

Śūdra's Salvation Through Reading the Bhāgavatapurāṇa: A Debate Among Early Modern Vaiṣṇavas

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Early modern vaiṣṇava commentators on the Bhāgavatapurāṇa generally agreed that śūdras and women are prohibited from studying the Veda, but in the late 15th – early 16th century one Gauḍīya vaiṣṇava commentator living in Bengal, Śrīnātha Cakravartin, raised the question whether or not the same prohibition extended to the study of the Bhāgavatapurāṇa itself. Since the Gauḍīya as well as several other vaiṣṇava traditions viewed the Bhāgavatapurāṇa as the essence of the Veda, there were some vaiṣṇavas, presumably the followers of Advaitācārya, who argued that śūdras and women are also prohibited from studying the purāṇas and can only listen to them from a brāhmaṇa. They argued that when Bhāg. 12.12.65 uses the gerund *adhītya* ‘having studied’ with śūdra as the agent, it has to be understood as ‘having heard’, but Śrīnātha objects that this is wrong and that Bhāg. 12.12.65 is proof of a devoted śūdra’s qualification (*adhikāra*) to study the Bhāgavatapurāṇa. He reiterates the same position in his commentary on 10.38.4, emphasizing that a vaiṣṇava śūdra is exempt from any such prohibitions.

This debate continued later in Vrindavan, when Jīva Gosvāmin (16th cent.) expressed support for Śrīnātha’s position in favor of śūdra’s literacy, while several other contemporaneous Bhāgavata commentators argued against education of the śūdras in general, concluding that, just as studying and teaching are virtues for a brāhmaṇa, they are faults for a śūdra. Later in the 18th century Rādhāmohana Gosvāmin, a Gauḍīya vaiṣṇava from Advaitācārya’s lineage, wrote a commentary on Jīva’s *Tattvasandarbhā*, reiterating the more conservative interpretation of *adhītya* “having studied” in Bhāg. 12.12.65 as a gerund with a causative stem, “having had it read”. He systematically argued that women and śūdras are qualified only to listen to the Bhāgavatapurāṇa from a brāhmaṇa and have no *adhikāra* to read the purāṇas themselves.

In this paper I consider how this debate about śūdra’s and women’s qualification for reading the purāṇas may have affected vaiṣṇava theologians’ position on Sanskrit education. I propose that Śrīnātha’s position may have influenced his disciple, Kavikarṇapūra (16th cent.), who, being not a brāhmaṇa but a *vaidya*, wrote his own textbook on Sanskrit grammar, the *Caitanyāmṛtavyākaraṇa*. Arguably, Jīva’s grammar, the *Harināmāmṛtavyākaraṇa*, also stands in solidarity with Śrīnātha’s position—it is a grammar which Jīva understands to be meant for all vaiṣṇavas, including śūdras. While I see no early modern vaiṣṇavas making the case that Sanskrit literacy is a prerequisite for salvation, arguably some of them, such as Śrīnātha and Jīva, viewed it as an important component of the vaiṣṇava identity and objected against denying lower class vaiṣṇavas access to Sanskrit education.

With the Eye of a Scholar and the Insight of a Physician: Gangadhar Ray Kaviraj and the Carakasamhitā

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This essay presents a study of Gangadhar Ray Kaviraj's (1798–1885) philological work on the Carakasamhitā, the oldest Ayurvedic text. Gangadhar was the editor of the first printed edition of (part of) the Carakasamhitā, which appeared together with his commentary on it, the Jalpalkataru, in 1868 in Calcutta. Gangadhar's philology represents a piece of traditional scholarship from 19th century South Asia. In the absence of documentary evidence, this claim will be substantiated by analysing the text of the Carakasamhitā transmitted in manuscripts and printed books associated with Gangadhar's name.

However, identifying terms of comparison for this kind of analysis is not as straightforward as one might assume or wish. Therefore, we will first discuss how to study Gangadhar's philological practice by providing reflections on the documents and the methodology – what variants and commentaries can reveal about philological practices centred on the transmission of Sanskrit texts. A detailed analysis of a passage from Carakasamhitā, Vimānasthāna 8, will provide evidence for Gangadhar's cautious philology.

Furthermore, this essay will reflect on the context made up of texts, or the “intertextual context” (Ganeri 2008) that actors involved in the transmission of Sanskrit texts inhabited. In the case of Gangadhar, a ‘contextual archive’ can be reconstructed which testifies to an amalgam of śāstric knowledge, more particularly medical and philosophical knowledge, that he deployed in his philological activity. Gangadhar's professional ‘liaison’ with the CaS also triggers a chain of questions of broader significance. This chain starts by asking why Gangadhar – a prominent physician in colonial Bengal – decided to edit the Carakasamhitā, why he chose to compose a commentary on it and to do it in Sanskrit; what else he chose – paraphrasing Sheldon Pollock – when he chose Sanskrit for talking about Ayurveda in his social and political environment; and what his edition and commentary meant for the Ayurvedic community. Eventually, the investigation of Gangadhar's philological activity turns into an exercise in investigating the narrative concerning Indian intellectual history in colonial South Asia, and our own assumptions about philology as a practice and a discipline.

Vedantic Comedy and Religious Nationalism in V. Raghavan's Sanskrit Drama, Vimukti

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In V. Raghavan's contemporary Sanskrit drama, *Vimukti* (written 1931, published 1964), the renowned scholar of Sanskrit aesthetics gives the comic sentiment (*hāsya*) a Vedantic reworking, turning comedy into a form of the sentiment of peace (*śānta*) and a means of liberation (*vimukti*). On the surface, the play is a farce about a Brahmin, *Ātmanātha*, beset by six unruly sons, a quarrelsome wife, a witch of a mother-in-law, and three sisters-in-law. With his house under threat of demolition by the government, *Ātmanātha* debates getting another house, running away, or suicide.

On a philosophical level, the play presents a Vedantic philosophical allegory wherein the self (*Ātmanātha*) seeks liberation from the six senses (the sons), material *prakṛti* (the wife), illusion (*māyā*, the mother-in-law), and the *guṇas* (the sisters-in-law). The impending destruction of his house signifies bodily death. In the denouement, the sons/senses are literally arrested by the government, *Ātmanātha*'s house stands, and he receives a mantra from the mayor of the city/supreme being (*īśvara*) that kills his mother-in-law and pacifies his wife (*prakṛti*). The play offers an allegory for liberation of the soul from materiality and illusion. References to modernity in the play further suggest that this liberative mocking of materiality doubles as a denunciation of Western capitalism and sensuality in favor of an imagined Indian spirituality and traditional morality.

On my reading, the play suggests a liberation not just of the individual soul but of the entire Indian nation from the snares of Western materialism as part and parcel of India's "liberation" from colonialism. Thus *Vimukti* echoes Raghavan's nationalist and scholastic advocacy for the redemptive and religious nature of Sanskrit culture. The drama plays off a common trope of the West as materialistic and the East as spiritual. As such, the play serves as a unique example of contemporary Sanskrit literature that builds on a tradition of Sanskrit allegorical plays and speaks to both classical aesthetics and modern sentiments.

The Development of the Terms Māyā, Īśvara and Saccidānanda in the Early Advaita Vedānta

Dr Ivan Andrijanić

The aim of this paper is to determine when the concepts of māyā, īśvara and saccidānanda acquired the form that became common in the later Advaita Vedānta. In the case of the notion of īśvara which refers only to the conditioned brahman, the direction of this development has already been outlined by Śaṅkara. This tendency is evident in the Upaniṣadic commentaries. Maṇḍanamiśra played a decisive role in the idea that ignorance and māyā are the same, and that māyā is neither existing nor non-existent, but inexplicable. The root of the idea of māyā as the substance from which illusory phenomena is created, could be traced in Vācaspatimiśra and the concept is fully developed by Prakāśātman and Sarvajñātman. According to them, māyā is inexplicable, the same as avidyā, and at the same time the substance from which illusory phenomena are made. Brahman as ānanda is an old Upaniṣadic concept but the problem has arisen whether ānanda is a quality of brahman or brahman's own being. Mandanamiśra with his discussion of ānanda, which cannot be a property of brahman, again played a crucial role in shaping this concept. Śaṅkara bypassed the problem, while his successors found a way to incorporate the idea into the system without violating the principle of the totality of brahman. The popular idea of brahman as existence, consciousness and bliss (saccidānanda) appeared rather late, firstly only as existence and consciousness in Śaṅkara's Upadeśasahasrī, and then, probably from Sarvajñātman onwards, the formula takes its well-known form, although the compound is not yet fully stabilized as sukha appears interchangeably with ānanda.