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Research Report Abstract – The Textual Sanctification of Vārāṇasī

This research project investigates the complex literary processes involved in sanctifying Vārāṇasī, a famous religious destination in North India. A key aspect is the continuous textual construction and rendition of the city; that is, the discursive and narrative reframing that Vārāṇasī has been subject to during most of its religious history.

A central primary source for this research is a unique 12th-century palm-leaf manuscript of a compendium of texts celebrating the greatness of Vārāṇasī. These texts are called Vārāṇasīmāhātmyas, and they are attributed to various Purāṇas in the compendium. The compendium provides a snapshot of Vārāṇasīmāhātmyas in a state of flux, and forces us to critically think of Vārāṇasīmāhātmyas and Purāṇas as "living texts."

I employ three analytical perspectives to show the multiple dimensions of the creation of a sanctified Vārāṇasī. First, the perspective of "deep textual history," involving issues of intertextuality, textual creation processes, and historical connections. Second, the perspective of "localization," used to investigate how sacred space is created in and around specific locations. Last, the perspective of "sovereignty," focusing on power dynamics.

However, here I would like to focus only on the perspective of "deep textual history." I present examples of two chapters from the aforementioned compendium which I have edited and translated. I show how these chapters correspond with parts of the *Matsyapurāṇa* and the early *Skandapurāṇa* to highlight their intertextuality. Then, to display the complexity of the textual creation processes of the compendium, I discuss alterations which have been made to the texts to adapt the material to the context of Vārāṇasī. I also show how the process of editing and translation is made more complex by at least two later correctors who have changed the texts in the current manuscript.

I would like to hear your thoughts on 1. the perspective of "deep textual history," 2. how to deal with scribal change, and 3. how to present my edited and translated material. Any other ideas or comments are, of course, also highly appreciated.

A Temple of Stone and a Temple of Love:
Govindadeva in the Religious Imagination of Early Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas

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The temple of Govindadeva, which crowns the central hill of the pilgrimage town Vṛndāvana, has been called "the most impressive religious edifice that Hindu art has ever produced", and has dominated the town's skyline for centuries. Built by Mānasiṃha, a prominent Kachavāhā king and general of emperor Akbar's army, the temple has received much scholarly attention in recent years, mostly either examining either the art and architecture of this impressive building, or examining the political context of the temple and its relation to Kachavāhā rule and identity.

As I demonstrate in this paper, however, the temple was already prominent before the Kachavāhā patronage—and thus also before the building of the structure that still stands in Vṛndāvana and that has been the focus of so much scholarly attention. I argue that in order to understand the significance of the temple, we need to look not just to the political context of this red sandstone building, but also at the way the temple had been viewed in the religious imagination of its founder, priests, and devotees

I look at the temple from three different angles. In the first section, I look at the ways Rūpa Gosvāmī, the temple's founder, connects this new temple to the distant past, by claiming this new centre of worship to be the re-establishing of an older temple known from Purāṇic texts. I then examine, in the second section, how the temple was connected to the mythic present—to the abiding *līlā* of Kṛṣṇa—by examining what Gauḍīya authors thought about Govindadeva's location. The third and final section examines Govindadeva's temple's relation to the other (Gauḍīya) temples of Vṛndāvana, mostly by exploring the views of Rādhākṛṣṇa Gosvāmī, the fifth custodian of the temple, and demonstrates that legal battles over the temple and the increased involvement of Kachavāhā kings in the temple's management in the seventeenth century—so well documented and so well studied—represents but one facet of a protracted conflict over the "imagined" identity of Govindadeva and his temple.

श्री:

The significance of etymology in early modern polemical works of Vedānta

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1. Title and the authors of the works extensively mentioned in the article:

Title		Author
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● Vedāntakaustubha - VK	-	Paravastu Vedāntācārya (fl.18th cent.)
● Śivārkamaṇidīpikā - ŚMD	-	Appaya Dīkṣita (1520-1593 CE)
● Brahmasūtra*s* - BS	-	Bādarāyaṇa (between 400 and 200 BCE) - Also known as Vyāsa
● Brahmasūtrabhāṣya on BS	-	Śaṅkarācārya (8th cent. CE)
● Brahmamīmāṃsābhāṣya on BS	-	Śrīkaṇṭha (fl. between 11th and 14th cent.)
● Kūrmapurāṇa - KP Padmapurāṇa - PP Mahābhārata - MB Harivaṃśa - HV	-	Attributed to Vyāsa
● Tattvamuktākalāpa - TMK	-	Veṅkaṭanātha (1268-1364 CE)

2. Abstract:

The paper presents the argument that took place between two major theologians of Vedānta active in the early modern period, namely Appaya Dīkṣita and Paravastu Vedāntācārya on the term Nārāyaṇa. The term is referred to by many Vedic hymns and the scriptures as the ultimate cause of creation (i.e. *Parabrahma*). Hence, both Vedāntins argue on the interpretation of the term and its identity with the deity of their cult, namely Śiva and Viṣṇu. Alhough the term Nārāyaṇa had generally been used to denote Viṣṇu, Appaya, in his ŚMD, quotes verses from the KP and the HV to claim that it is also 'a proper name' of Śiva. To support his argument, he then uses etymological aspects such are the signifying power of the word, the interpretation of

it, etc. to ascribe the term Nārāyaṇa as 'a proper name' to Śiva. Thus, in the first stage, he ascertains that the term denotes Śiva by means of its indicative power. He is aware that the Vaiṣṇavas may not agree with this concerning the etymology of the term which insists a unique characteristic that is not applicable to Śiva. Hence, in the second stage, he argues that the term does not *exclusively* denote Viṣṇu, the preferred deity of Vaiṣṇavas, but also Viriñci (i.e. Brahmā - one among the three-fold deities). He quotes some other verses, again, from the KP to argue that the term Nārāyaṇa and the characteristic implied by the etymology are associated with Viriñci. Thus he concludes by saying that the term Nārāyaṇa should not be *exclusively* identified with Viṣṇu, but also with other deities.

Two centuries after Appaya, Paravastu Vedāntācārya, a Vaiṣṇava erudite, refutes and responds to Appaya's claim on the term Nārāyaṇa. He, at first, quotes verses from the MB and the PP to elucidate the etymology of the term. He then uses grammatical techniques to establish the meaning of the term Nārāyaṇa through derivation and the characteristics implied by it. He argues that those characteristics are applicable only to the ultimate cause of creation (i.e. Supreme soul) and it could be *only* Viṣṇu, the preferred deity of Vaiṣṇavas. He refutes Appaya's view by saying that it is improper to claim that the term Nārāyaṇa denotes Śiva by indicative power. Furthermore, it is well-established by the Vedic and the worldly usages that by all means the term Nārāyaṇa denotes *only* Viṣṇu. He then quotes a rule from the Mīmāṃsā to determine the purport of the chapter of the KP quoted by Appaya to say that the term Nārāyaṇa is 'a proper name of Śiva. Based on the rule, he further explains that the chapter deals with the origin and the destruction of the beings and not the names of 'any deity' (i.e. notably Śiva). Paravastu then responds to Appaya's second argument that the term Nārāyaṇa does not *exclusively* denote Viṣṇu as sources are found to identify it also with Viriñci. He says that again *only* Viṣṇu is referred to by the term Nārāyaṇa in the context mentioned by Appaya to say that Viriñci is referred to by the term. Hence, he affirms that it cannot be identified with any deity. He concludes by saying the term Nārāyaṇa is a unique one and can be identified with and denotes only Viṣṇu. Thus, this paper, by presenting the debate between Appaya and Paravastu, shows how importance was given to the interpretation, denotation, and identification of the term Nārāyaṇa, which reflects the significance of grammatical aspects in the polemical works of Vedānta composed in the early modern period.

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The concept of *sukha* in the ascetic traditions of Ancient India

ABSTRACT

This paper argues that *sukha* is an important concept in the ascetic poetry of Ancient India, where it is particularly prominent in religious rhetoric and negotiation. Most of the time ascetic *sukha* is contrasted with some inferior *sukha* in an attempt to create a hierarchy of *sukhas*.

The concept of *sukha* is important to the householder-renouncer dichotomy. The ascetic traditions claim that they can offer a better *sukha* than that already experienced by the householder. It is superior and permanent because it does not depend on any external object for its experience. It is a *sukha* that is found within oneself (*ātman*).

The *sukha* experienced by the renouncers is paradoxical. While according to conventional wisdom the renouncer is deprived of all normal sources of *sukha*, the renouncer claims to have a superior *sukha*. Rather than following from the satisfaction of one's desires, the renouncer's *sukha* is experienced when there are no desires in the first place.

An important feature of the semantics of *sukha* is that *sukha* is used to talk about the feeling of being at ease. The experience of *sukha* often follows when a source of agitation is removed. Being removed from the society, the renouncer is also freed from the troubles that social life and responsibilities bring. It is in this sense that the renouncer can be said to experienced *sukha* here and now, even if everything in *saṃsāra* is said to be suffering.

A threefold hierarchy of *sukhas* is found in the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*, which has *kaivalyasukha*, "the *sukha* of liberation", on top and *saṃtoṣasukha*, "the *sukha* of contentment" in the middle position. By claiming that *saṃtoṣasukha* is *sukha* only in relation to the inferior *kāmasukha* the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* stays faithful to the dictum that everything is suffering while also drawing on earlier ascetic literature that describe sages as experiencing *sukha* here and now.