividly in the terminology of Sāṅkhya.[35]

IV

In the foregoing discussion we have seen that Patañjali while presenting some of the fundamental ideas of his philosophy is under the dual influence of Sāṅkhya and Buddhism. The Sāṅkhya influence largely consists in Patañjali's acceptance of the transcendent metaphysical framework in which *prakṛti* (which Patañjali terms as *guṇas, dṛśya* etc.,) and *puruṣa* (which Patañjali terms as *draṣṭā, dṛkśakti* and also as *puruṣa)* are the basic categories. Wrongly identifying *puruṣa* with *prakṛti*, or, to be more specific, with *buddhi* (which Patañjali calls *darśana-śakti)*, and not discriminating between them amount to the metaphysical misconception which manifests itself in the formation of ego (*asmitā*), whereas the emancipatory knowledge consists in discriminating between the two categories. In this state of discriminatory knowledge, *puruṣa*, the seer, is supposed to perform his basic role of a passive witness, which he does not perform at other times due to admixture with the operations of the intellect (*buddhi*).

On the other hand, there is the Buddhist influence as well, which largely consists in the empirical-practical message contained in the *Yogasūtra*. According to the latter, emancipation from suffering is not achieved through the speculative knowledge of some metaphysical categories. It is rather realised through the practical regulation of one's life with the help of *yama-niyamas* (moral-spiritual regulations and observances), *dhāraṇā-dhyāna-samādhi* (meditation leading to cessation of the operations of mind) and *prajñā* (the emancipatory vision which sees all phenomena as impermanent, impure, unpleasant and soul-less).

We have also seen that the Sāṅkhya approach was eternalistic whereas the Buddhist approach was non-eternalistic. Patañjali however, brings them together and tries to bring about a synthesis between the two. He seems to do this by accepting the former as the framework and fitting the latter into it.

Patañjali's attempt towards the synthesis between the two elements raises some philosophical issues. Can eternalism and non-eternalism go together? Is it necessary to present the empirical/practical way of emancipating from suffering, (which is the central message of Patañjali's Yoga) in the eternalistic metaphysical framework of Sāṅkhya? Or can it be presented independently of it? Have Patañjali

and Vyāsa succeeded in synthesising the two systems together and creating a homogenous whole out of them? These issues lead us to a different kind of enquiry which has philosophical, as well as, practical implications.

Notes

1. This is an updated version of the paper published in *Journal of Buddhist Studies*, (Sri Lanka and Hong Kong), Vol. XII, 2014-15, pp. 107-122. The author is grateful to K. L. Dhammajoti, the editor of the journal for his permission to republish the paper.

2. *Sarvadarśanasaṁgraha* of Sāyaṇamādhava refers to Patañjali's philosophy as *seśvara-sāṁkhya*. However, Bronkhorst rightly has reservations in calling the Yoga of *Yogasūtra* and Yogabhāṣya as seśvara-sāṅkhya. See Bronkhorst (1981).

3. Bronkhorst (1981) supports this view. He also argues that the closest approximation to what we know about the 'Sāṁkhya with God' from the *Tattvasaṅgraha* and *Pañjikā* seems to be found among the Pañcarātras.

4. Here I am treating Patañjali and Vyāsa as the two personalities the former being the author of *Yogasūtra* and the latter that of Yogabhāṣya as per the tradition. Bronkhorst (1985) argues that the author of Yogabhāṣya who was either named Patañjali, or wrote Yogabhāṣya in the name of Patañjali, was himself the compiler of the *Yogasūtra*. Brnkhorst's well-argued claim, does not affect my main line of argument. It would imply, however, that while considering the Buddhist influence and the synthesis of Sāṅkhya and Buddhism in Yoga school, we have to take into account *Yogasūtra* and Yogabhāṣya together.

5. In VB IV.21 and IV.24, Vyāsa criticises Buddhists calling them *vaināśika*.

6. For example, the concept of *Īśvara* as an object of meditation, the syllable '*Om*' as the symbol for *Īśvara*, and a few ideas of this kind are found not in Buddhism or Jainism but in orthodox tradition.

7. This attitude of Patañjali and Vyāsa can be contrasted with that of the Vedāntin Gauḍapāda who in *Āgamaśāstra* borrows many ideas from Yogācāra and Mādhyamika Buddhism and also explicitly refers to the Buddha approvingly. See for example ASG IV.83-84, 88, 99.

8. Aphorisms 15 to 21 of YS chapter 4 constitute Patañjali's criticism of Buddhist idealism and the doctrine of momentariness. Vyāsa in his commentary of aphorisms 14 to 22 makes the criticism explicit where he refers to Buddhists as Kṣaṇikavādin and Vaināśika.

9. '*kūṭasthanityatā*' and '*pariṇāminityatā*'. Vide VB 4.33.

10. The situation can be compared with a traditional Hindu marriage in which the wife loses the identity given by the earlier family and assumes the husband's identity. Similarly, here the Buddhist meditation theory loses its original Buddhist identity and assimilates itself with the Sāṅkhya identity. How successful this conversion becomes is a different question?

11. Monier Williams' dictionary gives the following meanings of the verb '*ni-rudh*': to hold back, stop, hinder, shut up, confine, restrain, check, suppress and destroy. Here the verb is transitive. The word nirodha in Buddhism is used generally in intransitive sense such as ceasing, being stopped/

destroyed, where the agent is generally absent. Nirodha in Buddhism as 'stoppage' is also not transitive (of the form 'X stops y'), but intransitive ('y stops').

12. Monier Williams' dictionary gives the following meanings of the word *kleśa*: pain, affliction, distress, pain from disease, anguish. None of them are applicable to the term *kleśa* in the *Yogasūtra*.

13. Namely, Misconception (avidyā), Egoism (*asmitā*), Desire (raga), Aversion (*dveṣa*) and Attachment to existence (*abhiniveśa*); YS, 2.3.

14. Bronkhorst (1993, 71) too translates the definition of yoga as "the suppression of the activities of the mind" and associates it with mainstream meditation in Jaina and Hindu scriptures. I however treat this definition of Yoga as a mark of Buddhist influence.

15. "*vṛttayḥ pañcatayyaḥ kliṣṭākliṣṭāḥ/ pramāṇaviparyayavikalpanidrāsmṛtayaḥ/*", YS, 1.5-6.

16. Or *saṁjñāveditanirodha*. See ADKB, II.44. Bronkhorst (1993:86-7) doubts the generally accepted view that cessation of ideations and feelings (*saṁjñāvedayitanirodha*) was the final stage of meditation according to the Buddha. Bronkhorst's main concern there is: what must have been the Buddha's own view about meditation? Whether Bronkhorst's argument is acceptable or not, my suggestion is that the view that *saṁjñāvedayitanirodha* (what Vasubandhu calls *cittacaittanirodha*) was the final stage of *samādhi* type of meditation according to Buddhism might have been present before the author of the *Yogasūtra*. It is possible to argue that the Buddha shared with the non-Buddhist tradition the technique of concentration meditation (*samādhi* or samatha meditation with formed as well as formless objects) after considerable modification, but the technique which he introduced anew was mindfulness (*sati*) meditation.

17. So, he asks, "*kasmāt punarete cittacaittanirodhasvabhāve satyāv asaṁjñisamāpattiḥ saṁjñāvedita-nirodhasamāpattiś cocyete*?" ("If these stages are of the nature of nirodha of citta and caitta, why are they called *asaṁjñi-samāpatti* and *saṁjñāvedayitanirodha samāpatti*?"), Ibid.

18. "*trividhaṁ cāpyasaṁsaṁskṛtam/ ākāśaṁ dvau nirodhau ca...*", ADK, I.4.

19. "*tisro hi duḥkhatā, duḥkhaduḥkhatā, saṁskāraduḥkhatā, vipariṇāmaduḥkhatā ca*", ADKB, VI.3.

20. Vasubandhu distinguishes between dormant (*prasupta*) *kleśa* and awakened (*prabuddha*) *kleśa* and identifies the former with *anuśaya*. See ADKB, V.2. *Prasupta* is a kind or stage of *kleśa* according to *Yogasūtra* (YS, 2.4).

21. Patañjali does not give the status of defilement to doubt (*vicikitsā* or *saṁśaya*), but includes it in the classification of *cittavṛttis*.

22. There is a striking similarity between Patañjali's definition of *rāga* as '*sukhānuśayī rāgaḥ*'(YS, II.7) and a statement quoted by Vasubandhu, "*so'sya bhavati sukhāyāṁ vedanāyām rāgānuśayaḥ*." ADKB, V.2 (p. 279).

23. Vasubandhu also uses the words *asmitā* and *asmimāna* for *māna*. See ADK, V.11 and ADKB on it. However, Patañjali assimilates *asmitā* with the *ahaṁkāra* of Sāṅkhya system. See the discussion of *asmitā* in the next section.

24. Vasubandhu explains dogmatic view as *abhiniveśa*. See ADK, V.8.

25. Vasubandhu discusses in detail the issue as to which defilements are to be abandoned by meditation (*bhāva*nā) and which by vision or insight (*dṛk* or *darśana*) in ADK and ADKB, V.4-14.

26. "*vṛttayaḥ pañcatayyaḥ, kliṣṭākliṣṭāḥ*", YS, I.5.

27. "*catvāro viparyāsāḥ. anitye nityamiti, duḥkhe sukhamiti, aśucau śucīti, anātmny ātmeti.*" ADKB, V.8. Patañjali's definition of *avidyā* goes parallel to it: "*anityāśuciduḥkhānātmasu nityaśucisukhātmakhyātir avidyā*", YS, II.5.

28. "*dṛgdarśanaśaktyorekātmatā iva asmitā*", YS, 2.6.

29. "*buddhitaḥ paraṁ puruṣamākāraśīlavidyādibhirvibhaktamapaśyan kuryāttatrātmabuddhiṁ mohena.*", VB, 2.6.

30. The three types of prajñā are explained in ADKB, VI.5.

31. "tasya saptadhā prāntabhūmiḥ prajñā", YS, 2.27.

32. Vasubandhu calls it the twelve-fold path of knowledge (*dṛṅmārga*) and identifies it as twelve-fold wheel of *dharma* (*dvādaśākāraṁ dharma*cakram). He explains: "*Kathaṁ dvādaśākāram? caturṇāṁ satyānāṁ tridhākaraṇāt. duḥkhaṁ samudayo nirodho mārga iti. parijñeyaṁ praheyaṁ sākṣātkartavyaṁ bhāvayitavyamiti. parijñātaṁ prahīṇaṁ sākṣātkṛtaṁ bhāvitamiti.*" ADKB, VI.54.

33. This two-fold division of liberation is found in Buddhist *Sūtra*s. "*dve vimuktī sūtra ukte. cetovimuktiḥ prajñāvimuktiśca*", ADKB, VI.76.

34. "*eṣā catuṣṭayī kārya-vimuktiḥ prajñāyāḥ. cittavimuktistu trayī....*", VB, II.27.

35. See VB, II.27. La Vallee Poussin claims that the last three *prajñās* resemble what the *Arhat* calls *kṣayajñāna* and *anutpādajñāna*. (See Bhave 1992, 9). However, although there is formal similarity between the two, the use of Sāṅkhya terminology in Vyāsa's explanation cannot be overlooked.

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ADK: *Abhidharmakośa* as in *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya of Vasubandhu*. Edited by P. Pradhan. Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1967.

ADKB: *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. See above.

ADS: *Abhidharmasmuccaya*. Edited by P. Pradhan. Sa Visva Bharati, Santiniketan, 1950.

ASG: *The Āgamaśāstra of Gauḍapāda*. Edited and translated by Vidhushekhar Bhattacharya. Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1943.

SK: *Sāṇkhyakārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa (with Sāṅkhyatattvakaumudī of Vācaspatimiśra)*. Benares: Jaya Krishna das Haridas G, 1937.

YS: *Yogasūtra* as included in *Pātañjalayogadarśanam, Tattvavaiśāradī-saṁvalita-vyāsabhāṣya-sametam*. Varanasi: Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, 1963.

VB: *Vyāsabhāṣya* on *Yogasūtra* as included in *Pātañjalayogadarśanam, Tattvavaiśāradī-saṁvalita-vyāsabhāṣya-sametam*. See above.

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Andal: Afterlife of a 9th Century Woman Poet

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I. Introduction

Many saint poets, men and women, belonging to what has come to be known as the *bhakti* movement, have rich afterlives. Abiding in memory and imagination, they become expressions of communities, cultures, nations and people. Some achieve immortality in their lifetimes. Others were rediscovered and revived more recently to become part of literary discourses and mass-mediated popular culture. Akka Mahadevi, Andal, Basava, Chokhamela, Jnaneshwar, Kabir, Mirabai, Ravidas, Tulsidas and others have remained in the consciousness of the devotional public across regions for centuries.

Methodologically, the course of the afterlife of saint poets is hard to track. History and legend get interwoven in the narratives that emerge. Andal belongs to early India[1] for which documented historical sources are limited. Even for later saint poets like Mirabai or Sant Tukaram, popular stories are in active circulation, overwhelming the sparse documented accounts. But both contribute to our understanding, each in its own way.

Over time, afterlives may diminish or flourish. The narratives vary depending on the context and site. Whether they were in a fraternity or were lone voices, whether they were disturbing the social order, and other issues like the prevalent kinds of political patronage come into play in how the poetry is received at different

times. The authorship of a poem cannot always be established. As A.K. Ramanujan (1999, 281–4) points out, saints within a language formed clusters, being in familial relationships with each other, supporting each other, and thus making for 'composite saints.' Sometimes the genre (*abhang* or bhajan or *vachana*)[2] was the badge of identity, not the individual. Anonymous poets would take on the identity of a known poet, writing in that style. Genres and tropes moved from one poet to another and crossed geographical borders. Dates are always debated, more so for the early groups. The afterlife of a saint poet must be quilted together in a patchwork, from multiple sources. Fact and truth need to be integrated. This makes for methodological complexity.[3]

The concept of afterlife allows us to follow the story of a historical personage or institution or event or book or object as it travels in time and space, acquiring, so to say, a life of its own. The anthropological approach to afterlife that I take points out how, through memory and recursive practice, some form of the subject of our attention is kept alive as a link to the historical and mythological past. Each 'site' of afterlife that we may either stumble upon or approach purposefully represents the crucial institutional structures of a particular society/culture at a particular time. It is where the afterlife is made and unmade, some strands rendered visible and others erased. As part of the toolkit of writing biographies, the concept of afterlife moves our understanding of the subject to a dynamic plane.[4]

Andal is one of the twelve Alvar saint poets of the Sri Vaishnava tradition, the youngest and the only woman among them. The Alvars and the sixty three Saiva Nayanmars were venerated all over the region through their devotional hymns in Tamil composed between the 7th and 9th centuries CE. The emotionally charged outpourings for their personal God – Vishnu or Siva – were unlike any earlier genre of literature in any Indian language. They are considered to be inaugurators of a new genre of ecstatic mystical poetry which spread to many regions, through many languages in the country, over more than a thousand years.

Andal's afterlife has been one of dazzling continuity. Within a century of her lifetime, her poetry was included in the Sri Vaishnava sacred canon. By the 12th

century, she was transformed into a goddess, the only Alvar to be deified. She started gaining a formal presence in temple liturgy, iconography, epigraphy and hagiography. It continues undimmed. Yet, despite all the attention being given to *Bhakti* and Sufism in current popular and academic discourses, Andal and the Alvars are not well-known outside southern India.

Andal has composed two poems – *Tiruppavai* and *Nacchiyar Tirumoli* – counted as among the finest in Tamil devotional literature. Both are part of the *Nalayira Divya Prabandham – Prabandham* in short – a compilation of Alvar poetry. *Tiruppavai*, consisting of congregational prayers to Vishnu for blessings, is extremely popular. Lesser known is *Nacchiyar Tirumoli* in Andal's individual voice, passionately expressing her love for Vishnu, sometimes in explicit physical terms. In Sri Vaishnava tradition, both poems are given a prominent place.[5]

The antiquity, literary excellence and musicality of Andal's poetry, its intensely personal voice, and her life story have inspired many devotees and admirers. *Nacchiyar Tirumoli* has also raised questions regarding a young unmarried woman not only composing poetry in the 'bridal mysticism' genre but expressing an intense desire for marriage to and physical union with Vishnu and acting upon it.

The present essay traverses some of the sites in which Andal's afterlife has played out – in canonical religion, politics, civil society and popular culture. It is a selective exercise, depending upon the kind of material available and the issues that I personally have an engagement with as an anthropologist with a feminist perspective.

The very first site for inquiry is Andal's own life and poetry. What were the circumstances that created *Nacchiyar Tirumoli*? For this we need to look at the Alvars as a collectivity. To do this, I focus on nascent Sri Vaishnavism from the century after Andal's lifetime, until a few centuries later, when it develops into a sect with a fully worked out theology and temple-centred liturgy, rituals and practice, in which Andal holds a central place. The most important question here is this: given the substance and style of *Nacchiyar Tirumoli*, how was it accepted as an integral part of the Sri Vaishnava canon? Another connected question: how

does this canonical acceptance manifest itself? Furthermore: when and how was Andal transformed into a goddess?

Three other sites of Andal's afterlife that I explore are contemporary: the popular culture of Tamil Nadu, the political domain of this state, and the intellectual discourses on *bhakti* and feminism. Andal's presence in popular devotional culture is palpable in the Tamil region and, to some extent, in the Telugu and Kannada regions too. How does Andal's poetry interweave through religious and secular realms, straddling multiple performative genres?

After independence, the politics of religion, secularism and cultural memory played out in different ways in the erstwhile Madras state during the Congress rule and later in the successive governments based on Dravidian nationalism. Between the latter's ideological roots in rationalism and atheism and its commitment to reviving ancient Tamil literature, the devotional poetry of the Alvars and Nayanmars posed uncomfortable contradictions. One controversy that arose in 2018 was regarding an allegedly disrespectful remark on Andal made by the famous poet and writer R. Vairamuthu. This is discussed later in the essay. He raised the possibility that Andal had been a *devadasi* in the Ranganatha temple of Srirangam, without contextualizing the meanings of that fraught term. The issue galvanized various sections of Tamil society including political parties, religious organizations and civil society. Underneath the sound and fury lurked a deeper question. How did groups ideologically and politically hostile to each other all lay claims to Andal's legacy and unite in denigrating the category of '*devadasi*'?

There is a flourishing cottage industry of informed devotees writing on Andal, especially in internet chat groups. Translations of her poetry abound.[6] There are scholarly analyses from the literary, *bhakti* and feminist perspectives. How does Andal's story fit into the notion of a pan-Indian *bhakti* movement? Are we able to interpret her poetry through a particularly feminist lens, since she is a woman and wrote with what might seem like a combination of radicalism and conservatism? This is the site in which, through my writing, I too am adding a few strands to her afterlife.

In each of these sites, overlapping questions and issues get thrown up. But the central question about the spark that created *Nacchiyar Tirumoli* remains a mystery. Growing up in a Tamil home, I have, as a child, listened to Andal's story, wide-eyed at the magical moment when she walks into the Srirangam temple dressed in bridal finery, climbs into the *sanctum* near the idol of Ranganatha and simply disappears. As a student of classical music, I have spent enchanted evenings learning the *Tiruppavai* songs, without giving much thought to the meanings. Lately, my intellectual engagements in the fields of gender and culture have pulled me back to themes that I had absorbed unselfconsciously as a young girl.

II. Andal among the Alvars

Andal's life and poetry are inseparable from the Alvars' poetry which is foundational for the Sri Vaishnava sect in its formation, philosophy and practice.[7] The twelve Alvars composed their poetry over three centuries from 7th century CE to 9th century CE. Andal belonged to the last phase and was the adoptive daughter of Periyalvar, a highly revered and popular Alvar. The Alvars were drawn from all the four *varnas*.[8] They did not campaign against caste. But they were insistent on direct access to and communication with God, welcoming all devotees of Vishnu. The Tamil devotional communities that were formed in this era "cut across caste, sex and other hierarchies of orthodox Hinduism … (more) a movement towards communal solidarity than an expression of social protest" (Peterson 1989, 9). The peripatetic Alvars visited the important Vishnu temples in the region and composed hymns called *mangalashasanams* on them.[9]

These hundred and eight temples are known as *divya desams* and make up the sacred geography of Sri Vaishnavism (Neelakrishnan 1992). The poetry of the Alvars and Nayanmars is the first literary expression of *bhakti*, the first sizable corpus of full-fledged religious poems in Tamil and the first Hindu sectarian scripture in a language other than Sanskrit.[10]

By the 10th century, Alvar poetry – the individual songs being called *pasurams* ('*song of praise*') – had been compiled into the '*Nalayira Divya Prabandham*' (*The*

Four thousand Divine Hymns) by the theologian Nathamuni. It soon became the most sacred of the Sri Vaishnava texts, referred to as *Tamizh Marai* or Tamil Veda. We shall return to this later in the section.

Andal was the only Alvar who acquired divine status. She is considered an incarnation (*avataram*) of Bhooma Devi, consort of Vishnu, whereas the other Alvars are each an aspect (*amsam*) of one of Vishnu's symbols – conch, discus and so on. While Alvar idols are consecrated in smaller shrines around the *sanctum* of the temple, Andal is the presiding deity in the temple in her birthplace of Srivilliputtur.

Life story

Andal's life story as gleaned from her own poetry, hagiographic accounts, commentaries on the *Prabandham* and popular legends has been widely published. I only give a brief sketch here.[11]

Andal was a foundling, her caste unknown, discovered by the Vishnu devotee Vishnuchittar under the Tulsi plant in the temple garden near his home. A Brahmin by birth, he was a priest at the Srivilliputtur temple. He had himself composed devotional poetry, was recognized as an Alvar, and widely known as Periyalvar. Vishnuchittar raised his daughter, Kothai/Goda devi as she was named, in an atmosphere of prayer and worship, teaching her the Alvar hymns. The little girl developed a deep devotion towards Vishnu in the form of Lord Ranganatha, the presiding deity of Srirangam, dreaming that she would marry only him. In *Nacchiyar Tirumoli*, she cries in anguish that she would rather give up her life than marry an earthly mortal, when her body and soul were for Ranganatha alone. Vishnuchittar also got divine signals in his dreams that Ranganatha would marry her. Eventually, after failing to dissuade her, he accompanied Andal, who set out in bridal attire, in a grand procession from Srivilliputtur to Srirangam to marry her Lord. As she entered the *sanctum*, she vanished. Hagiographies say that she united with Ranganatha with her physical body.

Tiruppavai and *Nacchiyar Tirumoli*

Andal's first poetic composition is *Tiruppavai* in which she imagines herself as a *gopi* (cowherd girl) and leads the other *gopi*s to perform special austerities (*vrata*s) and rituals in the sacred month of Margali to get Vishnu's blessings. The *gopi*s go to wake him up and express their desire to serve him forever. *Tiruppavai* is widely considered to be an allegorical interpretation of the mystic longing of the finite self for union with the Infinite. In practice, it has come to symbolize young unmarried women's penances to find a worthy husband.

My focus here is however on Andal's later poem *Nacchiyar Tirumoli*. I am not doing a formal analysis of the poetry, but rather trying to identify the circumstances that enabled a very young Andal to compose such a poem. It is written in Andal's individual voice (although interspersed occasionally with the chorus of *gopi*s). The poem is a "profoundly intimate journey into the interior" (Venkatesan 2007, 20) with Andal expressing her love and yearning for marriage and physical union with Vishnu. She dreams of her wedding with him, recounts the rituals, sends messages to him about her longing, and expresses anger and sorrow when he does not respond. "Have you seen him here," she asks the *gopi*s at the end of the poem in a becalmed mood. They reply: "Yes, we saw him here in Vrindavana," indicating that she has found him (Chabria and Shankar 2015, 163-67).[12]

That *Nacchiyar Tirumoli* was composed by Andal no later than in the 9th century cannot be doubted. It is part of the *Prabandham* whose centrality and sanctity as a canonical text make it hard to tinker with.

Madhurya Bhakti/*Agapporul*/Bridal mysticism

Nacchiyar Tirumoli is cast in the classic pattern of *madhurya bhakti* or devotion to a personal god (most often Vishnu) expressed as a woman's love for her beloved. The Tamil literary term *agapporul* is a close equivalent. The sweetness of union is conjoined with *viraha bhakti* or the anguish of separation and the pining for union. After the Alvar era, this genre passed on to different regions of India, in

various languages. Majority of the poets were male. In Brindavan's popular Raas Lila festival, Krishna is deemed to be the only male. All other devotees, male and female, take on the '*gopi bhava*' in the manner of the cowherd women of Gokul. The theme has found its way into many classical and folk genres of music and dance. 'Bridal mysticism' is also known in Sufi poetry and in medieval Christianity. Everywhere it is understood as the quest of the individual soul to merge with the divine/absolute reality. Human sexual union becomes a metaphor for expressing transcendental union. At this level there is no issue with males becoming female. Two Alvars, both men, Tirumangai Alvar and Nammalvar, addressed Vishnu in the voice of a woman pining for her beloved. Their style is different from Andal's who composes with a directness unmatched in the Alvar tradition. Here are some glimpses from the poetry of Tirumangaiyalvar and Nammalvar –

When she covers her round breasts
With perfume, sandal paste and pearls
They turn to fire.

When even the full moon's white rays
Burn, she grows thin.

When the wave-tossed sea cries aloud,
she too cries aloud.

Her body, the colour of young mango leaf,
Has turned sickly gold.

The bangles do not stay tight
on her hands.

What indeed are your intentions
about my daughter,
my girl covered with jewels?

Tirumankai Alwar, 3 (Ramanujan 1994, 75-76)

*

Evening has come,
but not the Dark One.

The bulls,
their bells jingling,
have mated with the cows
and the cows are frisky.

The flutes play cruel songs,
bees flutter in their bright
white jasmine
and the blue-black lily.

The sea leaps into the sky
and cries aloud.

Without him here,
what shall I say?
how shall I survive?

Nammalvar, 9.9.10 (Ramanujan 1981, 33)

Keeping in mind the gap of centuries between Andal and the other women saints, the present discussion pertains only to Andal.

Sri Vaishnava commentators and devotees alike hold that, in this genre, Andal's is a unique and authentic voice. Archana Venkatesan underlines the poetic conventions adopted by the two male Alvars to construct female longing, whereas Andal was talking about herself. She did not need interlocutors (Venkatesan 2007, 23). The three poems presented here convey Andal's intensity, unfettered imaginative genius, complete absorption in her love and an articulation of great freedom of thought and feeling.

O Manmatha! My voluptuous breasts swell
For that lord alone who holds aloft
flaming discus and conch.
If there is even mere talk
of offering this, my body to mortal men,
then I cannot live.

Nacchiyar Tirumoli 1.4 (Venkatesan 2007, 20)

*

Whirling clouds, you enlarge in anger
and growl across the sky rending it open

with lightning. Spilling honey you tear
flowers, petals spatter like blood on earth.

Go to the fierce lord who roars and mauls
Tossing his mane as his paws rips insides out.

Tell him I'm bloodied. He must heal me
with long caresses, still me in his thrall.
engorged with anger

nails extending he kills
plunging wrists in blood

from these very hands I seek
fondling
gather in my swollen ripeness

as spilling nectar
my body's blood flower
bursts
Nacchiyar Tirumoli (Chabria and Shankar 2015, 103–4)

*

I dissolve in anguish awaiting his glance.
But the duplicitous Lord of Govardhana
Cares not if I live or die though he rains attention
On everyone else. If that looter, that
Plunderer but looks in my direction I shall pluck
Out my useless breasts by the roots and fling
Them at his chest.

Nachiyar Thirumozhi (Chabria and Shankar 2015, 156)

Even for a contemporary woman poet, such articulation of female desire would be an incredible accomplishment. Without taking away from Andal's pioneering poetry, we could now look at the enabling circumstances.

Andal was brought up by Vishnuchittar, an Alvar himself, in an atmosphere of devotion, hearing and learning about the other Alvars. In hagiographies, Andal is embedded in familial relationships with other Alvars and Acharyas. The *Divya Suri Charitam* describes Nammalvar as having conducted the wedding of Andal with Ranganatha – a fatherly or brotherly gesture. Though chronologically two centuries later than her, Ramanuja is known as Andal's older brother with special affection for her. He lived on *bhiksha*, and chanting Andal's *pasurams* would go with a bowl in his hand collecting food from his bhaktas. He was therefore known as *Tiruppavai* Jeeyar.[13] We see Andal then as part of the Alvar family, her poetry supported by them. She must have been inspired by Tirumangai Alvar and in turn she may have inspired Nammalvar.

Andal, Nammalvar and Tirumangai Alvar expressed 'bridal mysticism' in such an accomplished manner as to allow us to presume that this mode must have been known even earlier. As argued by several scholars, a modified Brahminical Hinduism from northern India and the indigenous literature and culture of the

Sangam era (2nd BCE to 3rd CE) were both powerful components in the making of Tamil *bhakti* (Karashima 2014, 82–120). Venkatesan (2007, 16) shows how Andal made connections with Sangam literature, particularly the *agam* poems, though there are points of departure too. The erotic love between man and woman that is the subject of the Sangam *agam* poems were the inspiration but with a twist: in *bhakti*, the lover is imbued with divinity and identified specifically with Vishnu. The tone also changes. The *pasurams*' sacred quality is not found in Sangam literature (Ramanujan 1999, 243).[14]

After the Sangam era and before the first Alvars and Nayanmars, the Kalabhras, who were Jains from the Deccan, ruled over the Tamil region. Literature in Tamil is scarce for this period except for a few late-Sangam poems, which functioned as a bridge to the new devotional literature.[15] But, given the powerful argument that Tamil *bhakti* was a reaction to the domination of the heterodox Sramanic religions, oral traditions are likely to have existed expressing nascent ideas of love for a personal God. Andal's individual accomplishments in Tamil poetry and her striking expressions of passion must have been influenced by pre-existing modes with adaptations to her own era's ethos.

III. The Context of Sri Vaishnava Canon and Practice

Between the end of Andal's mortal life and her being enshrined as a goddess in Sri Vaishnava canon and practice lies the first phase of her afterlife. The questions of when and how this author of *Nacchiyar Tirumoli* became a goddess and why and how she came to be accepted in Sri Vaishnavism are related. The latter however can be addressed more easily because there are textual, liturgical, iconographic and ceremonial sites where her footprints abound. As for the former, popular legends hold that the instant she entered Ranganatha's *sanctum* and vanished, she became a goddess. Scholarship puts it at a few centuries later.[16] It is no surprise that this first phase of Andal's afterlife is implicated in the birth and growth of the Sri Vaishnava sect and community, beginning from the 10th century CE.[17]

The era of the Alvars also marked certain broader developments in southern India which shaped the political dynamics and religious fabric of the time. Fueled by the growth of agriculture, new types of states arose from the earlier chiefdoms. The features of this period included fights between the Pallavas, Pandyas and Chalukyas for political power, indifference or hostility towards the Sramanic religions (which had started receding), and an accepting attitude to Vedic Hinduism. Tamil *bhakti* is seen to be a reaction to the Sramanic dominance of the post Sangam period. It was born through a merging of the Brahminical tradition of northern India in association with newly produced puranas and *agam*as that acted as a bridge to the indigenous Sangam beliefs and traditions (Karashima 2014, 82 & 104–105; Peterson 2007, 5–8). The essential features of early Sri Vaishnavism are to be seen in this backdrop.[18]

Tamil Veda and *Ubhaya Vedanta*

While Nathamuni is revered as the first Acharya of Sri Vaishnavism, Ramanuja (11th century CE) is considered the most important. His foundational writings gave a formal philosophical and theological structure to the nascent Sri Vaishnavism. He drew from Sanskrit metaphysical and Vedantic thought as well as from the Tamil poetry of the Alvars to develop his philosophy of Vishishtadvaita as a modification of Sankara's Advaita. The successive Acharyas and commentators also wrote on the *Prabandham*'s equivalence to the Vedas and consolidated a syncretic Tamil-Sanskrit theological culture. The moniker *ubhaya vedanta* (the dual vedantas) came to be used for this fusion between the two textual traditions.[19] The syncretic interleaving of Sanskrit and Tamil traditions, which Andal embodies, can be seen in many facets of Sri Vaishnava practice: its sacred geography, temple network and organization, liturgical cycles, recitations, rituals and ceremonies and their mutual interconnections.

Tamil being on par with Sanskrit in a canonically significant way had a positive impact on Sri Vaishnavism's access to all classes and to women. Sanskrit had traditionally been open only to males from the twice born castes. Sri Vaishnavism during the first few centuries of its evolution was relatively speaking, open to the

entry of all castes[20] and the use of the common language of the people in liturgy aided this to a large extent. It placed the worship of Lakshmi or Sri at its centre, as an integral part of Vishnu. It developed an elaborate and intricate commentarial tradition on the philosophy and theology of the *agapporul* poetry of the three Alvars. This crystallized into a fundamental Sri Vaishnava principle that all souls are ultimately female with Vishnu as the only male.

In orthodox Brahminical Hinduism, moksha is only possible through Vedic knowledge which women and shudras are not entitled to. They are thus spiritually disenfranchised. Young (1983, 183-6) argues that early Sri Vaishnavism made such knowledge accessible to women and shudras through the 'Tamil Veda'. It went even further in bypassing scriptural knowledge and ascetism altogether; moksha was available to anyone, regardless of caste, creed and gender, through unconditional surrender (*prapatti*) to the Lord. Furthermore, absorbing the spirit of the Sangam age, Sri Vaishnavism celebrated the householder's life and expressed positive regard for women. This suffused not just practice but the canon as well.

So, the central question of this site on how *Nacchiyar Tirumoli* got accepted within the canon is partially answered by the spirit of early Sri Vaishnavism.

More specifically, Andal was not married; she had no husband or in laws to seek permission from. She had the blessings of her father in her quest to marry Vishnu. She was not against marriage for women. Nor was she against Vedic knowledge and *agam*ic rituals. *Tiruppavai* is considered in Sri Vaishnava theology to be the very source and seed of the Vedas. She did not rest with writing poetry but acted on her passion and travelled to Ranganatha's temple to marry him. This was her difference from the other two Alvars. What happens when a metaphor is made literal? Mahalakshmi (2014, 113) insightfully interprets Andal's disappearance into the idol of Ranganatha, thus ending her mortal life, as a price for her audacious action. An emergent theology gave her goddess status as a way of fructifying her desire of marriage to Ranganatha in an acceptable realm. Weddings and amorous affection between gods and their consorts are the stuff of Hindu religious lore.

While *Nacchiyar Tirumoli* is not recited ubiquitously the way *Tiruppavai* is, it has by no means been erased. As composed, it conveys a sense of equality with Vishnu the lover, addressing him with intimacy, chiding and scolding him and pleading with him. According to Venkatesan (2007, 18), Alvars' *agapporul* poetry could be read as continuous narrative cycles of union and separation, but in the commentaries, they are completed by allegorizing the female as a dependent soul seeking the ineffable divine.

Cycles of Transaction and Exchange among Temples

I end this section with vignettes of transactions among four important Sri Vaishnava temples. It is a fascinating tale of special ceremonies and exchanges of auspicious gifts linking them together, setting the seal of acceptance for Andal's relationship with Vishnu (Rao 2012, 195–199; Jeyalakshmi 2020). Andal is the presiding deity at the temple of Srivilliputtur, her place of birth. She had special affection towards certain forms of Vishnu as evidenced from her poetry: Ranganatha of Srirangam, Kallalagar of Alagar Koyil and Venkateswara of Tiruppati. The four temples are part of the *divya desams* of Sri Vaishnava sacred geography. Their special connections with Andal are acknowledged in their liturgical cycles. During the ten-day annual 'chariot festival' at Srivilliputtur culminating with Aadi pooram, Andal's birth star, 'sayana utsavam' is held in a grand ceremony on the seventh evening. It is attended by huge crowds. The idol of Ranganatha is made to recline on the lap of the idol of Andal, symbolic of their union. On the tenth day, special silks are sent by the Srirangam temple to the Srivilliputtur temple. The idol of Andal goes out in procession that evening draped in silks. On Bhogi, the day preceding Pongal festival, the wedding rituals of Andal and Ranganatha are conducted at the Srirangam temple. At the annual festival in Alagar Koyil, the idol of the presiding deity Kallalagar enters the river Vaigai in a procession, wearing the garland of Andal sent by the Srivilliputtur temple. During the garudotsavam festival at the famous temple at Tiruppati, the garland of Andal is sent for Venkateswara from Srivilliputtur. In the same temple, the morning recitation of *suprabhatam* throughout the year is in Sanskrit. In the month of Margali alone the *pasurams* of *Tiruppavai* replace it. Such practices

form an intricate tapestry, coding historical and mythological relations and interconnections. They carry an aura of eternity. But, unlike the *Prabandham*, they may have evolved over time, adding and subtracting details, while in essence conveying official sanction.

IV. Contemporary Sites of Afterlife

The three contemporary sites of Andal's afterlife taken up here – popular culture, politics and intellectual discourse – are rich and complex and can be read in different ways. Within the scope of this essay, I have merely gestured to possibilities.

Icon of popular culture

Given that Andal's poetry is in old Tamil, *Tiruppavai* has somewhat esoteric meanings and *Nacchiyar Tirumoli* is relatively unknown, one would imagine that recitation is limited to arcane Sri Vaishnava devotional groups. The visitor to Tamil Nadu in the month of Margali may be surprised to find Andal a ubiquitous presence in popular media.

In many parts of India, this month[21] is associated with piety and spiritual growth. For Tamils, the entire month is dedicated to Andal. Special worship is done in Sri Vaishnava temples and homes. The chanting of *Tiruppavai* verses in groups, on the streets around temples, is a hallmark of the month. Folk musical forms like *Ammanai* and *Kummi*, narrating her life story, are also prevalent. Traditionally, these devotional activities were widespread but in locations of face-to-face interaction. From the 1940s, they started entering secular, public fora too: in concert halls, on stage, in broadcast and telecast channels. The annual festivals at the major Vishnu temples feature Andal prominently. They always drew huge crowds but with electronic and digital media, their popularity has ballooned. There are *katha kalakshepams* (musical discourses) on Andal's life, literary events on her poetry, her *pasurams* are sung and danced to in classical Bharatanatyam

and Carnatic music performances as the last or second last piece, a slot usually reserved for bhajans.

Since the 1960s, a striking development in urban Tamil Nadu is the formation of women's groups generically called Goda Mandalis (Goda/Kothai being the given name of Andal). They study and recite her poetry together in regular classes. They also perform as groups in public gatherings and processions (Narayanan 2006, 37). Inspired by Andal's spirit, they endeavor to live a life of piety and devotion.

The icon of Andal, hair tied up in a side knot, wearing her distinctive, heavy garland, her left hand holding a parrot is abundantly visible not only in Sri Vaishnava temples, in the shrines and on walls, but also in Thanjavur paintings, street art and calendar art.

The story of Andal entered the world of commercial films with a film titled *Andal* in 1948 and another in 1968 titled '*Thirumal Perumai*' (The Glory of Vishnu). The first was reasonably successful and the second was a box office hit. She has been acknowledged in the credits for the Tamil film *Hey Ram* as one of the lyricists[22] and an acclaimed novel has been published drawing upon her life.[23]

In the digital world of YouTube, *Tiruppavai* sung in fusion style with orchestra[24] can be found nestling cheek by jowl with the traditional devotional, classical and folk versions. Her birthday even finds a place in Amar Chitra Katha's Twitter account.

How is it that Andal has moved out of a sectarian framework into the popular religion and performing arts domain? The authentic voice of her poetry is no doubt an important factor. Besides, in contemporary times, various segments of popular culture overlap, often using the same technology and platforms. With huge innovations in recording, reproduction and communication technology, Andal's poetry has reached out to newer audiences. Her strong presence in traditional devotional culture continues and feeds into the popular domain, where classical, folk and contemporary are spliced, fused and remixed with much ado.

Political drama over legacy

From the 1980s onwards, the acrimonious interface of religion and secularism in India has inevitably become a matter of debate in politics and civil society. Even a remote historical figure like Andal, symbol of piety, pure love and syncretism is not exempt. A recent page in her afterlife tells us more about the politics of our times than hers.

For two weeks in January 2018, there was a volatile political altercation in Tamil Nadu around an issue of religious belief. It drew in voices from across the political spectrum and from all walks of life. The controversy was over a statement made by the Tamil poet and film lyricist R. Vairamuthu that Andal may have been a *devadasi* in the Srirangam temple.

The ensuing furore dredged out issues that were simmering underneath the surface of Tamil politics for decades like Dravidianism and Hinduism; faith, devotion and atheism; women, chastity and prostitution; gender, patriarchy and feminism; myth and history.

Vairamuthu is an influential public personality with links to the literary, cinematic and political networks of the Dravidian movement. BJP leader in Tamil Nadu, H. Raja launched an abusive campaign against Vairamuthu for terming Andal a *devadasi* (Aravamudan 2018). The system of dedicating women to a temple, as 'servants of God' (*devadasi*), was known in early India and there is evidence that they were respected in society. Over the centuries, practices and meanings changed and *devadasi* got conflated with the loaded term 'prostitute.' It was this latter meaning that Raja invoked, breathing fury at the wounding of Hindu sentiments and threatening violence. Vairamuthu should, he said, beg forgiveness at the feet of the Andal idol at her temple in Srivilliputtur and apologize to her devotees.[25] There followed both spontaneous outrage from Andal devotees and a canny mobilization of religious sensitivities by the BJP and allied organizations. Within days, criticism of Vairamuthu burst out in several media not only from personalities from the religious fold and the political Hindu right, but also from non-sectarian, non-political devotees and non-devotees prominent in public life (The New Indian Express 2018). A criminal case was filed against Vairamuthu

(Rajasekaran 2018). There were echoes of the cry "Andal is our divine mother. How can he demean her?" in the Indian diaspora too (The News Minute 2018). Vairamuthu gave a qualified apology that he had only quoted from another scholar's work. He praised Andal's contribution to Tamil literature, saying, "She is my mother who fed me the milk of Tamil. For forty years it is Andal whose voice has been singing inside me."[26]

Meanwhile, responses supporting Vairamuthu also came in thick and fast. Individuals from the Congress and from all the Dravidian parties except for the ruling AIADMK condemned the threats of violence and lauded Vairamuthu's accomplishments. But they were careful not to endorse his original statement. He was only quoting someone else's view; he had apologized; the matter should end there – this was the prevailing consensus among his supporters. Despite their roots in Periyar's rationalism and atheism, the Dravidian political parties, operating within electoral compulsions, could not afford a direct confrontation with the religiosity of the majority. Furthermore, a commitment to Tamil language and literature was also part of their credo, complicating their response to Andal. Eventually, the Madras High Court stayed all criminal proceedings against Vairamuthu observing that he had not expressed a personal opinion but merely quoted a researcher (Rajasekaran 2018).

The fundamental question for me is about the very terms of the discourse, in which both opponents and supporters of Vairamuthu left the category of '*devadasi*' untouched, without any contextualization or analysis. In effect, they endorsed the stereotyping of '*devadasi*' as a woman who dispensed sexual favours for a consideration. From a feminist perspective, this is problematic.

Hardly any statements issued in the fracas had clarity or depth.[27] A sensitive voice, that of Nrithya Pillai (2018), from within the Isai Vellalar (formerly *devadasi*) community, said this was a matter for historical debate and expressed outrage at the public shaming of her foremothers and the misrecognition of their role in the preservation of the traditional arts.

It was poet and feminist Perundevi's response that captured the essential principle at stake. Conceding Vairamuthu's right of free speech, she questioned

his apology. Only Andal could decide whether or not she was a *devadasi*. It was not Mr. Vairamuthu's call to make. Without citing supporting evidence, without clarifying ambiguities in the label of *devadasi*, his statement was misleading. By implying that the sexual explicitness of Andal's later poetry raised questions about her identity, Vairamuthu had displayed a socially regressive and patriarchal mindset. He was suggesting that women from respectable lineages did not write thus (Perundevi 2018).

The debate had lasted less than a month. But for a moment, it illuminated the landscape of Tamil Nadu brilliantly, revealing current political fault lines, the simmering tensions between Dravidianism and Hinduism and the caution with which the Dravidian parties were now facing off with Hindutva. The underlying idea threading through the binary of mother/prostitute and the patriarchy in both right-wing discourses and the vocabulary of progressivism, explicit in the former and camouflaged in the latter,[28] continue to pose disturbing questions. Andal had been but an instrument for an exercise in political posturing.

Discourses on *Bhakti* and Feminism

The last site I explore is the contemporary intellectual discourse on *bhakti* informed by feminist perspectives.

Most saint poets were known and revered in their own regions and sometimes across contiguous regions. The popular idea that *bhakti* was a pan-Indian movement starting in southern India that spread to other regions is a creation of the modern era according to recent historiography. It served to reinforce the idea of the unity of India in the nation building project.[29] In this classical view, the movement was egalitarian and reformist. Cumulative developments in vernacular languages consolidated it as a lower caste protest against hierarchy and power, and against Brahminical, Sanskritic orthodoxy. It preached direct access to God without intermediaries. Intentionality and conscious thrust on the part of the saints were implied.

Later empirical research and writings have found inconsistencies and contradictions in the assertions of egalitarianism. Nor was it, argues Hawley a 'movement' in the sense of revolutionary dissent or planned pursuit of a goal. As an alternative, he proposes the idea of a far-reaching *bhakti* network that is sensitive to economic and social contexts and pays attention to the original voice of the poet.[30] *Bhakti* literature is rich, increasingly complex and nuanced. I merely evoke it as a context for situating Andal.

The feminist movement in India from the 1980s onwards was searching for indigenous sources of women's autonomy and empowerment. There was a felt need to counter criticism that feminists were overemphasizing victimhood of women and were imitating western feminists.[31] To rebut this, the writings of saints like Akka Mahadevi, Lal Dyad, Bahinabai, Jenabai, Mira and others were retrieved and re-examined.[32] The search continues. There are broadly two approaches, with some overlaps. One views women saints as rebels against the patriarchal and caste based social order of their time. They offer lessons for contemporary women struggling against gender biased social structures.[33] The other more complex position is taken by academics who have been part of the women's movement.[34] They agree on the power and rigidity of patriarchy but see the women's rebellion as either incomplete or inconsistent or lacking feminist awareness and eventually becoming contained by patriarchy. Despite this, women saints break conventions, wrest some space for themselves, gesturing to the possibility of a different understanding of gender relations.[35] Both approaches imbue women with agency. What is also common to both is the assumption that women saints struggled consciously against patriarchy – an implicit judgment of their actions with a contemporary yardstick.

The question here is whether gender was indeed the significant lens through which the women saints mapped the world and acted in it. But then, how can we even ask even this question about all women saints in general, given their varied time, space and social configurations?

Still, we can view our subjects through a broad-based feminist framework, without necessarily attributing feminist intent to them. We can recognize systemic patriarchy and equally spot traces and residues of past cultures differently

organized, where gender may have been constituted in other ways and where cognitive space for women was not ruled out.

I can attempt to address this issue only through my engagement with Andal. Although first in the genre, it is not easy to characterize Tamil *bhakti* poetry as an exemplar. Rather it is a forerunner with distinctive features. Arising as a reaction to Sramana dominance in the preceding centuries, it fuses a Vedanta inspired metaphysical quest and indigenous Sangam traditions leading to a new personal and emotional language of devotion. The Alvars' poetry gave birth to and also itself flourished in the sectarian context of Sri Vaishnavism. I have earlier, in Sections 2 and 3, discussed Andal's lifeworld; her placement within the ethos of the Alvars and Sri Vaishnavism. Andal's access to the *agapporul* tradition of the Alvars, Nayanmars and Sangam literature helped to nourish her own individual genius. Her yearning for union with Ranganatha was cast within the Sri Vaishnava goal of moksha by total surrender and uniting the individual soul with the infinite. If this were not so, then one could ask, why did males write in this genre?

Andal's refusal to consider marriage to a mortal human being is not a statement of opposition to marriage, but her steadfastness in thought and action – to marry a god – is surely agentic. The freedom and honesty of her poetry also reflects agency, but as Kannan (2018) points out, *Nacchiyar Tirumoli* is not just about sexual desire but also Andal's suffering, self-deprivation and denial which come close to ascetism. Kannan makes the larger point that Andal (and Tamil *bhakti* in general) fuses the householder and ascetic paths to achieve moksha. It is only by viewing Andal through this lens that we can enter her interior world.

Finally, what of the question of impact? Andal's life and poetry have inspired many for different reasons, some diametrically opposed. On the one hand, the women in the Goda Mandalis sing her poems and experience a sense of agency in attempting to live a life of piety and devotion. Then there are the young women who want to reclaim her legacy as an early feminist of Tamil Nadu, whose true voice has been erased by patriarchy. The political fracas of 2018 in her name illuminated contemporary battle-lines rather than any attempt to listen to her voice. Andal's iconic presence and her words, powerful and moving, travel across the centuries, triggering unintended and unforeseen consequences.

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Acknowledgments: The Guftagu team and St. Andrews Centre for Philosophy and Performing Arts; Ashish Upadhyay, Bharatwaj Iyer, Gita Chadha, Gopal Srinivasan, Indra Munshi, Irfan Engineer, Kanchana Mahadevan, Nasreen Fazalbhoy and Vibha Kamat.

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Notes

1. I follow the widely accepted periodization and nomenclature of Indian history that puts 500-900 CE as early India, 900-1000 as early medieval,1100-1300 as medieval, 1300 – 1500 as late medieval and 1500-1800 as early modern.

2. For non-English words, popularly accepted spellings are used.

3. One must first arrive at what questions one is seeking answers to and then choose the source.

4. The afterlife of Andal is more than the 'reception' to her work. As a concept, it lets us bring together multiple aspects of her work and life, its endurance over time, its social anchoring and the different contexts and various ways in which people connect with her, bend her story and make her their own or not.

5. In the canon, *Tiruppavai* is more exalted, but the hagiographies quote almost exclusively from

Nacchiyar Tirumoli (Venkatesan 2007, 20).

6. Dehejia (1990), Venkatesan (2010) and Chabria and Shankar (2015) are fine examples.

7. Sri Vaishnavism emerged in South India after the Alvars. It follows the Vishistadvaita philosophy of Sri Ramanuja (11th century CE).

8. Tiruppan Alvar was from an untouchable caste and Tirumangai Alvar from a tribe.

9. With the exception of Madurakavi Alvar who only composed on Nammalvar.

10. Peterson (2007,4). She refers to them as cults and not as a movement.

11. The earliest account of Andal's life is in the 13th century Tamil work *Guru Parampara Prabhavam*. A detailed account of her wedding to Lord Ranganatha is found in the late 15th century Sanskrit text *Divya Suri Charitam*.

12. Song 14 has 10 verses in the form of questions and answers, with the refrain "Yes, we saw him here in Vrindavana" interpreted as Vrindavana of the heart.

13. See for instance Vasudevan (2012). There are numerous hagiographical stories about this relationship. In Verse 9.6 of *Nachiyar Tirumoli*, Andal takes a vow to offer a hundred vats of butter and a hundred brimming vats of akkara adisil (sweetened rice) to Kallalagar. When Ramanuja fulfilled her vow at the Malirunchola temple, it is believed that she came out of the idol and addressed him as Anna (elder brother) thanking him for this act.

14. Ramanujan (1999, 2 46-55) shows how Nammalwar uses elements from classical Sangam poetry; "while he follows the classical score closely, he transposes it to a new key." (Ibid, 252)

15. Ramanujan's article with Norman Cutler titled "From Classicism to *Bhakti*" (1999) explores the intricacies of this bridging.

16. By the 13th century, Guru Parampara Prabhavam mentions it as an established fact.

17. In this period, there were disagreements on whether Andal and Madura Kavi should be included as Alvars. Eventually, they were. Regretfully, I have been unable to pursue this debate for this essay.

18. It is not within the scope of this essay to provide a detailed exposition of Sri Vaishnavism. I only highlight some aspects which could throw light on the place of *Nacchiyar Tirumoli* in its canon.

19. The relative significance of the two was debated in the later centuries which led to a gradual split into two sub sects, Vatakalai and Tenkalai, which gave greater emphasis on Sanskrit and Tamil respectively.

20. Textual exegesis and practice did not necessarily reinforce each other. Ramanuja's *Sri Bhashyam* takes the position that only male Brahmins are entitled to Vedic knowledge, but popular tradition holds that in practice Ramanuja and the Acharyas of that period encouraged people from various backgrounds to become part of the Sri Vaishnava devotional community. In his *Saranagati Gadyam*, Ramanuja himself espoused the idea of achieving moksha through saranagati or prapatti, i.e., total surrender to Lord Narayana, thus making it possible for anyone to achieve moksha. According to hagiographic tradition, Ramanuja performed saranagati in Srirangam in Ranganatha's *sanctum* and he was granted the boon he sought. Here is an accessible translation of the text – https://www.sadagopan.org/pdfuploads/Saranagathi%20Gadyam.pdf

21. Also known as Margashirsha/Dhanur masa.

22. A song from *Nacchiyar Tirumoli* plays as the background score, during the scene of the wedding rituals of the hero and heroine.

23. *The Queen of Jasmine Country* by Sharanya Manivannan

24. For an example of this, view "Thiruppavai Margazhi Thingal (Carnatic fusion)" https://youtu.be/M7wjqtVdNwQ

25. View H. Raja's Speech delivered on January 9, 2018 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_Yx83fmJvM

26. View Vairamuthu's emotional response to the Andal controversy from January 20, 2018 https://youtu.be/Nvelbr4vEQw

27. Exceptions include Musician T.M. Krishna who questioned outright the denigration of the category *devadasi* in whatever sense it was used (Govindarajan 2018) and writer Indira Parthasarathy who rued the absence of contextualization of the term. View the latter's statement on the controversial remarks on Andal by Vairamuthu https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2EgdQVXdbo

28. See Sarkar and Butalia (1995) and C.S. Lakshmi (1990) respectively for sharp analyses.

29. It was shaped in the late 19th and 20th centuries, by British and Indian Orientalists like Grierson, Farquhar and Bhandarkar, leaders like M.G. Ranade and Bipin Chandra Pal, and nationalist scholars of literature and history like Ramachandra Shukla, Hazari Prasad Dwivedi and V.Raghavan (Hawley 2015, 13–58). Krishna Sharma (1987) was among the earliest scholars to challenge this model. Rich empirical studies are since emerging to nuance the idea of a movement.

30. In his chapter 'What should the *Bhakti* movement be', Hawley (2015, 285–341) marshals a formidable array of life stories and poetry of saints from different regions to support his view on *bhakti* as movement vs network.

31. Chaudhuri (2004), Jain (2011) among others offer overviews of feminist discussions on this issue.

32. Kishwar and Vanita (1989) and Tharu and Lalitha (1991) are analytical and insightful contributions to this literature.

33. Some recent examples are Rangarajan (2020), Krishnamoorthy (2019), and Thaosen (2017).

34. Prominent voices include Uma Chakravarti (1989), Vidyut Bhagwat (2005) and Neera Desai (1994).

MEDIEVAL PORTRAYALS

Sufism: In the Spirit of Eastern Spiritual Traditions

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Introduction

Sufi Islam is a mystical form of Islamic spirituality. The emphasis of Sufism is less on external rituals and more on the inward journey. The seeker searches within to make oneself *Insaan-e-Kamil,* or a perfect human being on God's path. The origin of the word Sufism is in *tasawwuf*, the path followed by Sufis to reach God. Some believe it comes from the word *suf* (wool), referring to the coarse woollen fabric worn by early Sufis. Sufiya also means purified or chosen as a friend of God. Most Sufis favour the origin of the word from *safa* or purity; therefore, a Sufi is one who is purified from worldly defilements. The essence of Sufism, as of most religions, is to reach God, or truth or absolute reality.

Characteristics of Sufism

The path of Sufism is a path of self-annihilation in God, also called a *fanaa*, which means to seek permanence in God. A *Sufi* strives to relinquish worldly and even other worldly aims. The objective of Sufism is to acquire knowledge of God and achieve wisdom. Sufis avail every act of God as an opportunity to "see" God. The *Sufi* "lives his life as a continuous effort to view or "see" Him with a profound, spiritual "seeing" . . . and with a profound awareness of being continuously overseen by Him" (Gulen, 2006, p. xi-xii).

While preparing for *fanaa*, the *sufis* reorient their existence on to the path of God and practically strive to merge their existence into the reality of God. Sufism is the path of annihilation of an individual's ego, will, and self-centeredness and the subsequent spiritual revival with the light of God's essence. They constantly remind themselves of the reality which God is, and orient their will to the will of God. They continuously strive to cleanse themselves of all that is evil to acquire virtue. They seek permanence in God and are intensely God conscious. The aspect of cleansing is important to understand when working with someone who belongs to this faith or tradition.

Sufis in fact, celebrate their death, which is referred to as *visal*, as that means being nearer to God. Their life on earth is merely a journey to prepare themselves for being one with God. The journey to reorient one's life along God's path is then guided by the Qur'an and inspired by the life of the Prophet of Islam, which is indeed a tough path. Sufis try to overcome desires, which lead them astray from the path of God. They try to master emotions and feelings like jealousy, fear, anger, greed, and so on. They resist temptations of carnality, wishes, or appetite (*nafs al-ammara*), which command the individual to sin. *Nafs al-ammara* (the commanding soul that is full of evil desires) becomes sovereign over the human body; it subjugates individuals and demands insatiable indulgence in pleasures. Sufis, overcoming nafs al-ammara, acquire laudable moral qualities. They follow the Qur'an: "To the righteous it will be said "oh reassured soul, return to your Lord well pleased, and pleasing to Him" (89:27–28). They are content with the command of Allah Almighty; there is nothing else that can make them happy (*nafs al-Mutmainnah*).

Sarmad Shahid, a Sufi saint who was executed by Aurangzeb, would only pronounce half kalima, which is the proclamation of faith, *La ilaha* ("There is no God"), and would not pronounce *illa'llah* ("Except Allah"). When asked to explain, he answered "Presently I am drowned in negation; I have not yet attained the station of affirmation; if I said the whole phrase in this state, I would be telling a lie" (Sofia, 2017). According to Sarmad, he had

not yet completely negated his desires, lusts, passions, fears, greed, and so on. Unless he negated these, he would not be able to proclaim that there was only one God who he affirmed and bowed down to. Aurangzeb's judges considered a refusal to recite full *kalima* as blasphemy, and he was ordered to be executed. The day he was to be executed near Jama Masjid, on seeing the executioner's gleaming sword, Sarmad smiled, looked towards heaven and said, "*May I be sacrificed for You; come, come, in whatever guise, You come, I recognize You.*" (Graham, 2011). This appears to be the ultimate desire of most sufi practitioners, full renunciation, which leads to union with God.

In order to master one's desires, greed, fear, anger, and jealousy and constantly be God conscious, Sufis chant the *kalima*, or invoke God, or have sama: ecstatic singing or dancing sessions. However, more important is to live a very tough life and sacrifice consumption of all that was considered unnecessary for their existence. The *murshids* (guide or teacher), of Gudri thus wear a very simple patched frock. When a *murid* (disciple) obtains the worn robe of the *shaykh* (master) he is expected to wear it without washing and should not give it to others. Hazrat Nizamuddin Awliya said something very important regarding the dervish robe: "*Tariqat ba-joz o khedmat-e-khalq nist; Ba tasbih o sajaada o dalaq nist*" ("The Sufi path is nothing but service to humanity. It is not found in the rosary, the prayer carpet and the dervish robe") (Chishti, 2018).) Sarmad wore none. Guides or murshids play an important role in sufism. The role of the guide is to help the student or *murid* achieve union with God.

Sufi orders had considerable influence in the medieval period and were more popular among the lower classes. The *Chistiya silsila* (order) of the Sufis believed in keeping their distance from the state. Despite its ideals, we witness Sufi orders being influenced by the material world and its pomp, pleasure, and power rather than the other way around. We do not hear of any great *Sufi* saint in the modern

period when the world is full of conflicts and wars. The spiritual glories of not only Sufi saints, but of other faiths too, remain mute spectators to the conflicts.

While the Chishti order of Sufis kept principled distance from the state, the other orders were less inclined to keep that distance. The Sufis lived in poverty and did not want to get used to comforts and pleasures. Shaikh Farid Ganj-i-Shakar stated the attitude of Chishti Silsila firmly in these words: "If you aim at achieving the spiritual position attained by elders, keep away from the princes of the blood" (Nizami, 1991, p. 102). They eschewed politics and refused stipends and grants. Service of state would distract from attainment of Gnosis (*ma'rifat*). Acceptance of state service was tantamount to signing one's spiritual death warrant. They also questioned the source of income of the state and considered it to be from prohibited sources.

Sufism and Its Inclusive Approach

The doctrine of *sulhi-i-kul* believes in overflowing Divine love and getting along with all other beings. To the *Sufis*, the world is a cradle of brotherhood and sisterhood. A Sufi must seek happiness and not pleasures. Happiness is derived from serving others and seeking salvation through conviction of truth, righteous conduct, sincerity, and purity of intention. This could be understood as a very good intervention strategy in working with someone who professes to this faith tradition. It is always important to give precedence to the well-being and happiness of others. Sufism and Sufi *Silsilas* (orders) at best are centers where helpless, powerless, and needy people visit for solace and spiritual guidance. There are also centers where *samaa* sessions are held and followers attain ecstasy. Through the experience of ecstasy, the followers experience God and turn to spirituality. Through spiritual experiences, Sufism also provides resources to overcome and transcend sectarianism and build bridges with other faiths and communities. Sufism facilitates dialogues between different communities and faiths to build a peaceful, tolerant, and inclusive world. The world in which the *Sufi* lives, its culture, customs and traditions are important contexts for designing

intervention strategies for practitioners of Sufism. This world is inclusive of persons of all faiths.

The emphasis of Sufism is less on outward manifestations of faith and more on the inward journey and seeking God within. That leads to dedicating one's entire life and one's whole self on to God's path. The journey of life is to seek union with God. To achieve this, Sufis continuously and relentlessly strive to conquer their ego and submit it to God's will and path. It would therefore appear that, in all persons who are of the *Sufi* faith, the conquering of the ego would have to be part of the therapeutic process. In the process, they give up everything that can distract them from God's path.

> Sarmad Shahid, a Sufi saint once wrote, referring to the *meraj* (Heavenly journey) of Prophet Mohammed (PUBH), "The mullah says that Ahmad went to the heavens; Sarmad says the heavens were inside Ahmad." (Gandhi, 2015). Bulle Shah, another Sufi saint who settled in Punjab and composed his poetry, wrote, "*Masjid dha de, Mandir dha de; dhaa de jo kuchh dainda; Per kadi kise da dil na dhayeen; Rabb dilan wich rehnda.*" ("Demolish the mosque, the temple or anything you see; but do not break a human heart for that is where God resides") (Nav Singh, n.d.).

This approach made Sufis most inclusive, embracing, and compassionate toward all human beings, living creatures, and nature. They strive to control their desires, emotions, and fears and put them in service of God and the creation of God. Rabia al-Adawiyya, an 8th century Sufi saint from Basra, Iraq, went a step ahead and wanted to douse the fire in hell and burn down heaven, as the lure of heaven and fear of hell are hindrances to the true vision of God. Those who serve God should not see God as an object of hope, of paradise or fear of hell. They should be motivated to tread the path illuminated by God only out of love for God. The *Sufi* emphasis is more on obedience to God out of love for God.

Sufi Doctrines

Muhiyuddin Ibn Arabi (1165–1240), and other Sufi saints subscribed to the doctrine of *whadat ul-wujud* (unity of being or existence). This essentially emanates from the concept of *tawhid* or unity and wahadat or one. The concept of oneness of God translates into unity of all beings, whatever the color of their skin or physical features, race, tribe, or ethnicity, or even religious beliefs. They are all manifestations of God and therefore all are to be embraced and seen as God in creation. None is stranger, alien, or "other." No culture, language, custom, or tradition is alien or that of "other." Not to accept this would mean denial of *tawhid* or oneness of God. Those speaking a different language or who have different cultures or physical bodily attributes are all creations of the same God. *Sufis* therefore always embrace all cultures and languages and adopt them as a medium to transmit the message of God.

The goal that *Sufis* strive to achieve is *sulh-i-kul* (complete or absolute peace). Peaceful and harmonious relations between all human beings entail peace between all religions and acceptance of diversity and interfaith dialogue. This goal is to be achieved by reorienting oneself toward equilibrium with people, nature, and surroundings. There are two dimensions to reach *sulh-i-kul.* The first is when one continuously strives to acquire knowledge about people's behavior, culture, social traditions, and customs. The second dimension is when one strives to develop love and compassion toward the people, which enables one to understand the context of the culture and social tradition and accept them if they are not contrary to and not forbidden by God. The principle of *sulh-i-kul* discourages one to be judgmental about people and communities. Inculcating this ability helps the Sufi practitioner grow in his or her spiritual relationship with God.

The Master-Disciple Relationship

In order to achieve *sulh-i-kul,* a Sufi who is initiated into the order by a master or *Pir*, regrets the sins that he or she might have committed, feels deep remorse, and

turns to God in obedience. Holy Qur'an states, "Ye who believe! Turn to God with sincere repentance; In the hope that Your Lord will remove from you your ills" (66:8). Whenever a *pir* accepts a *murid* (disciple), he or she is kept in a closed room in seclusion for a period of 2 to 4 weeks under guidance and supervision. During this period, the murid is left to himself or herself and does not meet anyone else. He or she must eat very simple food and continuously pray to God. The murid recalls his or her past sins while praying to God for forgiveness. The *murid* undertakes *tafakkar* or deeply reflects on his or her past and thinks systematically in great details on the Islamic way of life. The murid discerns what is evil and harmful and what is righteous conduct. One finds God and tries to be in the company of God alone. The *pir* assists the *murid* in purification of all false beliefs, dark thoughts and feelings, and conceptions and imaginations that separate him or her from the truth (Gulen, 2006). The master plays an important role in guiding the student according to religious tenets.

Not all those who seek to be initiated into *Sufi* orders survive this period of seclusion, which is very rigorous, and the rigorous simplicity associated with it. While the *murid* is being initiated into a *Sufi* order, he or she learns to gradually renounce worldly pleasures and carnal desires. Rabi'a al-Adawiyya, a woman *Sufi* based in Basara, gave up all worldly desires so that she might serve God without distraction. She heard an inner voice saying to her,

> Have a care, if you desire it, I will endow you with all the pleasures of this world, but I shall take concern for Me out of your heart, for such concern and the pleasures of this world cannot dwell together in one heart. O Rabi'a, you have a desire and I have a desire, I cannot combine my desire and your desire in one heart. (Smith, 1994, p. 41)

A Sufi firmly believes that the journey of life on earth is but a small fraction of eternity. Permanence is only in God. The pleasures associated with the journey of life on earth therefore are also temporary. In the Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqara states, "They ask thee what they should spend (in charity). Say: Whatever ye spend that is good, is for parents and kindred and orphans and those in want and for wayfarers" (2:215). "They ask thee how much they are to spend; Say: "What is beyond your needs" (2:219). Sufis strive to reduce their needs to the minimum so that they can spend the rest in charity as commanded by God.

Nizamuddin Awliya would fast on all days and not just during month of Ramzan when it is obligatory for all Muslims to fast, even though he ran a kitchen for all those who came to his *khanqah* (hospice where Sufis reside and meet their followers). He would enjoy seeing others take food and that felt as if he himself was taking food (Nizami, 1991). Normally *Sufi pirs* wore coarse woolen fabrics with many patches stitched on to them. The favorite murid would inherit the robes of the *Sufi pir* and would highly value the robe and wear it. Most preferred to own just two robes and wear one while the other was washed.

> *Sufi pir* Sarmad Shahid from India, who was guillotined by Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, would roam about the streets naked. It is said that when the emperor saw Sarmad naked on the steps of the royal mosque, Jama Masjid, he asked Sarmad to cover himself with a blanket lying nearby. As the blanket was pulled to cover Sarmad, all the heads of those whom the emperor had assassinated to grab the throne rolled out. Sarmad famously told the emperor, "Should I cover my naked body with the blanket, or should the blanket cover your sins?"

Sufis live a simple life with as little means as possible so that they can spend the rest on those who really need them. At the Sufi *Khanqas*, one rule was followed meticulously: not to save anything for the next day. All the donations and grants received were to be spent on the same day for the needy. The next day, they believe, God would give them, again to be spent on the needy. All possessions are strictly discouraged.

Fanaa Filla

A Sufi's path is to tread on the path prescribed by God to the hilt while journeying on earth and to seek permanence in God. In order to seek permanence in God,

one must constantly strive to eliminate oneself and one's existence by moulding oneself to God's will. The great poet Galib (n.d.) puts this sentiment beautifully in his poetry:

> *na thā kuchh to ḳhudā thā kuchh na hotā to ḳhudā hotā*
>
> *Duboyā mujh ko hone ne na hotā maiñ to kyā hotā*
>
> (When there was nothing, then there was God; If there was nothing, there would have been God
>
> My being (coming into existence) let me down; if I had not come into existence, what would have been there?)

According to this verse, one's existence must not be separated from God's will. The exercise of choices to fulfill one's earthly and carnal desires and to seek pleasures of life are contrary to the path prescribed by God. Life's journey, therefore, should be to conquer oneself and one's desires. This can be achieved by constant remembrance of God and meditation to understand God's message and to love God and God's creation—all humans, animals, living beings, and nature. One should strive to constantly purify one's carnal soul from all sins through asceticism, as it is said, "When cleansed from these lusts of the flesh, the soul could enter on the Path which was destined to lead it to union with the Divine" (Smith, 1994, p. 73).

Tariqah

While *Sufis* follow the *Shariʹa*, particularly the five basic tenets every Muslim has been called on to, so far as applicable to them, the *Sufis* devote themselves to the teachings of the Qur'an and follow them more intensely. The five basic tenets that every Muslim is called upon to follow are: (a) profession of faith by reciting *kalima* and bearing witness to oneness of God and the Prophethood of Muhammed; (b) praying five times a day; (c) fasting in the holy month of Ramzan; (d) pay *zakaat i.e. tax equivalent to 2.5% of one's wealth* or undertake charity in non-Islamic states; and (e) pilgrimage to Haj after fulfilling all other duties. There are Sufis who spend their time in remembrance of God and praying through the night.

> Rabi'a used to pray all night, and when the day dawned she allowed herself a light sleep in her place of prayer, until the dawn tinged the sky with gold, and I used to hear her say, when she sprang up in fear from that sleep, O soul how long wilt thou sleep and how often wilt thou wake? Soon wilt thou sleep a sleep a sleep from which thou shall not wake again until the trumpet call of the Day of Resurrection. (Smith, 1994, p. 48)

Many *Sufis* fast all year round and consume very simple food and as little as possible for they feel they have to account for every grain of food. They consume barely enough food to keep their body and soul together. Thus, they ensure that their needs remain at the bare minimum to be able to spend the rest according to God's command, as stated in Qur'an (2:219) They would insist on non-possession and saving nothing for the next day in order to ensure that whatever they received was spent that day among the poor and the needy. "Just as in orthodox Islam the Kaaba in Mecca is the true center for Muslims, for sufis the true destination is the "Kaaba of the heart", or the center of the soul where Oneness with Allah resides" (Katya Faris, 2018). Sufis were inclusive in their approach to ways of worship and never looked down on any other way of worship of God. The real essence of worship lies not in external forms or rituals, but the purity of heart with which one remembers God.

In Rumi's *mathnavi* (poetic compositions), God says to Moses,

> Ways of worship are not to be ranked as better or worse than one another
> It's all Praise it's all right
> It's not me who is glorified in acts of worship
> It's the worshippers! ... (Jafri, 2019)

Sufis were strict in the outward observance of Islam. However, they also adapted various psycho-energetic practices that ensure all-around spiritual development of the murids called *tariqah* (method). Psycho-energetic practices ensure all-around ethical and intellectual self-development of the murid's spiritual progress

at all stages. All students receive special tasks from their shaykhs according to their individual capabilities and peculiarities. The shaykh also gives psycho-energetic training to a group of students. Different exercises are suggested to enable the *murids* to develop their concentration, control their flow of thought, and achieve mental pause. After that, various psycho-physical exercises are used—rhythmic movements to music, Sufi whirling, and so on. These exercises have a purifying effect; achieve subtle attunement of body, mind, and consciousness; and bring the *murid* to a state of ecstasy and love of God, for example, the *Dhikr* (rhythmic recitation of name of God and qualities associated with God) or remembrance of God. The ways of remembrance of God are many and could be performed individually or in a collective. A group of murids sit in a circle and chant the kalmia or name of Allah rhythmically, first slow and then to the tune of the *Shaykh*. The Qur'an states, "Those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of God: for without doubt in the remembrance of God do hearts find satisfaction" (13:28). *Dhikr* of Allah is a source of tranquility for Sufis.

Dhikr of Allah could be done by ecstatic chanting of God and God's qualities or during sama, singing hymns praising God. *Qawwalis* are sung in praise of God at *Chisti Dargahs*. The Dervishes of *Mevlana* order become ecstatic during a whirling dance that signifies circumambulating one's heart, which is God's abode. The camel fur cap on their heads signify their ego's tombstone and the black cloak represents the evil, which the dervish removes before whirling, thereby being spiritually born to the truth. The white dress they wear signifies ego's shroud. As the *sama* commences, the dervish crosses his hands on his chest, representing God's unity, and bows. While whirling, the dervish slowly opens his arms and spreads his right arm skyward, ready to receive God's beneficence. His left arm is pointing to the earth. The dervish turns from left to right, symbolizing spiritual upliftment. The whirling signifies revolving around one's heart, embracing all humankind and creation with love and affection. The drums symbolize God's order to Creation: "Be." *Sufis* use metaphors of lovers to describe the state in which they are during *Dhikr*. *Dhikr* manifests in the heart and leaves them drunk on Divine love. (BBC, 2009). The whirling exercise relaxes the mind and bestows peace within. There are general rules for performing the whirling exercise. It should not be undertaken until 3 hours after meals. The eyes are fixed on one of the raised hands or not fixed on anything at all. The number of whirls is no more than 40 in a minute; in rare

cases it can go up to 60 whirls in a minute. The beginning and end of the exercise should be as smooth as possible. In case one falls down during the exercise, one should turn on the stomach and relax. After performing the exercise, one needs to relax fully. The duration of the exercise depends on the individual and his or her adaptation to the technique (The Beauty of Islam).

While adhering to *Shari'a* (Qur'anic prescriptions and laws derived from the holy Qur'an); *Sufis* also practiced *tariqahs* to ensure their complete submission to God. *Tariqahs* are many and some believed as many as the number of Muslims. Whirling round, singing qawwalis in praise of God and the Prophet (PUBH), chanting the name of God ecstatically, dancing in ecstasy, and are some *tariqahs*. The Sufis adopted all methods. Along with *tariqahs*, they also embraced various cultures, languages, and traditions that were not contrary to the path set out by God. Baba Farid Ganj-i-Shakkar (1179–1266) composed his poems in Multani language; Amir Khusro (1253–1325), disciple of Nizamuddin Auliya (1238–1325), composed his poetry in Hindawi; Hazrat Dada Hayat Khalandar or Baba Budan (16th century), a popular Sufi in the Chikmaglur District of Karnataka State, conversed in Kannada; Vali Gujarati (1667–1707) was very popular in the state of Gujarat and adopted Gujarati as his language. Some of the dialects, like Multani, Saraiki, Awadhi, which were employed as a medium for transmission of *Sufi* ideas, developed into languages with scripts and literary traditions. Sufis blended and communicated extremely well with the local cultures and performing arts like music and dance.

The Hindu festival of colors—Holi, during which a fire is lit symbolizing burning of all ill feelings toward fellow beings and the following morning everyone sprinkles color on each other in the neighborhood—is celebrated with great revelry. Amir Khusrau (1253–1325) has composed excellent poems on Holi and the spring season, in which Holi is played. Sufi *sama*, or ecstasy in music sessions, contributed greatly to the development of musical instruments and classical ragas (music compositions). Amir Khusrau developed a popular instrument used in Indian classical music tradition - a sitar- a musical instrument with strings. Sufis had an inclusive approach toward worship as well. Nizamuddin Auliya once commented on seeing Hindus worshipping idols on the bank of river Jamuna, "Every people have a religion and a house of worship" (Nizami, 1991, p. 124).

Piri-Muridi

The spiritual journey of a Sufi toward becoming *Iinsan-e-kamil,* or a perfect human being, has various stages. Some of the stages are tawba or repentance for the sins one may have committed in the past; muhasaba or self-criticism for any evil deed committed in order to seek inner spiritual depth; tafakkur or reflection to understand the world and God's message and purpose; *firar* and *i'tisam* (fleeing and taking shelter), the journey from the created to Creator, from lesser qualities to Divine attributes; *zuhud* (renouncing worldly pleasures), resisting carnal desires, living austere life, and refraining from sin in fear of God; *taqwa* (piety), performing God's commands and observing His prohibitions; *ibada* (worship and deep devotion), not only worship but fulfilling God's commands in daily life; *ikhlas* or sincerity and purity of intention; *tawadu* or good nature; *sidq* or truthfulness; *haya* (modesty); *sabr* (patience); *ihsan* (obliging others through as one's duty); *sakina* and *itmi'naan* (serenity and peacefulness); *qurb* (feeling the support of God for good deeds one does as servant of God); *ma'arifa* (attaining and acquiring spiritual knowledge of God); *mahabba* (love) that is so deep and irresistible that it longs for union and struggles to comply with all His desires and commands in all thoughts and acts; and *walaya* or sainthood.

To traverse these stages is most challenging. The journey needs a master and a guide who can take the incumbent through the process wherein one gives up natural human desires and attachments to worldly materials and puts oneself on the path of subservience to God. In order to become a *murid*, one needs to give an oath of allegiance to the *pir* (*bayyat*), taken by putting one's hand on the hand of *pir* and repeating a prescribed oath. A murid needs to have certain attributes (*adab*), including a belief that his pir is the best and the murid will follow his *pir's* command. *Pir* or *shaikh* or *musrshid* of a Sufi dargah is the spiritual guide who helps the incumbent seeker or murid on the spiritual journey. The murid cannot reach his destiny on the spiritual journey without the *pir. Murids* remain bound to their *pir* by their vow of allegiance to him, the pir's friendliness, sympathy, material, magical and psychological assistance, and, when that is not enough, fear of his magical power. This is achieved through a lengthy socialization process that spans a period ranging from 12 years to a lifetime. This socialization process is very painful, and some disciples (*murids*) run away (Pinto, 1995).

The *murid* is skillfully guided by the *pir* step by step, taking him through all the phases. Each *murid* is different and the *pir* guides the *murid* individually. Those who stay on the path of spiritual journey see God in the *pir*, and the *pir* helps the *murid* see God in everything. The *murid* is socialized according to the *tariqah* of the *Khanqah*/*Dargah*. The *pir* gives tasks to the *murid*, duly understanding his capacities and strengths. The *pir* is responsible for giving instructions and then supporting, monitoring, and appraising the spiritual progress of the *murid*. *Dhikr* (constant recitation) and invocation of "Allah-Allah" till the murid becomes ecstatic is the normal task given. *Dhikr* helps the *murid* concentrate and see Allah in the *pir* and things around him.

> The spiritual work given individually to murids to meet their specific spiritual needs is called wird (plural - award). Wird (such as saying, "Allah, Allah") is described as a unit of dhikr constructed to contain certain patterns of knowledge and self-awakening. The initial goal is to gradually improve concentration by learning to stop the flow of thoughts—"living in the moment." (Sarfaraz, 2011)

Constant and fast and increasing remembrance of Allah several times draws the *murid*'s attention away from his daily needs, and the *murid* realizes that he cannot even breathe without the *dhikr* of Allah. The murid starts seeing first his *shaikh* in every direction and even in his dreams. This stage is called *fanaa fi shaikh*, or annihilation of oneself into the *shaykh*—seeing the *shaykh* and oneself as one and the same, acquiring attributes of the *shaykh* into oneself.

As the *dhikr* and remembrance of Allah continues and becomes more challenging, an arduous task requiring greater dedication and concentration for longer periods under the supervision of the *shaykh*, the murid realizes that his *shaikh* is but a curtain or a veil for Allah. The murid starts dreaming about Allah. This stage is called *fanaa fi'illah,* wherein the *murid* intensely desires union with Allah and acquires attributes of God, intensely desires union with God, and completely treads God's path. Sufi Mansur Al-Hallaj (858–922) declared himself as Ana'l-Haq (I am God).

Conclusion

Sufi Islam is human-centric, tolerant, accepting plurality of culture and ways of worship that mould every individual into i*nsan-e-kamil*—a perfect human being through the path of love of Allah, while accepting all creation and appreciating the diversity in the world. Sufism believes that peace with all, or *sulh-e-kul* and unity of existence, or *wahadat-e-wujud,* is a liberating resource to build a peaceful world.

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Love in the Time of Hate

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I begin with a confession that I am no historian. Just a student. A lover of history. So, forgive me for barging on to a platform that is the pride of blue-blooded historians, and heritage experts. For that very reason it is my privilege to be a part of this platform. And it is a privilege for me to be in your company.

I ask of you, to lend me your ear. For just a while. To get a perspective on a particular period from the past from a non-historian. I do promise to bring to history, the fragrance of literature, which is my field of study, and the thrill of reportage , journalism being my profession.

This essay will take a look at the very special relationship between Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, and Amir Khusro. Both of whom lived in the 13th century, till the first quarter of the 14th century.We will talk about Amir Khusro who had with great affection called Nizamuddin 'Nijam'. While Nizamuddin had addressed Amir Khusro sometimes as God's Turk, and sometimes as Indian Turk, the poet, Amir Khusro has left numerous verses in praise of his close friend and spiritual mentor Nizamuddin. And I have translated into English *Chaap Tilak sab.*

This verse by Khusro is still very popular with music lovers, and those in love with poetry, and which is a glowing example of Amir Khusro's intense feeling towards Nizamuddin.

I may repeat the reading again, to make many a point regarding the very special relationship shared between the two:

Your gaze,
Locked on me...
You, strip me of my beauty, my worth...
You offer me a drink,
A cup of love...
Your intoxicating gaze,
Locked on me, and I on a high.
I stake all that I have, for you Nijam,
My body, my soul...
You, have made me you.
His gaze,
Locked on you
Your life Khusro is no longer yours.
Khusro you, are now Nijam.
His gaze,
Locked on you Khusro.
The green bangles in pieces as Nijam reaches out for the fair wrist of Khusro...
Dyed in his colour, his bride
His gaze,
Locked on you.
Stripped of your beauty, stripped of your worth by his gaze,
Locked on you...

The question is why do we want to talk TODAY about the friendship between Nizamuddin and Amir Khusro, from that long ago?

Perhaps because revisiting the past makes us deal with our present, a little more confidently? That then is enough reason to keep in touch with our collective past.

I will try to transport you to the period in the South Asian region between **1238** and **1325**. You have to travel with me today, some eight centuries back in time, to see if there are any similarities in life, then and now.

If there are... then what may we learn from them, to resolve problems faced by us now.

Please bear with me as I tell you how we decided to talk about Nizamuddin and Amir Khusro today.

The two have been on my mind as I looked for answers to the increasing cruelty of some citizens against fellow citizens, in my country.

Lynching of fellow citizens seemed no longer a singular incident by a crazy citizen. Unchecked, the incidents of cruelty threaten to become a norm. As I breathlessly hear of one more lynching, one more rape, one more arrest, one more riot, one more fellow citizen vanished from the face of the earth... it becomes clear that these incidents are no longer an aberration but are encouraged and even applauded...Such cruelty taking place in front of my eyes, numbed my thinking, and paralysed me into inaction.

I was sleepless, wondering how to deal with a wave of almost organised, and nearly institutionalised cruelty taking place around me. On my own. By myself?

The question remains... what does an individual citizen do in the absence of vanishing institutional support, I still wonder. And that is when the life of Nizamuddin returned to inspire.

I was reminded of the book I had written on two mystics of the Chishti Sufi Silsila.

The Book of Nizamuddin Aulia was published in 2012.

I returned to the research done for this book and found that yes, Nizamuddin and Khusro had lived at a time when excessive violence was the order of the day. They were treacherous times.

Nizamuddin lived in humble surroundings in what is now the neighbourhood named after him in Delhi. Khusro came from a family of courtiers. He was the court poet of several rulers, much admired and wealthy. But fame and money did not always make him happy. The intrigues at court often got to him.

His mind calmed down, and his soul was at peace only in the company of Nizamuddin.

That is the beginning of a shift in Khusro's attraction for glitter and glamour, towards the spiritual world of mysticism. He was overcome with happiness and gratitude in the home of Nizamuddin.

In the presence of Nizamuddin, his poetry was dictated by his heart. Instead of only composing verbose eulogies about the ruler of the day, in exchange for money, Nizamuddin encouraged Khusro to write poetry also in the western Uttar Pradesh dialect of *khadi boli* so that many more **ordinary** people could appreciate his verses.

Khusro watched Nizamuddin spend all his nights and his days in adoration of his beloved creator. He was inspired to write verses filled with yearning for his creator, in imitation of his mentor. And when the crowds that collected in countless numbers saw the love and respect exchanged between Nizamuddin, and Amir Khusro, they too aspired for a similar relationship with other human beings.

Clearly the friendship that evolved between Nizamuddin, and Amir Khusro stood out refreshingly before the whole world like a rose, in the midst of a garden reduced to thorns.

Nizamuddin was born in 1238, and Amir Khusro in 1253. Both died in 1325 and are buried side by side in Delhi's Nizamuddin neighbourhood.

Surely, most of you already know much about both Nizamuddin and Amir Khusro. About the spiritual aura of Nizamuddin, and the literary ingenuity of his close friend and dearest disciple, Amir Khusro. Both are popular memories and remembered to this day.

The basti of Nizamuddin in Delhi thrives. And is a great example of living heritage.

Where Nizamuddin had once lived, is now a shrine and thousands of devotees visit the shrine wishing for *barkat*, or blessings even from the memory of him. On Thursday evenings the poetry of Amir Khusro is recited around the shrine of Nizamuddin, with great joy.

However a fellow journalist in Delhi told me after reading the announcement of today's talk, that he was at the dargah three days ago.

"Lekin raunaq nahiin thii" he reports.

I asked, "Dargah pe raunaq nahiin thii...?"

And he said, "Ji haan... Sach poochiye tho raunaq ab kahin nahiin hai. Aisa lagta hai kahin koi utsah nahiin."

I don't know if my fellow journalist in Delhi exaggerates. I am talking to you from Lucknow, and from the bottom of my heart I pray that he does exaggerate. To take away *raunaq* from living, is to find that little else is left in life.

But if this feeling of my fellow journalist is shared by many others, the question is how have we reduced ourselves to this state of utter uljhan, restlessness? How have we managed to reduce life to this when the very zest, the eros of being alive seems to be squeezed out of living?

Let us move back to the period between **1238 and 1325** during the life time of Nizamuddin and Amir Khusro, to see if we can make sense of the problems we face today, by trying to find out what we were in the past, Where we have reached today, and what may we become tomorrow?

Much of the information here is pulled out from the research I did to write the *The Book of Nizamuddin*, to prepare this essay for you.

I have divided this essay into five parts:

1. Nizamuddin
2. Amir Khusro
3. The Time of Nizamuddin
4. Sufi Mysticism
5. Friendship

Nizamuddin

Nizamuddin Auliya is the most famous of the Chisti sufis. He is the disciple of Baba Farid. He came to Delhi in 1258 from Badaun and settled in what is called the Nizamuddin basti in Delhi.

In his life time, seven Sultans ruled over Delhi but he did not befriend any.

When a Sultan expressed his desire to meet him, he said, “I have two doors in my home. If the Sultan enters through one door I will go out of the other.”

The home of Nizamuddin kept its doors open mainly for the poor, who were also the majority population. Nizamuddin was visited daily by thousands of people, for more than forty years.

Barani, a chronicler of that time writes that from early morning till late into the night, nobles and plebeians, rich and poor, learned and illiterate, citizens and villagers, soldiers and warriors, free-men and slaves...men and women, young and old, shopkeepers and servants, children and slaves visited the *khanqah*, or the home of Nizamuddin.

The *khanqah* served as a community centre to help and to support people living in the neighbourhood, as well as travellers coming from other districts, or from abroad.

If a house caught fire, money was sent to the family who was left without shelter, if a widow was starving, Nizamuddin would provide for her. And on his way to his mother's grave or elsewhere, he would distribute money to the poor and to prostitutes.

Nizamuddin's life in Delhi created a bridge among different social, and religious groups. It held the ordinary citizen together within a moral frame, that the state was not capable of offering.

Nizamuddin talked to his visitors about a spiritual philosophy of tolerance, acceptance, goodness, and of an overwhelming, and universal love. Faith in the creator of the world was more valued than any one religion. Nizamuddin did not take love for granted...every moment of his life, he continued to **teach** himself to practice love in a more gentle, more intense way.

And all those who saw Nizamuddin do this, jumped on to the path of love and tried to emulate his walk.

The one thing that was banned by Nizamuddin was a serious engagement with those in power. The emphasis was on love which he was sure leads one to realization of the divine. For him, faith was important. He said that love of God means love of humanity. His is a message of universal love and brotherhood. He said that those who love god for the sake of human beings, and those who love human beings for the sake of God are the best human beings.

This is the best way to love and to adore God.
After having taught himself, and intoxicated those around him with the ecstasy of loving another...

"prem ghati ka madwa pilai ke... mohe suhagan ki mosey naina milai ke..." Nizamuddin died in 1325, at last united with his creator after having yearned for this union throughout his life.

After Nizamuddin, the Chistis did not stay around Delhi. They dispersed to practice their message to other parts of South Asia as well.

Amir Khusro

Following the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate, the cities of northern India received a constant flood of immigrants from Iran, Afghanistan, and the rest of Central Asia.

The Mongols were on a rampage. Among the refugees escaping the Mongol fury were the ancestors of Amir Khusrau, belonging to a Turkish tribe of Central Asia. His father was employed at the court of Iltutmish, turkic Sultan of Delhi between 1210 and 1236.

Amir Khusro's mother was the daughter of an Indian nobleman at the Sultan's court.

Amir Khusrau was born in 1253, in Patiali, in the Etah district of Uttar Pradesh. Imad-ul-Mulk, the maternal grandfather of Amir Khusro was rich and educated.

This was the world where the young poet grew up, surrounded by luxury and high society. In the magnificent assemblies of his grandfather's residence musicians and poets, scholars and mystics were constant visitors.

This is the world in which Amir Khusrau became a well known and acclaimed poet. He was 20 years old when his grandfather died. As a young poet, he had already composed his first collection of poems. In the following 15 years he made a name for himself. At the age of 35 years he was appointed to the court of Delhi and later served as chief librarian of Jalaluddin, the first Sultan of Delhi of the Khalji dynasty.

Delhi was the envy of other world capital cities like Baghdad, Cairo and Constantinople because of the presence of peerless men of extraordinary talents like Khusro in the same city.

Writes Khusro about his beloved Delhi:
If a Khurasani, Greek or Arab comes here, he will not face any problems, for the people will treat him kindly as their own, making him feel happy and at ease, and if they jest with him they do so with blooming smiles.

Amir Khusro is remembered as an ardent follower, friend and finally disciple of Nizamuddin.

The reason of Khusro's popularity and prestige throughout the Sultanate period was both artistic and material. He served six monarchs, and survived their political intrigues. He avoided conflict with Sultans even when they were hostile to his spiritual master Nizamuddin.

In those days, poetry had served as a medium for communicating with the world at large...And a court poet was the spokesman for the ruler. The relationship between a patron and poet was a delicate one.

Khusrau's strong connection with the Sultanate ruling class did not prevent him from pursuing a spiritual path under the guidance of Nizamuddin which is the main inspiration of his soul searing poetry.

In the space between your footsteps, one enters the unfolding union of both worlds.
You, have codified the path of Farid, and that is why they call you the Code, the Nizam.
A hundred noble souls in heaven have been melted down, and stamped with your name, Nijam. Your court is the qibla (the direction of prayer), and angels fly to your roof, like doves. The tonic of your words is soothing to the melancholia, of those yearning for the Real (TRUTH). The lowly Khusro will have eternal life now, that he is enslaved by you, for a thousand lives.

It was a rule at the home of Nizamuddin that neither he, nor his friends engage with the corridors of power. However Amir Khusrau enjoyed the best of both worlds of the royal court, as well as the courtyard of Nizamuddin.

How did he do manage that? I suspect, with the consent of his beloved mentor Nizamuddin.

Time of Nizamuddin

The Turkish invasion of northern India began earlier, but the Turks decided to live in Delhi from beginning of the 13th century. To make a home in Delhi, the Turks had to first battle Muslims already living in the areas of Multan, Lahore, and Punjab before reaching Delhi from modern day Afghanistan. At this time individual rulers were threatened by the invader, irrespective of their religion. Local rulers were fearful of losing their land, power and wealth. Just like rulers belonging to the same religion were always fearful of losing their kingdom to each other.

Historians recall this period in South Asia as one that had very close cultural ties with the Persian world. Indian influence often crossed the Afghanistan area to rub shoulders with the world of the Persians.

With the Turks came a new economic system that was city based.

New centres of political and economic power in surroundings areas of Delhi came up. The reason why the Turks wanted to live in South Asia are political, economic and social. The condition of the places they came from like modern day Central Asia, Afghanistan and Iran, was chaotic.

During the 12th century and the 13th century, a large number of scholars, poets, administrators and warriors turned to India for refuge as Mongol hordes destroyed their homes. The first thing on their mind was to find refuge.

Apart from establishing a Sultanate, the immigrant warriors established a tradition of scholarship, making small towns in north India like Badaun and Etah centres of learning. It is essential to mention Badaun and Etah in western Uttar Pradesh because Nizamuddin was born in the former and Amir Khusro in the latter. And apart from Persian, both Nizamuddin and Amir Khusro also spoke the local language and dialect of the area they were born in.

This is why khadi boli made its way into the writing of Amir Khusro, to the delight of Nizamuddin.

This was a time of hectic exchange of cultures, ideas and arts.

Around 1206. the cities of the Delhi Sultanate contributed to the birth of new social classes like artisans, merchants, money-dealers, without disturbing the local language or way of life.

Delhi, in which both Nizamuddin and Amir Khusrau lived was home to a vibrant, urban, cosmopolitan society.

This was a society with a rich cultural setting, providing great challenges as well as opportunities.

Delhi was the home of all arts, fine and coarse. In the suburbs and slums of the great capital the pimps, prostitutes and gamblers of Hindustan collected to ply their abominable trades; and along with them, as a Heaven-sent antidote, came innumerable mystics…

The Mongols managed to conquer large parts of the world but they could never conquer South Asia, now fortified by the Turks.

In a more peaceful time, many Mongols were allowed to settle down in Delhi in a neighbourhood called Mughalpur. Mughal being one pronunciation of the word Mongol.

The immigrants were grateful to find refuge in South Asia, and Delhi also benefited from the talent, mentality and customs the immigrants brought. The migrations made the city wealthy and gave it a lush, colourful character.

There were also spies everywhere. The atmosphere of the time was highly suspicious. The most common means to gain power or settle businesses was to blind or poison rivals. Assassins, robbers and thieves were found along each route, and around every corner.

There were sinners in plenty in Delhi then, but there were also saints.

Sufi Mysticism

Long before the establishment of Turkish rule in South Asia, wandering fakirs and saints came here. Some set up mystic centres at a number of places.

A systematic organisation of *silsilah* (order, school), began almost simultaneously with the foundation of the Sultanate of Delhi. Two of the most important mystic orders were the Chishti and the Suhrawardi spread far and wide.

The Chisti teachings, of which I know a little more than about the other schools of sufism said, that the creator of the world resides within the being of each human being. That the world needs humanity above everything else. The world needs peace. Human beings need someone to share their pain and sorrow with.

Since the Chishti were willing to fulfill these basic needs of ordinary human beings, Dalit, Hindu, Muslim and Christian flocked to Nizamuddin. Because everyone was equal in his eyes. For him the religion of others did not matter. Humanity did.

From his mentor Baba Farid, Nizamuddin had learnt to serve the creator of the world by serving the roofless, the sick and the hungry. Nizamuddin had faith in his beloved Allah, but the religion that he practiced was to try and bring happiness to the human heart.

Nizamuddin had learnt to practice humanity through example. Baba Farid, his mentor had repeatedly told him that bringing happiness to the human heart is all that matters in life.

Nizamuddin's life was as generous as the river, warm as the sun and as hospitable as the earth.

Nizamuddin did not create divisions in society, but united citizens.

During his lifetime, mysticism exercised a profound calming influence on society. Cultural synthesis was seen at its best at most sufi centres. Here ideas were freely exchanged.

Nizamuddin is adored to this day as he made a personal quest for a union with the creator of the world, into a socially significant movement. For him, the highest form of religious devotion was to feed the hungry, provide clothes to the naked and to spend time with those in distress.

It was Nizamuddin's desire to see that each visitor left him with relief in the heart, and with a smile. This clubbing together of religion with serving all human beings in distress, had a revolutionary effect on society. The selfless services of community leaders like Nizamuddin inspired many to introduce a set of moral and spiritual element into their daily life.

As always, the majority of population was the most troubled, and sufis were its only hope.

Social equality was practiced at the home of Nizamuddin. The prince and the pauper received the same attention, making the Sultan's court and Nizamuddin's courtyard symbols of two opposing institutions.

While members of royal families murdered siblings and close relatives to assure themselves an unchallenged throne...While kings and princes fought enemies daily, piling up decapitated heads of the defeated, in the yard of the palace to discourage further defections, mystics prayed and continued to quitely serve the needy.

And to share and inspire each other with heartfelt stories of love and compassion.

The presence of mystics in Delhi had acted as a corrective to the political hysteria of the period.

Friendship

Against this background a little now on the friendship between Nizamuddin and Amir Khusro.

When I first took myself back in history, I tried not to judge or to compare that society so long ago, to my own. It is of no interest to me for example, whether the relationship between Nizamuddin and Amir Khusro was sexual in nature. Simply because I don't know. There is nothing on record to suggest that it was.

However there are lines written by Khusro addressing Nizamuddin, where Khusro says in rhyme that I kiss your threshold, and not your lips.

Traditionally mystics do not share any intense, intimate and personal experience with the public. The climax of a mystical experience of any sufi is union with the creator. The journey of an *auliya* like Nizamuddin is a continuous attempt to aspire, to anticipate that ultimate moment of oneness with the divine beloved, which is assured at death.

But some *auliya* experience divine union in their life time.

The mystic finds it impossible, and is also forbidden to share the ecstasy experienced of being drowned in longing for the beloved, with others. However impossible, the mystic may find it to talk about *batin* or his inner personal journey, his day to day conduct or *zahir* actions are there for the world to witness, and to emulate.

The mentor, or auliya tries to live an exemplary life every day, with the single purpose of being worthy of the anticipated union with the creator. And *that* decent conduct by the auliya before the public, inspires devotees to follow in the footsteps of the master.

An auliya is a mystic who has reached that stage in life when his sole beloved is the creator of the world, while the desire of a disciple or devotee is to get his love accepted and acknowledged at least by his spiritual mentor, already so close to the creator of the world, and representing divine love on earth.

What mentors on the path of mysticism do is to encourage and help a devotee reach a stage of courage and confidence in their life when they are able to have a divine experience of their own.

Nizamuddin was guided by his mentor Baba Farid, and following in the master's footsteps he inspired his devotees to do the same.

Talking about Nizamuddin is a joyful exercise that can last a lifetime. If you are ready to join me in following in the footsteps of Nizaumuddin, lets continue the conversation.

But for today lets take a break and close this talk right here, leaving it to you dear audience, to decide whether you found any parallels with the time of Nizamuddin, and today? And if you are at all inspired to emulate the life Nizamuddin and Amir Khusro chose to live even when challenged with difficult social, political and cultural turmoil that hovered around them.

But not before reciting chaap tilaak for you once more to see if you find something more in the reading this time round than in the first reading?

Your gaze,
Locked on me...
You strip me of my beauty, my worth...
You offer me a drink,
A cup of love...
Your gaze,
Locked on me, and I on a high.
I stake all that I have, for you Nijam,
My body, my soul...
You have made me you.
His gaze,
Locked on you
Your life Khusro is no longer yours.
Khusro you are now Nijam.
His gaze,
Locked on you Khusro.
The green bangles in pieces as Nijam reaches out for the fair wrist of Khusro...
Dyed in his colour, his bride
His gaze,

Locked on you.
Stripped of your beauty, stripped of your worth by his gaze,
Locked on you...

Chhap tilak sab cheeni ray mosay naina milaikay
Prem bhatee ka madhva pilaikay
Matvali kar leeni ray mosay naina milaikay
Gori gori bayyan, hari hari churiyan
Bayyan pakar dhar leeni ray mosay naina milaikay
Bal bal jaaon mein toray rang rajwa
Apni see kar leeni ray mosay naina milaikay
Khusrau Nijaam kay bal bal jayyiye
Mohay Suhaagan keeni ray mosay naina milaikay

Chhap tilak sab cheeni ray mosay naina milaikay

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The Problem of Caste: Bhakti and Equality in Kabir

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Introduction

According to Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, Kabir's poetry has a unique quality of embracing the rationale of say caste only to turn against it and therefore rejecting it. This is evident in the following song attributed to Kabir.

> "O saintly men, don't ask again the man devoted to the God without qualities what his caste is. The brahmin's good, the warrior's good, the trader's caste is good. The thirty-six clans, they're all good- it's your question then, that's crooked. The barber's good, the washer man's good, the carpenter's caste is good. Raidas, the saint, was good, Supac, the seer, was good- though they were scavengers. Both Hindus and Turks have demeaned themselves- they can fathom nothing." [1]

The inherent logic of this poem questions the organization of the caste system, firstly by embracing different castes when it says that all the castes are good and tries to break the binaries of the hierarchical structure of caste by bringing them at par with each other. As pointed out by Vinay Dharwadker, "this poem

1 Vinay Dharwadker, The Weaver's Songs, (India: Penguin Books, 2003).

is grounded in the historical fact that, over time, many of the famous bhakta have come from the low castes and from untouchable groups". This category of bhakta(devotee) is very important as it is devoid of any 'societal power structures' operating on it. Through this category of bhakta (devotee) one can see Kabir's vehement rejection of inequalities prevalent in the society based on caste and religion. Therefore, through the poems attributed to Kabir, one can discern the idea of equality present in them. Arguing against the critics of the Bhakti movement that it seeks to establish equality only in the realm of spiritual and is unable to do so in the social sphere, Kabir's idea of equality, as can be understood through his poems and verses, seeks to establish the equal moral worth of an individual irrespective of caste and religion. This can be seen through his direct engagement with the spiritual and temporal authorities and with the society, which represents a kind of power structure that was oppressive in its very nature. This offers him a unique position in Bhakti.

The following paper will thus seek to understand the notion of equality emergent in Kabir's poem and how it can be materialized in the context of India. The second important question that this paper will address is regarding the contemporary significance of Kabir in his vehement opposition to the hierarchies of the caste system. The paper will further investigate the question of the influence of Kabir over Ambedkar, as recent studies by scholars like Kanwal Bharti have shown. He argues that there was a profound influence of Kabir on Ambedkar and the reason for this was that both were victims of the same socio-religious background.[2] For Kabir, the epitome of the power structures were the Maulvies and Pundits, who were not only the religious heads of their respective religions but also responsible for entrenching the rituals of the piety and the Varna system. Kabir directly engages with the spiritual authorities of his time and this is evident from his poems when he refers to them as, 'hey pundit', 'listen maulvi'. 'Mr Qazi', 'think pandit', 'Pandit you have got it wrong' etc. This also shows the challenge to the caste structures operationalized by the religious authorities, through Kabir's dissenting voice and disrespect for their intellectual authority and knowledge system of the Brahmins, which was very much exclusive in nature. Kanwal Bharti argues that similarly to Kabir, these religious authorities were also a problem for Ambedkar.

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2 Vinay Dharwadker, The Weaver's Songs, (India: Penguin Books, 2003).
https://www.forwardpress.in/2017/07/kabirs-nirgunvad-influenced-ambedkar/

Caste in India

The caste system has not only led to social but economic and political inequalities. The castes which were docile and submissive have become more assertive and militant recently. The theories of organization of caste defined purely by hierarchy and purity are no longer sustainable because of the assertiveness of the low caste identity in contemporary times.[3] According to the sociologist Louis Dumont, the caste system in India was defined in terms of 'Pure hierarchy' in which the Brahmins occupied the top most position, and the rest of the castes fell in line behind the Brahmins, completely agreeing with the ideology of hierarchy. This is why he called the Indian society 'Homo Hierarchicus'.[4] The two extreme ends of this hierarchy are the pious Brahmins and the impure Untouchables, thereby making 'purity and pollution' the bedrock of the hierarchy of the caste system. Politics and wealth have only an interstitial role in this hierarchy. However, Dipankar Gupta argues that this theory of pure hierarchy is failing because each caste had ideological underpinnings from which they drew their 'symbolic energy' for political and economic mobilizations and hence were able to value themselves deeply.[5] For instance, the Julaha caste can be seen as representing their origins and history differently and simultaneously glorifying their own lineage. This is precisely what Dwivedi argues when he says that the weaving castes never liked to be represented as inferior to Brahmins. In fact, they called themselves Brahmins at times.[6] He further argues that Dumont was aware of the parcelization of pure hierarchy into competing blocks, but he failed to provide a reason for the same.

Another attack that comes to Dumont's theory is from Andre Beteille, who argues that the caste system in India is leading to 'dispersed inequalities'. Highlighting the problems of 'comparative sociology', Beteille argues that the hierarchical society like India (where hierarchy permeates every sphere of life) is placed in opposition to the 'homo equalis' (societies that are zealously attached to the principle of

3 See introduction in Dipankar Gupta ed. Caste in Question: Identity Or Hierarchy?, Vol. 12, (New Delhi: Sage, 2004), p.x.

4 Louis Dumont, Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications, trans. Mark Sainsbury, Louis Dumont and Basia Gulati, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 60-75.

5 Gupta ed. Caste in Question: Identity Or Hierarchy? pp. x-xi.

6 Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, Kabir, (New Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, 2008), p.19.

equality). This comparison between the 'Homo Hierarchicus' and 'Homo Equalis' comes from the lack of understanding of the context of the former and prejudice towards the latter.[7] The western societies are the exemplar of the 'Homo Equalis', and the sociologists of the West accept the diverse views in the West, thereby making it more egalitarian in nature. However, when it comes to hierarchical societies, the western scholars are satisfied with the less differentiated view of the latter. [8] This allows the western scholars to judge the hierarchical societies not based on their experience of the modern struggles against discrimination but their image of the past. For instance, India's modern struggles against the inequalities of caste and untouchability have been pushed into the background, just to bring the hierarchical Varna and Caste system upfront.[9] This possibly arises from the anxiety of the West to show itself in the light of equality by using the non-West in the background, which reflects the built-in structures of inequalities. Therefore Beteille suggests that the specifications of the society are to be understood in the light of both equality and inequality merging together to form a particular design. [10] He simultaneously rejects Dumont's assertion that traditional India knew nothing about the values of equality and liberty. What Beteille brings to the fore is the point that before these categorizations of 'Homo Hierarchicus' and 'Homo Equalis', one needs to study the context and traditions of the so-called hierarchical societies because according to him, no society can lack in the conceptions of equality and justice. Every society therefore has some fundamental concept of equality.

In this background, it becomes essential to study Kabir as a modern figure who was not only fighting against the oppressive caste system but the religion that sanctioned it. Kabir serves as an example that the idea of equality was not entirely absent in India. Besides Kabir, there were other poets of the medieval century that were arguing for a casteless society and this is evident from the utopian society of Begumpura, which Ravidas had propounded.[11] According to

7 Andre Beteille, "Homo hierarchicus, homo equalis", Modern Asian Studies, Vol.13, Issue no. 4, (1979): p. 529.

8 Beteille, "Homo hierarchicus, homo equalis" p. 530.

9 Beteille, "Homo hierarchicus, homo equalis", p. 530.

10 Beteille, "Homo hierarchicus, homo equalis", pp. 531-532.

11 Gail Omvedt, Seeking begumpura, (New Delhi: Navyana Pub., 2008), p.18.

the hagiographies, Ravidas is considered the contemporary of Kabir, and one often finds stories of their debate on the Sagun and Nirgun Bhakti.[12] Both Kabir and Ravidas belonged to the low castes where the former was a julaha(weaver) and the latter was a 'chamar' or a leather worker and it is in their subalternity that one can see the anti-caste agenda. The city of Begumpura encapsulates the vision of a prosperous and equal society where irrespective of caste and status, everyone walks together and freely.[13] In a similar way Kabir's city of 'Premnagar' (the city of love) and 'Amarlok' (the city of immortality) too is a utopian vision where love pervades every sphere thereby bringing down the walls of hatred and discrimination. [14] As rightly pointed out by Gail Omvedt, reason and ecstasy form the bedrock of these utopian visions of the subalterns, without access to any knowledge and privileges, they were trying to subvert the hegemonic Brahmanical traditions. Being aware of their positions in the society, the low caste saints were trying to bring a radical transformation to Indian society. The utopias of the subaltern saints could be seen as posing an alternative society that was based on the understanding of history, and the way to achieve it was through reasonable actions.[15] Whereas Brahmanism had no such vision of a just society, but in fact, they placed emphasis only on the deeply hierarchical society to be regulated by the Varna system. It is also important, therefore, to understand that the Varna system that sought to maintain stability and coherence in society was itself responsible for the rising inequalities. This is because, as Beteille would argue, the very criteria of evaluation that an organization sets for an individual is responsible for inequalities.[16] For instance, the criteria for evaluation, on the basis of birth for the admission into the caste system, points towards the inherent tendency to be unequal. Therefore, this idea of evaluation is a 'social or cultural process' because this standard of evaluation is applied not only to the material things but to the human beings, thereby making them part of the collective

12 David N Lorenzen, Praises to a Formless God: Nirguni Texts from North India, (New Delhi: SUNY Press, 1996).pp168-190.

13 Omvedt, Seeking begumpura, pp.106-107.

14 Omvedt, Seeking begumpura, p. 18.

15 Omvedt, Seeking begumpura, p.14-15.

16 Andre Beteille, Inequality among men (UK: Blackwell,1977), pp. 4-6.

representations (for example caste).[17] This places the individual in a ranking order based on, for example, their birth in an Indian Caste system.

The envisioning of the utopia thus can also be seen in the form of dissent and social protest against the divisive forces prevalent during the medieval centuries. However, in the case of Kabir, it is important to remember that not only was he simultaneously envisioning an ideal simple state that is 'sahaj sthiti' which means true liberation, but he was directly engaging with the dominant forces and was not somebody who denied his material existence. In fact, he sought to acknowledge them and then tried to bring about a radical transformation. Therefore, when Gail Omvedt argues that the lower caste saints utopia of casteless society was to be accomplished through the reason guided actions because this utopia represented a combination of reason and ecstasy. Kabir actually is doing both, envisioning of an ideal city of 'Premnagar' and 'Amarlok' and at the same time questioning the orthodox brahmanical authorities. For instance, in his following verse he is seen to be questioning the very logic of caste- based inequalities. "It's all one skin and bone, one piss and shit, one blood, one meat. From one drop, a universe. Who's Brahmin? Who's Shudra?" [18]

The Paradox between Hindu Kabir and the Dalit Kabir

In order to see how Kabir understands caste, it is important, to see how Hindu authors and Dalit authors have tried to understand and then appropriate Kabir. Hazari Prasad Dwivedi compares Kabir with the Narsimha avatar (a half lion and a half-man incarnation) of Vishnu because both stood at the intersection of impossible and contradictory situations. While the latter was a creation to kill Hiranyakashapu (king of demons) who had asked for his killer to be neither a man nor an animal, that he should not be killed by a weapon neither made of metal nor stone and many other eccentric conditions required to kill him. This points to an impossible yet extraordinary task. Kabir too stands in a similar way

17 Beteille, Inequality among men pp 8-9.

18 Kabir, The Bijak of Kabir, trans. and ed. Linda Hess and Sukhdev Singh, (New York: OUP, 2002), p.19

at the intersection of contradictory conditions, of being a Hindu and a Muslim, of being learned and untutored and of being the preacher of nirguna (God without attributes) and a seeker of saguna[19] (God with attributes). Therefore for Dwivedi Kabir stands at the crossroads of mutually contradictory doctrines similar to that of 'Narsimha' avatar of God Vishnu and this is where he paints Kabir as the savior of Hinduism.[20] Kabir becomes for Dwivedi the 'romantic rebel' who seeks to save Hinduism from Islam. Referring to Kabir as 'Phakkar' (rebellious), Dwivedi argues that Kabir criticized all the customs and traditions and inaugurated a Nirguna Bhakti. He calls Kabir a 'dharamguru' (religious leader) and throws light upon the unique personality which becomes essential for the historical project of Hindi. It was Dwivedi who brought Kabir and his mysticism in the center of the debate, where he was seen to represent new ethics of individualism in the discourse of nationalism, after a continuous attack from Ramchandra Shukla who was trying to establish Tulsidas and Surdas as the most influential saints of North India and in whom the dominant idea of community and nationalism was being construed. [21] The enumeration of an 'unique individual' and marginal status in the caste system represented by Kabir becomes essential for Dwivedi for opposing the Islamic creed by bringing Kabir within the fold of Hinduism resting upon his shoulders the task of radically changing the social norms of the traditional Indian society. Why a marginal figure of Kabir becomes important for Dwivedi is because a homogenous and consolidated national tradition could emerge only with the accord between the low castes and the elites. Therefore for Dwivedi, Kabir is neither a Dalit nor a Muslim, but a unique modern Hindu. [22] This tendency of assimilating Kabir within the Hindu tradition is criticized by Dalit scholars like Dr. Dharamvir. [23]

Kabir, according to the Dalit scholars is Dalit God instituting a religion of its own. This veneration of Kabir as a Dalit God was essential for Dharamvir to construct the history of the subalterns which was denied by the hegemonic brahmanical

19 Dwivedi, Kabir, pp 143-145.

20 Milind Wakankar, Subalternity and Religion: The Prehistory of Dalit Empowerment in South Asia, (New York: Routledge, 2010), p.81. Hereafter I will be using the analysis made by Wakankar in the same book.

21 Wakankar, Subalternity and Religion: The Prehistory of Dalit Empowerment in South Asia pp.117-118.

22 Wakankar, Subalternity and Religion: The Prehistory of Dalit Empowerment in South Asia, p. 74.

23 Dr. Dharamvir, Kabir Ke Alochak, (New Delhi: Vani Prakashan, 2015).

traditions. Therefore to dissociate themselves with 'e' Hinduism is very much radical for the Dalit movement initiated by B. R. Ambedkar. Whereas Kabir is a rebel who seeks to go beyond Caste for Dwivedi, for Dalit scholars he becomes a victim of caste always pointing at the inherent inequality of the caste system. But in this, as has been pointed out by Wakankar both Dwivedi and Dharamvir keeps Brahamanism at the centre where the former seeks to move towards it and the latter seeks to depart from it. This often ignores in the process what is 'intransigence for the low castes in their struggle for recognition and autonomy'. [24] The difference between Dwivedi's Kabir and Dharamvir's Kabir can also be looked at as how they understand his notion of Nirguna God (without attributes). While Dwivedi argues that Kabir's nirguna Bhakti was a way to achieve the Saguna God (with attributes), for Dharamvir Kabir himself was a Dalit God.

In the light of the above discussion, it is important to see that while Dwivedi was trying to do away with the caste, Dharamvir brought it to the fore. For both, therefore caste remains central, where the former is trying to ignore the inherent inequalities of it for the larger project of a homogenous tradition, the latter unveils the inherent inequalities. However, the problem with the Dalit appropriation of Kabir as Dalit God confines him within the institution of organized religion. Another point that needs to be taken into consideration is that when Kabir refers to his identity as a Julaha or of his low caste status, the purpose is to reject the institution of caste and then the institution of any religion. One might argue that possibly for Kabir the hierarchies within the institutions eventually led to the inequalities and therefore it was crucial to reject not only those institutions (specifically caste and religion) but the very ideology of those institutions. But this is not the case with the Dalit scholars as they very well are skeptical of leaving behind their identities which are being used as a bargain for the sake of their representation and equal rights.

24 Wakankar, Subalternity and Religion: The Prehistory of Dalit Empowerment in South Asia, p.77.

Kabir's Idea of Equality

The Hindu religious authorities were exclusionary by their very nature because they granted access to knowledge and privileges only to the upper caste. This phenomenon of binaries based on the caste is not something new but has been entrenched in the minds of those who favour it and those who want to destroy it. In such a case, Ambedkar argued for the 'annihilation of the caste' in the early twentieth century, and similar to this, Kabir too was fighting against this in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. One might argue that both launched a strong attack against the Brahmanical ideology and the prevalent power structures that sought to repress one section of the society while favouring the ideology of those who ruled. However, both differed in their ways of doing so, whereas Ambedkar suggested leaving the fold of Hindu religion and joining Buddhism[25], for Kabir the entire practice of following institutionalized religion and any external authority that sought to dictate the lives of individuals needed to be rejected. Therefore, for Kabir these binaries had to be rejected and the practice of 'interiorizing faith' [26] needed to be inculcated. One can argue that in rejecting these binaries there was an idea of non-discrimination and equality present in Kabir and he sought to materialize it through the 'principle of sameness'. This principle can be seen in the following sabda (a form of folk song) where Kabir argues that every individual is made from the same bone; same flesh and has the same blood running through their veins.

> "Pandit, look in your heart for knowledge. Tell me where untouchability came from, since you believe in it. Mix red juice, white juice and air—a body bakes in a body. As soon as the eight lotuses are ready, it comes into the world. Then what's untouchable? Eighty-four hundred thousand vessels decay into dust, while the potter keeps slapping

25 Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, Annihilation of caste: An undelivered speech. (New Delhi:Arnold Publishers, 1990), pp. 40-42.

26 Vaudeville, Charlotte. A Weaver named Kabir: Selected Verses with a Detailed Biographical and Historical Introduction, Vol. 6. USA: Oxford University Press, 1993.

> clay on the wheel, and with a touch cuts each one off. We eat by touching, we wash by touching, from a touch the world was born. So who's untouched? asks Kabir. Only she who's free from delusion"[27]

The metaphor 'clay' denotes the substance with which the body comes into existence and which according to Kabir is the same for every individual. In the above poem, one can see how Kabir, like Socrates, has a 'hammerlock' over the argument, while the 'interlocutor' in this case 'Pandit' becomes the subject. [28] The passion with which Kabir is arguing reflects his anguish towards discrimination based on caste, purity and impurity and most importantly 'touch'. The question that Kabir raises, that 'from where did untouchability come?' is very pertinent to the idea of equality and hierarchy that one can draw from Kabir. Hierarchy for Kabir was composed of the oppressed and the oppressors, in his case the low castes and the upper castes respectively. This hierarchy was based on access to the knowledge of the Vedas (the oldest Hindu texts), birth, pure-impure, power and wealth. This hierarchy that Kabir sought to eliminate and thereby establish equality not only on the ontological but also moral basis. The idea of equality was not that of demanding political rights but that of equal moral status in the society by not only drawing upon the natural basis of equality (that of flesh, bone and blood) but also by rejecting the acquired inequalities based on hierarchies of caste and varna system. Coming back to the above mentioned sabda, Kabir attacks the notion of untouchability by embracing the idea of 'touch'. Kabir argues that without the action of 'touching', one can neither perform their everyday functions nor can they come into existence. No human body remains untouched in this world. Therefore Kabir is questioning the very premises on which the untouchability is based, if touch which is the essence of everyday activity of every individual being. He calls this the questioning of 'illusoriness of touch'. Since every body is made of the 'same essential substance' and that each body is produced from another body, at what point does the defilement take place?[29] This question raised by Kabir challenges the notion of purity and impurity, which were developed by the Brahmanical authorities based on touch and sight. The

27 Kabir, The Bijak of Kabir, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.17.

28 Kabir, The Bijak of Kabir, p. 27. Special emphasis on the footnotes.

29 Kabir, The Bijak of Kabir, pg 17.

world which is seen as the creation by touch [30] in the above verse highlights its importance thereby negating the very essence of untouchability. This is in a way very procedural because the things that go into the making of an individual are the same and the procedure of reproduction is too the same. So the basis for inequality or ascription of lower status to the shudras by the Brahmins on the basis of birth becomes redundant.

It is important to analyze the resistance against the Brahmanical orthodoxy that one sees in Kabir. This resistance stems from him being conscious of his caste and his surroundings. The very fact that some scholars have argued that Kabir belonged to the community of converts and Kabir himself referring to as either 'julaha' or 'kori' is indicative of his awareness towards his caste. Kabir asks individuals to reject the organization of caste and Varna. The following 'Ramaini' and this reflects that he was aware of the inherent inequalities in the organization of caste. "Drop family, drop status, seek the nonexistent space, destroy the shoot, destroy the seed, reach the unembodied place." [31] This can be seen in yet another sakhi (a short verse) coming from the Rajasthani Granthavali – "I've burned my own house down, the torch is in my hand. Now I'll burn down the house of anyone who wants to follow me."[32]

It is important to see that he was not just challenging the hierarchy of upper and the lower caste but the different power structures leading to inequalities. This is how his idea of equality becomes universal because he was not just challenging the status and power of the dominant sections but also the sources from where they were drawing upon them such prestige, for instance, the knowledge of the Vedas, scriptures, birth, wealth and language etc. The aim was. therefore to destroy the roots or the source of inequality. It is important here to cite one of the famous hagiographical accounts concerning the ritual of birth and death in the Hindu tradition. According to this ritual, dying in Magahar (a town in UP) led to the re-birth as a donkey, whereas dying in Kashi (a town in UP) meant liberation.

30 Kabir, The Bijak of Kabir, pg 18.

31 Kabir, The Bijak of Kabir, pg 86.

32 Linda Hess. "The cow is sucking at the calf's teaKabir's upside-down language." History of Religions Vol 22, Issue no. 4 (1983): pp. 313-337.

Magahar was a town where the low caste or the ones who performed unclean jobs resided. This clearly shows that Kabir's conscious decision to die in Magahar meant his complete rejection of the rituals associated with death and afterlife.[33] This shows that Kabir, a critical individual, was trying to bring forth the problems of external rituals, social differentiations and sectarianism. Hence according to Baidyanath Saraswati one can see a tradition of non-conformism in Kabir.[34] For Kabir the inherent qualities of an individual had nothing to do with the caste[35] and this is evident in the following lines of Ramaini (another type of composition associated with Kabir). "The maker himself became a potter, the potter shaped all kinds of pots. He set them in one place, the creator— carefully he made those pots! He baked them in the belly's fire, guarding them the whole time. Then carefully he brought them out and "Shiva," "Shakti," named them all. If the son of the house is stupid, clever ones don't follow him. I'm telling you my own truth, madmen follow others' dreams. Hidden and visible—all milk. Who's the Brahmin? Who's the Shudra? Don't get lost in false pride. False is the Hindu, false the Turk."[36] This clearly stands in opposition to the division of castes on the basis of inherent qualities as for Kabir one can bring about a change in the existing social conditions through one's labour and this is evident from his life account as a julaha weaving the cloth for the subsistence of the family.

The falsity of rituals, religious identities and caste identities and anything which are hypocritical are often associated with 'Maya' in Kabir's verses. According to Linda Hess, Maya represents the 'phenomenal universe', 'the ephemera of transient forms'.[37] Since these forms are evanescent and their existence is temporary, Maya therefore constitutes 'illusion' which often leads us astray from the true path to salvation. Therefore, for Kabir, all the religions, caste and rituals are forms of Maya. Often it is representative of lowly passions and desires, which clouds the judgement of individuals, pushing them to pursue the temporary pleasures

33 Baidyanath Saraswati, "Notes on Kabir: A Non-Literate Intellectual" in, Dissent, Protest, and Reform in Indian Civilization. Vol. 24, Malik, Subhash Chandra ed., (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1977), pg 172-173.

34 Saraswati, "Notes on Kabir: A Non-Literate Intellectual", p. 173.

35 Kabir, The Bijak of Kabir, see footnote to ramaini 26.4.

36 Kabir, The Bijak of Kabir, p. 83.

37 Kabir, The Bijak of Kabir pg 197.

of the phenomenal universe. Sometimes Maya is also personified as a female seductress leading people into bewilderment and distractions. This concept of Maya found in Kabir is understood by Kumkum Sangari through three types of femaleness on which Kabir draws upon – the 'fallen' femaleness of strisvabhav (nature of a woman), the noble precepts of stridharma (duty of a woman) and the 'higher' femaleness emerging in bhakti compositions.[38] The stridharma often found in the marriage along with the 'higher' femaleness enables the individual to free themselves from the clutches of lower passions and desires of strisvabhav. Maya is the basis of distinctions between different kinds of women on the basis of the above categories but also simultaneously defines a woman's essential nature.[39] The first category that of 'strisvabhav' views women as an impediment in the path of Bhakti, hence it is associated with the characteristics of deceit, sensual pleasures, greed and lies. For instance, in the following sabda one can see Kabir referring to Maya as a trickster swaying people away from the path of salvation.

> "Maya's the super swindler. Trailing the noose of three qualities, she wanders, whispering honeyed words. For Vishnu she's Lakshmi, for Shiva she's Shakti, for priests an idol, for pilgrims a river. To a monk she's a nun, to a king she's a queen, in one house a jewel, in one a shell. For devotees she's a pious lady, for Brahma, Mrs. Brahma. Kabir says, seekers, listen well: this is a story no one can tell."[40]

Thus, Maya is present within oneself and Kabir argues that Maya and Mind become one thereby creating a delusional world. In this sense the strisvabhav therefore becomes a 'principle of male self-division' where there is a constant struggle between the male striving for higher truth and Maya creating distortions.[41] The strisvabhav runs contrary to the stridharam which refers to the 'pativrata' women surrendering her life for the betterment of her husband and children. Kabir is often seen immersing himself in the Bhakti of God in the pursuit of stridharam

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38 Kumkum Sangari, "Mirabai And The Spiritual Economy of Bhakti", Occasional Papers on History and Society,XXVIII, (1990), p. 78.

39 Sangari,"Mirabai And The Spiritual Economy of Bhakti", p. 78.

40 Kabir, The Bijak of Kabir, p. 41.

41 Sangri, "Mirabai and the Spiritual Economy of Bhakti", p. 85.

where the latter represents a perfect male protecting their respective wives. This reflects upon the undivided self which when separated from the god becomes unworthy but becomes complete on uniting with God.[42] The strisvabhav and stridharm therefore reflects the contradictory virtues - 'femaleness of male frailty' desirous of lowly pleasures preventing both men and women from attaining salvation on the one hand and 'femaleness of higher male desires' respectively. This is therefore legitimizing the stridharm as a married woman who chastises the lowly desires created by strisvabhav. However, the problem in such a kind of division where on the one hand woman is a mere trickster and on the other helps in chastisement reflects upon the dual nature of women either being bad or good. This representation is very much patriarchal in nature where again women have not only been reduced to as being evil and good but have been placed in subordination to the men. The powerful femaleness of 'strisvabhav', which can be rather interpreted as an independent force, is rendered as evil. This therefore reflects the persistence of patriarchal values in Kabir's verses. The problem in such a claim might arise from the fact that Kabir's poems have been orally transmitted and from the western to eastern texts there have been additions. So, whether these values were present in the original compositions or have been later additions remains an enigma, hence the idea of equality in Kabir remains incomplete. This makes the contextual reading of Kabir all the more important.

Kabir, Gandhi and Ambedkar on Inequality, Caste and Toleration

It would not be wrong to suggest that one can identify a common thread between Kabir, Gandhi and Ambedkar. Where Gandhi often recited Kabir's verses and the recent Dalit scholars have argued that there was a consistency in the thought of Kabir and Ambedkar. Also, the influence of Kabir is seen on Ambedkar because his parents were Kabir Panthi's.[43] Three of them raised the important questions of untouchability and inequality of the caste system; however, their respective ways of approaching the problems were different. Kabir, as has already been pointed

42 Sangri, "Mirabai and the Spiritual Economy of Bhakti", pp 85-90.

43 Bharti, "Kabir's 'Nirgunvad' influenced Ambedkar".

above, rejected the external rituals of caste and religion in totality. He argued for the elimination of the two, which were leading to the inequalities in the society. He sought to achieve equality by arguing a case for biological sameness. [44] Kabir not only rejected the distinctions of caste and varnas but also rejected the scriptures in which they were rooted. Kabir rejected the existence of different God's for different people and in fact placed importance on the unity of God, which was immanent.

However, for Gandhi, religion was an important aspect of one's life and he is often seen claiming in 'Hind Swaraj' that Indians are becoming irreligious. Gandhi explains that Indians are 'turning away from God' and this because of the dawn of modern civilization, in front of which the religious superstitions seem harmless. This however does not mean that he was supporting the superstitions but instead argued that one could not do away with them by disregarding religion.[45] One can therefore see the underlying difference between Kabir and Gandhi in the way they approached religion wherein the former sought to dissipate the existence of religion, the latter sought to conserve it. This 'conserving of religion' by Gandhi steers the way to his principle of toleration which relied on accepting the faults of every religion, thereby leading to the fact that all religions are imperfect. It is in the acceptance of these imperfections that the principle of tolerance develops. However, later, Gandhi had transformed the meaning of tolerance to 'goodwill' as he thought the former to be judgmental and condescending.[46] For Gandhi, therefore "Religions are different roads converging to the same point. What does it matter that we take different roads, so long as we reach the same goal? Wherein is the cause for quarrelling?"[47] Therefore for Gandhi religion was a "resource, a body of insights to be extracted, combined and interpreted in the way he thought proper". [48] Whereas for Kabir different religions were the delusions

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44 This sameness is based on the flesh, bones and blood which is common to all the human beings. the faculty that seperates human beings from the animals is that of reason and criticality, the two of which are the essence of Kabir's verses.

45 Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule, (India: Navjivan Publishing House, 2014), pp.38-39.

46 Bhikhu Parekh ,'Gandhi: A Very Short Introduction', (United States: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.118.

47 Gandhi, Hind swaraj or Indian Home Rule, p. 49.

48 Parekh, Gandhi: A Very Short Introduction, p. 47.

of Maya that led people astray from the path of salvation. Therefore, in the light of this Saral Jhingran, the argument that both Mahatma and Kabir emphasized the importance of unity of all religions is rendered redundant. [49] Though, both were facing the communal discord during their times, yet their approach for settlement of the conflict varied. For Kabir, tolerance of religion was by no means an option when he rejects the basis of external differentiations of human beings based on the same.

Coming to the question of caste and varna, Gandhi had rejected the caste system prevalent in India, yet had accepted the Varna system. He argued that Caste has no relation with religion and Varna but also said that Varna defined our duties based on the occupation and is good for the welfare of the society.[50] Varnashram dharma according to Gandhi was a 'unique contribution of Hinduism' to the entire world. Varna which was based on the division by birth was inherent in human nature and to disregard it was to flout the 'law of Heredity'.[51] Therefore, the four fold varna distinction remained important for Gandhi while the classification into various castes was 'unwarranted'. In fact, when there was a discussion regarding the granting of the communal awards to the lower castes, Gandhi came out in strong opposition to it because according to him their status as untouchables would be further perpetuated without actually reforming Hinduism.[52] Though he condemned the practice of untouchability of the caste system, he also demanded the Hindus for bringing the reform. It is important to understand that the Varna system is based on the birth but on the worth of an individual and the caste system is based on the birth of an individual. Both in their practice become solidified with clear cut distinctions and this perpetuates inequality. That is why it is important here to reiterate Kabir's idea of equality, which basically emphasized on the equal moral worth of an individual. This basic equality whose remnants are to be found in Kabir is essential for any democratic society. That is why Kabir

49 Saral Jhingaran, "Kabir and Gandhi as Apostles of Human Unity, Transcending Religion and Caste-based Discrimination", Gandhi Marg, Vol. 32, No.3, (Oct-Dec 2010), accessed on June 5, 2018, https://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/kabir-gandhi-apostles-of-human-unity-trascending-religion.html

50 Ambedkar, Annihilation of caste, pg 42.

51 Mahatma Gandhi, 'The essence of Hinduism', (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1987), pp 30-33

52 Parekh, Gandhi: A Very Short Introduction, p. 23.

completely rejected the caste and the Varna system and also rejected their source of knowledge that is Vedas and Puranas.

Echoing in the same contention, Ambedkar in his 'Annihilation of Caste' argues that Hindu society is not a community but an amalgamation of different castes and it is important to do away with the caste and Varna system. The reform of Hinduism was impossible therefore he suggested leaving the fold of Hinduism and converted to Buddhism. Caste according to him was a state of mind and thereupon reform of the caste meant notional change. The deeply held religious beliefs further perpetrated the caste distinction making all the Hindus slaves to the caste system and this could be changed only by leaving the fold of Hindu religion.[53]

Religion for both Gandhi and Ambedkar was important wherein the former sought to reform Hinduism; the latter sought to reject it by conversion to Buddhism. Though, for Gandhi the cosmic spirit (God) was the truth, which human beings strive for and which was formless that is without qualities, but he was also aware of the disorientation experienced by the human mind (especially Hindus for whom rituals around deities is a way of life) when asked to think of God in a 'non-qualitative' terms.[54] Therefore, for Gandhi religion becomes central to the reform of the hindu society. In fact, Ambedkar never rejected the religion per se and this is evident from conversion to another religion. However, Kabir completely takes a different course altogether and a much more radical one that is rejecting all the organized religions. Kabir's rejection of religious distinctions and the caste distinctions are based on his idea that every human being is equal and the only hierarchy that exists is that between God and the Bhakta. The Bhakta doesn't know any caste, gender or religion. What is important to note here is that Kabir is not rejecting the possibility of God's existence but the religions, which are a hindrance to the path of salvation. The essence of life[55] is not to be found in any

53 Ambedkar, Annihilation of Caste, pp 31-40.

54 Parekh, Gandhi: A Very Short Introduction, pg 36.

55 By essence of life I am referring to the meaning of our existence which we derive from religion. For instance the various rituals performed to please the deities to bring good fortunes.

religion but within oneself and one's labor. By placing the essence of life within the individual Kabir seeks to create a unity of all the human beings.

Conclusion

Kabir is then seen as rejecting the very idea of the caste and untouchability. Kabir not only challenged the authority of the institutional structures of caste and religion but attacked the very ideology upon which they are founded. While arguing that 'touch' is the essence of our existence, he argues that the Brahmin, Shudra, Muslim, Hindu, etc everybody is born through the touch. Therefore, one can say that Kabir was arguing for an equal moral worth of an individual and through this he sought to unite humanity .

Finally, from the above discussion it can be concluded that Kabir's idea of equality was very much political and social in nature. Not only was he arguing a case for basic equality but simultaneously envisioned the city of love where everyone was equal. The ideal of selfless love and devotion towards God actually burnt the walls of discrimination because it sought to bring every individual on the same plane.

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Sant Ravidas:
Making sense of Ravidas amidst the appropriating narratives of the *bhagat*, the 'reborn brahmin' and the political performatives of *fakiri*

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Based on the verses, discourses and hagiographic work sourced from the literature and field work at the Dera Sachkhand Ballan in Punjab, this work attempts to extricate Ravidas' devotional thought and the ideas associated with it, from the narratives of appropriation. The narratives of *bhagat* Ravidas and the 'reborn Brahmin' portray Ravidas as a follower,undermining the long legacy of his deification and reclamation as *satguru* (the truest guru). These narratives attempt to substitute the past and contemporary assertions of the Ad Dharmis and Ravidassias respectively, with a compromised depiction of Ravidas' life and thought.

Ravidas situates the self, outside the disciplining and control of the body through the networks of purity/pollution. This paper attempts to highlight the liberating and empowering implications of Ravidas' devotional thought for the marginalized self and body by juxtaposing his views against Vaishnava bhakti thought and the Hindu right's framing of the body as a register of masculinist power and control. It further attempts to visibilise the inexorable link between practices of ascetic mortification of the body, masculinism, and the Hindu right wing's political performative of *fakiri*.

The guru, the *bhagat* and the 'reborn brahmin' [1]:

Historically, the religious landscape of northern and central India has seen Chishti Sufis, Nath Yogis and Puranic gurus espousing and propagating non-sectarian and overlapping beliefs, forming what is known as a culture of the sants (Gopal 2019). This culture of the sants or *santism* is a radical break from the system of organized religion and its structures of authority (Vaudeville 1987). Sant is a term derived from the Sanskrit word sat (the truth). It refers to a person who knows the truth or the one who has experienced the ultimate reality, enlightenment or self-realization (Vaudeville 1987). In common parlance, the term sant is used to describe someone who can be a moral or spiritual exemplar. The term saint, which is often used interchangeably for the term sant, comes from the latin word *sanctus*, meaning the one who is holy (Cross and Livingstone 2005). While the term saint may be used to convey a formal religious designation or title, the term sant is generally used to convey respect or popularity of a person recognized as spiritually evolved by the people of a region.

The porous and unorthodox ideas of Bhakti devotionalism of many 'lower caste'[2] sants like Ravidas, Kabir, Namdev, Tukaram, Ramdas, Pipa, Sain and Dhanna (Muthu Mohan and Dharam Singh 2003) have nurtured a devotional ecosystem unburdened with abject sectarianism and orthodoxy. Ravidas is one of the leading sants of Bhakti devotionalism to inspire a positive recalibration and reclamation of Chamar caste identity and the socio-political mobilization of self-respect surrounding it. Omvedt (2008) terms Ravidas as a Bhakti radical for his social vision of the *Begumpura* – the land without the sorrows of caste, that in many ways is the defining feature of Ravidas' social utopia.

The contemporary assertion of the Ravidassias of the Dera Sachkhand Ballan, for a distinct social identity, is a manifestation of the indelible impact of the values and ideas of sant Ravidas.[3] Ravidas' thought needs to be situated within this very significant context of being an icon of change for the Chamars who have been able to articulate a positive self-identity of Ad Dharmi, Ravidassia and 'Chamar'[4] against the humiliating and denigrating meanings of caste occupation and ritual pollution attached with their given social identities.

The term sant is the most commonly used term of reference for Ravidas, a sign of endearment, respect, adoration and often an acknowledgement of his popularity among the masses. In the sant tradition, respect and recognition is gained from the masses, unlike the Judeo-Christian tradition where established authority canonizes sainthood in recognition of holiness. Santhood therefore belongs to the realm of the plural, diverse and fluid where many meanings of the divine co-exist in defiance of the structure of fixed authority. The absence of a rigid or a pronounced notion of hierarchy between the follower and the sant leaves open the possibility of redefining the exchange between the seeker and the sought on more democratic terms. The appellation of sant for Ravidas comes from this context of the sant tradition.

According to the Sikh normative belief, the appellation of guru is a marker of supreme respect reserved for the ten gurus of the Sikh lineage. In the Sikh faith, the reference of guru is exclusively reserved for the ten Sikh gurus part of the established guruship, leaving the other sants to be identified as their followers or the bhagats (Ranjan 2019). This notion of the guruship has been questioned by the dalits of Punjab, who constitute roughly 32 per cent of the total population. Despite the remarkable popularity of the 'lower caste' sants like Ravidas, they find themselves on the margins of the Guru Granth Sahib.

The followers of Ravidas take exception to the deeming of Ravidas' verses in the GGS as the 'bani of bhagat Ravidas' and use markers of guruship for Ravidas, reiterating their stance that Ravidas is not simply a sant or a bhagat but the most superior of all gurus to them (Ranjan 2019). Using markers of guruship like guru and satguru for Ravidas is an act of rejecting the patronizing and dismissive narratives that deliberately underplay and undermine the cultish popularity he enjoys among the Chamars. The dominant Sikh and Vaishnava narratives of Ravidas attempt to uniformize the diversity of sant beliefs by integrating Ravidas into monotheistic traditions where he is obscured by a Sikh or Vaishnava guru (Ibid).

Similar to the guru/bhagat hierarchy, many mainstream hagiographers of Ravidas integrate him in the narrative of the 'reborn brahmin' where Ravidas is shown to be returned to the fold of brahminhood by a Vaishnava guru. The

narrative describes him as a fallen brahmin who first became polluted by violating the order of purity/pollution in his previous birth but was later redeemed and reindicted in brahminhood by Ramanand. This narrative reduces Ravidas' status to the contingency of birth while anointing Ramanand to the status of his inherent and unquestioned saviour.

The Hindi hagiographers Anantdas and Priyadas are two of the more prolific sources of the 're-born brahmin' narrative of Ravidas. Upadhyaya (1982) traces this narrative in Anantdas' *Bhaktaratnavali* where Ravidas is said to be a brahmin who reincarnates as a Chamar due to the 'impure' act of eating meat. According to Anantdas' account, Ravidas was born a brahmin in his previous birth but was reborn as Chamar because he consumed meat (Callewaert 2000). Upon being reborn in a Chamar family, he refused his mother's milk for a period of four days. On the night of the fourth day, Ramanand received a divine command to go and initiate infant Ravidas and his family as his followers. Only after this divine intervention did Ravidas accept to drink his mother's milk, implying that a caste-aware infant Ravidas had refused ritual pollution from a 'lower caste' mother due to his Brahmin affiliations of the previous birth.

Priyadas' account of Ravidas is another variation of the reborn brahmin narrative. This is argued by Gail Omvedt but has been sourced from the Round Table India. Perhaps the right way to frame it is, Gail Omvedt terms Priyadas' 1712 version of this narrative in the *Bhaktirasbodhini* as a brahmanisation of Ravidas (Omvedt 2012, Roundtable 2012). According to Priyadas, Ravidas was born a brahmin but accepted alms polluted from the touch of the cobbler caste people and became demoted to being born a 'lower caste' in the next birth. This narrative too places sole emphasis on Ravidas' birth-based ascription and pins it onto Ravidas' polluting actions. Both these accounts deprive Ravidas of the dignity of agency and impose brahmanising narratives on his legacy. In response to these narratives of appropriation, the Ravidassias deify and glorify Ravidas as a hero, a saviour, a protagonist and a miracle worker.

Ravidas the protagonist: extricating Ravidas from the narratives of appropriation

There is a general tendency, among the dominant social forces, to mute or temper the legacy of Ravidas. Ravidassias respond to this tendency of appropriation by exalting Ravidas, sanctifying him as their hero and presenting his life accounts as a series of spectacles marking his extraordinary powers and abilities.

Miraculous stories of Ravidas like the 'four janjus' (producing the four sacred threads from his heart) or floating of the pathri (making the stone float on water)[5] invert the dominant narratives of the *bhagat* and the 'reborn brahmin' by taking prominent figures deemed with respect and veneration in Sikh and Vaishnava beliefs, and portraying them as the admirers or followers of Ravidas. The visual imagery of Ravidas circulated in the deras and on its online forums shows him discoursing with people at the ghats of Benaras, arguing with the kings and putting brahmin characters of the story in their place,[6] radically altering the system of existing meanings where the 'lower caste' is the perpetual follower of the enlightened upper caste guru.

The life episodes of Ravidas involving the river/goddess Ganga, Kabir, Gorakhnath and Sikander Lodhi are popular in the North Indian tradition of Ravidas veneration.[7] The river Ganga and its anthropomorphic depictions hold a place of reverence in North India for being a holy site. The Ganga thematic of Ravidas life episodes (Friedlander 1996) are very popular at the Dera Sachkhand Ballan. In these life episodes, Ganga appears in her anthropomorphic *avatar* and becomes an admirer of Ravidas. One such life episode goes like this. While making leather in Kashi bazaar, Ravidas was asked by a brahmin called Ganga Ram to accompany him for a dip in the holy Ganga.[8] Ravidas declined to take the dip as he did not believe in the Hindu ritual of washing sins in the Ganga. He asked Ganga Ram to give an offering of a piece of leather to the holy Ganga on his behalf. Goddess Ganga, thinking that Ganga Ram is Ravidas became elated and praised him with many honorifics. She then offered the brahmin a gold bangle as a gift for Ravidas. Ganga Ram took the bangle and gifted it to his wife. After a few days, he went to the market to sell the bangle where it was apprehended as a stolen good. When the king heard news of the stolen gold bangle, he asked Ganga Ram to produce

the other part of the pair to prove his innocence. Ravidas came to the brahmin Ganga Ram's rescue by seeking river Ganga's help through an act of miracle. In the stories of the Ganga thematic, Ravidas becomes the figure of admiration and reverence for the brahmin and river/goddess Ganga. There are many different stories of Ravidas and river Ganga with the same narrative structure where only the objects of exchange vary, from coins, betel nuts, *damri* (a small quantity) to gold bangles/bracelet, while the main characters remain the same.

Here is another popular variant of this life episode. A brahmin would walk barefoot for his daily bath in the Ganga river every day. One day, Ravidas offered him his shoes without accepting money for them. He asked the brahmin to offer betel-nut to the river Ganga on his behalf. Upon being offered Ravidas' betel-nut, the river Ganga appeared in her divine *avatar* and outstretched her hand to accept it. Goddess Ganga praised Ravidas and expressed her respect for him. This act of miracle is said to have made Ravidas famous in the whole of Kashi (Bhatti and Pinney 2011).

In most of these stories, brahmins play the characters of either beneficiaries of Ravidas' kindness or jealous antagonists attempting to harm him. In one such story, Ravidas defeats the machinations of the brahmins to kill him.[9] The story goes as follows: Ravidas began to worship god in the manner of the brahmins. He would apply *tilak* (mark), wear *dhoti* (cloth sheet), blow the conch shell and wear the *janju* (sacred thread). Soon he became very popular among the people for his message of universal brotherhood. Ravidas' vehement criticism of untouchability and the caste system angered the brahmins. They, along with Piran Ditta Mirasi, hatched a conspiracy to kill Ravidas. One day, they invited Ravidas for a meeting. Despite knowing of their scheme to kill him, Ravidas accepted the invitation. Using his miraculous abilities, Ravidas exchanged appearances with the brahmins' companion Bhalla Nath and the brahmins ended up killing him instead. When they heard Ravidas blowing his conch-shell in his hut later that day, they realized they had killed Bhalla Nath. The brahmins then acknowledged Ravidas' extraordinary powers and apologized profusely.

There are many life episodes where Ravidas is glorified as the most virtuous of all sants. A famous narrative is that of the philosopher's stone. According to a popular

rendition of the story, Ravidas preferred to live like a poor man and never accepted any gifts from the many kings and queens who were his disciples. One day, god willed for him to have the philosopher's stone, which was the most precious of all possessions. God visited him disguised as a sant and offered him the philosopher's stone that had magical powers to convert iron into gold. The sant offered Ravidas the stone to use it in the service of the *sadhus*. Ravidas listened to this offer and politely refused with the plea that he rather be of service to the *sadhus* with the resources available to him. The sant made Ravidas repeated offers to keep the stone, but to no avail. When he saw that Ravidas wouldn't accept it, he left the stone in Ravidas' hut telling him that he would come back and collect it later. When the sant came back to collect the stone after thirteen years, he found it lying at the same place he left it. In Vaishnava versions of this story, Ravidas refuses the stone for the love of lord Ram while in the Ravidassia narrative, he forgoes the stone out of his virtuousness.[10] These life episodes, miracle stories and narratives of Ravidas inverting the brahmanical tropes, contest the appropriation of Ravidas by celebrating and glorifying him as the heroic figure.

These stories are not simply a reflection of the enthusiasm of the followers of Ravidas to deify and venerate him, but are premised on the powerfully and systematically structured ideas of Ravidas in his devotional philosophy. Therefore, Ravidas veneration is to be analysed in conjunction with Ravidas' devotional philosophy.

Ravidas' devotionalism: radically altering the self and the divine

In the Vaishnava tradition Rama, Vishnu and Krishna are deemed as the aspects of the one deity who is the *parmatman* (the supreme self). *Bhakti* (devotion) is a central aspect of Vaisnava tradition, fixed in the four principal practices of meditation, praise of god, image worship and the Vedic ritual (Lutjeharms 2020).

Ravidas questions the Vaishnava *bhakti* rituals and offers alternative paths to devotion. In Shabad 6 of the Amritbani, the compilation of verses of Ravidas by the

Dera Sachkhand Ballan, he criticizes the rituals of the Vedas, singing devotional praise, asceticism and various other means of worship in the Vaisnava tradition. He says:

> *Aisi Bhagat na hoyi re Bhai. Ram Nam bin jo kuch kariai.* (Performing rituals is not the worship of god)
> *So sab bharam kahai* (everything without the name of god is an illusion)
> *Bhagat na ras dan, bhagat na khathai gya*n (neither singing a sweet song, nor speaking knowledgeably)
> *Bhagat na ban ai gufa khudayi* (nor going to forest or caves is worship)
> *Bhagat na aise haansi, bhagat na aassa paasi.* (neither worship is a joke, nor a game of dice). [11]

In the aforementioned Shabad 6 of the Amritbani, Ravidas describes the following acts as falsities: the monastic act of going to a cave, attaining knowledge, singing devotional songs, counting rosary beads and tonsuring the head.[12] He refers to those who indulge in these acts as pretenders and hypocrites. According to him, the renunciation of pride and arrogance[13] is the true path of devotion.

Apart from redefining devotion, Ravidas redefines the relationship between the self and the divine such that both self and the divine acquire radically altered meanings. As an expression of hyperbolic praise for god, Ravidas willfully subjugates the self to god. In Shabad 1 of the Amritbani, Ravidas addresses god as the master from whom he seeks the wisdom to enable him to worship day and night.[14] In Shabad 2, Ravidas addresses himself as god's slave and beseeches him to not forget him.[15] He says, "*Mera karam kutilta Janam Kubhanti* (my acts are crooked, birth is mean), *Charan na chhadao sarir kal jai* (I will not forsake your feet even if my body perishes tomorrow)."[16] This subjugation of the self in devotion to god constitutes a self-effacing attitude such that the self is both resigned and reduced in a gesture of humility.

The self-effacing nature of Ravidas' devotionalism has the potential to empower the self when the divine entity escapes any fixed meaning or order. Unlike the well-defined hierarchy of the divine order in the Hindu belief system, the object

of worship in Ravidas' thought remains undefined and radically undefinable. The divine remains an unstable object in Ravidas' philosophy, unfit to be structured into a hierarchy. Ravidas' bhakti thought forecloses the possibility of accepting any one entity or authority as the supreme. He does not subscribe to one monolithic notion of god with a personal nature or with fixed attributes, in his verses. To him, the god-entity remains a shifting, unsettled and ambiguous object. Ravidas refers to the god-entity with different names such as Ram, Gobind, bajigar, deva, etc., and introduces plural notions of the divine such that no order of hierarchy can capture it/them.

Ravidas' verses refer to Ram as a non-dualistic force that supersedes all systems of hierarchy and authority, not to a personal god marked in the hierarchy of the Vaishnava gods.[17] His devotionalism empowers him to speak from a position of intimacy and affords him the position to challenge the social class of god-mediators. For those who are marginalized and oppressed by the fixities of caste and its divine symbolic universe, this non-monolithic notion of god is empowering. Ravidas slips in and out of several references to transcendence without settling down for one absolute notion.

On the one hand his verses are replete with mentions of complete surrender in devotion to the supreme entity, on the other those references are often followed up with mentions of the grace of the guru, company of the sants or the giving up of arrogance as the real paths to the divine.[18] In the Shabad 4, Ravidas introduces the idea of god's worship and the company of sants as ways of achieving deliverance without prioritizing one over the other. He says, "*Ram bhagat bin mukat na pawai* (you cannot achieve salvation without worship of god), *Ravidas pal sadh sangat mil* (If a man spends few moments in the pious company of sants with true devotion), *Puran brahm sada pritpali* (then he can achieve the god, who is the creator)."[19]

Ravidas' idea of an undefinable god and the lack of any fixed path of deliverance makes it possible to reimagine the social order outside of the neat hierarchy sanctioned by a clearly defined system of gods. It also makes possible the imagining of a self that is engaged in the material conditions of existence, as opposed to the idea of renunciation which is a complete abandoning of the body

so as to escape its worldly encumbrances. Ravidas' devotionalism radically alters the notion of self and opens up the possibility of renegotiating individual agency with regard to the divine.

Rescuing the body from purity / pollution

Body is a crucial site of caste-based ascription of purity/pollution. The regimentation of the body based on caste is pivoted on the idea that touch itself is the carrier of pollution unless minimized by practicing a strict social discipline and adhering to rituals of touch and 'untouch.' The disciplining of the body through purity/pollution therefore furthers a body negative ideal that disempowers those who are marked as polluted under the contingent reality of birth. This regimentation of the body, its degree of purity and the transfer of it by birth, can be said to be the basis of caste based social ascription of rank, status and occupation described variously as caste identity, jati and varna.

Under the moral universe of caste, individuals are organized in a social order of hierarchy based on their degree of purity by birth, transfer and association or contact. It would be apt to describe caste as a regulation of bodies and people that is in place "to ensure, sustain, and multiply life, to put this life in order" (Foucault 2008). In other words, a social division of labour that is based on the biopolitics of purity/pollution. The dispersed networks of power that operate at the lowest level of life are described by Michel Foucault (2010) as the *dispositif. Dispositif* is an abstraction through which Foucault analyzed the totality of practices and discourses in any network of power. In the *dispositif* of caste, the individual regulates the self and the other on the basis of touch/untouch, thereby losing control over their own body and the way in which it relates to other beings and objects. Ravidas' thought provides the possibility to regain control over the body by rescuing it from the discipline and control of the touch/untouch.[20]

Caste functions through an expansive and meticulous network of social institutions and discipline at the level of the somatic as well as the sovereign (Foucault 2010). The caste system can therefore be defined as a dispersed network of power

that operates at the lowest unit of society through to the highest, acting as both a means and the effect of control and discipline. This network comprises of discourses, institutions and rituals of purity/pollution functioning as 'technologies of power'- the means of applying power' (Ibid) as well as the totality of caste.

Alter (1992) argues that Hinduism can best be explained by reference to relative degrees, as no notion is absolute, and things are definable only in terms of where they are placed between the two extreme positions. The Hindu order attaches the disciplines of the body with certain pre-defined stages of life. The householder's stage is that of indulgence in the sensuous and the worldly, while *sanyaas* is a complete withdrawal or escape from the body.Ravidas' devotionalism has the ability to rescue the body from caste-based disciplining, thereby empowering the self to take charge of the body and nurture its capacities. The logic of caste treats the body as the carrier of pollution or defilement unless redeemed by the rituals of purity. Herein, the body has no identity bigger than the one ascribed by birth and no role bigger than that of being the carrier of that ascription, subject to everyday redemption by rituals. Ravidas does not treat his caste occupation as a site of pollution but proclaims it as a site of labour and writes about it as his material condition in an oppressive system. Ravidas says, "*Meri jaati kutbandhlaa dhor dhouwanta nithi baanaarasi aas paasaa. Ab bipar pardhan tihi kari hdanduouti tere naam sarnaaie Ravidass daasaa.* (My Caste is Kutabådhalâ, I cart carcasses constantly around Benares. Now Brahmans and headmen bow down before me, Ravidas the servant has taken refuge in Your Name) (Ronki Ram 2009).

This taking charge of the body is a liberation of the body from the rituals that mark it as pure, superior, fierce, aggressive, virile or potent. The willful surrender of the self in Ravidas' Bhakti thought is neither indulgence nor escape but a non-acceptance of either of the binaries that regulate the functions of and impose limitations on the body. There is a range of means for disciplining the body in the Sant tradition. The concept of attaining control over the body or *sadh* is prominent in the religious practices of the sants called the *Sadhus*.[21] These practices are socially interpreted as virtues of sacrificing social power and renouncing attachment to worldly pleasure.

In contemporary Indian politics, the tropes of celibacy and austerity have been invoked by the *fakirs*, *yogis* and *sadhvis* of the Hindu right-wing, creatively combining religion and power through the male-centric notions of the body. Unlike Ravidas' ideas of minimizing the self and questioning of social hierarchies of power, these political performatives of asceticism reproduce traditional structures of power. Control of the body under the binaries of excess and denial is structured on the larger male-centric view of control of body as a measure of its potency, feeding into the socially constructed notions of masculinity.

The *fakir*, the *sadhu* and the *sanyaasi*: masculinism and caste in the ascetic performatives of holy men

Control of the body is central to the ascetic practices of the holy men. The logic of control and disciplining of the body runs across a range of ascetic practices from the milder forms of control through to extreme practices of inflicting pain on the body. *Sadhus* are the ascetics under the Vaishnava or Shaiva traditions popularly known by many different names like *vairagi*, *sanyaasi*, *yogi*, *swami* and so on, depending on the nature, degree and order of their ascetic practices.[22] A range of practices from abstinence from food to self-flagellation, self-control and pain form a prominent part of ascetic practices of the *sadhus*. A *sadhu* is the one who practices *sadh* – the 'gaining of power over', whereas a sanyaasi is the one who is a complete renouncer and adheres to a much stricter definition of asceticism. *Sanyaas* (Alter 1992) is "a categorically asocial attitude and style of life. He (the *sanyaasi*) must go through life naked, alone, wandering, celibate, begging, fasting and silent."

Sadhus are usually characterized by their ochre robes, shaven or matted hair, a life of penury and are often associated with the practicing of yoga, brahmacharya, *tap* (self-mortification), vows of celibacy or other varieties of ascetic practices. The *sadhus* and *sanyaasis* are believed to be renouncers of all material possessions and desires. However, not all ascetics renounce social power and privilege. The self-fashioned ascetics in the Hindu right-wing are an example of intersection of the body, discourses of power and religion to reproduce and reorient social

power along a new axis of privilege. Therefore, measures of control of the body that appear to be renouncing privilege may effectively reorient privilege and give rise to new networks of power.

In Ravidas' moral universe, the social utopia of equality is the more essential idea of transcendence rather than the control of self over body. This progressive nature of Ravidas' devotionalism and santism needs reiteration in the present context where the Hindutva outfits have utilized the aesthetics and poetics of asceticism in an effort to draw symbolic parallels with the sants.

Fakiri, a trait associated with the sant culture of mendicancy or self-imposed poverty has gained popularity the Indian political domain, in the recent times. A cultivated and curated image of *fakiri* is one of the many instances of the political performatives of asceticism in contemporary Indian politics. Political performatives in this context comprise of various bodily comportments, gestures, lifestyles and speech-acts that are part of a performative act larger than its constituent parts. For instance, a popular leader publicly appearing as a bearded sage and practisingyoga, or a leader performing the lifestyle of a *brahmachari*, renouncing the pleasures of matrimony to voluntarily take up excessive workload are constituent parts of the larger act of performance of ascetic discpline. In these political performatives, the sant culture stylings and performances of the body become so intricately coiled on to the political figure such that the two become indistinguishable as separate ways of being.

Performative here is used in the sense of bodily appearance, regimens of its disciplining and linguistic utterances (Fischer-Lichte 2008) that not only make statements but also perform actions. It is a term of language philosophy and performance studies where an overlapping of speech and action creates a new aesthetic terrain. The theatrical utterances and appearances of contemporary political leaders have the effect of a performative. These performatives have been utilized by extremist forces to draw symbolic parallels with the *sadhus*, the sants and their lifestyle of poverty, in order to reiterate, not challenge, the established structure of social privilege and power.

The male centric notion of disciplining of the body or *sadh* involves the manufacturing of conditions that inflict pain on the body, outside of or in rejection of the existing social institutions. The ability to tolerate self-inflicted pain on the body, based on the binary of excess/denial, as a measure of its control and of placing value on the self is a predominantly male-centered view of the body and self. It does not take cognizance of pain caused from bodily processes like menstruation and reproductive labour that is a routine aspect of the female body. Ravidas' notion of self and the body doesn't privilege any one gender, caste, class or religion, leaving it open to be utilized as an instrument of empowerment by people of any social group or identity.

Overcoming of bodily pain is an aspect of the everyday physical labour of women within the spaces of family, society and workspace, and not of renunciation of the social space. Far from being a source of power or valuing of self for women, these bodily processes involving overcoming of pain are largely associated with ritual impurity and inferiority, leading often to debarring women from social and domestic spaces. Therefore, regimens of control of the body in a sadhu, yogi or fakir privileges and normalizes male centric views of the body and its disciplining.

Arpita Chakraborty (2019) argues that the dietetic and spermatic forms of control in MK Gandhi's practices of brahmacharya and vegetarianism are heteropatriarchal regimens of the male body that further 'symbolic violence' – a Bourdieusian concept where the oppressed misrecognize the dominance imposed on them as something natural. The political performatives of fakiri lie at the intersection of the discourses of power, body and masculinism such that the dominant caste, religious and gendered discourses that perpetrate symbolic violence become circulated in the form of abstractions such as nationalism, discipline, fitness, cleanliness and so on.

The imagery of the half-black, half saffron Hanuman icons, or the sculpted body of the Hindu male gods put on display on the social media space embody the aggressive masculinism of the Hindu right-wing, directly othering the religious minorities. Furthermore, the right-wing's ideological and political support to the policies of neo-liberal capitalism that structurally exploit the poor, while upholding the bodily aesthetics of *fakiri* or *sadhuwad* extends the symbolic violence (Deepak

K 2021) of class where the poor are made to believe that the economic practices that oppress them are meant for their own good.

The right-wing political practices of glorifying sacrifice of carnal pleasure, allegations of effeminacy against the men in political opposition, aggressive nationalism, justification of rape, slut shaming of women opposition leaders, male protectionism and many other such routine acts of masculinism constitute everyday symbolic violence through male centric discourses of the body and self. Contemporary political rhetoric uses binaries such as sexual freedom / moral uprightness, nationalist protectionism/ anti-nationalism, celibacy / indulgence that become seamlessly interspersed in popular puns and social media conversation, framing the aggressive, morally disciplined and sexually abstinent bodies as masculine. In many such rhetoric, Jawaharlal Nehru's purported sexual indulgence is juxtaposed against the morally superior body of the *brahmacharis* and *fakirs*.

In such political rhetorics, the sensitive, sensuous, inquisitive, self-critical, intellectually curious, sexually exploratory or rebellious attitudes that have the effect of potentially empowering people against the violent patriarchal structure are marginalized as traits of the effeminate, inferior or infantilized bodies. In these rhetorics helmed by the political protagonists, the bodies that are self-regulated and disciplined under the regime of masculinism are framed as superhuman and virile.

The ascetic performatives of the holy men have the effect of reproducing the existing forms of social power and privilege, arguably in more effective ways than direct and graphic forms of violence. The right-wing discourse of self and the body, involving performatives and tropes of *fakiri* and *sadhuwad*, further perpetrate and entrench caste, class and gendered privileges of the performers by preserving and normalizing the existing social hierarchies and symbolic violence.

Notes

1. The reborn brahmin is a popular narrative of Ravidas being reborn as a Chamar due to caste pollution in the previous birth, but being redeemed by the Vaishnava guru Ramanand and, under his discipleship, attaining his upper caste status. This can be said to be one variant of the ghar wapsi or reclamation through conversion, integration or appropriation.

2. The so-called lower caste communities, in reference to the graded hierarchy of the caste system in India. See, B R Ambedkar. 2013. Hindu Social Order. New Delhi: Critical Quest.

3. Field notes. Dera Sachkhand Ballan. September 20, 2017.

4. Instead of reference to the 'lower caste' identity, this term is redefined by the Ravdassias to mean the one who is made from Cham or flesh. This universalization of the term Chamar is an assertion of pride and rejection of the denigrating meanings associated with it.

5. "Stories of Shri Guru Ravidas Ji," Shriguruvidasji, Accessed February 20, 2021, https://www.shriguruvidasji.com/site/articles_books/ravidasji/ravidas_a_b_stories.php.

6. Field notes. Dera Sachkhand Ballan. September 20, 2017.

7. Ibid.

8. "The episode of Damri", Gururavidassguruji, Accessed March 22, 2021, http://www.gururavidassguruji.com/ravidassias-worldwide.

9. "Stories of Shri Guru Ravidas Ji," Shriguruvidasji, Accessed February 20, 2021, https://www.shriguruvidasji.com/site/articles_books/ravidasji/ravidas_a_b_stories.php.

10. Stories of Shri Guru Ravidas Ji," Shriguruvidasji, Accessed February 20, 2021, https://www.shriguruvidasji.com/site/articles_books/ravidasji/ravidas_a_b_stories.php.

11. Amritbani Satguru Ravidas Maharaj, Shabad 6. Translated by Siri Ram Arsh. United Ravidassia Community. Accessed March 22, 2021, https://www.gururavidassguruji.com/amritbaniinenglish.htm.

12. Ibid.

13. Amritbani Satguru Ravidas Maharaj, Shabad 8. Translated by Siri Ram Arsh. United Ravidassia Community. Accessed March 22, 2021, https://www.gururavidassguruji.com/amritbaniinenglish.htm.

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CONTEMPORARY RECEPTIONS

Masihi Kavya: Reading Christian Devotional Literary Expression in Hindi

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Abstract

The poetic contours of Hindi (Hindavi) are deeply shaped by the literary expressions of spirituality associated with medieval Hindu and Sufi traditions. Readers of bhakti voices in Hindi are familiar with panths, paramparas, silsilas and poetic shapes of pada, doha, chaupai, and musical renditions such as bani, bhajan, and kalam. While northern India has witnessed the proliferation of Christian denominations as Protestantism, and inter-theological debates between Islamic and Christian scholars as well as metaphysical debates between pundits and theologians especially in Delhi, Agra, Aligarh and Punjab in the early modern period, the literary expressions of devotion in Christianity in northern India have received little attention outside Christian knowledge circles. The early phase of Hindi Christian writings consisted largely of theological debates and evangelical expression, while in more recent times, we find devotion taking a prime place in poetries, songs and bhajans being composed in Hindi. This paper intends to explore contemporary Hindi Christian devotional poetry, especially the work of Shivraj K Mahendra and other contemporary collections such as *Aradhana ke Geet* and *Kavita Mein Shubh Sandesh* (Sarojini Arya); reading them with a focus on poetics—metaphors, linguistic registers and texture of language to draw attention to the relationships as they exist between language, religion and emotions. This focus on Christian bhakti in Hindi will allow us to explore the

variegated lives of the language itself and recognize that spiritual expression is the most virile way of infusing life into any language that naturally refuses to be contained by religious straitjacketing. This approach will point towards analyzing the psychological and literary shaping of reading cultures themselves, beginning with the question of which spiritual traditions can lay direct and complete claims on Hindi and how our reading orientations and exposure shape associations and literary expectations when we encounter Christian spirituality in Hindi.

Keywords: Hindi-Christianity- Masihi- bhakti-literature

Introduction

A study of the relationship between Hindi language and Indian Christianity historically takes us back to the nineteenth century when the text book printing activities of the Christian Mission Society in north India, the establishment of Fort William College in Calcutta and the circulation of English (Christian) education in the vernaculars forged colonial, evangelical and educational bonds between Indian Christianity and Hindi language. Vasudha Dalmia in *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions* (1997) has highlighted the ideological underpinnings of imperialists and nationalists and the roles played by lexicographers, printers, missionaries, teachers and translators in the standardization of Hindi as we know it today. The nineteenth century was witness to the shaping of modernity through Western education; it was also witness to the differential mechanisms whereby "Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan" came to be popularized in Hindu nationalism and found support in imperial divisiveness. Dalmia identifies Western nation-state models of linguistic and religious nationalisms as being imposed on the socio-cultural framework of India (Hindustan) that resulted in administrative and missionary focus on identifying a "pure and unadulterated" language for Hindus. This task of purification meant that at the levels of schools and colleges, in printing presses and scholarly enterprise, and later at courts too, Hindi/Hindui/Hindavi was to be carefully promoted for Hindus alone with the use of the Devanagari script. It is important to note that Hindustani was the literary language prevalent in northern India, while Avadhi, Braj, Rajasthani and other bhashas were the lingua

franca in rural parts of north India. Urbanization and the concomitant need for standardization furthered the imperial project by fuelling and sustaining the cultural differences between Muslim and Hindu ways of life to become hardened and exclusivist differences between Urdu-Muslims and Hindi-Hindus in early modern period.

The purification process of ridding Hindi of all "foreign" influences made extensive use of bhakti literature wherein all the literature of the sampradayas was subsumed under "sanatana dharma" and bhakti became Hindu devotion while similarly Sufi silsilas and their literature was contained within an Islamic identity formation. Even though "dargahs" have survived as icons of non-divisive faith traditions in India, it is not difficult to notice a growing Islamization of these Sufi sites of devotion. Even so, these sites remain open to devotees and seekers of all faith traditions, as I have witnessed Hindus, Sikhs and even Buddhist seekers at Nizamuddin dargah in Delhi. In India, dargahs and even churches such as St. Michael's church in Mumbai have been witness to Hindu, Muslim and Christian spiritualities sharing in the sacred geography of the land. Indian medieval period testifies to even state-patronage for intercultural and non-sectarian religiosities as in the kingdom of Akbar, while in the early modern period, this trend sustained in the living traditions with small states and rulers writing, composing and supporting inter-faith literatures, as for instance, Mughal patronage to Vallabha and Pushtimarg sampradays in the Mathura region and Nawab Wajid Ali Shah (1847-56) composing Persian-heavy poetry in Brajbhasha. The reductionism of Hindi and Hindu religiosity, as noted, was carefully crafted and meticulously executed through later day patronages especially from the mercantile class and imperial educationists. Slowly and steadily, Hindi became a language of Hindu expression—religious as well as cultural.

Bhakti in Hindi Poetry

An overview of the historiography of Hindi literature ascertains the devotional literary expression to 'bhaktikaal' and the early parts of 'ritikaal' with the 'adhunik kaal' (modern period) heralding new waves of 'nayi kavita', 'nayi kahani' and

literary movements like chayavaad, prayogvaad and pragativaad shaping the development of Hindi literature. With the focus on subaltern representation and literary criticism as stree vimarsh (feminist discourse), Dalit chetana (Dalit consciousness), Adivasi dhara (indigenous sensibility) and others, the modern texture of Hindi literature has seen little to no literary expressions of devotion or spiritualism barring a few exceptions like the prolific writings of Amrita Bharati (b. 1939)[1] which have received attention in Western academic studies but ironically none in Indian scholarship. In the context of spiritual poetry, there are lone works and voices as that of Dr. Naresh (b. 1942)[2] and some other spiritualists, who are not considered literary artists primarily.

The modern period of Hindi literature saw a cohesive and considerable proliferation of bhakti poetry in what came to be called Dwivedi Yug, marking roughly the period from the last decade of the nineteenth to the first two decades of the twentieth century. This period is highlighted with the poetry of Hindi bhasha stalwarts like Maithilisharan Gupt, Ayodhya Singh Upadhyaya 'Hariaudh', Siyaramsharan Gupt amongst others. This was the period when Hindu emotive and cultural identity was standardized through bhakti projecting as rashtra-bhakti (patriotic devotion). Poetry of this period was aimed at consolidation of Hindu spiritual and social ideals, with deification being merged with nationalism, and *devotion (bhakti)* becoming the tour de force of the Hindu nationalist movement. This period also involved a reorientation of Hindu ideals themselves with poets openly criticizing caste system, patriarchal double standards and other ills within a projected Hindu nationalism. In religious self-expression, purity and tolerance became the bywords with Hariaudh stating that the Vedas are the original founts of all wisdom of all religions as in the following lines:

Bane panth mat jo dharam ke sahare
Kahin hon kabhi ho sakenge na nyare
Chamakte mile jo ki ganga kinare
Khile neel par bhi wahi gyan tare
Damakte wahi tiver par dikhaye
Mississippi kinare wahi jagmagaye

(All the cults that have come from any religion
Can never, wherever they be, become original,
Those that were found shining on the banks of Ganga,
They were the stars of wisdom that lit up the skies.
The same stars were seen shining on the Tiber skies

The banks of Mississippi were lit by the same stars)

Maithilisharan Gupt invokes Ram, Buddha and Jesus in one breath to highlight the common principles of compassion and non-violence as the core of all religious teachings in the world (Hindu, p.13), while in his poem '*Bharat-Bharati*', he too, like Hariaudh, makes generic claims to Hindu spiritual wisdom being the font of all religions of the world:

Yunan hi keh de ki who gyani-guni kab tha hua
Kehna na hoga ki Hinduon ka shishya who jab tha hua
Hamse alaukika gyan ka alok yadi pata nahin,
To woh Arab Europe ka shikshak kaha jata nahin

...
Tha Hinduon ka shishya Isa, yeh pata bhi hai chala,
Isaiyon ka dharm bhi hai Baudha sanche mein dhala

(Let Greece tell us when it acquired wisdom and knowledge?
It will have to be said it was only after they became disciples of Hindus
If Arabia had not received the knowledge of higher word from us,
How could it have become the teacher of Europe

...
It has also been found that Jesus was a disciple of Hindus
Christianity has been molded in the frame of Buddhism)

(*Bharat-Bharati*, 8.66,68)

In the following two decades, 'chayavad' became a stylistic trend in which abstraction and romanticization became the defining features of Hindi poetry and bhakti was replaced with surreal and transcendental spiritualism in the hands of Pant, Prasad and Nirala. In the period following chayavad, modernism has concerned itself with thematic focus of subaltern voices and stylistic experimentations as free-verse (nayi kavita), anti-poem (akavita) and other interventions. A scanning of modern Hindi poetry revealed scarce references to Christian images such as 'Isa ke pankh' (the wings of Jesus) in Muktibodh's poem 'Chand ka Muh Tedha Hai'.

The consolidation of Hindu emotive-poetic expression has led to straitjacketing of spiritual expressions as either Hindu specific or non-literary when it comes to contemporary Hindi poetry. In this context, the 'masihi kavya' (Christological Poetry) of writers like Mahendra and Arya assume an important place in the trajectory of development of Hindi poetry. Felix Wilfred (2014) points to 'becoming Christian' as the central feature of Indian Christianity because unlike in the West, Christianity in India has to engage with pluralistic religious and spiritual traditions necessitating a natural inter-cultural dialogue in its growth and development. Indian Christian poetry in the contemporary period indicates to such developments through creative literature.

Hindi Christian literature has primarily consisted of evangelical and institutional literature that has involved translations of hymns and tracts and publications and distributions of sermons. A leading theologian, Father Camille Bulcke's (1909-1982) contributions to Hindi literature are well known as are his efforts at inter-spiritual dialogue through his enriching work on Ramkatha tradition and Ram-Christ inter-faith spirituality. Rakesh Peter-Dass (2019) has identified two gap areas in the studies of Hindi Christian literature in India. The first gap area is the relatively less attention and engagement that Hindi Christian literature has received in the field of Indian Christian scholarship. This fact is important also because the history of Hindi Christian expression is intrinsically linked with the history of urbanization, setting up of printing presses and the intersectionalities in the Hindi-Hindu reform movements. The second gap area that Dass points to is the reliance of Hindi Christian writers on Western sources while engaging almost negligibly with Christian scholarship in other Indian languages. Dass provides an

important insight into the fact that Hindi Christian literature is non-Brahmanical in nature, being written by people belonging to subaltern social categories like Dalit and Adivasi (indigenous/tribal). This could explain the existence of a third gap area that I would like to explore in this field. This is the glaring void in Hindi literary scholarship when it comes to the study of Hindi Christian literature. Renu Singh's *Hindi Sahitya Mein Isayi Missionariyon ki Bhumika (The Role of Christian Missionaries in Hindi Literature)* (2008) is a noteworthy scholarly work among the few studies of Hindi Christian writings. This work includes a detailed overview of the writings by missionaries that have contributed to the growth and development of Hindi language, grammar and a brief overview of their contribution to literary arts. In this study, there are two distinctive chapters—one on Kabir and one on Tulsidas that make a comparative study of Christ's social consciousness and that of the two prominent Hindi bhakti poets. As an attempt at inter-spiritual dialogue, this academic study paves the way for contextualizing Hindi bhakti poetry beyond categorical poetics. In Hindi studies, there is scholarly attention given to figures like Father Camille Bulcke, which reveal a tendency to highlight Hinduized Christianity as acceptable and worthy of inter-cultural explorations. There is a clear discomfort with Christological writings, and it is not difficult to see the Hindi-Hinduization of literary traditions as a major contributing factor to this epistemological block. Even within the growing field of subaltern studies in Hindi literary criticism, there is a dearth of any focused engagement with the writings of Hindi Christian poets.

This brings us to a close examination of literary scholarship itself. In 1812, the first compositions in khari boli (standardized Hindi) were undertaken by Rev. John Chamberlain who wrote under the pen name 'Aasi', followed by missionary poets such as John Parson, John Christian, Father George Prakash and others until mid-20th century. In later 20th century and contemporary writings, there are hymns and spiritual poetry in Hindi written by Vimala Dorothy, Manju Jyotsana, Father Dilraj Dungdung, Vamana Tilak, Vandana Mataji, Shivraj Mahendra, Sarojini Arya, Komal Masih, Christopher Peter; plays by Satya Prakash Patani, Father Gyan Prakash, John Anand and novels by Cherubim Barno Sahu, Robin Shaw Pushp, Peter Paul Ekka, Asha, Shireen Bharati among others as well as other narratives including short stories, biographies and literary criticism. In the world of music, there are commercial and local artists popularizing Hindi Christian devotionals,

and platforms like Spotify, YouTube and social media have no dearth of Hindi Christian lyrics and poetry. Yet, these narrative forms remain limited to a closed readership and audience in the Indian Christian community. It is also important to note that special issues of journals, magazines and periodicals that focus on bhakti/spirituality/devotion/religious literature in India, do not find any significant representation of Christian spiritual expressions. The academic engagements with 'bhakti' are a case in point. Due to a categorical understanding of human experience, bhakti literature has been bound up in categories like 'Hindu Bhakti', 'Sufism', 'Jain Bhakti', 'Vernacular Bhakti', 'Saguna Bhakti', 'Nirgun Bhakti', 'Yoga-Bhakti', 'Women's Bhakti', 'New Age Bhakti' and so forth. These categorizations compel scholars to locate the sacred experience within existing philosophical vocabularies of religions, theologies, linguistic or cultural domains. These approaches take away the trans-personal and cognitive experiences of Bhakti itself, popularizing certain modes of expressions that lead to invalidation of other modes such as women's diaries, children's songs, non-institutionalized religious/spiritual expressions and others. An instance of this is the obsession with Mirabai's poetry that is over-read for eroticism and medieval feminism. Most studies on Mira are content to see a Rajput-queen rejecting the social institution of marriage and turning to Saguna Bhakti, an anthropomorphic devotional school of medieval spirituality. These assessments are driven by the need to locate and analyse, categorize and teach, that end up in ignoring the yogic language of Mira's verses, her guru-discipleship and the debates around it, and her coded and carefully structured poetics itself. Another way of looking at limited understanding of spirituality is to see how much of scholarly engagement has emerged with respect to the ecotheological and ecospiritual writings by Adivasi poets such as Jacinta Kerketta and Joram Yalam Nabam, contemporary Adivasi poets composing in Hindi. Their poetry is spiritual and evokes indigenous mysticism that is rooted in reciprocity and responsibility between the human and trans-human forms. In what category can we fit their spirituality in?

In the context of Christological bhakti in India, literary studies have not shown engagement with devotional literature of Mahendra, Arya, Tilak or Vandana Mataji, perhaps because this kind of writing doesn't fit into the domains of Indian spiritual expressions. Bhakti seems to have become a religious fossil, a doctrine or an event that happened with the Hindus in the past, and binary assessments that make

Hindu-Bhakti and Islam-Sufi and sometimes Sikh-Bhakti, Jain-Bhakti, Buddhist-Bhakti and others valid categories of examination but not Christian-Bhakti. This dis-ease invites us to revisit our understanding of Bhakti itself and the literary inheritance we have in the form of literary criticism and theoretical interventions in the same. We are compelled to reflect on whether inter-spiritual dialogue is possible in the study of devotional literature itself. When reading about Krishna-bhakti, we come across the verses of Tajbibi, Raskhan and other Muslim sants who made Saguna Bhakti the centre of their devotional compositions. In the Preface to *Hamare Muslim Sant Kavi (1984)*, Vankhede Guruji uses a quote by Bhartendu Harishchandra that says, "On these Muslim men of god shower/ Blessings of thousands of Hindus" while Tajbibi's famous lines of devotion to Krishna are, "Hun to Mughlani Hinduani ho Rahungi main" ("I am a Mughal but I will become Hindu in love"). Rajeev Sharma has written the first biography of Prophet Mohammad in Marwari titled *Paighambar ro Paigham (The Prophet's Message)* and has uploaded in open access in 2015. Iqbal's Urdu translation of the Gayatri Mantra is well known, while Ramayana has found multiple adaptations and inspirations in Urdu poetry, even after the linguistic nationalism of Hindi-Urdu divide had come to stay in modern India. Apart from inter-spiritual references, invocations and inspirations, literary criticism can carve a space for inter-faith dialogue in its own way too. Hindi literature has much to offer which criticism and pedagogy can absorb and channelize to create grounds for inter-spiritual correspondences; and to use Arvind Sharma's phrase, make "reciprocal illuminations" possible. In the field of theo-poetics too, it is possible to incorporate inter-religious dialogue by assessing literary theories in the light of different aesthetics—for instance, dhvani theory in the light of Christian mystical poetry, or messianic poetics to better understand bhakti poetry.

Shivraj Mahendra's poetry collection *Masih Meri Manzil* (*Christ, My Destination*) (2008, 2017) offers a valid point of entry into Hindi Christian literary expression. This collection of poems is a series of reflections on the poet's own experiences of conversion and Ordination. These conversion narratives, like other conversion narratives, are important because they bring to light the spiritual experiences and social dimensions of these experiences into focus, besides enriching poetics through intimate lyricism. In the history of Indian Christian literature, prose and poetry in Marathi, Tamil, Malyalam, Bengali and English have brought to readers,

spiritual narratives of first- or second-generation conversions, frames of reference for education and new woman and other social debates, perspectives on reform movements in modern India and music and poetics through hymns and bhajans. In Hindi, we find the earliest publications as pamphlets and one autobiographical account of the conversion of Bhayaharn Das, titled *Kaise Paya Muktidata, arthat Bhayaharn Das ka Itihas (How I Found the Saviour, or the Shepherd Convert of Monghyr)*, written for him by Ram Singh and published by Rev. Thomas Evans, a Baptist missionary in 1877. Such pamphlets and accounts were encouraged by missionaries for evangelical purposes, while in the present context, they can present important perspectives on a society, nation and individual's evolution, if studied critically. Hindi literature has consisted of pamphlets, guidebooks, sermons, mostly translations, theological tracts as by Bishop Din Dayal, Sadhu Sundar Singh, Benjamin Khan and others. This field is especially rich in hymns and songbooks, notably among them *Aradhna ke Geet*, *Masihi Geet Sangraha* and *Kavita Mein Shubh Sandesh* by Sarojini Arya.

Shivraj Mahendra's devotional poems demand a literary space of their own—in Hindi poetry as well as in Christian literature. These first-person epiphanies are significant in taking Hindi Christian poetry beyond congregational relevance and performative contexts. These are standalone poems that can be read to understand the spiritual experiences of an individual through a range of tonality and inflexions that nudge their way into the poetics of bhakti in Hindi language. These forty poems compel the readers to recognize Christian Bhakti as valid poetics in Hindi—their structure and organization demonstrate the poet's self-consciousness in carving a space for Christian bhakti in Hindi poetry. The signature poem at the end titled 'Aao Rachna Karein Naveen' ('Come, Let us Create Anew') is an exhortation to fellow Christian poets to compose poetry in Hindi while the poem titled 'Tu Kab Majdoor Banega' ('When Will You Become a Labourer') highlights the possibility of enriching a poetic and spiritual space that is fertile and capable yet hasn't witnessed significant compositions or change in north India. In this collection, some poems resonate with the bhakti-nationalism phase of Hindi poetry; poems are calls for awakening, a spiritual regeneration that is not limited to a religious denomination but an awakening that is holistic in getting rid of social ills such as corruption, greed, lies and superstitions. The poems 'Usne Kaha Tha' and 'Masihi' are particularly significant as they point to a self-reflexive

dialogue within the community of believers where the poet is clear and insistent in pointing out the dissonance between avowed bhakti and true bhakti, between who is claims to be 'masihi' and who actually is. These poems point to a level of spiritual maturity in the poet, something that medieval bhakti poets demonstrated when scathing criticisms of religiosity and invocations of true spirituality were the tour de force of spiritual writings in India. Mahendra's poems are direct addresses to believers who pretend and project, who are far removed from Christ himself, who profess devotion but remain mired in ignorance and darkness. These poems use symbols of crucifixion, martyrdom and the body of Christ, reminding us of Richard Crashaw's poems where he invokes Christ's body and wounds and blood as affective theo-poetics. In lines as:

Maine masih ke ghav dekhe hain
Kabhi tumhare aansu tapke hain?

(I have seen Christ's wounds
Have you ever wept for them?)[3]

...
Koi sun sakta hai?
Masih aaj bhi
Crus par rota hai
Kya tumhara dil nahi rota hai?

(Can anyone hear?
Christ still weeps on the Cross
Does your heart not weep?)

The poet is addressing those who call themselves 'masihi' (Christian) and uses the refrain 'Main Masihi Nahin Hun' (I am not Christian). In an ironic self-criticism, the poet, through a series of rhetorical questions, asks the Christians to rethink their Christianity—whether it is a religious affiliation only or whether Christianity lies 'in becoming Christian'. The poem ends with the lines

Vidambana yahi hoti hai
Aksar
Masihi to hota hai
Masih nahi hota hai

(This is the contradiction
Often
Christians remain
While
Christ is absent)

This is a powerful criticism of religiosity, and it reminds us that devotional poetry has always highlighted incongruities in spiritual expression and conduct, whether it be in the medieval Bhakti and Sufi compositions, in vachanas, abhangas and padas, or in contemporary bhakti poetry as that of Mahendra.

In a poem that I find to be the strength of this collection, titled 'Usne Kaha Tha' ('He Had Said'), the poet writes in a tone of familiarity and criticism, an intimate personal address to a community while using the third person pronoun to defamiliarise at the same time. Let us see the following lines:

Usne kaha tha jakar chele banana
Inhe dekho yeh to khud chele nahi ban pa rahe hain
Usne kaha tha shubh sandesh sunana
Inhe dekho yeh to khud buri khabar bane ja rahe hain

(He had said
Go and make disciples
Look at them
They are not able to become disciples themselves
He had said
Spread the Good News
Look at them
They are themselves turning into bad news)

The play of pronouns as 'usne' and 'inhe' is brilliant as it demarcates the voice of Christ from the non-followers, the true from the fake, the spiritual from the corrupt. In a series of contradictions between what Christ said and what people are doing, the poet is able to address the so-called followers of Christ who are 'unable to become disciples themselves', while in an evangelical sense, he is also addressing non-believers too, though not in a denominational or sectarian sense. In an ulatbani Kabir says, "Paap karein te hari milein, paap karein te chain/ Paap kare sab kuch mile, isliye paap karo din rain" (Sin gives you peace, sin takes you to God/Sin gives you everything, keep at it night and day) he is using his ulat-bansi style to distinguish between what the world wants and what it deserves—Hari as superficial god, the deity of worldly rituals and rites and the true Hari who cannot be got with the rituals of ignorance. These are not prescriptive lines as many interpreters believe and find illogical syntactic and phonetic breaks to interpret this doha (couplet). All devotional poems need not be prescriptive, there are various ways of composing poetry, and devotional poems are particularly clever in the use of symbolism and suggestion. W. B. Yeats used gnostic and hermetic symbolism in talking about the 'second coming' while Blake reiterated that he prefers Hell to Heaven and Devils to Angels. Poetry invites us to explore meaning through a cognitive process that involves inference, suggestion and layers of cognition, as the dhvani theory or the Symbolist manifesto highlight. In the poem under discussion, the cognitive dissonance created with the use of 'usne' and 'inhe' is the poetic of inversion that is the strength of this poem.

In this collection, there is a poem 'Ishvar Putr' ('Son of God'), where the poet has deliberately used colloquial Hindi in place of standardized Hindi, in a tone reminiscent of avadhi-braj devotional poetry. This poem stands apart from other compositions in its metrical rhythm and stuti-path (remembrance-utterance), evoking the Ramkatha path of *Ramcharitamanas* and other medieval compositions. The lines read as:

Sat adi sat hain Ishu Masih
Asat ke sab bhaav mitavein
Jagat ke sab tam harein, au
Antas mein jyoti-pushp khilavein

(Jesus Christ is the eternal truth
He erases all sentiments of un-truths,
He snatches all the darkness of the world,
He makes flowers of light blossom in the heart)

There are some poems that make use of Hindustani while most are composed in khari-boli or standardized Hindi. While reading these poems, one notices the use of Christian images, symbols and referents and that makes it important to understand that symbols and referents in religions are an integral part of spiritual vocabulary itself.

Language and Symbolism

While reading Christian bhakti poetry in Hindi, the registers of Christian symbols and theological referents bring us to examine another aspect of spiritual literature: the nature of language itself. Is the language of spiritual literature to be assessed with the same qualitative and semantic registers as the language of non-spiritual or secular literature? When the English poet William Blake called for the burning of the Bible as readers were incapable, he said, of understanding symbolic language therein, or when Kabir encodes his messages in his 'ulat bansi' (inverted flute) or when the Siddhas create a 'sandhya bhasa' (twilight language) for sharing their spiritual messages, we are sure to note that spiritual language takes us beyond the associative and denotative stages of language to a state of suggestion (dhvani)[4]. We also understand that religious referents and symbols are an integral part of spiritual vocabulary itself and the poet-devotee is making free use of these encryptions in sharing an experience that is charged in anubhuti (experience) of the individual herself. At times, these compositions are encrypted codes, open to the initiates and attracting the lay; sometimes, these verses are spontaneous outbursts of higher states of consciousness; at times verses are part of ceremonial language itself. In different contexts, these verses/songs deploy sacred, specialized, theological language while in other contexts, especially when it involves ceremony or performance, the language is more accessible. In

gospel poems and bhajans available as music, the lyrics are more accessible while congregational prayers make use of theological terms in higher degree. Mahendra's collection of poems features compositions that explore language in most of these contexts—there are theological terms, archaic language, more generalized words as well as nationalist tones in various poems. Dass proposes that Mahendra's Hindi bhakti poetry brings in a wider perspective to Indian Christian theological developments in Hindi through the range of themes and linguistic variety in the collection.

Exploring theology through creative literature as in hymns, poems, songs, films and theatre in Hindi is a field open to research. Even a close examination of Christian characters in Hindi films, from the naïve but sexually experimental eponymous heroine in *Julie* (1975) to the wise and compassionate Father Braganza in *Kabhi Haan Kabhi Naa* (1994), the lives and dimensions of characters in popular cinema tell their own story[5]. The entry of commercial singers like Shaan, Sonu Nigam and others in rendering Christian hymns in Hindi points to the contradiction in terms of monetary viability but cultural obscurity of Hindi Christian popular arts. As I conclude this article, I invite readers to consider if bhakti poetry can be without yogic metaphors, Saguna similes, siddha symbols, liturgical and theological referents at all? Are religious symbols only representative of denominational impermeability or do they hold within them, an epistemological signification, as W B Yeats said of the soul that "[the soul] communicates in symbols". In understanding inter-faith spirituality, the experiences of Ramkrishna Paramhansa and Raimon Panikkar who insisted on maintaining the purity of religious vocabulary as aids to inter-spiritual experiences, not as hindrances, can enable us to open Hindi poetry to recognize and validate Christian spiritual experiences, the first step towards any meaningful inter-faith dialogue. Hindi Christianity in creative literature seeks to go beyond the ridiculous Hindi-Hindu, Urdu-Muslim and Christian-English trifurcation that has become the fossilized trinity of cultural fundamentalism in contemporary north India.

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Notes

1. Amrita Bharati has a prolific output, yet scholarly studies of her poetry are rare and available mostly outside India. As a modern spiritual poet, her work invites more engaged readings, given the underrepresentation of women's spiritual writings themselves in India.

2. Dr. Naresh has a prolific output with literary criticism, novels and poetry on the theme of bhakti. Some of his poetry collections include *Pipasit Man, Shabd Vinag, Adhyatm Satsai,* the titles pointing to their nature and scope.

3. All translations are done by the author of this paper.

4. See Chaturvedi, Namrata. 2018. "*Sanskrit Hermeneutics and Christian Devotional Poetry*". *International Journal of Asian Christianity*: Vol.1, Issue 1.

5. See Mathew, Ruth Susan. 2021. "'The politics of the representation of Christian women characters in select hindi films". *Continuum*, DOI: 10.1080/10304312.2021.1889974 and D'Souza, Ryan A. 2019. "Representations of Indian Christians in Bollywood Movies". Graduate Theses and Dissertations, https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=8969&context=etd accessed on 25/6/2021.

Two Marxist Perspectives on the Buddha: Rahul Sankrityayan and Debiprasad Chattopadhyay

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Following the revival of classical Indian philosophy in colonial times, Indian Marxism zoned in on Buddha and his philosophy and celebrated it as a breakthrough when seen through the classical Marxist perspective. This perspective towards Buddhist philosophy was split into two modes – the first driven by a materialist conception of history, and the second by dialectical materialism. Even as there is no opposition between these two perspectives, the distinction between them separates the two approaches to Buddhism. This paper explores two major Marxist philosophers, Rahul Sankrityayan and Debiprasad Chattopadhyay, and their Marxist analysis of Buddhist philosophy. It will be argued that they represent the two approaches of Marxism towards Buddhism.

Two Marxist Perspectives on Buddha

Human activity is driven by human interest – be it personal, political, social or ideological. The revival of Indian philosophy in the 19th and 20th centuries in general and Buddhism in particular is not an exception to this rule. A close reading reveals the common elements in this revival, and that every modern philosopher, school and thinker had appropriated classical Indian philosophy according to their modern political, social or ideological interest. For instance, Gandhi's appropriation of Vedanta, Tilak's celebration of Gita, and Ambedkar's revival of

Buddhism were all driven by modern political interests. Even the Indian Marxist philosophy is not different; it was influenced by official Marxist philosophy of the Soviet Union, which perceived philosophy as contained within the dichotomy of idealism and materialism and explained the entire philosophical corpus created by humanity in the dogma of either historical or dialectical materialism. The result of the latter understanding was a search for a local ideological or political ally for Marxist philosophy, while the former tended to explain the field of philosophy with reference to a 'master field' of either Economy or History. For instance, from the Greek philosophical tradition, it was the philosophy of Heraclitus and Democritus that was celebrated by the Marxist philosophical school as a revolutionary philosophy. In the same manner, Indian Marxism celebrated the philosophy of Lokayata and Buddha because of their materialist and dialectical outlook respectively and because of their anti-idealist philosophy as compared to the Veda and the Upanishads. Indeed, it is a fact that the Lokayata and Buddhist philosophy emerged as heterodox schools of thought in the 6th century BCE, but despite their common anti-Vedic stance, the two schools were critical of each other. The historical materialist interpretation, as a tendency within Marxism itself, may be understood separately from such formulations. It looks at the totality of a social formation – the peaks of its civilizational achievements as well as its crimes against its own members and outsiders – to understand how life was reproduced and reorganized within it, and places products of that society in relation to this totality.

This paper tries to explore this opposition via the philosophy of two proponents of Indian Marxist philosophy that is, Rahul Sankrityayan and Debiprasad Chattopadhyay, and their analyses of Buddhism and Lokayata philosophies.

Method:

Indian philosophy has its own methods and distinctions of writing history and conducting debate with the other schools. The first philosophical distinction is between heterodoxy and orthodoxy. In Sanskrit and vernacular languages, it is nastika darshan and astika darshan respectively. In the Indian philosophical

tradition, nastika - often misunderstood as meaning atheism - denotes a rejection of the authority of the *Veda*. This includes schools such as *Carvaka*, Jain and Buddhist. Similarly, *astika* does not mean theist, rather it denotes philosophies that accept the authority of the *Veda*, like the *Upanishads, Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya-Vaisheshika, Purava Mimamsa, Uttara Mimamsa*.

Besides this rigid distinction, there is a fluid methodical distinction that is made between philosophical schools and their views, expressed as a rhetorical dichotomy of *purvapaksha* and uttarapaksha. In this method, the philosopher first puts forth the views of the opponent school(s) in a section that is referred to as *purvapaksha*; and then the philosopher presents his refutation of the opponent's view in a section called *uttarapaksha*. For example, if I am a Buddhist philosopher, then to assert my own philosophical position, first I will put forth the views of my opponent's philosophical school (ideally) without distorting or diluting them. After that, I will refute their school of thought logically, bring out their shortcomings and put forth my philosophical argument as a more comprehensive alternative to the opponent's thought. This method is not just used against one opponent but rather against many opponents at the same time. For instance, in Chattopadhyay's *Indian Philosophy: General Introduction*, he is defending the materialist philosophy of Lokayata; but to defend or assert the Lokayata philosophy – the *uttarapaksha* – Chattopadhyay forms his purvapaksha by describing the Vedas, Upanishads, Mimanska, Vedanta, Samkhya-Yoga, Buddha and early Buddhism, Jain, Later Buddhism, Nyaya-Vaisheshika, and only then places Lokayata as *uttarapaksha*. According to Chattopadhyay, the Vedas are the prime opponent of Indian materialism and philosophies like Nyaya-Vaisheshka are allies to Vedic philosophy, while Buddhist philosophy is neither the most extreme opponent nor an ally of Indian materialism (Chattopadhyay 2010).

Chattopadhyay also uses this method of *purvapaksha* and *uttarapaksha* in his *What is Living and What is Dead in Indian Philosophy* (2010). But in addition to this, he makes use of the Marxist dichotomy of idealism versus materialism. So, the *purvapaksha* is Indian idealism that includes Veda, Upanishads, Buddhism and Vedanta. The uttarapaksha are Nyaya-Vaisheshka, Samkhya and Lokayata. The early Buddhist philosophy is conceived neither as idealism nor as materialism, but it is discussed as dialectics (Chattopadhyay 2010).

This distinction of Indian philosophy as being an opposition of idealism and materialism is an attempt to search for a materialist ally in Indian philosophy, making use of the correspondence theory of base and superstructure in order to discern revolutionary agencies in the base. This distinction is problematic for many reasons, among which I am just pointing out one important aspect. Every one of these philosophical schools is known for a particular philosophical aspect, a specific advancement in one of the subfields of philosophy – for example, the Samkhya philosophy is known for its dualist metaphysics, Nyaya for logic, and Vaisheshika for its metaphysics of seven categories – and the defence of the primacy of matter against immaterial perversions, as vulgar materialism may be described, is not especially a concern of these schools. Calling them materialist is something like calling Plato a Communist philosopher simply because he rejected private property in the Republic! Secondly, every school has its own historical role in the sense that every philosophy tries to defend some contemporary movement, and this distinction inverts the relationship between the movement and its philosophical expression by first searching for an acceptable philosophy and then allying with the movement it represents. This creates some serious issues to which we will return. Lastly, even if we accept this double-basket of idealism and materialism, the question remains to what extent is the so-called Indian materialism close to the materialism of Marx and Marxism? Since this question is not the central issue of this paper, we can for the time being let it remain as an important question that needs addressal.

In Sankrityayan's analysis of Indian Marxism, we do not come across such a distinction of idealism and materialism, nor is there a desire to search for an ally in Indian philosophy. In his *दर्शन दिग्दर्शन* (Sankrityayan 2010), he does not use the dichotomy of *purvapaksha* and *uttarapaksha* or that of idealism and materialism. Instead, he provides a combination of a history of Indian Philosophy in a linear chronological exposition and a discussion on the formation of the schools of thought – from the Vedas till Buddha he gives the account of the history of Indian philosophy in a linear way, and then he divides the remaining schools as theist and atheist. For Sankrityayan, the atheist schools and philosophies are Lokayata and their materialism, schools of Buddhism and their non-materialism, Vaisheshika and their defence of atom, Jainism and their *anekantvad*, and lastly Mimamska and their defence of testimony or text; and the theist schools are Nyaya, Yoga,

and Vedanta of Badrayana. Besides this distinction, he employs the category of 'developed' or 'advanced' schools of Indian philosophy, in which he includes the Later Buddhism and the Vedanta of Gaudapada and Sankara.

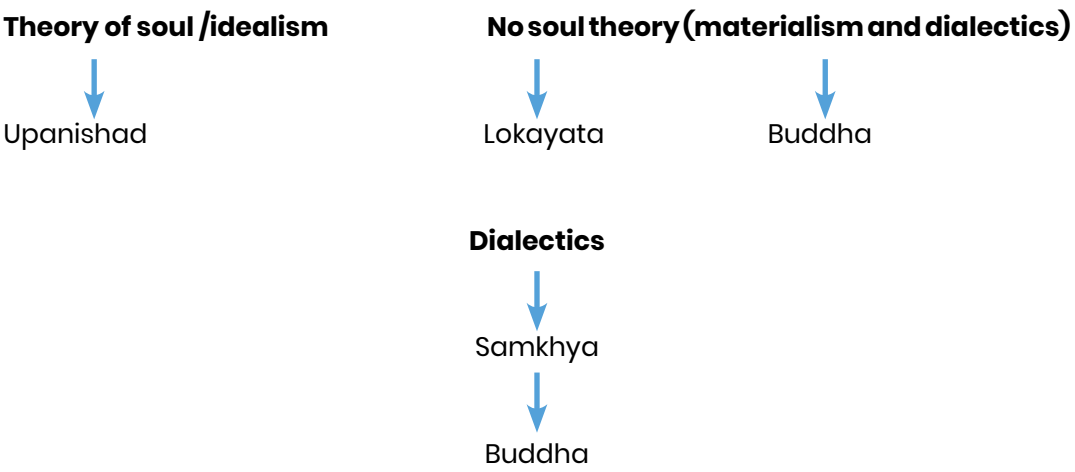
We can see here that Sankrityayan does not use the Orthodox Marxist distinction of philosophy into idealism and materialism, nor does he use the classical Indian debate of *purvapaksha* and *uttarapaksha*. Lastly, both the Marxist philosophers reject the classical distinction of Indian philosophy into heterodoxy and orthodoxy.

Situating Buddha, Philosophically & Historically:

Buddha remains the most important radical philosopher in the history of Indian philosophy. Historically speaking, Buddha was the culmination of an independent heretical and philosophical movement which emerged in the 5th and 6th century BCE against the Vedas and the Upanishads. Philosophically speaking, he provided the highest expression of the ontological question raised by the Upanishads, particularly the question of self and the status of things. Every philosopher and philosophical school is a continuation and at the same time a negation of their predecessors; their philosophical question is an answer to their historical period, and Buddha is not an exception to this.

According to Chattopadhyay, the Upanishads' theory of soul or *atman* is the thesis or *purvapaksha*, and there are two rejections of this theory of the soul provided by Lokayata (representing the materialist outlook) and Buddha (the dialectical outlook). Ajita Keshkambal, the founding figure of Lokayata philosophy, rejected the theory of soul from Upanishads and propagated his materialist theory that is, *bhutchaitanyavada* (the theory that consciousness arises from matter) before Buddha. But though Buddha is an ally of Ajita against Upanishads, what is the relation between Ajita's materialism and Buddha's philosophy? But before exploring this question, we must discern the philosophical roots of Buddha's dialectics. Following Stcherbastky, Chattopadhyay argues that the theory of universal flux is pre-Buddhist in origin and can be found in Samkhya philosophy. One of Buddha's teachers was a Samkhya scholar as well. On this

basis, Chattopadhyay argues that Buddha's theory is a reaction against the dialectics of the Samkhya School (Chattopadhyay 2010, 500)



According to Chattopadhyay, against the idealism of Upanishads, we have two parallel opponents in the forms of materialism and dialectics, among which the dialectical outlook is the continuation and negation of Samkhya philosophy (Chattopadhyay 2010, 500). In this formulation, Chattopadhyay presumes that there is no philosophical conflict between materialism and dialectics, and that they are allies by virtue of opposing idealism – he uncritically uses a pre-dialectical logical formula pertaining to identity, as if to say the enemy of my enemy is my friend.

Against such mechanical understanding, we can place Sankrityayan's view on Buddha and his relation with his predecessors. Sankrityayan acknowledges the fact that, after the renunciation, Siddharth learned some yoga from Alara Kalama and later from Uddaka Ramaputta (Sankrityayan 2012, 18). So, there is no trace of dialectical continuation through rejection of Samkhya philosophy in Sankrityayan's Buddha. Instead of searching for the philosophical roots of Buddha in Samkhya philosophy, Sankrityayan places Buddha in a different dialectical schema:

"Thesis: theory of self - Upanishads
Antithesis: no-self - Lokayata materialism
Synthesis: no-self theory - non-materialism of Buddha" (Sankrityayan 2012, 49).

Thus, for Sankrityayan, Buddha's non-materialist no-self theory is a negation of negation; the first negation being that of the theory of self, and the second negation that of the materialist theory of no-self.

While explaining Buddha's view on *anatmavada* (no-self theory), Sankrityayan elaborates upon the two types of negation. Buddha says there are two kinds of *atmavadin* (आत्मवादी) – those who identify *atman* with the body and those who recognize *atman* as a non-material entity. Buddha also argues that those who propagate the theory of self (*atmavad*) also believe that the *atman* is either finite or infinite; those who identify the soul with the body consider the self to be continual (नित्य) and those who believe atman is a non-body entity consider it to be momentary (अनित्य) (Sankrityayan 2012, 33). For Buddha, those who believe that this soul is the subject which experiences everything, the one who experiences the good and bad deeds and is static, stable, unchangeable – such people are silly (Sankrityayan 2012, 34).

Like Carvaka, Buddha is an opponent of theory of self, but he does not accept the materialist view that body is soul or that consciousness arises from matter, and therefore the Buddhist theory of no self (अनात्मवाद) is a negation of negation. Chattopadhyay argues that Buddha's negation of the theory of self (आत्मवाद) is dialectical in nature because Buddha's ontology stands for momentariness (Chattopadhyay 2010, 495), but Sankrityayan points out that Buddha used his ontological position against the materialist conception of self as well. Sankrityayan provides a more rigorous Marxist outlook towards Buddha compared to Chattopadhyaya's theory of two opponents of Upanishads.

Buddha developed his non-materialism as against the mythical Lokayta king Payasi. This king was known for his proto-materialism and empiricism. He developed his proto empiricism against rebirth, life after death and Vedic rituals. In support of his philosophy, Payasi asks three different questions to one of the disciples of Buddha: 1. Those who are dead never come back and tell us that there is another world, then how do we know there is another world? 2. Why are those who perform good deeds and live a life of goodness for the sake of heaven afraid of death, or why are they not desiring death? 3. If there is a soul in the body, then

after death the body weight should get reduced; if we closely examine the body post-mortem, we do not find the soul (Sankrityayan 2012, 36).

Against this empiricist materialism, Buddha argues that if one believes that the body and soul is one and the same, then that person will not lead a life of monkhood, or even if someone believes that the self is different from the body, then too one cannot lead the path monkhood (Sankrityayan 2012, 36). This is how Buddha justifies himself as अनात्म अभौतिकवादी (no-self non-materialist).

What happens when you use dialectics in society?

Chattopadhyay in his *Indian Philosophy* (2010) argued that Buddha came up with his theory of suffering mainly against the new historical and political changes which were taking place before his eyes – that is the fall of जनपद (proto-democratic state) and the rise of महाजनपद (centralise state) (2010, 128). This transformation of political power had created unrest and suffering in the life of people, and they lost the equality and freedom which they enjoyed in their previous lifestyle. Chattopadhyay argued that Buddha remained an admirer of the old political system throughout his life and had experienced the persecution of his own Shakya clan by the hands of the Kosal prince. Besides, Buddha had witnessed Ajatashatru's attack on the Vajji clan (Ibid.) These socio-political events and a resultant desire for the political and economic power which was prevalent in society had provoked Buddha to come up with his theory of suffering, with which he tried to provide a palliative remedy to the troubles which existed in society (Chattopadhyay 2010, 519). Chattopadhyay argues that Buddha used his philosophy and *sangha* to reestablish the lost political system of the proto-republic state (2010, 30). For Chattopadhyay, this revival of democratic life in the form of *sangha* was the embryo of a classless society in a class-based society; in this regard, Chattopadhyay also argued that the Buddhist *sangha* was the opium of the people (2010, 131).

With this argument, Chattopadhyay projects Buddha as a revivalist or a defender of primitive communism. He accepted the historical limitations of Buddha, but

he argued that Buddha stood against private property and caste (2010, 519). The rejection of private property is double-pronged. First, there is a moral rejection as private property creates the mental state of longing – clinging and attachment leads to suffering, and we should reject private property. Since everything is in a state of flux, there is no static self on one hand and on the other, there are no stable objects as well; this eternal instability laid bare the foolishness of running behind private property (Ibid.) In accordance with the theory of dependent origination, the rejection of private property is similar to the rejection of soul and personality (Chattopadhyay 2010, 523). In a similar manner, Buddha used his theory of dependent origination on the question of caste and argued that like everything else in the universe, the caste-oriented society comes into being only under specific conditions and hence it is destined to pass away (Chattopadhyay 2010, 225). By focussing on these two points, Chattopadhyay argues that Buddha's project was to eradicate the social evils with the help of his ontological theory and provided the *sangha* system where people can live equally without any attachment towards personality, soul, private property, and caste (2010, 532).

In short, one can say that for Chattopadhyay, Buddha's was a revisionist project towards a proto-egalitarian state which was based on freedom and equality and Buddha formalizes this project in the form of *sangha*. For Sankrityayan, the Buddha was not a revivalist. He occupied a double and contradictory position – he was at once a progressive as his philosophy and ontology was radical, but in his political practice, he was regressive.

Sankrityayan says that the social conditions before the rise of Buddha were based on the dual exploitation of the people; the Vedic philosophy and its religious rituals, and the kings and their political and economic power (2012, 49). Before the rise of Buddha, the exploited had people forgotten about their classless past, and were under the yoke of religion. In this situation, Sankrityayan argued that the Indian materialist thinkers had tried to liberate the people from their religious consciousness by attacking the theories of rebirth, soul, life after death, and God (2012, 49). But the state and kings were happy with Lokayata philosophy as it tried to retain the general class-based social order, but simultaneously demanded a change in socio-religious conditions (Sankrityayan 2012, 50). Indian materialism therefore had its limitations and was used by the state power for its benefit

(Sankrityayan 2012, 50). According to Sankrityayan, Buddha emerged in a society where the Vedic religion was an ally of state power, and materialism was partly against religious ritualism but was also used by the state power for its own benefit. We can put it as follows:

Thesis: Vedic and Upanishadic philosophy - Brahman (religious power) + Kshatriya (state power)
Antithesis: materialism - critique of ritualistic practice and religion but use by state
Synthesis: Buddha as an emerging radical philosopher

Buddha's philosophy is affirmative in three senses. First, his ontology was itself radically new. Secondly, with the help of this ontology, Buddha preaches the path of progress and overcomes the cry for a lost paradise. Lastly, Buddha treated his philosophy as a means to overcome a certain stage, like a vanishing mediator, and argued for its death after its necessary use (Sankrityayan 2012, 50). Despite this progressive element, there remains the regressive residue in Buddha's philosophy and that is his theory of rebirth (Sankrityayan 2012, 50). The Buddhist ontology, which Sankrityayan defines as discontinuous continuity, continues after the death into the next life. Buddha thus incorporated the theory of rebirth within his own philosophical framework, and he defended the idea of rebirth in the form of a counter-alliance of discontinuous continuity in the next life as well (Sankrityayan 2012, 51). The ontology based on momentariness is useful for explaining the nature of the world, but the deployment of this theory to defend rebirth meant that Buddha retains an approval for the social system (Ibid.)

Thanks to the theory of rebirth, Buddha got support from the state and the contemporary ruling class. Buddha used his philosophy for retaining the social order as it is and did not weaponize it for social change. Buddha's theory was useful for the expansion of the state as well, as he stood against the Varna and caste system but without disturbing the hegemonic economic condition; due to this he was not able to eradicate inequality but still managed to get tremendous support from the lower class as well (Sankrityayan 2012, 52).

Sankrityayan holds that the personal life of Siddhartha coupled with some other social factors were the determining factors in the formation of his theory of suffering, but despite that, the eradication of poverty and inequality was not the program of Buddha's philosophy (Sankrityayan 2012, 53). In this regard, Sankrityayan notes that in the early days, the *sangha* was open to downtrodden people. But after the objection of Mahajanas, Buddha barred the debaters in the *sangha*. After the objection of slave-masters, Buddha denied entry to the slaves; and lastly after the objection of king Bimbisara, Buddha closed the door for foot soldiers (Sankrityayan 2012, 54). So unlike Chattopadhyay's Buddha who was a revivalist, egalitarian and progressive, Sankrityayan's Buddha was progressive in his philosophy but at the same he was also a regressive defender of the existing class formation.

These two Marxist approaches to the question of method and socio-political issues are for us a starting point to see the differences in the Marxist approach over the question of philosophy itself.

Is it even dialectical?

Chattopadhyay used the term 'dialectics' to characterize Buddha's theory of dependent origination. Now it is an obvious fact that one cannot use the word dialectics in its highest form to define the Buddhist philosophy. For example, in Hegel, dialectics is a logical process in one sense and in another, it is a transformation of this process (Bottomore 1999, 144). In its first sense, dialectics is reason (Zeno, Socrates, Plato, et al) and in the second sense, it is a process of the self-generation of reason. The second conception is again divided into ascending dialectics (God or some divine entity) and descending dialectics that its manifestation in the phenomenal world explained (Ibid.) Buddha's ontology lacks the critical ingredient of self-generation. While in Hegel, contradiction is the fundamental life-force which necessitates a recurring self-positing through imitation, reversal, mirroring, inversion and distortion, Buddha's ontology is better characterized by a primacy of temporality over essences. This specific conception of temporary essences is common to Hegel and Buddha, but not sufficient ground to equate

the two philosophies under the category of dialectics. Dialectics has a different aspect of Hegel's philosophy, which deals with the specificities of the paradoxes of change and opposition, and not simply a rejection of static essence, which had already been argued by empiricism before him.

We can also consider the parallel dialectics from Greek philosophy, especially the dialectics of Heraclitus, and in that light, try to analyse Chattopadhyay's argument. Rescher, in his book on dialectics, argued that Heraclitus' dialectics is dual dialectics (Rescher 2007, 8). He writes that "reciprocal accommodation between two opposing forces where the excess of one evokes and ultimately predominately opposition of the other, deserve to be characterised as dialectical" (Rescher 2007, 8). This definition presumes opposite and reciprocal relations between the pair. In the light of this definition, let us examine Chattopadhyay's interpretation of Buddha's theory of dependent origination. "That being thus, This comes to be, from the coming to be of That, arises This. That being absent, this does not happen. From the cessation of That, This ceases" (Chattopadhyay 2010, 505). Chattopadhyay further argues that the formula thus has two aspects – positive and negative. Positivity refers to the 'arising' or coming into being of each and every thing, subject to the presence of some specific condition, or, more properly, the collocation of a number of conditions (*samudaya*). Evidently, such conditions or their collocation can never be something stable or immutable, inasmuch as – according to the same view of causality – they in their turn come into being subject to the conditions of their own. The conditions of something coming into being have themselves to come into being and are thus unstable; hence that which comes into being subject to such unstable conditions is, by its very nature, itself unstable i.e., destined to (*nirodha*) pass out of existence (Chattopadhyay 2010, 505).

In Heraclitus, there are two opposite forces and there is a reciprocal relation between these two opposites, if one force loses its power or balance then automatically the other force becomes predominant. So, there is some static condition within the two opposite things and there is strife as well in these two opposites (Skirbekk and Gilje 2001) and this is how it becomes a dualist dialectic. In Chattopadhyay's interpretation of the theory of dependent origination, the thing which comes into being is by its nature unstable, which is why it passes

in existence. That means the opposite force is not being excessive on the other course and that is why there is no duality or strife here and therefore it is problematic to call it dialectics.

On the other hand, Sankrityayan in his account of the theory of dependent origination does not use the term dialectic for it. He argues that for Buddha the theory of cause is not continuous continuity (Sankrityayan 2012, 29). Instead, he argues that Buddha does not use the word cause (प्रत्यय) as other philosophers have used it i.e. to denote the cause of a known effect. For Buddha, the origination of cause means withering away of cause itself and the origination of something new; so, for Buddha, the cause (प्रत्यय) withers away before the emergence of a new object or event, and therefore for Buddha, the theory of dependent origination is a discontinuous continuity (Sankrityayan 2012, 30).

For Chattopadhyay, things come into being because of *samudaya* and by its nature, it ceases. For Sankrityayan, there isn't any cause for the effect, because the so-called cause or object absolutely ceases and new things come into existence. Therefore, for Sankrityayan, Buddha's ontology is based on discontinuous continuity and for Chattopadhayay, it is continuous continuity. Or one can say that for Chattopadhyay, dialectics is a doctrine which he tries to search for in Buddha's philosophy, and for Sankrityayan, dialectics is a method which he applies to analyse Buddha's philosophy.

Conclusion:

Based on this analysis one can argue that Sankrityayan's interpretation of Buddhism is not driven by Marxist orthodoxy, whereas Chattopadhyay's interpretation is influenced by Marxist orthodoxy. Secondly, in Sankrityayan's interpretation, the drive is not a search for allies in Indian philosophy, whereas Chattopadhyay's project is driven in that direction. Lastly, Chattopadhayay tries to search for dialectics and materialism in Indian tradition, and against that, Sankrityayan interprets Indian philosophy with the help of materialist conception of history and dialectical materialism.

Note: The author is thankful to Arjun Ramchandran for his critical reflections and discussions.

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Rolling Eyes, Rejected Subalternization, Reimagining Justice: A Reading of Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar's *The Mysterious Ailment of Rupi Baskey*

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Introduction

Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar's (Sowvendra, hereafter) 2014 novel *The Mysterious Ailment of Rupi Baskey* (*Rupi Baskey*, hereafter) constitutes the story of the Santhal community. The novel depicts a course of triumph and success of the indigenous community. It is a deviation from the usual trajectory of victimizing or infantilizing the community. The aim of this paper is to explore the narratives around the agency and autonomy of Santhal community through a reading of *Rupi Baskey*. In particular, the paper situates the author Sowvendra within the scope of indigenous literature while highlighting the idea of oral narratives and literary autoethnography. It analyzes the portrayal of the Santhals as an empowered community through their un-subalternizing and accentuates their contribution in India's historic freedom struggle by portraying the Santhal 'side-up'. Further the paper explores the physical and cultural geography of the Santhal space to show the distinct identity of the Santhals. Finally, it discusses the use of the paranormal within the indigenous space.

Indigenous Moorings

Indigenous writers across the world have had to struggle to find a place of recognition in the world of literature and otherwise. While the 1969 Pulitzer Prize to N. Scott Momaday for his *House Made of Dawn* threw the floodgates of publishers open to indigenous writings in America, indigenous writings in English in India have still to find a strong moment of reckoning. Barring a few writers from the North-East, most of the other indigenous communities have not received the limelight that they should have, both within the regional and the Indian English literary canon. It is within this context that Sowvendra, a medical doctor, arrived with his *Rupi Baskey*, which won the Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar in 2014. In an interview, Sowvendra says, "*Rupi Baskey* is the first full-fledged Santhal novel written in English, and published by a mainstream publisher like Aleph Book Company. I think this is a huge enough representation of the Santhal life in the mainstream Indian English writing. And I think this is good. There should be more Santhal stories told in English now" (Prasad, 2017). Ironically, his next book, a collection of short stories called *The Adivasi will not Dance* (2015), was banned in 2017 on the allegation that it tarnished the image of Adivasi (the indigenous peoples of India) women and Santhal culture. He was suspended from state service as a medical officer but later reinstated in 2018. Sowvendra showcases the Santhal Community in a light hitherto unknown in English Writings. Binoo K John writes in *Scroll.in*, "The twin life he leads, as doctor and then a writer at night, comprises struggles against various impossibilities – a throw of the dice in the dark for a Santhal writer battling against both prejudice and ignorance" (John, 2015).

Literary Autoethnography and Oral Story-Telling

Rupi Baskey gives a bird's eye view into some aspects of Santhal culture and society which had hitherto been found only in books related to anthropology. By demonstrating the everyday life of the Santhals, an agrarian community, he demonstrates an insider's perspective. Sowvendra says he writes what he has lived through; the stories come from life around him during his years growing up in Ghatshila (John, 2015). "I have grown up on stories my family told

me - stories about kings and gods and ghosts" (Prasad, 2017). Within the Native American space, many writers have turned to *creative nonfiction or literary autoethnography* to express how tribal affiliation, myth, ancestry, gender, life stages, education, geographical locales, and historical moment impress their consciousness and inform their identity and works. These authors have become anthropologists of their own experience. Notwithstanding, these Native American authors see themselves "in relation to collective social units or groups rather than as isolated individuals" (Arnold Krupat 212 as quoted in Lundquist 8). Sowvendra's works *Rupi Baskey* and *The Adivasi will not Dance* seem to reflect this exposition. Manasi Shah writes, "The history of the Adivasis has always been written by others - the mainstream historians. While the Adivasis treasure their cultural and historical legacies, there is next to no documentation of this by themselves" (Shah, 2019). She further states that one of the reasons for this negligence was because the Adivasis were not themselves writing in English. However, writers such as Sowvendra who write in English are akin to storytellers of the past who have passed on their stories to various generations. Additionally, Ruby Hembrom, the founder and Director of Adivaani (first voices), an archiving and publishing outfit of and by Adivasi, insists on publishing in English and says, "Choosing English was a strategic move to ensure we were paid attention to. Choosing English is not about whether our people can read or write in it; it's about existing, nudging our way onto bookshelves and libraries, as some day, this will be the database and collective memory of the authentic Adivasi voice" (Mitra, 2019). Sowvendra too writes primarily in English although he translates from Santhali to English, and Hindi to English. His opponents challenged his authority to narrate creation stories. While both these writers have been criticized for writing in English, they have unequivocally maintained the power of oral narrative traditions too within this context. The backlash which Sowvendra received for his books, compelled his supporters to comment on the power of oral narratives endemic to indigenous cultures. In an article in *Scroll.in*, they said:

"These erudite protestors forget that we come from an oral tradition and that there are several versions of the Karam-Binti which are different from the written versions. (Karam Binti, according to Ruby Hembrom, is a ritualistic retelling and recalling of the Santhal-creation stories (Hembrom, 2018). There are Santals who say some sequences in the creation narrative are missing or not recognisable

in the printed versions. Do they intend to say that these Santals are not the 'true' Santals because their belief of the myth is different from that of the objectors? They're using the arrogance of printed text to subjugate people of orality, like the 'dikus' (Diku is a non-Santhal) have been doing" (Scroll, 2017).

In an interview, Ruby Hembrom says, "Adivasi literature is oral, written, graphic, animated, sung and performed...We never needed to write because we were living documents ourselves. But now, armed with literacy, we need to record, document, express and challenge what has incorrectly gone down as history, set records straight and even defend ourselves" (Mitra, 2019). Hembrom asserts the importance of singers, storytellers and family in preserving the Santhal knowledge systems. They, through their oration and singing, nurture and re-create the idea of the community itself. She further adds, "The oral tradition is a distillation of the shared community and corporal experience that gives language and culture meaning" (Hembrom, 2018). Since each narrator revises and improvises while narrating a story it re-creates a sense of a community.

(Un)-Subalternizing the Santhals

Sowvendra refuses to portray the Santhals as subalterns. He shows the community as people with agency who lived with pride as a farming community, until the place was swallowed by land sharks who wanted their pound of flesh from the mineral-rich land of Jharkhand. I would argue that Sowvendra showcases the Santhal community as a people who were a triumphant lot – they had their own way of living which was both meticulous and accommodative. Although currently many members of the community live in abject poverty, I would argue that poverty was thrust on them for no fault of theirs. In *Rupi Baskey*, where Sowvendra traces the lives of the Santhals from the pre-independent era, one wonders, why do the women practice black magic against anyone who appears better than them? Since we are attuned to Western/European discourses, it is difficult to view the Santhal community from any other lens and that is indeed a fallacious notion. Santhal culture, traditions and rituals are viewed through the filter of the Euro-Western perspective which leaves no scope for any discussions on witchcraft

and black magic. The answer lies also in the undeniable connection between those beautiful women and the beautiful land called Jharkhand. *Rupi Baskey* is inextricably connected to the exploitation of Jharkhand which has rendered the place into an ailing space.

Rupi is a strong woman married to a promising man with great prospects because he is a teacher in a Government school. In her in-laws' house, a pregnant Rupi contributes during the rice-transplanting season along with other women. The novel opens with Rupi giving birth in the paddy field – "*Rupi Baskey cannot believe she was once the strongest woman in* Kadamdihi, who bore her eldest squatting in the middle of a rice paddy, shin-deep in slush" (Shekhar 2014, 1). However, not only Rupi, even Sido Master (her husband) and Jaipal (her eldest) are captives of Gurubari (Sido's colleague's wife) through the evil spell that she has cast on them. 'She has sucked the life out of Rupi bit by bit and Rupi, once the strongest woman in Kadamdihi, is bedridden for no apparent reason' (Shekhar 2014, 6). Further, even before Jaipal was born to Rupi and Sido, Gurubari extracts a promise from Rupi that the latter will give away her first-born son to her – 'You will give me your eldest,' she said (Shekhar 2014, 105). If Rupi is Jharkhand, then one can see her territories being leased out to outside parties for mining at the cost of her own natives. Rupi's condition appears incorrigible but hope arrives in the form of Rupali, her second son Bishu's wife, who is pragmatic, resourceful and stable in her thoughts and action. It is Rupali who finally becomes the cause for Rupi and the Baskey household's rejuvenation. With her ability to lead without arrogance, she is able to tame even her aunt-in-law, Dulari. She is able to convince her husband and others to enroll the children in school, a facility Rupi's children were deprived of despite their own father being a school teacher.

In reality, while all the corporates grew fat on the riches of the land, the Santhals or the indigenous became impoverished. Additionally, the dehumanization of the Adivasis continued unabated with their rich culture being effaced with the construction of the idea of the uncultured savages. Through Rupi's original status of being a promising wife at the threshold of a new life, Sowvendra depicts the un-subalternization of not only the Santhals, but also Jharkhand.

Re-creating History – Santhal side-up

In *Rupi Baskey*, Sowvendra foregrounds the leaders from the community who do not find themselves highlighted among the luminaries of the freedom movement. Della [daughter of Naikay (who is Rupi's neighbour and Putki's best friend)] and Putki (Rupi's mother-in-law) rejoice with the others over the freedom gained from the "Ingrej" and the possibility of an Indian "Sarkaar" (Shekhar 2014, 48). It not only focuses on the Indian independence, but also highlights the promise of a new space for the Adivasis – "Much more exciting than national freedom was the prospect of a separate land for the hor people, for the Adivasis" (Shekhar 2014, 48).

Sowvendra highlights the roles played by Santhal leaders who initiated a sense of political consciousness within the community during the freedom struggle and after. These are much needed glimpses of the Santhals who are shown to have agency, unlike their representation in other works where they are victims of the system trying to survive. The representation of history showcases the triumphant status of the Santhal community within the political spectrum as India burgeoned into a nascent nation. The dream of a state exclusively for the Adivasis is bolstered by the roles played by leaders such as Jaipal Singh, a member of the Munda tribe, who formed the Adivasi Mahasabha in 1938 and sought a separate state called Jharkhand for Adivasis of the Chota Nagpur Region. Educated at Oxford University, he captained the Indian hockey team to win the gold in the 1928 Olympics held in Amsterdam. While serving as the member of the Constituent Assembly he had sought reservations for the Adivasis all over India (Shekhar 2014, 48-49).

While privileging Santhal leaders of post-independent India, Sowvendra indirectly reminds the readers of some other historical figures of the past for example, Sido Murmu. It seems too much of a coincidence to avoid discussing the name Sido, *Rupi Baskey*'s husband although he is nothing like Sido Murmu who led the rebellion against the British. The name Sido however, is a reminder of the historical legend whom the Adivasis of the Chota Nagpur plateau can never forget. Beumer, an art historian at the University of Amsterdam writes that Sido and Kanhu Murmu were the champions of the Santhal community and led the first war of independence against the British and the zamindars in the years 1855-56 although, official versions vouchsafe for the 1857 rebellion against the British as

the first war of independence. Sido along with his brothers Kanhu, Chand, Bhairat, Jhano and Phulo put up a tenacious resistance (Beumer, 2017). Beumer says, "The Illustrated London News dated 23 February 1856 under the headline 'Suppression of the Santhal insurrection', found a detailed report on a mass uprising that had taken place in November 1855 and was brutally put down: 15.000 Santhals lost their lives and dozens of villages were destroyed" (Beumer, 2017). In 1992, the Sido Kanhu Murmu University was established. In 2002, Indian Post released a four-rupee stamp commemorating Sido and Kanhu Murmu the leaders of the "Santhal hul" (Beumer, 2017).

Returning to the novel, Sowvendra discusses the political awareness created among the Santhals by the likes of Khorda Baskey, Rupi's father-in-law. He is Sowvendra's mouthpiece as he recounts for his people the role of Jaipal Singh and his Jharkhand party. Further, he reminds his community about the Kharsawan massacre of January 1, 1948 in which "more than a thousand Adivasis were killed" (Shekhar 2014, 70). Khorda asserts that the tribals who were shot at during the Kharsawan massacre were united in their dream for a new Adivasi state called Jharkhand. His assertion of brotherhood and empathy is reflected in the following words: "They were our brothers...They were hor like us. Some were Santar like us, others were Larka" (Shekhar 2014, 71). While lamenting the loss of his fellow Adivasis, Khorda says, "They had gathered to demand what is good for us, our rights. But police came and shot them all dead. Was that right? What was their fault? We are living in a free country now. Don't we have the right to demand what is good for us?" (Shekhar 2014, 71). It is upon Khorda Baskey's motivation that Putki went to vote for "the first general elections of the country and became part of history" (Shekhar 2014, 71). Sowvendra's voice merges with that of Khorda's when he recounts the history of the Adivasi struggles. The narrative privileges the Adivasi perspective of history rather than the official narrative propagated by the dominant players of the Nation. Although the dream of a state for the Adivasis was deferred to appease the more dominant stakeholders, the dream remained a sustained one to come to fruition later on in the course of time. With the reorganization of the states on a linguistic basis, and while the mineral rich parts were being divided between Bihar, West Bengal and Odisha, the issue of Jharkhand was pushed to the corner – "When such big barters were taking place, why would anyone bother to see who or how many spoke Santhali, Mundari, Ho or Kurukh?" (Shekhar 2014,

72). The state of Jharkhand was only formed in 2000, more than half a century after India became independent. Thus, by creating a space for the Santhal history, Sowvendra creates a space for the Santhal side-up in history and asserts the agency which the Santhals have always exercised under various situations of distress. While historicizing narratives is significant, the geographies (physical and cultural) that play a part in this become equally important.

Physical Geography and its transitions

Sowvendra's subtlety in portraying the transition of Jharkhand from an agrarian space into a mining territory is a veiled attempt at probing the idea of environmental injustice. The mines and the factories were gradually impacting people's health and the environment. The mining centres are seen through Rupi's eyes as she travels with Sido for the first time to Nitra, the place where Sido is a school teacher. Through her, the writer shows the concentration of factories and mines that had mushroomed in that area. Sido points out to her the copper factories, the Subarnarekha river (The River of Gold). She had heard stories about it, about the gold nuggets in its bed and the Jadugora Uranium mines (Shekhar 2014, 87-88). The mines provided employment to the people in the neighborhood. The Majhi (the village-head) with whom Sido and Bairam lived was not only a prosperous farmer in Nitra, he also worked at "the mines in Rakha as labourer, like many of the other Santhal men of the village" (Shekhar 2014, 97). Although these factories and mines are meant to help in development of the area/country, it sooner or later has detrimental effects on the local communities residing in the places for ages together.

Rupi's journey to Nitra heralds her sickness – her mysterious ailment for which there is no cure. The ill- effects of uranium mining in Jadugora, the hazards caused by copper mining are well-documented facts. The mining in the area has had serious health hazards and environmental disasters including contamination of the water bodies, air pollution and so on. The land is rich in mineral resources. Just as Rupi entered the Baskey household as a beautiful bride kindling everyone's interest in her beauty, so also was Jharkhand generating interest in anyone who

wanted to partake of her riches. Rupi thus becomes a metaphor for Jharkhand which has been getting exploited from the time of the discovery of the mineral resources. When Rupi is presented to the neighbours as was the custom, many women from the neighborhood come to bless her. Among all the women, Rupi could never forget one of them – Naikay's widow (Rupi's neighbour) – 'The woman could look right through her, Rupi felt. And even more strangely, her large eyeballs would not stop rolling for a single second' (Shekhar 2014, 74). From time to time, the narrative describes women with "rolling eyes" gazing at Rupi. It is the gaze of the greedy devouring the rich heritage of Jharkhand, its mineral resources - 'Jharkhand is one of the richest areas in the whole country, rich in mineral deposits and forests. The region has huge reserve of coal, iron ore, mica, bauxite and limestones and considerable reserves of copper, chromite, asbestos, kyanite, china clay, manganese, dolomite, uranium etc' (Government of Jharkhand, 2021).

Therefore, even the place becomes a metaphor for the illness that grips Rupi who has entered the place with a sense of openness to start a new life with her husband. However, just as the mines and factories have the ability to destroy a place beyond redemption, Rupi is caught in the quagmire of witchcraft, black magic and various other spells. Her sickness is closely connected to the sickness that grips mining areas literally and metaphorically. The transition of Jharkhand's geography from being a river of gold to an exclusive mining territory, not only depicts that the place has been reduced to just being a mine for the greedy, but also the degradation of the land and its people. This degradation compels one to explore the cultural aspects of Santhal landscape because that is the last vestige that is left of a community that has been stripped of its land and riches.

Cultural Geography

In *Rupi Baskey*, the focus is on the cultural geography pertaining to the Santhals. Sowvendra recreates the physical and cultural geography of the Santhal villages in order to portray the culture of the place. Briney writes, "Some of the main cultural phenomena studied in cultural geography include language, religion, different economic and governmental structures, art, music, and other cultural

aspects that explain how and/or why people function as they do in the areas in which they live" (Briney, 2020).

Sowvendra explores naming of villages (dihi) to show that these villages are connected to nature. Each of the villages is named after an aspect of nature. For instance, Tereldihi, Rupi's home-village, is a wholly Santhal village. It is named after a tree – the terel or the kendu, the leaves of which are used to roll bidis (thin cigarette or mini-cigar filled with tobacco flake and commonly wrapped in a tendu leaf) (Shekhar 2014, 18). Likewise, Kadamdihi which is an important location within the novel is named after the kadam (burflower-tree, laran, Leichhardt pine) tree. Lowadihi- named after lowa, the fig tree. Sowvendra creates a sense of place by locating the Santhals in a space that imbues the Santhali culture.

In another instance of using elements of nature, Sowvendra traces the meanings of the surnames and their role within the Santhal space. For instance, he says "The paaris or surname, of Somai-haram's gushti (household) is Hansda. The eldest male of this clan was chosen as the majhi of Kadamdihi" (Shekhar 2014, 13). Further, he adds how each paari has its own story of its origin thus etching into the novel the creation stories about the Santhals. "Hansdas, for instance, are said to have hatched from the eggs of the mythical swans, Hans and Hansli, while Murmus are believed to be the kids of the sacred nanny-goat, Murum-Enga. Since all Hansdas are considered to be fellow nestlings, a Hansda man can never marry a Hansda woman. And so it is with others" (Shekhar 2014, 14). It introduces the origin of surnames with mythical or sacred elements.

Sowvendra not only discusses the use of nature in names of villages (dihi) or surnames (paaris), but also traces the life of the Santhals from pre-independence times and embodies the perception of Santhals as the 'other'. In demonstrating the divisions, the camaraderie and animosities that existed between the Santhals and the other communities, Sowvendra highlights the resentment harbored by the Kamar (the blacksmiths) and the Kunkal (the potters) against the Santhals. The culinary and marital choices of the Santhals were cited as primary reasons for their 'impurity' and 'uncleanness'. Despite their own marginalized status, the Kamars and Kunkals were contemptuous of the Santhals because they consumed "cow and pig meat, drank *haandi* (rice-beer) and paura (spirits distilled from the dried

mahua blossom) and practiced polygamy" (Shekhar 2014, 14). The others would refuse to eat or drink in the presence of a Santhal. The Santhals however, ignored this behaviour because of their implicit belief in the fact that it was ultimately their village. At junctures, where they were challenged to the hilt, the Santhals would put up a tenacious resistance, collectively in the manner of Khorda Baskey: "We are the ones who have let you live in this village; we can very well force you to pack up and leave. One more word against our women, children and religion, and see what happens to you all. Don't forget" (Shekhar 2014, 17). Culinary and marital choices have increasingly become matters of contentious public discussions in India. It is thus even within the contemporary Santhal space. However, their past history would show otherwise. For instance, *haandi* is a welcome drink or a regular drink but the others stigmatize it. Sowvendra portrays women drinking *haandi* without any apology, however, he also highlights the shame in Putki for drinking *haandi* without any control. The discrimination based on these choices is highlighted by Sowvendra because these were aspects that were used against the Santhals to dehumanize them at different points in history. Besides the *haandi*, there are other cultural aspects of the indigenous groups that are held up to ridicule and portrayed as being 'unscientific', such as paranormal beliefs.

Paranormal Beliefs

The Santhals believe in animistic practices by following the Sarna religion which is the "worship of nature and the spirits" (Shekhar 2014, 14). The Santhal pantheon is highly accommodative of every aspect that affects human life including the representation of evil. The free will to choose is an important aspect of this pantheon. While some of the Gods profess goodness and peace, some do not. The Gods of the pantheon closely align with the human tendencies and possibilities. The pantheon also reflects the longevity of the tribe as it has existed from ancient times. This section analyzes the animistic practices that exist within the community.

The Gods are part of everyday lives of the Santhals. Rupi attends the annual Buru-Bonga – the Worship of the hill and her occasional visits to the ancient shrine to

Marang-Buru on the top of the hill (Shekhar 2014, 2). Sowvendra highlights the most adored couple of the Sarna pantheon the shrine to Marang-Buru and Jaher-Ayo - the Father and the Mother and their sacred spot in the jaher, the place where the sacrifices are made (Shekhar 2014, 25). In addition to the father and the mother, there are five more shrines – shrine of feminine power and fertility; Five Great Warriors-the Moray-Ko; Sendra-Ko – the Hunters and masculine power; Dharma (duty) (Shekhar 2014, 25-26). The (fifth) shrine of Sima-Bonga was devoid of any embellishments. 'While the other gods represent positive energy, Sima-Bonga symbolizes the negative forces' (Shekhar 2014, 26).

Although Sima Bonga or the Dhonkundra-bhoot is revered along with the other deities, it is not worshipped on regular days and therefore becomes the privileged God (Shekhar 2014, 27). Although this God brings great wealth, it extracts a heavy price for its favors – people who are worshippers of this God suffered from strange illnesses, men become sterile – they cannot sire or bear children (Shekhar 2014, 27). Another aspect related to religion is the practice of black magic and witchcraft by Santhal women. According to Somai Haram, Putki's father, "Santhal men drink *haandi*, Santhal women practice dahni-bidya (black magic) and no one speaks about it" (Shekhar 2014, 37).

Like the God who occupies a place in the Santhal pantheon, the dahni (witch) also seem to form part of the Santhal world. They straddle both the real and the Other world of the paranormal, or so it seems in *Rupi Baskey*. No one questions the existence of dahni-bidya or the dahni's ways. They elicit a sense of fear among people and people seem to believe that they have powers that can bring about destruction. There is retribution in this world for the evil that is perpetuated through dahni-bidya and ultimately it is the choice of each person to follow a certain God. For instance, Naikay's (Rupi's neighbor) daughter Della does not follow her mother's practice, instead she threatens the God with dire consequences. She follows her heart, falls in love with a man, elopes with him. *Rupi Baskey* encounters dahnis from the time of her entry into Khorda and Putki's household as their daughter-in-law. Everyone knows that the Naikay's wife is a dahni and practices black magic and witchcraft, and so does the latter's daughter-in-law. However, they are not ostracized. There is a calculated distance that people maintain but they are part of every ritual and celebration in the village.

In *Rupi Baskey*, the dahnis mingle with Khorda Baskey's household but Rupi is warned about them and their ways. She unwittingly is caught in their spell once, but her general sense of trust makes her a prey to Gurubari, who is Bairam Master's (Sido's colleague and neighbour) wife, and lives as a parasite literally and metaphorically off her family – including her own children. Her deterioration into nearly a sickly invalid is attributed to the evil spell cast by Gurubari. She is also presumably the woman with whom Sido Master is having an affair. The white-haired woman emanating the scent of Jasmine oil appears (only to Rupi) at regular intervals to warn Rupi. Her trips to various doctors from the homeopath to the shaman is a reminder of the influence of another force altogether that has engulfed her into submission. Her fears of various apparitions – the tall man outside her house in the night, the sudden appearance of the white-haired woman coupled with stories of the Majhi's wife who practices witchcraft explores the impact of the belief in the paranormal. Further, her sister-in-law Dulari, Doso's wife practices witchcraft too to decimate her husband's lover. Doso, primarily marries Dulari in order to make her a house-help, batters her and carries on his affair with another woman. Dulari's transformation into the dahni is shown as a step towards empowerment. Her question to Rupi is poignant and a sharp reminder of the violence that she had experienced as Doso's wife. She asserts, "What was mine was being taken away from me. I had to claim it for myself...I had to help myself...If it meant using dahni-bidya, I was ready for that. I had to reclaim what was rightfully mine" (Shekhar 2014, 185).

Further, there is a mention of the beautiful Jugni spirit in Lowadihi, said to cause disease, and who lived under the talay tree (Shekhar 2014, 65). Additionally, Sowvendra portrays one of the Saat- Bohoni, the Seven Sisters - goddesses of ponds and lakes who drag attractive young men down with them into the depths of the pond. Having made them their consorts, they compel them to make love to all the seven sisters. The day after, the man's soulless body emerges from the depths of the pond and floats on its surface (Shekhar 2014, 68-69). These goddesses who form part of the daily legends are embedded in cultural landscapes and people believe them unquestioningly. Thus, there is no distinction between humans, and non-humans including these paranormal beings.

Dreams too find an important part in this relation between humans and the other-worldly experiences. It is hardly a Freudian interpretation of dreams. The dreams that Rupi or any other character sees are an indication of the truth that they cannot see in real life. Dreams become the medium for the characters to understand the diabolic nature of human existence. Rupi or Somai Haram's dreams awaken them to the realities of life. For women who are dahnis, the recourse to evil is almost a weapon to be used during desperate times; some use it to survive and some use it to prosper at others' expense. They too become metaphors for the land and the way land is used or abused. These paranormal beliefs are entrenched within the Santhal space as a part of the community's identity.

Conclusion

Rupi Baskey enabled me to explore the agency and autonomy exercised by the Santhals. By contextualizing Sowvendra within the Santhal space, it was not difficult to examine the autoethnographic elements in the form of personal anecdotes or stories passed down over generations. Retelling these stories in one's own words is presumably liberating and can boost the morale of the community. Sowvendra, although much criticized for his writings, uses every other aspect of the community to showcase the autonomy of the community. *Rupi Baskey* shook a lot of people's complacencies. By centering the Santhals, Sowvendra mainstreams the Santhals by foregrounding the cultural dynamics of their position. It shatters the image of powerless, infantilized subalterns trying to survive within a society.

The 'rolling eyes' of the dahnis can be perceived as metaphors of the greedy gaze of people who wish to devour the rich mineral heritage of Jharkhand. These 'rolling eyes' are also fundamental to the 'mysterious ailment' of Rupi. Gurubari with her rolling eyes extracts an unfair promise from Rupi that the latter will hand over her eldest son to the former. This forcible extraction stands out as a metaphor for the way Santhal land was given away, without any or adequate compensation. This spotlights the injustice that is meted out to Rupi and the Santhal community.

Sowvendra's reimagining of history from the Santhal perspective helps in further bolstering faith in the potential of the Santhals. The cataloguing of historical figures from Jharkhand is an assertion of their prominence. It is a way of paying tribute to them at least now, and rectifying the negligence shown to them earlier. Additionally, the mention of the historical figures from Jharkhand counters the dominant narratives of adulation around some specific leaders.

The physical geography of the place highlights the stories of environmental injustice that is perhaps the unwritten norm. Although Nitra has electricity, there are other areas of darkness in the place. The women of the place using dahni-bidya for killing or sacrificing people or in general harming unsuspecting persons is an indicator of the dangers that lurk in the mining spaces. Black magic is but a metaphor for the morbidities that surround the people. The cultural geography underscores the aspects of the tribe which have only been recorded in books written by anthropologists. Literary writers too can sometimes function as record-keepers of cultures and cultural practices. Both the men and the women drank *haandi* and this information is released in the most matter-of-fact manner. There is no taboo in women 'drinking alcohol'. Similarly, autonomy that women exercised in choosing partners or in engaging in sexual companionship is woven into the narrative to highlight the original culture of the Santhals which allowed women an immense degree of freedom.

The belief in the paranormal is a seamless idea which surprises no one in the world of the Santhals. Black magic, witchcraft and the likes are part of the socio-cultural fabric of the community. The pantheon of Gods of the Sarna religion engender the acceptance of the good and the evil without any dichotomy. After all, it is the freedom of choice that is ascribed to the Santhals and therefore it is a matter of great irony that they were never consulted before their lands were leased away or they were displaced in the name of developing the country. The Santhal community rejects being subalternized in every sphere – historical, geographical, cultural and paranormal beliefs.

The Santhal community has experienced untold misery due to 'rolling eyes' that continues to engage at their land with a colonizers' gaze. Sowvendra, through *Rupi Baskey*, reimagines justice by painting the picture of the Santhals with autonomy

and agency. He patches the unequal narrative of Santhal community through Rupi and her daughter-in-law Rupali, thus creating justice for the community as a whole. Sowvendra's subtlety and restraint in discussing issues pertaining to land and the people endear him to the reading audiences across the world. His straightforward narration has been instrumental in representing the Santhal world from a fresh perspective. Thus, *Rupi Baskey* is Sowvendra's personal tribute to his land, his people, his ancestors and his tribe.

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Cinema and Hindustani Classical Music in the Deccan

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"When it adapts from any other art, be it literature or music, architecture or its absence, the cinema has to submit to it, simultaneously as the cinema demands the submission of all arts. To preserve the dignity of every art that comes together with the other, it has to let those lotus-buds open out like eyelids awakening."

- Shahani (2015)

This writing looks to detail the interaction between abstract ideas and concrete practices associated with making a film on the tabla musician Ustad Nizamuddin Khan while placing the deccani artistic worldview at its heart. The writing also looks to synthesize a relationship between the Buddhist and Marxist frameworks on the nature of reality, to create a suggestion as to where the film as a work of art may locate itself. More importantly this writing is an appeal to filmmakers to understand their social position within society, the filmmaker does not exist independently in society but instead all artistic creations arise through a process of dependent origination which are embedded in their class-caste social circles, philosophical relationship with the mind and external objects, religious affiliations, and ethical factors while making films.

At the start, I would like to highlight two concepts which I hope will explain my approach to making my film, '*Kaifiyat*'. I refer to the terms in use by the Buddhist Dharmakirti of *samanya-laksana*[1] (universal nominal) and *sva-laksana*[2] (unique particular). The reason for bringing these concepts into our discussion is to emphasize the relationship between the mind and external objects[3] and the dialectical unity of such a relationship. In my view the individual and their art should be seen and identified through their unique properties that contain its *samanya-laksana* or the universal nominal characteristic, and to elaborate it further, these two are not posed in a binary but rather in a dialectical unity. Among the various uses Dharmakirti had for these concepts, the most prolific use can be seen in his rejection of the universal nature of the *jatis* in social classification through ontological grounds by suggesting that there was nothing inherent or eternal about properties assigned through *jatis*, he attacked the unreality of such universal nominal concepts[4] over the lived experiences of individuals, that humanity is unique and undifferentiated. Within the realm of writing on aesthetics, György Lukács, states that[5] the "individuality of phenomena (subjectivity) is without any degree of generalization while universality refers to the 'all' and is the ultimate generalization". Only the dynamic-dialectical unity of the two may achieve a category between the two, the category of speciality, 'which contains elements of each' but is a synthesis of these two.

In a manner of speaking the tabla player, Nizamuddin Khan and his son, Kamaluddin, remained rooted in Hindustani classical music with all its influences through sustained economic and sociological interactions with urban centers and smaller courts. Through accompaniment with Kathak dancers, Sufi *pirs*, commercial film music and several other systems of knowledge and practice. In the tabla playing style of Ustad Nizamuddin Khan, we get to hear how these various layers create universal effects of what is considered a tradition. We see how market demands placed an increasing burden on musicians, the system of tabla gharanas *had to* become rigid to pronounce their differences. Yet within these contradictions we see that the art of Nizamuddin and Kamaal remained between the conceptual and sensuous, rational and evocative, objective and subjective.

Historical Progress

Neela Bhagwat while teaching the Gwalior gharana frequently cites the Bhakti metaphor of the Banyan tree, 'the banyan tree is Gwalior [gharana] and from each root spawns a new gharana'. It is this carefully constructed metaphor from where my critical understanding of tradition begins. The banyan tree metaphor does not come from a mystical realm but rather from objective material reality that touches the subjective reality of the people who learn music. It encourages a student of music to; seek a deeper connection with the material reality of music, the changing nature of the social life of musicians, understand the transformations of the term's caste and class, gender in interpersonal and professional relationships, market driven voice-creations that are influenced by political realities, it grounds singing in a series of concrete and abstract forces which always engage the banyan tree as an ever-growing continuous process.

When I first began my research on the film, the word eclectic was used by various senior musicians to describe the tabla style of Nizamuddin's family. By learning tabla styles from different gharanas[6] Nizamuddin and his son had successfully melted the rigid epistemic categories of gharana styles to arrive at a mode of playing that was unique, individuated and yet combined the universal way by which a gharana's tabla had to be played. As I spent time with Kamaluddin he graciously told me the history of his father and grand-father's life, he recited several *gats*[7] and revealed the micro-tonal differences from one gharana style to the other, each perceived transgression he said was a micro tonal change in a tradition that was perceived to be static and unchanging. In further interactions, I got to know that Ustad Nizamuddin had spent decades of his life playing all throughout the Deccan, in that moment the Deccan became the spark that lit up all these various facets of cultural and artistic creations. Perhaps, if Kamaaluddin did not pass away before we could shoot or record him, the film would not have reached the form it did now. What became increasingly clear was that this family of musicians had gathered and been influenced by the innumerable geographical spaces they inhabited by encountering musicians, that is to say, even they could not be distinguished from their social and historical environment.

The early modern and Deccan

It is a tragedy that in the nationalist history taught in schools we look at the early modern era of this geographic space known as the Deccan with great suspicion. We are led to believe it was dominated by a singular force of Muslims who not only invaded but ruled by the sword. This patriarchal mode of history also tells us that Shivaji ushered in a new era of peace by ending 'their' rule through his sheer force. After which a new era of peace was ushered. On the other hand, we have newer interpretations, which problematically, espouse visions of cosmopolitanism in which the Deccani sultanates (Bahmani and successor dynasties) are seen as being led by Persian emigres (Freely switching between Shia-Sunni binaries) and frame the Deccan as a somewhat frontier of the Persianate Cosmopolis[8]. Though this research has increased awareness of social structures, taxation systems, land revenue approaches, and provided integrated views of Bhakti poetry in these centuries, we still commit ourselves to further binaries. In the 20th century, two historians and thinkers of South Asia, the historian, D.D. Kosambi provided an exposition of how there has been a Brahmanical capture of knowledge that was consolidated over centuries of writing. He was able to articulate the failures of nationalistic and traditional Marxist historiography. He was able to do this because he did not uphold a dogmatic understanding of historical materialism, Kosambi's historiography comes alive as it engages with the roots of society across time. Perhaps one of the most unique interpretation of the dialectics of historical materialism in India comes to us through Sharad Patil who frequently layered the revolutionary Buddhist logic of Dignaga onto historical materialism, he shaped it into a dialogic mode known as Sautantrika Marxism[9], the primary interest for Sharad Patil in such a form of Buddhist thought had been able to acknowledge the external reality of objects through the subjective mind, through conscious and unconscious thoughts.. He actively merged the knowledge bases that Phule and Ambedkar had generated, to address the lacunae of caste, *varna* and *jati* in the formulation of class. So any creative work on a film, has to be able to also contain and approach the intermixture of the lived realities of *varna*, *jati*, caste and class of its subjects within it. Perhaps the mightiest challenge to overcome is the unified category of 'Hindu' identity in this writing on history[10]. Though if we stop seeing it as an unchanging object, what is revealed is their constituent forms, so we can even begin to distill the presence of various cults and appreciate the

individuation any of their forms afford to their practitioners, indeed this path offers for further exploration.

My predilection with early modern and medieval forms comes from my guru, Kumar Shahani from whom I have learned how to approach filmmaking, in a thorough pedagogical relationship. In different ways, Pier Paolo Pasolini and Sergei Parajanov who envisioned modern and classical myths, legends and folktales in their films always remain in my mind. In Pasolini's earlier films we see an exploration of the proletariat lives of Rome, Naples etc. Even as he worked towards interpreting myths, epic and early modern literature through an internationalist framework to his selections in music, textile and location. Parajanov's films gave us insights into the culture of the Caucasus region that we may never see again, though he ossified his filmmaking into tableaux vivants. So as I understood it, a filmmaker or artist, engaging in making films can only do so by transforming historical, social and cultural traditions from the past and grounding them in the present time and space. It means that interpreting significant phenomena of social reality such as myths and legends, is something art can never give up.

The Deccan and its artistic forms fall in between most of the conventional historical approaches of what is considered North Indian and Carnatic music. While never drawing comparisons, the Deccan allowed me to look at one book of songs known as the *Kitab-i-Nauras*, which by its name is bent towards Rasa theory. The work elaborately draws from a wide array of metaphors from the region, while continuously embedding it within its early modern form, it actively looks to synthesize Shaivite, Sufi and other forms of daily life. It has been remarked that the compositions are an intermediary between the Dhrupad form and the Khayal form, this can be found in the content of the music. It is in the lyrics that we observe an affiliation with Sufi-Bhakti poetics as we see the number of songs dedicated to the beloved. Forms like the *chakki-nama* and the *charkha-nama* are prominent in the region, even till date, they reveal the proximity between similar works in Marathi or Kannada, which feel closer to achieving unity when we see it as part of a continuous landscape[11]. The beloved that Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II calls out to is not exactly the same as the beloved of Bulleh Shah, it is different and individuated yet a part of a universal approach towards the guru, but to navigate it in the visual means an engagement with the Deccani painting form of the Yogini

which by its Shaivite leanings mixed and merged aristocratic/semi-feudal forms of adornment, it detailed states of asceticism, the musculatre of the musician, the Yogini is not merely the female ascetic, and so a moment in the film means exploring the elusive words of the mazjub, Bahri of Gogi who speaks of the divine in the largest mountains and the smallest leaves and if I wish to explore it further then I may attempt to decipher the spatio-temporal rhythms of the architecture of those years, which lie in ruins presently, and when that sequence ends there are words of Eknath's Bhakti offering a stringent critique of the ontological position of the divine itself, which cannot be filmed for beauty and pure pleasure but continues its plunge into the material reality of the present of Nizamuddin and his family, the severe degradation of a majority of Muslim musicians in a post-independence phase must be shown, in a form that does not beautify their brutalisation. It must show the instrument maker and his labour involved, the worship of the divine in the contemporary, all the while attempting to raise questions of what the meaning of tradition and the creation and destruction energies of every moment in time is. All the while maintaining a dialectical relationship between image and sound, coming close through approximations like our srutis but never falling subservient to each other. That such culture cannot be replicated to appear 'authentic' but that these aspects are transformed and reworked through visual elements, gestures, facial expressions, intonations, pauses, all these movements of the nervous system provide a gateway to individuation at every given moment. Nizamuddin's relentless devotion to this restlessness in rhythm is on full display as he continually elongates this moment of *Sama* that he has generated in his listeners and in himself. That madness had to affect the very fabric of the film. Even as these sparks of great creativity made by Nizamuddin had increasingly rendered the women in his family completely mute to their own feelings. All this while I am constantly reminded of my own position as an outsider to these places, due to differences in religion and caste-class. I was raised as a catholic in Bombay, my family comes from a line of agriculturalists and horticulturalists from South Canara.

Pramana and Film

Before I conclude this writing, I wish to ask the question if the work of art can produce a distinct cognitive episode of knowledge in the viewer. The short answer I believe in is yes, it can. I do not wish to create a methodology, but I wish to locate this process in Lukács's specialty[12] in aesthetics along the concept of *pramana*. His term of the speciality can be layered with the usage of the term, *pramana*. Though the Buddhist writing on pramana does not directly refer to aesthetics, if we accept that a work of art falls under the category of perception or inference then we can carry this suggestion further. I refer to the Buddhists Santaraksita and Kamalasila who follow in the *pramana* tradition[13] of Dharmakirti[14], and state that, 'any cognitive episode does not differ from the episode itself'. That this *pramana* is a 'trustworthy awareness that reveals or makes known a previously unknown object'[15]. I believe, this episode of knowledge is not different from reality around us, the film or work of art is borne from this reflection of the dialectical unity of the subjective and objective world. In his work on rasa theory, James D. Reich shows us how in certain thinkers who wrote on rasa, the conception of rasa finds expression in differing approaches to the creation of rasa, in the non-dual Vedanta aesthetics of Bhatta Nayaka the subjective and the objective worlds coalesce into each other rendering the work of art into a blissful and actionless awareness in the one who perceives it. In the Shaivite monist Abhinavagupta, there is an emphasis on a deeper subjectivity such as the way in which Shiva actively apprehends himself, though an objective reality is not excluded from this.

I do not wish to carry this as a theoretical discussion any further, for only if the theoretical can be transformed in the act of making the film at every moment in time, can it be of any use. The cognitive episode of knowledge and by extension this aesthetic category of speciality may offer us a deeper reflection of this world around us, and that to be free is not to be bound to only through aesthetic detachment, pleasure or bliss, but that it may be able to provide a 'shock'[16] by which humanity could be spurred on to make our own history.

To sum up, at every moment and at every point of interaction between any human beings, traditions are transformed and cease to be eternal or permanent. One of the main contentions in the creation of the appearance of an unchanging

tradition is the reliance of writers and practitioners who rely on abstractionism and idealism (even aided by the subjective idealists) who deliberately mystify the process of the creation and the reception of art. As the smallest of examples, the form of Sufism and Bhakti that we encounter around us dependently arise from diverse sources themselves, so they evade the traditional classification of 'religion' and at their most radical are not essentialized forms, which can be easily placed into such distinct categories. These two concepts are just drops in the ocean of our culture which continues to echo throughout our spaces around us. Lastly, any nuanced approach towards making films must not give up on interpreting myths and legends in our time. As suggested, if films can be looked as episodes of knowledge and as a category of speciality, we may widen the question on filmmaking and its theoretical approaches. Finally, as I bring this commentary to a close, I offer a thought from the Buddhists Santaraksita and Kamalasila,

"*Only knowledge which offers liberation through the ability to teach everyone that the highest good for all sentient beings and not just for the self alone is the fundamental of life.*"[17]

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Notes

1. "sāmānya-lakṣaṇa" from Keown (2004)

2. I refer to the essay by Yoshimizu Chizuko (2004) for a clearer definition of Svalaksana.

3. Lukács's primary contention for all philosophy and by extension, work of art.

4. See Eltschinger (2012)

5. See Kiralyfalvi (1975)

6. I treat Gharanas as varying epistemic modes of knowledge within music, popular approaches with gharanas in vocalism advocate for a purity in their singers, while in the tabla players (and perhaps broadly instruments) there has been greater intermixture.

7. A sequence of tabla vocabulary, which are learned through vocal recitation and played on the tabla

8. For example, newer scholarship on the Deccan intends to make the connection with Iran prominent. Example, Eaton's latest writing (2018)

9. From Shetye (2010)

10. From recent writing particularly by Dwivedi, Mohan and Reghu (2021)

11. See Eaton, 1974.

12. As Lukács observes, "The dynamic-dialectical unity of the two is achieved in the category of specialty, which contains elements of each, and in a certain sense, especially as a means of artistic reflection, is superior to both. Moreover, specialty, when represented in a finished, individual work of art, is a category independent of both universality and individuality." Quote from Kiralyfalvi pp. 74 (1975)

13. Though not exclusively, prominently the Buddhists held inference and perception as pramana.

14. To quote Reich "Dharmakirti presents a universe composed of discrete, unique, atomic entities, each of which flashes into and out of existence instantaneously, leaving behind another discrete, unique entity in its place. These unique entities bear no real relationship to each other except for causal relationships and relationships of identity—any other ostensible relationship is explained as nothing, but a concept imposed onto reality. One consequence of this view is that perception is the only real contact we can have with reality" (2016)

15. McClintock notes that "Naiyayikas, Vaisesikas, Samkhyas, and Bhatta Mimamakas, all of whom generally regard the pramana, or means of determining that a particular cognitive episode is an instance of indubitable knowledge, as distinct from the resultant instance or action of indubitable knowing (the pramiti)." (2010)

16. I refer to the concept of Sahvega (Pali)/Samvega (Sanskrit), which is a layered word and would need a longer writing to explore. For a nearest possible approximation, I refer to Rotman's use of the term from his book Thus Have I Seen: Visualizing Faith in Early Indian Buddhism (2008)

17. From McClintock (2010)

Reading Sambhaji Bhagat's Bhim Geet

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Dalit assertion in contemporary India manifested itself in political and cultural realms in the opening sentence-in a different manner. In the cultural realm a variety of texts emerged, which were often categorised as protest literature. These narratives broadly challenged Hindu nationalism, which sought to define Indian society as essentially a Hindu society; attacked Hinduism by arguing that it was not the religion and culture of the majority; and rejected the forceful imposition. These narratives exposed the limitations of the Nehruvian model of development, which had created a welfare state with an industrial base with established scientific and technological institutions along with the establishment of the Indian University system. This framework defined as brahmanic socialism had limited reforms for working class, and socialism implied planning and management and 'public sector. . .with statism' (Omvedt 2011,70).

The Hindu rate of growth in the 1960s with a brahmin dominated state apparatus witnessed a slowdown of the economy, and new social movements were triggered by the Naxalite revolt in 1967 that mobilized many subaltern groups, of which Dalits were one. However, the institutionalization of the democratic process, represented through the establishment of institutions of liberal democracy, along with successful land reform legislations and execution of rural development programmes, resulted in the rise of middle-level agrarian caste communities, who also participated in electoral politics. The period also saw the rise of political

parties that mobilized Dalits and low-caste groups in electoral politics. This partly resulted in 'power being transferred in a peaceful manner from upper-caste elite to various subaltern groups' (Nilsen and Roy 2015,3). However, from the 1980s, an era of neo-liberalism, globalisation and privatization commenced. This period witnessed phenomenal growth in multiple sectors in an ever-expanding global economy, with wealth being concentrated in a few pockets. This development model defined by the New Economic Policy further exacerbated existing inequalities and disenfranchised peasants, Adivasis and Dalits.

The relationship between the Indian state and subaltern politics was defined by 'the combined impact of development strategies that are increasingly centered on neoliberal forms of empowerment' (2015,3) and the 'introduction of rights based legislation, to protect civil liberties and social entitlements' (2015,4). This in turn reconfigured the encounter between the Indian state and India's marginalized, to create the 'imagined space' (2015,4) within which negotiations between the marginalised communities and the Indian state took place. YouTube videos featuring Sambhaji Bhagat's Bhim Geet, which have been analysed in this essay belong to this imagined space. This paper will argue that Sambhaji Bhagat's Bhim Geet embodies oppositional narratives that have contributed to create a Dalit counter public sphere, which is part of the multi-dimensional Dalit movement, where struggles against humiliation, oppression, exclusion and discrimination have emerged as part of the complex process of subaltern struggles against hegemonic projects that have defined the Indian state.

Sambhaji Bhagat's Bhim Geet draws upon the tradition of the popular, which include forms and practices, located in the social and cultural conditions of the Dalits. These cultural traditions were often kept out of the narrative of national culture. Rege, following Stuart Hall, has defined these cultural practices as popular practices which are 'neither just traditions of resistance nor just forms on which the bourgeois forms are superimposed' (Rege 2002,1040). They are, as Rege argues at 'once emancipatory and imprisoning, containing and resisting' (2002,1040). The roots of this performance can be traced back to the tradition of Ambedkari Jalsas; jalsa, which was the tamasha of the lower caste. Mapping the transformation of jalsa to Ambedkarite Jalsas is tracing the history of 'cultural Renaissance led by Jyotiba Phule' (Prakash 2019, 75); the establishment

of Satya Shodhak Samaj and the manner in which jalsas were transformed to communicate debates in Marathi newspapers about untouchability, the plight of peasants and oppression of women. The audience now included women who were not allowed in the traditional tamasha. The traditional content was altered and the 'reform character was represented in terms of form and content' (Rege 2002,1044):

> The content was altered such that the traditional gan (offering to Ganesha) was replaced with a verse in praise of the Creator; the gavlan (the traditional dialogue between Krishna and the milkmaids) was transformed into an encounter of the non-brahmin hero with the daughter of the brahmin priest of the village. This became the mode of critiquing brahminical practices. The key element of this jalsa was the vag (the spontaneous theatre) which was instructive – in praise of modern science and education and was built around the mockery of oppressive religious practices (2002, 1044).

Ambedkarite Jalsas were a new genre located in the tradition of shahiri and were prevalent in the period 1920 to 1956 (Rege 2002). Their history can be traced to 1931, when in response to Dr Ambedkar's call to artists within the Dalit community to use their art to create anti-caste awareness, Bhinrao Kardak and his group formed the Shahiri Jalsa in Mumbai, and this marked the transition of Dalit tamasha and folk art into Ambedkarite Jalsa (Maitreya 2019). These Jalsas continued with the agenda of opposing caste-based oppression and discrimination. There was a shift from entertainment to politics, and women performers were excluded. These performances can be seen as the site of the articulation of values and meanings of subaltern movements, which contested their reception as folk performances associated with the bourgeois notion of aesthetics and their definition as 'traditional theatre' (Prakash 2019,76). Official Indian culture has been defined by the cultural expression of upper castes and in this situation creative performances by subordinate castes is defined in 'replication and not innovation' (2019,21). However, subaltern communities possess an autonomous culture that is independent of the Brahmanic worldview. These performances are part of the caste-system and they function as a 'repository of memories and histories of a particular caste' (2019,21).

Sambhaji Bhagat is described as a lokshahir, a tradition of Maharashtra's fabled people's poet, a lokshahir is a master of the tamasha; a folk form. A renowned Dalit activist and a balladeer, he has re-created traditional Dalit music and has

infused it with revolutionary ideas. He founded the Vidrohi Shahiri Jalsa in 2004, and performs to raise democratic consciousness. He has inherited this tradition from Annabhau Sathe and Amar Sheikh, two well-known Dalit balladeers. The YouTube videos featuring Bhagat's Bhim Geet herald the alternative framework of songs in his provocative refrain, 'We are here not to entertain you, but to disturb you', and therefore he was there not to 'sing a song, but sing a thought'. The four YouTube videos which will be analysed in the article are

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0QETSCliRk&t=173s;
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XatQyVi6-1k&t=296s;
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L0QfvGWeeVQ;
and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jYJtr7dUEiw&t=119s.

They are performances which were performed in auditoriums except for https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L0QfvGWeeVQ which feature the songs composed by Sambhaji Bhagat for the movie Court(2015).

Throughout the performances, Bhagat is engaged in a dialogue with his audience, who are made aware of the political economy of these performances and the aesthetic registers which are defined by anti-caste movements. Inspired by Ambedkarite philosophy, Bhagat exhorts the audience, whom he identifies as the educated elites, to expand their cultural field and to interrogate their cultural elitism. The songs are affective in their meaning and message. They are composed in Hindi and Marathi, and are categorised as protest songs to create a 'public conscience'. 'Public conscience' was explained by Dr Ambedkar as the 'conscience which becomes agitated at every wrong, no matter who is the sufferer and it means that everybody whether he suffers that particular wrong or not, is prepared to join him in order to get him relieved' (Teltumbde 2018, 15).

The compositions emerge as shared space for emancipation and the canvas is contemporary India marked by the rise of religious fundamentalism, growing intolerance as was evident in the brutal assassination of rationalists like Narendra Dabholkar, MM Kalburgi and Govind Pansare, growing violence against minorities, rise of crony capitalism, entrenched poverty, a political class who are not sensitive towards their own constituencies, agrarian crises looming large in

the country side, Hindu nationalism masquerading as patriotism, the agenda of development and governance that resulted in disenfranchising the adivasis and farmers through land acquisition, the withdrawal of welfare state in the face of growing global capitalism, environmental degradation and the failure of democratic revolution.

A different chord is struck with songs that pay tribute to Dr Ambedkar's role in creating new Dalit personhood, defined by untouchability that challenged the hegemony of the Hindu community. The larger ideological milieu of the songs is the cultural space located within the Dalit movement, where from a Dalit perspective an understanding of subalternity is not confined to caste-identity paradigm, but an expansive framework of 'exclusion, domination and marginality in their various forms' (Nilsen and Roy 2015,12). The song titled '*They are the friends of Hitler*' is one of the iconic songs of Bhagat and brings out the underlying politics that defines his oeuvre:

They are the friends of Hitler
Leading a procession of corpses
They do not talk about humanity
They only enquire about your caste and religion
Know their true selves
Be wary of them, O brother
Your blunders will cost you heavily
They are seen in jumbo jets
Controlling the Internet
We are sitting on empty stomach
We are sitting at factory gates
They act, we vote
They have done their manipulation
We have done our voting.
(author's translation)

The larger background of Bhagat's Bhim Geet is the different stages of the Dalit movement and its visions and the interpretation of caste related to power and culture followed by an understanding of the Dalit, not confined to identity. The

next section will map this journey and, in the process, try to identify some of the political-cultural formulations heard in Bhagat's songs.

The changing contours of Dalit space in recent times has been marked by communication and tensions amongst Dalit activists, daily interactions, sporadic meetings, conferences, festivals to mark Ambedkar's birth and death anniversary, social websites and publications that have enriched and defined ideas about Dalit identity 'disassociated from an ascribed Hindu identity, the Hindu community and Hindu values' (Hartmann 2009, 227). This space has been defined by various anti-caste movements that challenged caste bound exploitation to contemporary Dalit assertion. In western India, Dalit mobilization began with Jyotiba Phule (1827-1890), who founded the Satyashodak Samaj and he presented the theory of Aryan invasion, where the low caste were the ethnic groups who were the inheritors of 'antiquarian golden age and whose culture was therefore distinct from that of the Hindu society' (Jaffrelot 2012, 83), and tried to unite the Shudras and Atishudras.

The Non-Brahmin Movement spread to Southern India, where it was led by Iyothee Thass, who argued that lower castes were the original inhabitants of India. Periyar valorized a non-Aryan identity. These movements were united in the belief of the notion of autochthony and low-caste people were united on the basis of an identity that harked back to a glorious past. This alternative identity as sons of the soil helped them to challenge their inferior position within the caste system. However, the caste system was rigid, and was marked by competition amongst various jatis and various caste group leaders tried to build a support base by trying to mobilize all jatis under one umbrella. As Jaffrelot has observed, 'democratisation of the political arena had already accompanied the ethnicisation of caste' (2012,86). The analysis of the caste system by Dr. Ambedkar provided the taxonomy of an emancipatory vision. He denied the racial construction of caste and viewed all varnas as impure and his analysis of inequality in a caste-based society was founded on the concept of graded inequality:

> In a system of graded inequality there are the highest (the Brahmins). Below the highest are the higher (the Kshatriya). Below the higher are those who are high (Vaishya). Below the high are the low (Shudras) and below the low are those who are lower (the Untouchables). All have a grievance against the highest and would like to bring about their downfall. But they will not combine. The higher is anxious to get rid of the highest but does not wish to combine with the high, the low

> and the lower lest they should reach his level and be his equal. The high wants to overthrow the higher that is above him but does not want to join hands with the low and the lower, lest they should rise to his status and become equal to him in rank. The low is anxious to pull down the highest, the higher and the high but he would not make a common cause with the lower for fear of the lower gaining a higher status and becoming his equal. In the system of graded inequality there is no such class as completely unprivileged class except the one which is at the base of the social pyramid. The privileges of the rest are graded. Even the low is a privileged class as compared with the lower. Each class being privileged, every class is interested in maintaining the system (2012, 90).

Ambedkar addressed the division of Untouchables into many jatis and coined 'Dalit' (the broken men) as a common identity, and infused Dalit with a 'sense of an indigenous, ethnic identity and a religious affiliation to Buddhism' (2012: 90). He tried to unite the peasants, workers and the Untouchables. His 'position on the caste question is one of confrontation as opposed to Gandhiji's position of accommodation' (Zelliot quoted in Pai 2013,19,) and therefore he opposed the Indian National Congress as controlled by the upper caste and the capitalist, and 'sought to create an alternative political front that would represent a kind of left-Dalit unity with a core base of workers, middle castes and peasants' (Omvedt 1994, 13).

Post-independence, this space was defined by the rise of the Republican Party of India(RPI) in 1957 and later by the rise of the Dalit Panther in 1972. The RPI continued to take up class and caste issues and form a broad base. However, the rise of factionalism saw the growth of radical alternatives like the Dalit Panthers and the Dalit Sahitya. Various narratives begin to define the space, where the Dalit Panthers left a rich legacy of literature and sought to 'universalise the Dalit identity as proletarian experience' (Omvedt 2011,77). They brought together the economic exploitation and the cultural oppression of class and caste and the process of proletarianization of Dalit identity resulted in the spread of a kind of 'Dalit consciousness'. The rise of the Bahujan Samaj Party in 1984 is another trajectory that marked the inception of the Ambedkarite movement-turned-party, and sought to capture state power to rectify historical wrongs and establish a new social and political order from above through social engineering.

The implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations in 1990, where 27 per cent reservation of seats for Other Backward Castes in public sector employment resulted in the re-surfacing of caste in the public domain, was marked by nationwide protests of upper caste students around issues of merit, efficiency and national interest. Theorization about caste underwent a change to challenge the existing notion of Nehruvian modernity and the 'universal-normative position of "castelessness"' (Deshpande 2014, 407). This led to the rediscovery of Dr. Ambedkar as a pan-Indian figure and 'gave rise to a new language in Indian politics and Dalits and OBC were the agents of this transformation' (Tharu and Satyanarayana 2011,5). The reconfiguration of caste brought out the power in caste. Caste was no longer a relic of the pre-modern binary of purity-pollution, based on hierarchy, and specific to Hinduism. Caste issues were no longer the problem of lower castes only, and the dominance of uppercaste groups in perpetuating caste-based discrimination was investigated. Thus, the anthropological notion of caste, which had informed state policies through education, development and administrative policies to make India secular and modern was contested and caste was now invoked as the sign of 'solidarity, fraternity, pride, self-respect, assertion and unity' (2011, 13):

Relocated thus in the domain of modernity, caste is reconfigured as a contemporary form of power. It structures social relations and therefore also state action. It works in renewed and updated forms in modern contexts and institutions. This history of caste is part of the history of modern India. The experience of the dominant castes– their authority, visibility, power, economic presence- as well that of the lower castes- their subordination, oppression, invisibility, and economic and political marginalization- is a modern phenomenon. (2011,11).

The critique of the unmarked secular citizenship followed the critique of 'caste, power and privilege' (2011, 11) and a shift in understanding of caste as merely a vulnerability and disadvantage. The unmarked secular citizen was the norm and governed the 'foundations of modern institutions- law, education, knowledge forms, the arts, public culture- it is also the principal modality through which these institutions practice caste" (2011,11). Anti-caste movements, which followed the Mandal agitation and the massacre of Dalits, brought out the importance of the idea of caste as a social reality and the truncated modernity of the Indian

state. Dalit leadership and emerging Dalit identity mentioned above challenged the absence of Dalit worlds not only in the political sphere but also in the cultural and literary sphere. Dalit assertion mentioned at the start of this discussion was manifested in the reconfiguration of caste, and Dalit identity which emerged in the cultural arena was a new identity of 'self-assertion and pride' (2011, 13):

> . . . This caste identity, Dalit writers have argued, captures Dalit community life in urban as well as rural settings. It recovers and valorizes histories of specific caste leaders and reaffirms a range of Dalit cultural and religious practices. In these arguments and narratives, caste acquires a new meaning as the "social, economic and cultural capital" of a community. Such political identities also form the basis for determining access to resources and entitlement to rights in a modern democracy. While for the upper castes, caste enables social dominance and hegemonic power, subordinated castes rework caste to affirm the solidarity of a community, regain a world and affirm self-possession and confidence. Caste is now a conceptual formation that may be employed to theorize prestige, arrogance, privilege, dignity and power of social groups in India. It is articulated as a political question aimed at changing the existing equations of power (2011, 13-14).

The reconfiguration of caste identity to interrogate equations of power entrenched in modern democracy is one of the dominant themes in Bhagat's songs.

The existing power equations in the prevailing techno-bureaucrat state apparatuses was manifested in social and political elitism, which defined not only political process but also values, well-being and self-fashioning. A critique of growing economic disparities fueled by neoliberal economic policies, growing commodification, state withdrawing from social sector spending and the emergence of a system of exclusion marked by castelessness define the songs. The songs are an intervention in the long-established histories of accumulation by the dominant elite classes and point to the emergence of the politics of assertion by subaltern communities. A pervasive theme that is heard, is the impact of the elitism of traditional caste-capital, whichmanifested itself in terms of access to higher education, professional mobility and shaping formal democratic processes. This caste capital manifests itself as embodied cultural capital, which has been analysed by Bourdieu as the 'accumulated effects of family and class history that become integral to a person' (Subramanian 2019: 40), and functions as symbolic capital.

This privilege allows the member of the upper–caste to embrace modernity and gives them claim to a unique form of self-fashioning as 'subjects with sincere commitments to universalistic ideals of equality, democracy, and rationality' (2019,41). This vision governed the Nehruvian project of nation-building by the native elites who, according to Sudipta Kaviraj, did not speak the vocabulary of the subaltern communities. The songs critique the elitism represented in a postcolonial state that came to be defined by this elite discourse of governance and development schemes. There are repeated references in the song to farmers' suicides, point to a model of development, which 'implied a linear path, directed toward a goal, or a series of goals separated by stages. It implies the fixing of priorities between long-run and short-run goals and conscious choice between alternative paths' (Ram 2011,190).

The impact of growing corporate elite class, their forays in electoral politics and their influence in setting state agendas that had resulted in the rise of 'a hybrid system of political and economic governance which combine elements of redistributive, market, predatory, and democratic logics' (Lucia Michelittu 2017 quoted in Jodhka and Naudet 2019, 16) and its impact on ordinary Dalit lives has been a repeated motif in Bhagat's songs. This projection of subalternity marks a shift in the understanding of Dalit oppression beyond the axis of religio-cultural framework to the proletariat experience of the Dalit. Dr. Ambedkar 'had portrayed caste society as an involuted class formation' (Rao 2011, 102). Bhagat's songs reclaim Dr Ambedkar's vision of liberation, which involved economic and cultural struggle and therefore tried to unite the Dalits, the peasants and the workers against the Brahmin-bourgeois Congress' (Omvedt 2011, 54).

The songs celebrate a certain kind of non-bourgeois subaltern citizen culture, which lay bare the statist manner in which the citizen subject was constituted, and propose a notion of citizenship beyond the formal legal framework of the Constitution. Post-independence, the Indian state attempted to constitutionally address caste imbalances through the principles of freedom, justice and equality. The notion of citizenship as a member of a national political community was incorporated in the Constitution of India. This concept tried to invert oppressive structures simultaneously at two levels: against a hierarchically organised

scheme of social relations marked by ascriptive inequalities; and the dominance-subordination relationship between the coloniser and the colonised.

The nation-state was based on the principles of 'self-determination, sovereignty and citizenship' (Roy 2005, 80), and for the larger masses it implied embracing their new political identity as citizens with equal rights. The vision of citizenship was influenced by the nationalist anti-colonial struggle that reflected demands for greater participation in governance and carried out a significant experiment for an alternative modern state through Gandhiji's non-violent and non-cooperation movement. The native elites who were at the forefront of the struggle wanted to present the struggle as a harmonious aspiration of the people as a whole. The old structures of feudal-patriarchal-Brahminical structures were not contested (Roy 2005). Gopal Guru's observation about the silence of the traditional elite, about caste based humiliation point to the internally conservative and externally radical nature of the struggle (Guru 2009,4), where the 'political' was privileged over the social. The elite bourgeois distanced themselves from the peasants and the subaltern classes. The paradox continued to define the nation, where every citizen was deemed equal and constitutional equality was promised, effacing hierarchical inequalities and masking differences of gender, caste and culture. The Dalit voice emerges as a symbol of change, and challenges the space of dominant nationalism, 'a domain of enforcing domination over subaltern social groups such as lower castes, women and marginal linguistic regions by national elite' (Pandian 2002,1736).

It is in this context that Bhagat's songs invoke Dr. Ambedkar as the new lawgiver, who enumerates a new jurisprudence enshrined in the Constitution, which rendered Dalits as political constituency. However, the songs talk about the failed project of social equality, which was coterminous with political equality. The withholding of 'sociality was the coercive force keeping the caste system together' (Rao 2011, 103), and 'violence structured the social relations between untouchables and caste Hindus and justified their degradation as well as their separation from other castes' (2011, 104). Anand Teltumbde points to the contradiction where, even though the 'Constitution helmed by Babasaheb Ambedkar created a republic that repudiates caste, in reality the republic of India has been constructed on the foundation of caste' (Teltumbde 2018, 20). Therefore, although the Constitution

has outlawed untouchability, the lawmakers have 'skillfully consecrated caste which is the source of untouchability' (2018 ,20). The songs are embedded in a vision of humanity and perhaps speak of the notion of citizenship 'as a function of "responsible" participation' (Roy 2005,201):

> Responsible participation would manifest itself in diverse social situations, viz., how citizens view or act amidst potentially competing forms of national, regional, ethnic, or religious identities; their ability to tolerate and work together with others who are different from themselves; their desire to participate in the political process in order to promote the public good and hold political authorities accountable;...Such citizenship qualities . . . make a democracy stable and governable.(2005:201)

Bhagat's powerful articulations share some of the features of Dalit literature and are therefore marked by a powerful manifestation of Dalit Chetna, which is a pivotal feature of this body of literature. This oppositional consciousness has been defined by Muktibodh in the essay titled 'What is Dalit Literature' to understand the radical potential of Dalit literature:

> Dalit literature is the literature produced by the Dalit consciousness. Human freedom is the inspiration behind it. That is its implied value. The nature of this literature consists in a rebellion against the suppression and humiliation suffered by the Dalits in the past and even in the present in the framework of varna system. A Dalit sensibility seeks to bring about compatible changes in the social consciousness, it is rebellious as well as fundamentally optimistic and revolutionary. (Muktibodh 1992,267)

The oppositional consciousness cannot be defined in a single register. While sharing the space created by Dalit literature, the songs cannot be read as 'untouchable documents of subaltern experience' (Brueck 2017,7). They talk about the need for a radical and inclusive politics followed by engagement with issues of visibility and invisibility, hegemony and marginalization, and articulation and silence. The songs are revolutionary and often privilege Dalit cultural idiom, which is invisible in dominant cultural spheres. Bhagat, in the course of his performances has defined them as performances of the sons of the soil, the toiling masses, and draws attention to his diction and phrases and the need for different aesthetic standards which cannot be judged by the cultivated language of cultured people. This rebellion defies an essentialist understanding, and the 'innovative narrative

styles of resistance' (2017, 8) encountered in the songs call for understanding the 'interstices of Dalit activism, "consciousness", and literary expression' (2017,8).

The songs constitute the Dalit counterpublic sphere defined as the site 'for the construction of alternative and oppositional interpretations of culture and identity' (2017,26). Nancy Fraser in her essay 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Critique of Actually Existing Democracy' (1990) proposes the concept of multiple publics and revisits Habermas's singular concept of liberal bourgeois public sphere, which was constituted by exclusions in stratified societies and failed to provide opportunity of participation to subordinate groups. Hence, subordinate groups deliberate about their situation in their own subaltern counterpublics and challenge the inclusive character of this space:

> . . . history records that members of subordinated social groups – women, workers, peoples of colour, and gays and lesbians – repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute alternative publics. I propose to call these subaltern counterpublics in order to signal that they are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs. (Fraser 1990,67)

These spaces promote the ideal of participatory parity and have a dual character:

> . . . in stratified societies, subaltern counterpublics have a dual character. On the one hand they function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment; on the other hand, they also function as bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics. It is precisely in the dialectic between these two functions that their emancipatory potential resides. This dialectic enables subaltern counterpublics partially to offset, although not wholly to eradicate, the unjust participatory privileges enjoyed by members of dominant social groups in stratified societies. (1990: 68)

Sambhaji Bhagat's Bhim Geet are a part of an expansive Dalit counterpublic sphere; they spell out an anti-caste cultural oppositional agency that moves away from an essentialist understanding of caste as identity to inscribe a sense of solidarity amongst subaltern constituencies in the era of globalisation.

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Burning Languages: Aesthetics and Politics in the Poetry of Namdeo Dhasal

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I walk out of murders and riots
I fall out of smouldering biographies
I sleep on a bed of burning languages
- Dilip Chitre (1980)

The publication of Golpitha (1972), a slim collection of Marathi poems, marked the emergence of a stunningly new poetic voice. Its author, Namdeo Dhasal (1949-2014), was a young, working-class, Dalit denizen of Mumbai's underworld, whose poetry created shock-waves in the domain of culture; even as Dalit Panther, a militant activist organisation which he co-founded in the same year, shook up the political sphere. Three years later, avant garde French philosophers, Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) and Felix Guattari (1930-1992) published *Kafka - Toward a Minor Literature* (1975). As the duo famously claimed, 'There is nothing that is major or revolutionary except the minor' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2003: 26).

Dhasal's poetic practice marked a radical rupture in the Marathi poets' quest for modernity in the post-Independence era. I seek to read it through the conceptual lenses forged by Deleuze and Guattari. The aim is to explore the poetics and politics of Dhasal's oeuvre by placing it in a broader literary and political landscape, and by scrutinising it in terms of the primary characteristics of 'minor literature' adumbrated by the two French thinkers.

Deleuze and Guattari define a minor literature as one that a minority constructs within a major language; for example, the Jewish literature of Warsaw and Prague. It involves the use of a language affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialisation, such as Prague German for the Jews or English for the African Americans. Minor literature establishes a necessary and explicit connection between individual concerns (like the family) and larger power formations: commercial, economic, bureaucratic and juridical. It reveals a collective, even revolutionary orientation and enunciation geared to the generation of an alternative community and consciousness.

Namdeo Dhasal wrote in his mother tongue, Marathi – the official language of Maharashtra with a millennium-long, rich literary tradition – which has over 80 million speakers, and is among the 20 most widely spoken languages in the world. Despite its multicultural heritage, the territory of modern Marathi literature, and of poetry in particular, bore the strong impress of an upper-caste, bourgeois life-world. Consequently, mainstream literary Marathi was in a sense a 'paper language' to Dhasal as Prague German was to Kafka– an artificial language sundered from the masses. While Kafka accepted the 'poverty' of the inherited language, Dhasal infused into Marathi poetry a deeply unsettling diction and register springing from and bodying forth his teeming, polyglot, subaltern milieu. Hence his startling assertion: "I am a venereal sore in the private part of language" ('Kraurya'/GB/64; ND/100).

Dhasal's deterritorialising aesthetics drew nourishment from a variety of literary sources including the work of medieval Marathi saint-poets, indigenous orature as well as modernist poetry from the world over, and the small but significant corpus produced by older confreres like Narayan Surve (1926-2010), a poet of the proletariat, and the bohemian experimentalist Manohar Oak (1933-1993). In his minoritarian verse, Marathi poetry lost the measured cadences of conventional poetic practice that lulled the reader into a blissful stupor; instead, it 'stuttered' a la Deleuze (1997), unravelling the syntax of social domination:

> Their orthodox pity is no taller than a Falkland Road pimp
> It's true, they haven't raised any ceremonial tent for us in the sky
> After all, they are the feudal lords; they've locked all light in their vault

In this lowered life imposed on us, not even a pavement belongs to us
('Tyanchi Sanatan Daya'/G/1; ND/47)

Golpitha is dedicated to "all the movements and currents of thought, big or small, which seek to blast the exploitative system that deprives the ordinary person of power, wealth and dignity". Quite in keeping with the spirit of this dedication, a critical concern with the political informs and illuminates even the most intimate moments in Dhasal's poetry. A poem containing a son's poignant meditation on the life and death of his father, who was a stonemason, culminates in a cry of strident rebellion against the society that had condemned him to unremitting toil:

Stonemasons impart dreams to stones
I light sparklers
It is bad form to peer into one's father's life
But that's just what I do
And rummage through its nooks and crannies
(...)
Stonemasons dissolve stones into their blood
I carry stones
Stonemasons build a house of stone
I break a head with a stone
('Bap, Vadari ani Me...Yanchi Kavita'/G/37)

Several poems express great tenderness for women, along with a tragic awareness of their fate in a cruelly patriarchal world:

Manda
Your mind is neither of ash nor of marble
I feel your hair, your clothes, your nails, your breasts
as though they were my own: they reveal to me, within myself
colonies of the dead; hunchbacks left to die in the streets;
Sandwiches; streets; milk of a she-dog that's just given birth to her litter
(...)
Never before had I seen a face so devoid of light
As was yours; and of a thousand other females like you.

Flashing out from so many countries, and so many cages;
And bearing so many different names.
('Mandakini Patil'/G/57; ND/56-57)

A 'collective assemblage' emerges in Dhasal's poems that voice the millennial suffering of oppressed people:

O torturers
There is no duty in this world more graceful than giving a gift of water
When there is a shortage of water
You change your city as you would change your shirt
Tell us, then,
What should they change
Who thirst and die without water?
('Water'/G/65; ND/46)

A passionate agonism is at work in Dhasal's poetry which conjures up 'war machines' or communities of resistance seeking to target an array of hegemonic social structures undergirding the State:

O innumerable suns blazing in my blood
Your mothers and sisters are still violated in bazaars
Neros still run amok like rogues, brazenly torching people in public squares
Your hovels are still bulldozed
For laying claim to a loaf of bread or a fistful of water
(...)
Oh look, the earth's pride has risen up and filled the sky
My soul too has raised the cry of revolt
O innumerable suns blazing in my blood
Now go forth and set the city on fire.
('Raktat Petalelya Aganit Suryanno'/G/13)

Not content with a critique of class, caste and gender oppression, Dhasal charts a path of praxis, explicitly drawing on a rich revolutionary heritage:

> And visions of these sages spring from my bones
> First, Ambedkar, my militant gene
> Second, Marx, my profound, mature soul
> Third, Mao, my pervasive skin
> Not colour but conviction
> Not nakedness but action
> We are soldiers, makers of a new world
> This is our fervent long march
> ('Comrade Arthat Bara Balutedaransathi'/G/68-69).

The dialectics of emancipation embodied in Dhasal's oeuvre foregrounds the moment of destruction; but it also projects an intensely appealing if tremulous vision of the community to come:

> Launch a campaign for not growing food, kill people all and sundry by starving them to death
> Kill oneself too, let disease thrive, make all trees leafless
> Take care that no bird ever sings, man, one should plan to die groaning and screaming in pain
> (...)
> After this they should stop calling one another names – white or black, brahmin, kshatriya, vaishya or shudra;
> Stop creating political parties, stop building property (...)
> One should regard the sky as one's grandpa, the earth as one's grandma
> And coddled by them everybody should bask in mutual love ('Mansane'/G/32; ND/36).

Dhasal's poetic vision, at once radical and generous, found an echo in the Dalit Panther Manifesto (1973) which defined the category 'Dalit' as follows: "Members of scheduled castes and tribes, neo-Buddhists, the working people, the landless and poor peasants, women and all those who are being exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion". It went on to chart the path of Dalit

emancipation by asserting the need to bring about a 'complete revolution': "We do not want a little place in the brahmin alley. We want to rule the whole country. We are not looking at persons but at a system…*our ideas of social revolution and rebellion will…sprout in the soil, flower in the mind and then will come forward with full force with the help of steel-strong means*" (emphasis added).

At a time when crass majoritarianism casts a long shadow, the minoritarian interventions of Dhasal, Deleuze and Guattari recall a past pregnant with emancipatory possibilities – a past which is waiting to be "blasted out of the continuum of history" (Benjamin, 1969: 261).

Acknowledgments: This is a revised version of presentations at the Department of Political Science, Panjab University, 20 January 2020, and at 'Aesthetics and the Political in Contemporary India: Deleuzian Explorations', an international conference at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (Mumbai), 17 February 2017.

Primary Texts:

G = Golpitha – Namdeo Dhasal (Pune: Nilakantha Prakashan, 1975/1972)

GB = Gandu Bagicha – Namdeo Dhasal (Mumbai: Ambedkar Prabodhini, 1986)

ND = Namdeo Dhasal: Poet of the Underworld – Dilip Chitre and Henning Stegmueller (Chennai: Navayana, 2007)

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A Warkari In Pandharpur

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Night falls down from the sky
The Warkari gathers a bit of a cloud on his thigh
The darkness embraces him as he sighs
He invokes Namdeo & Eknath & Janabai
Did they also have an Aadhaar?
Or Nir-Aadhaar did they die?
Like our hungry homeless Warkari?

The pavement is his pillow
Holy stones in it, full of woe
He pokes ancient thoughts with his toe
When will this Brahminism finally go?

Inter-connected to the ancient past
The Pandharpuri model was built to last
But as the Warkari does his Tuesday fast
He wonders, will Aadhaar annihilate my caste

The government agent who shot his photo
Said the Warkari's life will be transformed in toto

He will be free to recite Tukaram's kirtans
The Warkari's atma will ascend to the sun

Will his IPR disintegrate in heaven, by then?
Will the bugs and infections make him zen?
Nahin, nahin, said the government agent -
Our proprietary system is mightier than the pen
Now smile please, say cheese, while I count to ten

The Warkari tries to sleep, in his dream, he hears Sant Dnyaneshwar
He asks, Do the Pandavs-Kauravs have an Aadhaar, O Krishna Sir?
Instead of an answer, all we hear are the abhangs
Every phrase is encoded-decoded by *the* Sangh
Scientific knowledge, among bhakths, causes *rasa bhang*
Beware of wissenschaft, says the Panchajanya's Diwali Ank

It's when the Warkari reads the fine print with a magnifying glass
He realises, all the rules have been dictated by the upper class
Data is the new oil and it is up for sale
Even if like the Warkari you're tenth standard fail!

Will the 12 digits be uttered along with the morning ablutions?
Will the 12 digits, help the poor genuinely get their daily rations?
Will the 12 digits be the new Gondhal and Bharood?
Will you need to pray with 12 digits for a change of mood?
Will the first language our babies learn be these 12 digits?
Will 12 digits replace I Love You as a popular mantra on this planet?
Will the 12 digits, be audited, and sold off at an auction?
Or will the 12 digits be nuked by a Kudankulam bomb?
Will computer science professionals cause more atrocities than World War I?
Will God and Satan spar over these 12 digits, just for fun?
I know not
Perhaps Vithoba, he knows

Unless even he knows not

Cause even Vithoba will be privatised, soon

The rumours say by the next monsoon

Pandharpur has its first digital-yug mess

Vithoba, he suffers from sleeplessness

A new religion sponsored by the MNCs, it appears

Mistaken identities start to spread an epidemic of fear

The Warkari realises how he is a mis-fit

Someone, you see, has stolen his digit

He sings his tragic lament with an *ek-taara* and a *dholak*

Not realising this is red tapism, not a case of bad luck

Thus is born the 21st century Pandharpur

A Trojan Horse built as high as the Duke's hilltop

Inside it there are a million and one laptops

The Ghats, replaced by binary bits instead of agricultural crops

Registrars, service providers, data thefts have left the Warkari numb

Vithobha is missing, and Pandharpur town survives on bajri crumbs

The Warkari wants to book a ticket to paradise

But Yam-Dhoot says Nichte-Nein, you are a lice

Even as his name is being deleted, the bhajans pour out

The absence of Aadhaar, has converted him into a lout

He sings a final song

And kisses the sky

From Jejuri to Wai

They ask, why, o why!

Will this be the saga of the last Warkari from Pandharpur?

Will this be the saga of the last Warkari from Pandharpur?

OBITUARY

Pandit Ghulam Dastagir Birajdar
A Sanskrit Scholar

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The Sanskrit world mourned the loss of one of its scholars, Pandit Ghulam Dastagir Birajdar, who passed away on 21st April, 2021 at Solapur. Panditji, as he was fondly known in the Sanskrit world, was a great scholar of Sanskrit. He was born in Akkalkot, Solapur, where in his childhood days, he would listen to the lessons taught by a teacher in Sanskrit. One fine day, he mustered courage to ask the teacher, whether he can sit for Sanskrit classes, inspite of being a Muslim. The Sanskrit teacher was so open-minded that he permitted Panditji to sit for his lessons. One good action from a teacher changed the entire perspective of the life of Ghulam Dastagir Birajdar. Panditji mastered the Vedas, classical Sanskrit Literature and also the art of conversing in Sanskrit.

After coming to Mumbai to make the best of what he had learnt, he started teaching in a Madrassa. His Sufi background did not permit him to sit idle. He undertook the crusade of popularising Sanskrit as a language for all and not restricted in the clutches of the Brahmanical priestly tradition. His efforts found due respect with the State Government, which appointed him as an Honorary Sanskrit Pracharak. With this designation, he visited schools and urged their managements to start teaching Sanskrit; he visited colleges and urged the students to take up Sanskrit at degree level; he visited Universities and urged them to undertake activities for general public to popularize the language. He has given insights and perspectives

for the curriculum of Sanskrit even to the State Board.

'Sanskrit Language without barriers'; this was his mission of life. Sanskrit should be taught and learnt irrespective of caste, religion or gender. Being a follower of Islam did not deter him to move freely in the world of Sanskrit. He published a book noting the contribution of Muslim scholars to the field of Sanskrit language and literature. He emphasized the need to translate important Sanskrit texts into Urdu, Arabic or Persian. In the same way, texts significant for Islam should be translated into Sanskrit. In this way, there would be a dialogue with Sanskrit and Islamic scholars. They will be able to understand the similarities and differences of thought and action, and this will lead to tolerating and appreciating conflicting ideas for universal peace and harmony. This led to the organization of interfaith and inter-religious dialogues between scholars practising Hinduism and Islam. He encouraged expression in Sanskrit and created a platform for Sanskrit, he started a periodical called 'Vishvabhasha'. This periodical was funded by the king of Kashi. In his deeds, we observe is that in every course of action, he had overcome the notion of fragmentation based on religion.

Panditji practiced what he preached. He urged for translations of different texts pertaining to Islam and Hinduism. Before leaving for the heavenly abode, he completed the translation of the Quran in Sanskrit. This translation will ease the barriers and encourage give and take between Sanskrit and Islam.

Panditiji was decorated with many awards and accolades. He received the highest award for Sanskrit, which is the President's Certificate of Honour at the hands of the then President of India, K. R. Narayanan. The State Government of Maharashtra honoured him with Kalidasa Sanman. Panditji's life is a path-breaking journey, adhering to the principles of peace and universal solidarity. Encouraging translations of Sanskrit texts to other languages and inter-religious interfaith dialogue with diverse group of people will be a true and meaningful homage to the departed soul.

REVIEWS

Book Review

The Ant who Swallowed the Sun
(Abhangas of Marathi women Saints)

translated by Neela Bhagwat and Jerry Pinto

New Delhi: Speaking Tiger Classics, 2020

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Medieval Maharashtra has been a theatre of socio-political and religious upheavals. This period marked the end of the Yadava dynasty and the emergence of Islamic rule. It also marked the ascendancy of a different form of worship—Bhakti—which gave birth to the Warkari sampradaya—or the Warkari movement. Bhakti was about praying to the God in oneself. As related by Dnyaneshwar, it was about praying to "Rama, Krishna, Govinda" within yourself. This movement made human the embodiment of God or making human one with God.

It was therefore not surprising to see the Warkari movement attracting fellowship by millions and becoming a melting pot of narratives that brought God in sight of human grasp. No wonder it started touching the lives of men and women alike irrespective of caste and creed. Pujaris and Shastris started ceding power to Saints—the ones who could bring many much nearer to God and vice versa. Saints gave birth to a new form of poetry—ovis and abhangas—that became the foundation to driving social change.

And the outcomes were evident and quick. Women saints appeared on the scene—a phenomenon that would not have been possible in the institution of 'Shastris'. Women saints excelled at the creativity and some like Bhagu and Vatsara only made their presence felt through their work, and not physical presence.

Beginning the 13th century, the Warkari movement gave Maharashtra some of its best women poets from different strata of society: Muktabai, Bahinabai (Bahena), Janabai, Rajai, Gonai, Kanhopatra, the sex worker and Soyarabai.

Their most significant biggest contribution was to open the minds of a patriarchal and caste have driven society into believing that they are all children of one almighty and that the same almighty was in each of them irrespective of they being a man or a woman, a brahmin or a dalit, a married women woman or a sex worker.

It is in this spirit that Neela Bhagwat and Jerry Pinto position their translation of abhangas and ovis of women saints from Marathi to English for poetry lovers and Bhakti exponents. History being 'his-story' has little to say about biographical details of these women saints. It this very gap that is bridged by this translation.

The book is an anthology of 61 ovis and abhangas composed by ten women saints from the Warkari tradition.

The title of the book, "The Ant Who Swallowed the Sun", is a direct translation of the famous first line of Saint Muktabai's composition, "Mungi Udali Akaashi, Tine Gilile Suryasi". It's a harbinger of what's inside—positioning the small 'her' as being capable of gulping the infinite and the eternal 'he'—presenting us an opportunity to grasp 'her-story' (and not 'his-tory') from 'her' lens.

The authors use their work as a mirror. They want us to look into it and see how our present is positioned in comparison to the historical social constructs and frameworks—that influenced the compositions of women saints. They provoke us to think, right from the Preface, wherein Jerry Pinto pens a retort to Muktabai's noting: Vaanjhe putra prasavalaa. Jerry asks Muktabai (and therefore us), as to why should a child be engendered. In his words "Why son, Muktabai? I wanted to ask isn't a child enough". He compels us to think as to why did Muktabai naturally ended up writing 'son': putra; and not 'baalak' and inadvertently makes us think if a similar approach to composition would have been adopted if she were to write today. It is this approach that makes the book stand out. I would have although

liked Jerry Pinto to also raise a question on why Muktabai positions women as the only source of infertility/barrenness.

Neela Bhagwat coins an interesting analogy terming women saints, as 'adi-dalit'—exhorting the need for women to be understood within a framework of gender and caste. She makes an interesting use of the present tense to note, "they are prey to multiple conflicts, their lives are never easy subsuming of everything into the pieties of faith; they bring their states of anger, frustration and exhaustion into their poetry" (Pg. 23)—compelling us to reflect on the status of women in our society today. She believes Vitthal and Rakhumai were their chief source of hope and life. They were their sounding-boards, and soul-mates with whom they could easily share their joys and sorrows and request guidance to address challenges.

Now let me discuss some features of this book, which I really liked.

Let me start with their work on compositions of Muktabai. Muktabai was the youngest sibling to Nivrutti, Dnyaneshwar and Sopan—the three acknowledged saintly brothers who laid the foundation of the Warkari movement. Despite being the youngest, as instantiated, she was probably the first amongst the siblings to fill Dnyaneshwar with conviction when he had locked himself in a hut, on being insulted as an outcaste. Muktabai consoled and counselled him through a set of Abhangas which are popularly known as 'taatiche abhanga'—displaying her profound emotional and philosophical maturity. She urged Dnyaneshwar to bear the world's spite without any complaints.

The authors have made befitting use of language to narrate Muktabai's thoughts on liberation.

While ordinarily, "Taati ughadaa Dnyaneshwara" could have been simply translated as 'O Dnyaneshwar, open the door', the authors have worded it as "throw open the doors". By doing so, they astutely present Muktabai's metaphorical power to compare a physical door of the hut to the gates of mind and soul.

In certain specific compositions, they have maintained a praiseworthy meter. For example:

"First came joy and on the morrow
Hard on the heels, the visit from sorrow
Muktai tells Changya: self-born, the soul,
Standing like a banyan, aloof and whole."

Now let's turn to Soyarabai. She was saint Chokhamela's wife. Chokhamela, a contemporary of Dnyaneshwar, faced hardships, contempt and torture as he was an "untouchable". Soyarabai witnessed the suffering inflicted on her husband on the one hand and the respect be received by his Warkari brethren for his poetic genius and ardent devotion towards Lord Vitthal on the other. Her works are, therefore, a reflection of binaries and contrasts. An elevated soul, she looked at life and death with equanimity. She considered death and lamenting as a lie. The authors' translations don't miss capturing such binaries and contrasts. In the abhanga titled, "Yei Yei Garud-dhvajaa" the phrase:; "Vitesahita karen puja" has not been translated. It's a 'zero' that accompanies Vitthal—the only 'one' to complete the 'whole'.

Janabai, the maid-servant of saint Namdev, was a powerful and eloquent saint-poet. She was responsible for menial jobs in the house of saint Namdev. For her Vitthal is a caretaker—the one who looks after her and participates in her chores to lighten the work she was subjected to. Her abhangas reflect the hardships she had to undergo and the role Vitthal could and did play in lightening her load. Neela Bhagwat and Jerry Pinto have used the free verse form to translate saint Janabai's compositions. They have wonderfully captured the aspect of 'Sakhya bhakti' through befitting verses such as, "When Jani sweeps the floor, Vitthala fills the dustpan".

Kanhopatra, the saint poet of the 14th Century CE, was born in the family of a sex-worker. Her pain and humiliation were lightened by her friendly devotion with to Lord Vitthal. In one of her abhangas she regards Lord Vitthal as Krishna-aai and Kanha-aai, i.e. her mother. The refrain of this abhanga has been splendidly used by the authors— "From your unseeing eyes let your mercy flow".

To summarize, women saints have raised voices of dissent, they have questioned the existing parameters of gender and caste and at the same time rendered

complete surrender to the Lord. The Warkari tradition, which works on the principles of humanity, equality and fraternity, have retained these compositions and immortalized them.

Neela Bhagwat and Jerry Pinto have done a commendable piece of work by translating abhangas of women saints into English and bringing these lesser-known saints to the forefront. They have taken up a socio-semiotic perspective in their translation. In this perspective the language is considered to be rooted in socio-cultural concepts. The translation is simple, lucid, rhythmic with apt choice of words. The preface and introduction by the translators give a perspective to the reader and create a good background for readers to understand and appreciate the work. Sharing the original work alongside the translation will help the readers to compare the translation with the original work. The work done by Neela Bhagwat and Jerry Pinto is inspiring and, as mentioned earlier, will provoke and promote similar translations of works of women saints across different regions of India.

Book Review

Mystical Worlds Spiritual, Social and Secular

Amita Valmiki

Navi Mumbai: NavVishnu Publications, 2020

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Even though we have been practising religion for thousands of years, why are we still in this unfathomable condition? What is it that prevents us from realising God's truth on earth? In today's pluralistic world, to maintain one's identity and sanity, the study of theistic-existentialism-mysticism in this voluminous work is enriching, and offers great value to all of us. It will immensely benefit students, research scholars and spiritual seekers. Reading this book would provide glimpses of experience in delight and thrill, and would motivate every reader to be involved in spiritual healing. I am extremely excited to write my views after reading this book. Amita Valmiki, a spiritual seeker herself stands as an inspiration for me. Her great passion towards mysticism, spiritual philosophy and to find deep meaning of life always came to forefront during the various philosophical discussions that I had with her.

Valmiki's book *Mystical Worlds Spiritual, Social and Secular* is an inspirational and timely work. While reviewing this book I was reminded of these famous lines that I came across some time ago-

The demon is always within,
The goddess is always within,
The battle too, is always within,
And so is the triumph of one, over the other.
Which one, over which one?

That choice is also, somehow always within.

What is this 'within?,' 'Where is the battle taking place?' and 'What is it seeking?'

These lines helps one to presuppose, a 'self'. The conflict is within oneself and the 'self' is seeking some kind of solution or solace. Today, the pandemic crisis in the world has forced us to ask, why most of us do not have one true calling? It is because, there is a perpetual conflict in our nature. Our hearts, emotions, thoughts and deeds are in conflict; they aspire high, but they act quite differently. That is why, in spite of centuries of practices of religion, we are still far away from this realization that human reason is meant for discretion and not distinction.

In this book Valmiki has examined the impact of world religions and the pivotal role of theistic mysticism with a focal point of devotion as its integral part. She has very philosophically woven the silken fabric of Kabir's mysticism and Soren Kierkegaard's theistic existentialism and unfurled these two mystical seers' worlds with spiritual, social and secular seams of yarn draped in the evolutionary process of human civilization.

In the introduction, the author has referred to a wide collection of available resources in order to reiterate the fact that the religious aspirants on their perennial quest seek answers for, is there any immanent connection between one thing and another in this world—between a tree and a stone, or a human and a beast? The relationship between God and the world is the crucial point in cosmological doctrines and theological principles. In fact, the explanation behind the existence of many religions in the world, as mentioned in the book, namely, is to explore the relationship between God and the world, and consequently the relationship between the world and humanity. There are systems which have taken a stand that emphasizes one aspect or the other—the transcendent aspect of God, the immanent aspect of God, or the total difference between God and the world can be seen as transformative in the emancipation and upliftment of human life from the dogmatic slumber.

Valmiki, in chapter 2 and 3, has very comprehensively addressed the difficulty in the present times that we all are facing with the actual state of affairs. God's

relationship to the world includes his relationship with everything, because all things are contained in what we call the world or creation. The points of the different theologies are taken into consideration from ancient to medieval and to modern India's Bhakti Tradition in these two chapters. Further, chapter 4 on devotion is much more than an emotion. It is a combination of love, lespect and surrender. The author has very clearly mentioned devotion comes out of acceptance and humility. Devotion brings out the best in us—love, humility, surrender, selflessness, fearlessness. It sublimates our emotions and thoughts. It is a matter of intense self-discipline; not merely intense contemplation, but intense self-searching. We have to scrutinise our hearts and ask ourselves every moment of our lives whether what we are doing is in accordance with our own basic nature. Valmiki has rightly pointed out the limitations of the world religion as being formal, mechanical, standardised and not a religion which has searched the depths of our own being and brought about a conversion of our nature.

It does not matter what religion we profess. All religions insist on the same kind of intense self-discipline. We are lacking in that. The moral crisis of the world today is the direct result of this divorce between our theory and practice. It is not necessary to say we are all religious. We talk of religion but commit murder uttering the name of God; we commit theft uttering the name of God. What sort of religion do we practise? That is the question we have to answer ourselves. That is why all the great religions ask us to practice austerities and asceticism. These seem so difficult, it may not be appropriate for present times. Instead, what is necessary is self-search. It is not religion that is at fault, but we the followers of religion are at fault.

As a result in chapter 5, the author has highlighted the multi-disciplinary approach to help us get over our present difficulties. Citing from various realms like environmental studies, Valmiki states that social reforms and humane virtues have the knowledge repositories from which every seeker can learn something or the other valuable in the philosophical journey of life where the personal and supra-personal meet.There is this discord between what we profess and our actual practices. So far as our theory is concerned, we affirm that there is God,

but when it comes to practice, we behave as if there is no God. And so long as this divorce exists, the present moral crisis will also exist.

The author very emphatically has therefore, drawn a parallel understanding between theistic existentialism with special mention of the works of Kabir and Kierkegaard. Reminding us of the fact that during any religious, moral or social crisis their contributions are symbolic, and can influence our thoughts and behaviour towards spirituality, the feeling of oneness with the whole of universe. Theistic mysticism is indeed the most desirable egalitarian model to build a secular society.

Thus, the only purpose of human existence is to be spiritual, to keep examining oneself and ask oneself whether we are drawing nearer to the ideals we profess or departing from them. This book has mysticism as a key to unlock concealed chambers of consciousness to establish spiritual unity.

Book Review

Baba Padmanji: Vernacular Christianity in Colonial India

by Deepra Dandekar

Routledge India, 2021, 144 pp., ISBN- 9780367503901

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Religious conversion is a contentious issue in India, often viewed as a civilizational threat. This threat expresses itself as outrage when the conversion is not in the native religion. It is perceived as a betrayal to cultural, religious, and civilizational values. It is considered to be an act of manipulation by crafty European missionaries to lure innocent people. But, not all religious conversions fall under the same narrative. The book *Baba Padmanji: Vernacular Christianity in Colonial India* interrogates the diversity in conversion and its perceptions in 19th century Maharashtra. In this work, Deepra Dandekar sketched Padmanji's social and literary contributions in the formation of native missionaries in vernacular space.

This work provides a well-researched narrative on the life of Padmanji that highlights the discursive framework of 19th century Maharashtra. It provides an account of Padmanji's attempts to direct his own development in guiding the vernacular community through the act of writing. Dandekar divides this book into an introduction, four main chapters, and a final chapter with concluding remarks. It begins with an analysis of postcolonial outrage against missionaries. The introduction stresses on themes that run throughout the book, that is, Padmanji's nativization of Christianity as a Marathi religion through the intervention of "vernacular mission field", thus creating an alternate social, literary, linguistic, and emotional space.

The author claims that her work is a challenge to the selective religious and cultural history of 19th century Maharashtra. She argues that the 19th century intellectual history conveniently located the spirit of modernity by identifying social reformers as theistic or deistic in their religious outlook. It ignored the strong intervention of vernacular Christianity pioneered by Padmanji, which advocated widow remarriage, religious freedom and the abolition of caste.

The author delves into great details to show how the hagiography and autobiography of Padmanji established him as a saintly native Christian leader. By discussing the contemporary scholarship on autobiographical writing, the author situates Padmanji's autobiography '*Arunodaya*' into a teleological hagiography, a self-authored *mahatmya*. His autobiography provides inspiration to a larger group of emulators to make the transition from their present Hindu self to an emerging Christian selfhood. According to the author, Padmanji's autobiography demonstrates the formation of a transcultural Christian moment of harmony between Europeans and native.

Chapter two of this book details the emerging role of Padmanji's Marathi Christian writing in 19th century intellectual history. In this chapter, the author emphasizes Padmanji's rigorous engagement with Hindu reformers, Hindu traditionalists, converts and European missionaries. She points out that the genre of vernacular Christian writing had greater responsibility to create the epistemic room between European missionaries and the Hindu and Muslim apologists. One of the most fascinating contributions of this work is Dandekar's explanation of Padmanji's literary and religious scholarship to strengthen the identity of vernacular Christian converts, so they could differentiate themselves ideologically, religiously, and culturally from both Hindu reformists and European missionaries converts. In his Marathi treatise *Nihshastravadpariksha* or *Examination of the Claims of Deism*, Padmanji argued against Hindu, Muslims and Zoroastrians, who did not believe in traditional religion because of their fascination with deism. Padmanji also showed his reservation against conversion as emancipatory for women and lower castes. Against these claims, Padmanji remained critical of the utilitarian approach. He feared that a utilitarian approach to conversion would expose native Christians to European and Hindu accusations of opportunism.

Chapter three is an exploration of three important writings of Padmanji, which are representative of the Christian vernacular genre. The first text is *Strividyabhyasnibandh* (an essay on the education of women), where Padmanji criticizes patriarchal dominance as an obstacle to women education and emphasizes the social role of women education. The second text is *Vyabhicharnishedhak Bodh* (Evils of Licentiousness), which deals with Hindu sexual immorality. The third text is *Naranayak the Son of Jagatshet*, which counters Hindu accusations against native Christians for abandoning their families after conversion. These three texts constitute a pioneering vernacular intervention that transforms social issues into an emotional experience that can be internally transformative.

The fourth chapter has assessed the most important writing of Padmanji, *Yamunaparyatan*. It is considered to be the first vernacular novel. Here, Dandekar explains how novel writing practices in colonial India constitute a mark of Indian modernity. This chapter studies the plight of women through the lens of caste. The author critically evaluates the charge against Padmanji that he is not empathetic in his approach to women's sexuality. The author believes that his opposition to utilitarian conversion limits women's agency only to Christian protestant ideas of sexual morality. This chapter also discusses the differences of Padmanji with reformists like Lokhitvadi and affiliation with Vidyasagar, Dayanand Sarswati and Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

The final chapter of this book is largely dedicated to the broad framework of contributions by Padmanji to transforming the reform agenda into a righteous, ethical, and religious cause.

The author's survey of literature from the protestant writing to vernacular writing offers a journey into the objective narratives of conversion in colonial India. She makes a compelling case that conversion in India is not limited to any single point of origin, neither is it limited to motivation for any social progress. Rather it was for many, a case of "conversion for the sake of conversion". To make this argument, this work does not limit itself to the biography of Padmanji, but also offers a balanced intersection of history, literature, and religion in 19th century Maharashtra.

In sum, this book articulates history and religion through the medium of narratives which open various shades of life and society in colonial era. It reveals the multiplicity of theistic, deistic, and pantheistic presumptions of social reformers. It is a well-written and carefully argued work that provided an incredible service to the scholarship of history and religion in the colonial era. It will be of interest to anyone with a serious interest in philosophy of religion, comparative religion and history of social reforms during colonial era, among other social science and humanities disciplines.

Afterword

Sambhaji Bhagat

Musician, Lokshahir, Poet, Playwright, Academic, Activist

Pinnacle of Liberation: On a Philosophical Note

बुरा जो देखन मैं चला, बुरा न मिलिया कोय ।
जो दिल खोजा आपना, मुझसे बुरा न कोय ।।
Bura jo dekhe mai chala, bura na miliya koy,
Jo dil khoja apna, mujhse bura na koi

Kabir's poem (*doha*) could be read as follows: "When I tried to find the 'evil' in the outside world, I couldn't find any. But when I looked at the world inside me, I realised there is no one more evil than me". Kabirdas Jayanti was celebrated on the 24th of June this year. Particulars and knowledge about his birth and death, his religion, sect or time are still unknown. But Kabir is beyond all this. He is a beacon to all of us. He has always existed since centuries in the form of eternally veracious words. Many attempts have been made to interpret his couplets (*dohe*) but everytime one finds something new in them. With the increasing religious and social conflicts, the

significance of Kabir's dohe has gained more importance today than in the Middle Ages. Humans are becoming more distant from each other which has resulted in a debilitated state of our country. No one person or group is responsible for this. The priesthood in every religion has become aggressive. Not only the educational institutions, universities but also the economy and politics are under the control of priesthood. And the only solace in these times is Kabirdas.

The pinnacle of liberating philosophy

Kabir and I met through music. In the sixties, among the "lower" castes of Maharashtra, there was a congregation singing hymns of *Kabirpantha*. Especially in the settlements of the "social untouchables", at a funeral, during the Dashakriya ritual, the congregation sings these *bhajans*. I didn't understand those *bhajans* at that time, but I felt the music deep inside of me. The tunes of those bhajans were in raag *Bhairavi*. Their words were their strength. Their meaning differed from the communal *bhajans*. Those hymns were asking us a question. I don't know how they got there. They were not translated in a literal sense, but were rather interpretations of Kabir's philosophy. They had been passed on from generation to generation through oral traditions. *Ektar*, *dimdi* and *manjeera* were the only instruments used by the *bhajanis*. Kabir's lyrical singing was an enlightenment. It couldn't have been lost in the music. I was overwhelmed by how Kabir's *bhajans* had the power to captivate someone and make one interrogate the self. Kabir's questions about who I am, what is the purpose of my life, began to make me restless. They began to motivate me to find a direction in my Life.

I left the village and also lost my connection with Kabir. Later on in Mumbai, I found Kabir's music again. I heard the lyrics

of Kabir's hymns at a funeral at Bardana in Asalfa Village, Ghatkopar, and that is when I reunited with him. I wandered around looking for those congregations. I finally found them in a hilly settlement west of Ghatkopar. They had come to Mumbai from Jalna to start a life here. Some mended slippers on the street, and some were engaged in petty jobs. Some were also glass-scrap sellers. But, everyone practised the oral hymns of Kabir. I worked with them for six months. I learnt their hymns by assisting them in their work like carrying their harmonium and other instruments etc. This is when I actually understood Kabir. Asaram Umap, whom I met during my stay, is still in contact with me.

Kabir's works were non-vedic. He preached the lack of attachment and labour. His works were completely indigenous and born in the soil of this country. Its foundation was love. He questioned priests of all religions. His questions were deeper than theology.

मोको कहाँ ढूंढें बन्दे, मैं तो तेरे पास में, *Why are you looking for me elsewhere, when I am just there with you!* They conveyed this message of love. Although Kabir was a medieval saint, his vision was far ahead of his time. He asked priests of all religions. No one has yet been able to answer Kabir's life-threatening questions. Kabir asked them, "Tell me, where is your God?". They answered with theological prose, but could not answer this basic question of Kabir. Their philosophy was *mayavadi* whereas Kabir proposed the philosophy of love. In fact, Sant Namdeo, Sant Rohidas, Sant Mirabai along with Kabir all showed the right direction:The direction of love. They taught the language of humanity.

Kabira asked,

बमन हो के पुराण वाचे
तो क्या साहेब मिलता है?
हाथ में लकडी उलटी पकडी
तो क्या साहेब मिलता है?
मुल्ला होके बांग पुकारे
वोह क्या साहेब बहरा है?
मुंगी के पैर में घुंगरू बांधे
तो साहेब सुनता है
प्रेमभाव से ध्यान लगाओ
उसको साहेब मिलता है

A Brahmin reads Puraan - Hindu holy books.
Does he find God?
Do you find God by holding a stick upside down?
A Mulla calls out his God loud in his prayers. Is God deaf?
If you tie ghungroo to even an ant's feet, God will listen to it.
One who concentrates on God with love, will find God.

After listening to such intriguing works of Kabir, I reached out to his followers who sang Kabir all over the country. I met them, listened to their hymns. I got to learn more about Kabir from them. As Kabir and his work unfolded, so did his visions and his greatness. The time he was living in was not easy. In the Middle Ages, when love had just started to blossom, when rays of love were falling on this world, emerged the everlasting literature conveying the message of love. In a more real sense, love was yet to be emancipated in the world, but saints like Kabir knocked on the doors of the world for love in the Middle Ages.

Just as the Sufi tradition from the north had an effect on Kabir, so did Kabir on Sufis.

The mainstay of both was the same, that there is no God; human love is God. Any other God is the creation of the human being. The Buddha laid the foundation of the liberating philosophy of this world and saints like Kabir crystalized it.

Kabir continues to influence the liberating political-cultural movements. He put aside the soul and inculcated the values of love and compassion in human beings. His influence on the *Varkari* sect is evident. Kabir is found in the theology of Jyotirao Phule. He was Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's *guru*. In today's situation, when the conflicts between castes and religions have intensified, the need for Kabir has increased immensely, in comparison to the Middle Ages.

Human beings are becoming more distant from each other resulting in the debilitated state of our country. No one person or group is responsible for this. The priesthood in every religion has become aggressive. Not only educational institutions and universities, but also the economy and politics are under its control. And the only solace in these times is Kabirdas.

The centers of knowledge in the form of universities are still hegemonized by the upper castes. Kabir's tradition is insignificant to them. For them, Kabir is a critique of the aesthetics of medieval language, an element of undignified ancillary to be put in literature. The philosophy of life of the lower castes, the oppressed, as stated by Kabir, is not yet the subject of their study. Before science was discovered, Kabir laid out the basic philosophy of life. He proved the folly of the established *Mayavadi* Vedic philosophy. As a result of this, Kabir and his works tend to be hidden from the outside world.

When the Gujarat riots broke out, we were looking for an effective medium. A platform that would seek to appeal to the minds of the people through the role of humanity. The idea was to affect people in ways beyond their caste and religion. Kabir was the only convincing answer, as a result of which the *Kabir Kala Manch* was founded. In this dogmatism and bigotry, Kabir, who embraces all religions and calls for humanity is the only true messenger of love.

Translated by Saumitra Joshi & Sonalee Gujar

CONTRIBUTORS' BIONOTES

Contributors

Sambhaji Bhagat (as he is popularly known) or Sambhaji Bhiva Gitabai Bhagat is a musician, lokshahir, playwright, scriptwriter, poet, academician and activist. He has taught for 27 years as a secondary school teacher. He has been a part of several state government initiatives such as "reading cultures", the Kala Utsav and the Department of Balbharati Textbook Production Corporation (of which he was an editorial team member in history for 4 years). He has received several awards such as the Nishtha International Award (2012) for his contribution to music, the MATA Sanman (2013) for the play *Adgal*, the Golden Lotus (Central Government award) for his music for the film *Court* (a 2014 film directed by Chaitanya Tamhane, which was also nominated for the Oscars). He was awarded the World Anthology of Literature Award for the film *We Are Not Your Monkeys* and he won an award for songwriting for the film *Nagarik*. Mr. Bhagat has received the Daya Pawar Pratishthan Award and the Tukaram Award for writing songs. He has received the Annabhau Sathe Award for contribution to Shahiri. He has received the Shiv Chhatrapati Pratishthan (Delhi) and the Vamandada Kardak Foundation's Vadalvara Award. Mr Bhagat has written, researched and acted in movies like *Pitaputra aur Dharma Yuddha, Hamara Shahar, Ardha Satya, Tujhya Ayala Sarpanch Bhagirat*h, Vote and Note. He plays a character role in the upcoming film *Funeral*. He has contributed to the domain of drama extensively. His play *Shivaji Underground Bhim Nagar Mohalla* won the Zee Award for which he created the concept, wrote the lyrics and composed the music. Bhagat wrote the lyrics and music of the play *Zalach Pahije*. He conceptualized the play *Statue of Liberty*, as well as, wrote the lyrics and composed the music. He was a writer, composer and singer for the play *Bombay 17*. As an active public performer and balladeer he has revived the Ambedkari Jalsa, since the last forty years. Bhagat has written and presented 125 street plays on activist themes. His published works include *Katlakhalcha Pani* (autobiography), *Tod Hi Chakori* (a collection of songs), *Ran Halgi* (a collection of essays). He regularly writes columns in newspapers such as *Mahanagar*, *Samrat* and *Pudhari*. He has presided over folk art and teacher's literature conferences. He is routinely invited to lecture by

many reputed universities and institutes. His commitment to activism and leadership in progressive movements remains abiding.

Namrata Chaturvedi is Associate Professor, Department of English, SRM University Sikkim. Her areas of research interest include Sanskrit literature, comparative poetics, women's spiritual writings and mysticism. Her edited book has been published as *Memory, Metaphor and Mysticism in Kālidāsa's AbhijñānaŚākuntalam* (London: Anthem Press, 2020). Her research papers have appeared in journals such as *International Journal of Asian Christianity, Yeats Journal of Korea, IUP Journal of Commonwealth Literature, Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* and others. She is currently working on a book that seeks to contextualize the spiritual writings of women from north and north-eastern literary traditions in India. Her translation of an Indian Nepali novel into Hindi will reach the readers soon.

Viplov Dhone is Assistant Professor in B. K. Birla College, Kalyan, since 2014. He completed his Ph.D. from the Department of Philosophy, University of Mumbai in 2019. His area of research is Marxism, Postmodernism and Ambedkarism. Earlier he has published a few research articles in, *Parivartancha Vatsaru*, Economic and Political Weekly, Sambhashan and Indie Journal.

Irfan Engineer is an activist committed to challenges related to social, political, legal and communal violence. He is the Director of Centre for study of Society and Secularism and Centre for Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution. Some of his books include *Surat Riots After the Demolition of Babri Masjid; Investigation and Analysis* (Pgs. 82+Vi, published by Centre for Study of Society and Secularism, Bombay, 1993), *Underdevelopment and Poverty: Political Economy of Migration - Study of Sugarcane harvesters in Western India* (Pgs. 96+Vi, published by Vikas Adhyayan Kendra, Bombay, 1997), *Immigrants in Bombay: A Fact Finding Report of Immigrants From Bangladeshi*, published by Centre for Study of Society and Secularism, Mumbai, 1995), *Students and Communalism* (published by Centre for Study of Society and Secularism, Mumbai, 1996) and *Water Management and Drought in Maharashtra* (published by Vikas Adhyayan Kendra, Mumbai, 1996.

Kamala Ganesh is former Professor and Head, Department of Sociology, University of Mumbai. Her fields of interest include Gender and Kinship, Women's history and Archiving for women, Culture and

Identity and Indian Diaspora Studies. She has been ICSSR Senior Research Fellow, Scholar in Residence at Shiv Nadar University and Fellow and Visiting Professor at Leiden and Muenster Universities. She is currently Prof. M.N. Srinivas Chair Professor for 2020-21 at the Institute of Social and Economic Change. Her book '*Boundary Walls: Caste and Women in a Tamil Community*' won the Silver medal of the Asiatic Society of Mumbai . The book co-edited by her '*Zero Point Bombay: In and Around Horniman Circle*' was listed by the Guardian in 2013 as among the 10 best books set in Mumbai. She has done field work in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Netherlands and Germany. She has been Convenor of the Research Committee on Migration and Diaspora Studies of the Indian Sociological Society, and also on its Managing Committee; Secretary of the Commission on Women of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences and Joint Secretary of the Indian Association of Women's Studies.

Rashmi Lee George is an Assistant Professor of English at St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Mumbai. Alongside teaching, she is currently the Director of Council for International Programs at St. Xavier's. Additionally, she is also the Coordinator of Special Courses: Environmental Studies and Giving Voice to Values, offered to students in their First Year. She was the Convenor of the St. Xavier's College Magazine for several years. Twice during her convenorship, the College Magazine received the Prof. M.V. Chandgadkar Trophy for the Best College Magazine. Her doctoral thesis was on an ecocritical approach to changing concerns in Indigenous Fiction of North America from 1990 onwards. Her interests include indigenous literatures from India and abroad, postcolonial writing, cultural studies, cinema and many others. She has published and made several international and national presentations and lectures on environment and literature, Native American writing. Her most recent publication is called "Pulverizing the Plague through Art and Literature."

Pradeep P. Gokhale was awarded Ph.D. for his work on "Fallacies discussed in Ancient Indian Logic" completed under the supervision of Prof. S. S. Barlingay. He taught for 31 years in the post-graduate Department of Philosophy of Savitribai Phule Pune University. Since January 2012 he has been Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Research Professor (Chair Professor) in Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath till 2018. His research areas are Classical Indian Philosophy and logic, Social Philosophy, Philosophy of Religion, Ambedkar studies and Contemporary Buddhism. He is the chief Editor of the three quarterly

journals: Indian Philosophical Quarterly, Paramarsha (Marathi) and Paramarsha (Hindi) published from the Department of Philosophy, SP Pune University. Some of the books he has authored are "*Inference and fallacies Discussed in Ancient Indian Logic*" (Satguru Publication), "*Lokāyata/Cārvāka: A Philosophical Inquiry*" (OUP), and "*Yogaūtra of Patañjali: A New Introduction to the Buddhist Roots of the Yoga System*" (Routledge). His edited works include "*The Philosophy of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar*" (IPQ Publication) and "*Classical Buddhism, Neo-Buddhism and the Question of Caste*" (Routledge). He is at present an Honorary Adjunct Professor in the Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies, Savitribai Phule Pune University.

Sonalee Gujar is NET qualified and has been teaching Marathi language and literature at UG and PG levels since 1996. At present she is actively involved as co-coordinator, co-editor and co-author in 'My Marathi' project (designing courses for teaching Marathi as a foreign language to non-natives) at Department of German, University of Mumbai in collaboration with Rajya Marathi Vikas Sanstha, Mumbai. She is experienced in teaching Communicative Marathi to non-natives at University level. Apart from teaching at Mumbai University, she has taught Communicative Marathi at Israel's Tel-Aviv University, Tanjaore's Tamil University, Mumbai Railway Vikas Corporation. She is also trained in translation and takes up translation projects in Marathi, Hindi and English. She has authored a book 'Bhasha : Samaj Ani Sanskriti' based on Socio-Linguistics, which has been in the syllabus of Second Year B.A. at University of Mumbai. She has been delivering guidance lectures on 'Language Games : An Effective Technique of Language Teaching'. She has created a language game 'Marathi Shabd-Haushi' based on the principles of number housie game and is well appreciated by many.

Mehru Jaffer is a Lucknow born author and journalist. She has taught Islam and gender related topics at the University of Vienna, Austria and at the Vienna American Webster University. She is the author of *The Book of Muhammad, The Book of Muinuddin Chishti* and *The Book of Nizamuddin Aulia*, all published by Penguin India. *Love and Life in Lucknow*, her fourth book is published by Niyogi while *A Shadow of the Past: A Short Biography of Lucknow* is published by Aleph Book Company. At present she is working on an anthology of Urdu poets writing in Lucknow in the 19th century, the golden age of literary activities in this part of India. She has contributed a chapter on *Religion in Bollywood Films* in *Fokus Bollywood: Das indische Kino in wissenschaftlichen Diskursen,* edited by Professor Claus Tieber, Lit

Verlag 2009. She has reported for the media from Europe, Southeast Asia and Central Asia, including television and the BBC.

Saumitra Joshi is a first year B.A. student at the Department of German, University of Mumbai. He is a polyglot and speaks Marathi, German, French, Russian and Sanskrit. Along with teaching German for 2 years, he also translates books and poems. He is an avid writer and a poet. He plays the violin and has a penchant for languages, culture and philosophy.

Divya Jyoti is a third year doctoral candidate at the Centre for Political studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University. Her research builds upon the corpus of medieval century mystic Sant Kabir. The research attempts to look at Kabir as a modern rational individual who tried to dismantle the existing binaries of caste and religion. In the process the research also studies the modern day sects around Kabir that have developed elaborate rituals and practices of 'bhakti' and simultaneously looking at their interaction with the state. Further it tries to bring forth the social and political ideas originating through Kabir and Kabir Panths, thereby offering myriad ways to tap into the past and present of South Asia. Divya has completed her Bachelors (Honors) in Political science from Delhi University and Masters in Political Studies from Jawaharlal Nehru University. Divya has worked with the National Institute for Education Planning and Administration, where she gained experience on policy making and implementation, particularly in the field of primary and secondary education.

T.M.Krishna (as he is popularly known) or Thodur Madabusi Krishna is a vocalist in the Karnatik tradition. Eluding standard analysis in his rendition of music and original in his interpretation of it, Krishna is at once strong and subtle, manifestly traditional and stunningly innovative. As a public intellectual, Krishna speaks and writes about issues affecting the human condition and about matters cultural. Krishna has started and is involved in many organizations whose work is spread across the whole spectrum of music and culture. As a writer Krishna has co-authored *Voices Within: Carnatic Music – Passing on an Inheritance*, a book dedicated to the greats of Karnatik music. His path-breaking book A Southern Music – *The Karnatik Story*, published by Harper Collins in 2013 was a first-of-its-kind philosophical, aesthetic and socio-political exploration of Karnatik Music. For this, he was awarded the 2014 Tata Literature Award for Best First Book in the non-fiction category. In his *Reshaping Art* (Aleph 2018) Krishna

engages with the critical transformative potential of art. His book *Sebastian and Sons* published by Context in 2020 traces the history of the mrdangam-maker and the mrdangam over the past century. It received the Tata Lit Live Award for the Best Non-Fiction book for the year 2020. His new book *The Spirit of Inquiry: Notes on Dissent* (Penguin) engages with themes of art, nation and secularism. He has been part of inspiring collaborations, such as the Chennai Poromboke Paadal with environmentalist Nityanand Jayaraman, performances with the Jogappas (transgender musicians), co-conceptualising and performing Karnatik Kattaikuttu, an unusual aesthetic conversation between art forms and communities that belong to two ends of the social spectrum, and his musico-poetic partnership with India's leading contemporary Tamil writer Perumal Murugan, is unprecedented. In 2016, Krishna received the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award in recognition of 'his forceful commitment as artist and advocate to art's power to heal India's deep social divisions'. In 2017 he received the Indira Gandhi National Integration Award for his services in promoting and preserving national integration in the country.

Mangesh Kulkarni is Professor & Head, Department of Political Science, Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune. He has also done teaching stints at universities in Malawi, Germany and Austria. He has been a recipient of grants and fellowships awarded by the Asiatic Society of Mumbai, the Rockefeller Archive Center, the European Commission, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, and the Indian Institute of Advanced Study. His publications include *A Terrorist of the Spirit* (HarperCollins, 1992)– an English translation of the Marathi poems of V. A. Dahake– and the following edited volumes: *Politics in Maharashtra* (Himalaya, 1995), I*ndia in World Affairs* (Himalaya, 1999), I*nterdisciplinary Perspectives in Political Theory* (Sage, 2011), and *Global Masculinities* (Routledge, 2019). He has been in the editorial team of journals like New Quest (Mumbai), *Men & Masculinities* (New York), *Shodharthy* (Delhi) and the *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* (Pune). He is a founder-member of the Forum to Engage Men (India) and was its National Joint Convenor during 2019-2021.

Madhavi Narsalay is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Sanskrit, University of Mumbai. Her specialization is in Veda, Vedant, Puranas and Dharmashastra. She has two books and one Seminar proceeding to her credit. Her articles have been featured in Oxford Journal for Hindu Studies and Monash University Press, Australia. She has been awarded the Performance based incentive award of the University of Mumbai in 2009 and the Samudramanthan Award

for her contribution in propagating Sanskrit Studies. She works as a consultant to many production houses like STAR PLUS, DISNEY HOTSTAR, Cineyug, Friday Filmworks. She works as a book-reviewer on matters of religion for the "Audible" an outfit of Amazon.

Elroy Pinto is a filmmaker and researcher. He completed his Masters in Global Cinemas and the transcultural at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. He has taught cinema at Wilson College, Mumbai and curated a programme of film at TARQ, art gallery. Previously he assisted the filmmaker Kumar Shahani and studied Indian classical music from Neela Bhagwat. He has co-created with Neela Bhagwat a lecture demonstration programme titled 'Glimpses of Nauraspur' that explores the intersectionality of artistic creations from the 'Adil Shahi kingdom in the early modern. His award winning debut film Kaifiyat (2019) is based on the musician Ustad Nizamuddin Khan and explores the socio-religious context of Deccani aesthetics. His writing has appeared in ON Stage, Project Myopia and Public Parking.

Ramu Ramanathan is a playwright and director. He has scripted plays such as *Cotton 56, Polyester 84; Comrade Kumbhakarna; and Mahadevbhai.* Eight of his plays have been anthologised in the book *3, Sakina Manzil And Other Plays* (Orient Blackswan/EFLU). He is also the author of the poetry collection *My Encounters with a Peacock and To Sit on a Stone and other Shorts* (Red River), and co-editor of *Babri Masjid, 25 Years On...* (Kalpaz). Ramanathan writes on theatre and culture in newspapers and periodicals. He has been associated with the printing industry for three decades as a journalist. He is the editor of *PrintWeek* and *WhatPackaging?* magazines.

Abhiruchi Ranjan is an Assistant Professor in the department of Political Science, Kristu Jayanti College, Bengaluru. Her research work focuses on issues pertaining to caste, religion, democracy and gender. Abhiruchi Ranjan has completed her MA, MPhil and PhD from the Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Her PhD thesis is titled 'Caste, Democracy and Social Change: A Study of Ravidassias of Punjab.'

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Sachchidanand Singh is teaching philosophy in Mithibai College, Vile Parle and working as a visiting faculty in NMIMS, Mumbai. He is pursuing his PhD from University of Mumbai. The topic of his research is "Philosophy of Social Science: Methodological Debate". His area of research interests includes philosophy of social science and philosophy of religion. He has been awarded Junior Research Fellowship by UGC. He has presented several research papers at national and international conferences.

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Style Guide

Citation Style: Author-Date Referencing System of *The Chicago Manual of Style* (Chapter 15, 17th edition)

Authors should adopt the in-text parenthetical Author-Date citation system from Chapter 15 of the *Chicago Manual of Style* (17th edition).

Some examples are listed below

1) BOOKS

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

Book references should be listed at the end of the paper as "Works Cited" in alphabetical order.

Single Author

Carson, Rachel. 2002. *Silent Spring*. New York: HMH Books.

Dual Authors

Adorno, Theodor, and Max Horkheimer. 1997. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. London: Verso.

Multiple Authors

Berkman, Alexander, Henry Bauer, and Carl Nold. 2011. *Prison Blossoms: Anarchist Voices from the American Past*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Anthologies

Petra Ramet, Sabrina, ed. 1993. *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*. New York: Cambridge University Press

IN-TEXT CITATION:

References to the specific pages of the books should be made in parenthesis within the text as follows:

(Carson 2002, 15)
(Adorno and Horkheimer 1997, 23)
(Berkman, Bauer, and Nold 2011, 100-102)
(Sabrina 1993, 122-135)

Please refer to 15.40–45 of *The Chicago Manual of Style* for further details.

2) CHAPTERS FROM ANTHOLOGIES

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

Chapters should be listed in "Works Cited" in alphabetical order as follows:

Single Author

Dunstan, John. 1993. "Soviet schools, atheism and religion." In *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*, edited by Sabrina Petra Ramet, 158–86. New York: Cambridge University Press

Multiple Authors

Kinlger, Samual A., and Paul H. De Vries. 1993. "The Ten Commandments as values in Soviet people's consciousness." In *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*, edited by Sabrina Petra Ramet, 187–205. New York: Cambridge University Press

IN-TEXT CITATION:

(Dunstan 1993, 158–86)

(Kingler and De Vries 1993, 190)

Please see 15.36 and 15.42 of *The Chicago Manual of Style* for further details.

3) E-BOOK

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

List should follow alphabetical order. The URL or the name of the database should be included in the reference list. Titles of chapters can be used instead of page numbers.

Borel, Brooke. 2016. *The Chicago Guide to Fact-Checking*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. ProQuest Ebrary.

Hodgkin, Thomas. 1897. *Theodoric the Goth: The Barbarian Champion of Civilisation*. New York: Knickerbocker Press. Project Gutenberg. http://www.gutenberg.org/files/20063/20063-h/20063-h.htm

Maalouf, Amin. 1991. *The Gardens of Light*. Hachette Digital. Kindle.

IN-TEXT CITATION:

(Borel 2016, 92)

(Hodgkin 1897, chap. 7)

(Maalouf 1991, chap. 3)

4) JOURNAL ARTICLE

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

List should follow alphabetical order and mention the page range of the published article. The URL or name of the database should be included for online articles referenced.

Anheier, Helmut K., Jurgen Gerhards, and Frank P. Romo. 1995. "Forms of Capital and Social Structure in Cultural Fields: Examining Bourdieu's Social Topography." *American Journal of Sociology* 100, no. 4 (January): 859–903.

Ayers, Lewis. 2000. "John Caputo and the 'Faith' of Soft-Postmodernism." *Irish Theological Quarterly* 65, no. 1 (March): 13–31. https://doi.org/10.1177/002114000006500102

Dawson, Doyne. 2002. "The Marriage of Marx and Darwin?" *History and Theory* 41, no. 1 (February): 43–59.

IN-TEXT CITATION:

Specific page numbers must be included for the parenthetical references within texts
(Anheier, Gerhards, and Romo 1995, 864)
(Ayers 2000, 25-31)
(Dawson 2002, 47-57)

For further details please see 15.46–49 of *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

5) NEWS OR MAGAZINE ARTICLE

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

List should follow alphabetical order and need not mention the page numbers or range. The URL or name of the database should be included for online articles referenced.

Hitchens, Christopher. 1996. "Steal This Article." *Vanity Fair*, May 13, 1996 https://www.vanityfair.com/culture/1996/05/christopher-htichens-plagiarism-musings

Khan, Saeed. 2020. "1918 Spanish Flu cure ordered by doctors was contraindicated in Gandhiji's Principles". *Times of India*, April 14, 2020. http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/75130706.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

Klein, Ezra. 2020. "Elizabeth Warren has a plan for this too." *Vox*, April 6, 2020. https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2020/4/6/21207338/elizabeth-warren-coronavirus-covid-19-recession-depression-presidency-trump.

IN-TEXT CITATION:

(Hitchens 1996)

(Khan 2020)
(Klein 2020)

See 15.49 (newspapers and magazines) and 15.51 (blogs) in *The Chicago Manual of Style* for further details

6) BOOK REVIEW

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

Methven, Steven. 2019. "Parricide: On Irad Kimhi's Thinking and Being." Review of *Thinking and Being*, by Irad Kimhi. *The Point Magazine*, October 8, 2019

IN-TEXT CITATION:

(Methven 2019)

7) INTERVIEW

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

West, Cornel. 2019. "Cornel West on Bernie, Trump, and Racism." Interview by Mehdi Hassan. *Deconstructed*, The Intercept, March 7, 2019. https://theintercept.com/2019/03/07/cornel-west-on-bernie-trump-and-racism/

IN-TEXT CITATION:

(West 2019)

8) THESIS AND DISSERTATION

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

Rustom, Mohammed. 2009. "Quranic Exegesis in Later Islamic Philosophy: Mulla Sadra's *Tafsir Surat al-Fatiha*." PhD diss., University of Toronto.

IN-TEXT CITATION:

(Rustom 2009, 68-85)

9) WEBSITE CONTENT

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

Website content can be restricted to in-text citation as follows: "As of May 1, 2017, Yale's home page listed . . .". But it can also be listed in the reference list alphabetically as follows. The date of access can be mentioned if the date of publication is not available.

Anthony Appiah, Kwame. 2014. "Is Religion Good or Bad?" Filmed May 2014 at TEDSalon, New York. https://www.ted.com/talks/kwame_anthony_appiah_is_religion_good_or_bad_this_is_a_trick_question

Yale University. n.d. "About Yale: Yale Facts." Accessed May 1, 2017. https://www.yale.edu/about-yale/yale-facts.

IN-TEXT CITATION:

(Anthony Appiah 2014)
(Yale University, n.d.)

For more examples, see 15.50–52 in *The Chicago Manual of Style*. For multimedia, including live performances, see 15.57.

9) SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

Social media content can be restricted to in-text citation without being mentioned in the reference list as follows:

Conan O'Brien's tweet was characteristically deadpan: "In honor of Earth Day, I'm recycling my tweets" (@ConanOBrien, April 22, 2015).

It could also be cited formally by being included in the reference list as follows:

Chicago Manual of Style. 2015. "Is the world ready for singular they? We thought so back in 1993." Facebook, April 17, 2015. https://www.facebook.com/ChicagoManual/posts/10152906193679151.

Souza, Pete (@petesouza). 2016. "President Obama bids farewell to President Xi of China at the conclusion of the Nuclear Security Summit." Instagram photo, April 1, 2016. https://www.instagram.com/p/BDrmfXTtNCt/.

IN-TEXT CITATION:

(Chicago Manual of Style 2015)
(Souza 2016)

9) PERSONAL COMMUNICATION

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

The expression “personal communication” covers email, phone text messages and social media (such as Facebook and WhatsApp) messages. These are typically cited in parenthetical in-text citation and are not mentioned in the reference list.

IN-TEXT CITATION:

(Sam Gomez, Facebook message to author, August 1, 2017)

Notes should preferably be listed as endnotes, followed by a works cited/references column.

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