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CONTENTS

Bears in Ancient Indian Literature and Culture

K. G. Sheshadri

Introduction

Ancient Indian Literature is replete with the descriptions of animals and birds as well as their behaviour and characteristic. The serene hermitage of various sages of ancient India had many Fauna. The observations made by ancient sages as well as by later writers and poets portray rich descriptions of Indian Fauna and their behaviour that astound even modern biologists. Among the wild animals, bear is one of them belonging to the family *Ursidae.* Ursine bears are the largest living terrestrial carnivore and have evolved during the last five million years attaining a wide geographical distribution range[1]. Bears appear in a wide variety of habitat throughout the Northern Hemisphere and partially in the Southern Hemisphere. Bears are found on the continents of North America, South America, Europe and Asia. Evidence from the fossil record, morphology and mitochondrial phylogeny suggested a closer relationship between the Asiatic and the American black bears. There are several species of bears inhabiting India of which some are predominant. Their characteristics are discussed in literature[2] and briefly tabulated in Tab. 1. The current status and distribution patterns of these bears have been discussed in recent literature[3]. The present paper gleans the characteristics, behaviour and other beliefs of bears in ancient Indian literature and culture.

Tab. 1 Species of Bears found in India

Species of bear	Zoological name	Habitat and Characteristics
Brown Bear	*Ursus arctos*	Confined to upland and alpine meadows in Himalayas especially the Western and North-Western ranges. It has a strong sense of smell, eats grasses, berries, fruits and insects. It hibernates in winter and comes out only when snow melts. It is known as *'Dzu The'* or *Yeti* in the high Himalayan altitudes.
Asiatic Black Bear	*Ursus thibetanus*	Himalayan region and hills of North East India extending from Sikkim to Arunachal Pradesh. It is very aggressive and can attack without any provocation. This bear also hibernates in winter, has a distinct V-shaped mark on chest and a diet like brown bears.
Malayan Sun Bear	*Ursus malayanus*	Tropical rain forest of North East India especially Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. They have long claws, are excellent climbers, fond of bees and honey. They also eat termites, ants, fruits, grass and beetle larvae.
Sloth Bear	*Melursus Ursinus*	Peninsular India, lowlands of Nepal, Siwalik hills and other regions from the Himalayas to Southern India. It is absent in Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan deserts. Feeds on black ants, termites, beetles, fruit and honey. They have long black hair with horse-shoe shaped marks on their chest.

Bears in Ancient Indian Archeology, Sculptures and other Arts

Sloth bears that have been found in India may have reached their current form in the early *Pleistocene,* the time when the bear family specialized and dispersed[4]. A fragment of fossilized *humerus* from the Pleistocene found in Andhra Pradesh's Kurnool Basin is identical to the *humerus* of a modern sloth bear. The fossilized skulls of a bear once named *Melursus theobaldi* found in the *Shivaliks* from the early *Pleistocene* or early *Pliocene* period are thought by certain authors to represent an intermediate stage between sloth bears and ancestral brown bears. Sloth bears probably arose during the *mid-Pliocene* and evolved in the Indian subcontinent. Bears are not depicted much in cave paintings found in rock shelters all over India. However, bears are depicted in a painting in the Bhanrawli hills of the Bhimbetka region in Central India. Another painting in Kathodia Karad depicts a bear hunt[5].

Bears have also been depicted in sculptural and archaeological monuments. Some of these have been elaborately discussed in literature[6]. Terracotta figurines of bear have been found in Chanhudaro, Mohenjodaro and Lothal sites belonging to the Harappan period. Bears are also depicted in the *Bhārhut* Buddhist sculptures as peeping out of a cave in a mountain and watching a Nāga maiden dancing and singing. A bear sleeping in a rock shelter on what seems to be a layer of leaves can be discerned at the left top corner of a panel from Nagarjunakonda Andhra Pradesh (3rd - 4th c. A. D.). These sculptures also portray a bear-faced man. The scenes of Ajanta cave paintings also depict bear in various contexts such as an attack on a bear by the hill people as well as sleeping bears and bears hugging one of the assailants. Bears have been also depicted in sculptures of temples in Mysore, the Mughal and the Rajput art miniatures that have been elaborated in literature. Two examples of realistic sloth bear statues are known from the region of Mathura, Uttar Pradesh and from Bhaktapur, Nepal[7].

Behaviour

Brown and American black bears are generally diurnal and are active for the most part during the day, though they may forage

substantially by night. Other species may be nocturnal or active at night though female sloth bears with cubs may feed more at daytime to avoid competition from conspecifics and nocturnal predators. Bears are overwhelmingly solitary and are considered to be the most asocial of all the *Carnivora.* Sloth bears breed during spring and early summer and give birth near the beginning of winter. They feed on termites, honeybee colonies and fruits[8]. Sloth bears may supplement their diets with fruit and plant matter. In March and April they eat the leaves of trees and are partial to mangoes, sugarcane and jackfruit. Sloth bears are extremely fond of honey. When feeding their cubs, sows are reported to regurgitate a mixture of half-digested jack fruit, wood apples and pieces of honeycomb. Sloth bears sometimes attack humans who encroach on their territories. Sloth bear mothers carry cubs up to 9 months old on their backs instead of sending their cubs up trees as the primary defence against attacks by predators, such as tigers, leopards, and other bears. They are capable of climbing on smooth surfaces and hanging upside down like sloths. They are good swimmers and primarily enter water to play. The breeding season for sloth bears varies according to location. Generally in India they mate in April, May and June giving birth in December and early January while in Sri Lanka it occurs all year. Sows gestate for 210 days and typically give birth in caves or in shelters under boulders. Litters usually consist of one or two cubs or rarely three. Sloth bears are expert hunters of termites which they locate by smell. Tigers and leopards occasionally prey on sloth bears[9]. Asian elephants apparently do not tolerate sloth bears in their vicinity. Officers in British India often kept sloth bears as pets. Sloth bears likely view humans as potential predators as their reactions to them (roaring, followed by retreat or charging) are similar to those evoked in the presence of tigers and leopards.

Bears in Vedic Texts

In Sanskrit, the oldest word for bear is *Ṛkṣa* meaning one who hurts or is injurious. It has many synonyms such as *Bhalla, Bhallūka, Bhālu, Hari* [which is also used for a monkey] and *Bhāluka.* The word

Haryakṣa is taken to mean both ape and bears. Bears are also denoted by the terms [अच्छभल्ल - *Acchabhalla]* in later Sanskrit, *Pāli* and *Ardhamāgadhi* languages. The earliest Vedic literature namely *Ṛgveda*[10] (RV) has several reference to bears. RV [5.56.3] states :

ऋक्षो न वो मरुतः शिमीवा। *ṛkṣo na vo marutaḥ śimīvā*

"The hordes of *Maruts* [Wind gods] are fierce and injurious like bears".

RV [8.68.15] states :

ऋज्राविन्द्रोत आ ददे हरी ऋक्षस्य सूनवि। *ṛjrāvindrota ā dade harī ṛkṣasya sūnavi*

"*Indrota* donated yellow horses to *Ṛjrā,* son of *Ṛkṣa*".

This indicates an epithet. The celestial bear among the asterisms is also referred in the *Ṛgoeda* RV [I.24.10] :

अमी य ऋक्षा निहितास उच्चा नक्तं ददृश्रे कुह चिद्दिवेयुः।
amī ya ṛkṣā nihitāsa uccā naktaṁ dadṛśre kuha ciddiveyuḥ।

Here the word *ṛkṣā* means 'star' and were identified in later texts as the *Saptaṛṣis* of the Great Bear constellation. The *Yajurveda Saṁhitā*[11] YV [24.35] in context of *Aśvamedha* sacrifice includes bear as one of the animals led to the sacrificial post and offered to the other folk.

ऋक्षो जतूः सुषिलीका त इतर जनानां।
ṛkṣo jatūḥ suṣilīkā ta itara janānāṁ।

The *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*[12] (TS) also mentions the same. The *Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā*[13] (MS) [3.14.17] also in the context of describing the *Aśvamedha* sacrifice includes bear among the *Jatū* (a bat) and *Suṣilīkā* (an owlet according to *Sāyaṇācārya's* commentary to RV [7.104.22]) to be offered to the deities of other people. The *Atharvaveda Saṁhitā*[14] (AV) refers to a deity or demoness named *Ṛkṣikā.* This may refer to a cult of bears and existence of such cults may be supported by their mention in stone tablets in the Devagiri or Daulatabad fort. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*[15] (SB) [2.1.2.4] also refers to the celestial bear.

ऋक्षाणां ह वा एता अग्रे पत्न्या आसु सप्तर्षीनु ह स्मा वै। *ṛkṣāṇāṁ ha vā etā agre patnyā āsu saptarṣīnu ha smā vai* ।

The *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*[16] *(JB)* [1.184] in the context of describing the legend of the three brothers *Ekata*, *Dvita* and *Trita* states that when *Trita* was rescued from the well into which he was pushed by his other two brothers, by the grace of the Gods, one of them became a bear and other a monkey. This legend seems to suggest that the bear was originally a human and later turned into a beast by the magical power of a sage. The *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*[17] (TA) [1.11.2] also denotes the seven stars of the constellation of the Great Bear by the term *'Saptaṛkṣā'*. Bears are also mentioned in the *Kalpasūtras.* The *Smṛtis* give several other aspects of bears with regard to several rites. The *Manusmṛti*[18] (MSM) [II.101] refers to the great Bear constellation in the context of the evening *Sandhyā* rites. It further states that a man who steals a woman becomes a Bear in the next birth as in MSM [XII .67]. The *Parāśarasmṛti*[19] [Vl.ll] states that a killer of a bear should expiate for the sin by donating one *Prastha* [a measure] of Sesame *(Sesamum indicum)* to a Brahmin after fasting for three days. The *Parāśarasmṛti* [XI-85-45] states that if a Brahmin sees the carcass of a bear or other wild animals and if the dead body sinks in a well or reservoir, he becomes pure by fasting for three nights. The *Kāśyapasmṛti*[20] states that if one kills a bear, one must fast for a full night and donate a cow the next day.

Bears in the Epics and Purāṇas

There are several references to the aspects of bears in epics and Purāṇic texts. These occur in both natural and mythological settings. No exclusive descriptions of the natural life of Bears are found in these texts. Sage Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*[21] also gives various aspects of bears in several sections of the text. It states that *Jāmbavān* was the king of Bears. He was known as *Ṛkṣarāja* and was the son of *Prajāpati* Brahmā. The text *[Bālakāṇḍa,* 17 .6] mentions that *Jāmbavān* was born during the yawn of *Prajāpati* Brahmā.

पूर्वमेव मया सृष्टो जाम्बवानृक्षपुङ्गवः । जृम्भमाणस्य सहसा मम वक्त्रादजायत॥
pūrvameva mayā sṛṣṭo jāmbavānṛkṣapuṅgavaḥ। jṛmbhamāṇasya sahasā mama vaktrādajāyata ॥

Further it is stated in the text *[Bālakāṇḍa,* 17.19] that some monkeys with valour were born to female monkeys with tails while some were born to female bears and *Kinnarīs.*

गोलाङ्गुलीषु चोत्पन्नाः केचित्सम्मतविक्रमाः । ऋक्षीषु च तथा जाता वानराः किन्नरीषु च॥
golāṅgulīṣu cotpannāḥ kecitsammatavikramāḥ। ṛkṣīṣu ca tathā jātā vānarāḥ kinnarīṣu ca ॥

The bears have been mentioned with other communities such a monkeys who were born from *Apsaras, Vidyādharīs, Nāgas* and *Gandharvas.* Kauśalyā mentions to Rāma regarding the wild beasts such as tigers, lions, leopards, bears, wild buffaloes and beasts with dreadful teeth and horns as in the text *[Ayodhyākāṇḍa,* 25.19]. The same text *[Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa,* 29.3] refers to *Sṛmaras* [a class of wild bears or species of deer according to some scholars]. In some sections of the *Rāmāyaṇa* it is interesting to note the mention of both organised band of bears under the guidance of *Jāmbavān* as well as wild bears of the forest. However the association of monkeys and bears are also noted by the text. Sage Bharadvāja recommends the forests of *Chitrakūṭa* to Lord Rāma describing it as inhabited by *Golāṅgulas* and frequented by *Ṛkṣas* and *Vānaras* in the text *[Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa,* 48.26]. The commentator Govindarāja in interpreting the phrase denoting it [गोलाङ्गुलानुचरितो वानरऋक्षनिषेवितः ॥ *golāṅgulānucarito vānararkṣaniṣevitaḥ।*] states that the three *Vargas* which the great sage Vālmīki was suggesting was that the monkeys of these species [*Jātīs]* would become Rāma's allies[22].

एतत्सजातीया एव रामस्य सहया अपि भविष्यन्तीति सूचितावानिति गम्यते॥
etatsajātīyā eva rāmasya sahayā api bhaviṣyantīti sūcitāvāniti gamyate॥

The Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa [Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa,* 93.1] mentions that bears, spotted deer, Ruru deer were seen running on the tracks of the rivers in the forest of *Chitrakūṭa.*

The Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa [Āraṇya Kāṇḍa* 4.3] in the context of slaying the demon Viradha mentions *Devī* Sītā stating to Rāma that bears would devour men just as tigers and leopards.

मामृक्षा भक्षयिष्यन्ति शार्दूलद्वीपिनस्तथा॥ *māmṛkṣā bhakṣayiṣyanti śārdūladvīpinastathā*॥

Rāvaṇa also mentions to Sītā that monkeys, lions, leopards, tigers, deer, wolves, bears and hyenas live in the forest of *Pañcavaṭī* surrounding their hermitage as stated in the text *[Āraṇya Kāṇḍa,* 46.29]. Elsewhere the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa [Āraṇya Kāṇḍa,* 14, 23-25] has Jaṭāyu declaring the origin of species who states that *Ṛkṣas* [bears], *Camaras* [yaks] and type of deer *[sṛmaras]* as having descended from Mṛgamandā, wife of sage Kaśyapa. Vālmīki uses the epithet like *Mahākapi [Kiṣkindhā Kāṇḍā,* 65.18] *Hariśreṣṭha [Kiṣkindha Kāṇḍā,* 65.20] and *Plavagaṛṣabha [Kiṣkindhā Kāṇḍā,* 65.33]. These epithets refer to him as a monkey rather than a Bear. Such references to the close associations of the bears and the monkey (apes) in *Rāmāyaṇa* have origins to the earlier legends as the one stated the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* [1.184]. Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa [Kiṣkindhā Kāṇḍā,* 60.15-20] mentions that sage Niśākara was surrounded by bears, *sṛmara* [a species of deer according to some scholars], tigers, lions and serpents of various kinds as all living being would follow a giver. As he was born from the yawn of the creator, Jāmbavān was called the son of *Gadgada* [stammer] as stated in the text *[Yuddhakāṇḍa].* He leads millions of black bear with white faces in the battle to help Rāma. His brother is like Parjanya (the God of rain) and was called as Dhūmra. He was brought up besides the *Narmadā* river in the *Ṛkṣavant* Mountains. The text states that Jāmbavān was stronger than his brother but had become feeble due to age and could jump only 90 *Yojanas [Kiṣkindhā Kāṇḍā, 65.13].* Jāmbavān was also termed as '*Vākyakovidaḥ*' (expert in speech) as in the text *[Kiṣkindhā Kaṇḍā,* 65.20]. Further, he himself narrates some incidents of his life that shows that he was long lived and a witness to several incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu. At the bidding of the Gods, during the period of Vāmana incarnation, he circumambulated the

world 21 times collecting the herbs from which Ambrosia *[Amṛta]* was churned from the milky ocean as stated in the text *[Kiṣkindhā Kāṇḍā,* 66.31]. The *Yuddhakāṇḍa* [27.9] has Rāvaṇa's spy Sāraṇa describing the strength of the army of Rāma. In this context he states that an army chief named Dhūmra was the lord of all bears and who drinks the water of the *Narmadā* river residing in the mountain named *'Ṛkṣavanta'*. This term *'Ṛkṣavanta'* also indicates a mountain full of bears or the bear totemic community as has been discussed by scholars[23]. Further the text *[Yuddhakāṇḍā,* 27.10-11] has Sāraṇa describing Jāmbavān as follows -

यवीयानस्य तु भ्राता पश्यैनं पर्वतोपमम्। भ्रात्रा समानो रूपेण विशिष्टस्तु पराक्रमैः॥ स एष जाम्बवान्नाम महायुथपयूथपः। प्रशान्तो गुरुवर्ती च सम्प्रहारेष्वमर्षणः॥

yavīyānasya tu bhrātā paśyainaṁ parvatopamam । bhrātrā samāno rūpeṇa viśiṣṭastu
parākramaiḥ ॥ sa eṣa jāmbavānnāma mahāyūthapayūthapaḥ।
praśānto guruvartī ca samprahāreṣvamarṣaṇaḥ॥

"See him who is appearing like a mountain, the younger brother of Dhūmra, though in form resembling like his brother, is more distinguished in prowess. He as such is a commander of even the mighty generals called Jāmbavān, who is setting on the march (for the battle). He has a respectful behaviour towards venerable persons impatient in battle".

He also describes that Jāmbavān rendered help to Indra in the battle between the celestials and demons. Jāmbavān's troops are also described to resemble *Rākṣasās* and have thick hair like *Piśācās* [राक्षसानां च सदृशाः पिशाचानां च लोमशाः॥ *rākṣasānāṁ ca sadṛśāḥ piśācānāṁ ca lomaśāḥ॥*], endowed with energy who wander about climbing mountain heights, hurl massive rocks as big as clouds as stated in the text [Yuddhakāṇḍa, 27.13-14]. In the context of surveying montain Suvela in Laṅka, the monkeys, entered the gardens and groves and thus many wild animals and bird including bears ran in all directions. The

text *[Yuddhakāṇḍā,* Chap. 56] while mentioning Rāma's march to *Laṅkā* through the *Sahyādri* forest states that bears, apes and tigers raise dust by their claws, tusk and toes. They are also found in the forests wherein the *Vānaras* feasted on fruit *[Yuddhakāṇḍā,* Chap. 84]. Vālmīki mentions the old tale of faithful bears and the unfaithful man in the text *[Yuddhakāṇḍā,* 114.41-42] as,

अयं व्याघ्रसमीपे तु पुराणो धर्मसंहितः। ऋक्षेण गीतः श्लोकोऽस्ति तं निबोध प्लवङ्गम॥ न परः पापमादत्ते परेषां पापकर्मणाम्। समयो रक्षितोव्यस्तु सन्तश्चारित्रमूषणाः॥

ayaṁ vyāghrasamīpe tu purāṇo dharmasaṁhitaḥ। ṛkṣeṇa gītaḥ śloko' sti taṁ nibodha plavaṅgama ॥ na paraḥ pāpamādatte pareṣāṁ pāpakarmaṇām । samayo rakṣitovyastu santaścāritrabhūṣaṇāḥ. ॥

"O monkey listen to the verse, sung by the bears in front of the tiger which illustrates the ancient *Dharma.* One does not repay the sinful persons in a sinful way. A good deed is to be maintained because the wise are endowed with noble nature".

The commentary of Rāma namely *'Tilaka'* also narrates an ancient legend in which a tiger asks a bear that had already mounted a tree to push down the man [actually a hunter] who was the enemy of the both. The bear refused to do so as he had taken refuge in its shelter. But when the tiger asked the man to push the bear down, he does so immediately but the bear caught hold of a branch and saved itself.

Kamban, the famous Tamil poet in his South Indian version of Vālmīki's text known as *Irāmāyaṇam*[24] *[Yuddhakāṇḍa,* 38.11] mentions Jambavān as fighting with the *Rākṣasa* Kumbhānu. He refers to Jāmbavān by the epithets *'Karaḍiyin Kāvalan'* [as protector of Bears] and *'Enkinvendan'* [the king of bears]. The *Irāmāyaṇam [Pūrvakhaṇḍa]* mentions that Jāmbavān was born from the sweat (hence known as *Ambujāta)* that flowed down the cheeks of Lord Brahma when the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha (who were born from ear-wax of Lord Viṣṇu) challenged him for a fight. He was the first person to enter the

country known as *Jāmbunada* and was thus called as Jāmbavān. He was born at a time when the creation was about to begin and hence his age could not be ascertained. At the time when Lord Viṣṇu incarnated as Rāma, his age was 6 *Manvantaras* and 164 *Chaturyugas.* He had been a witness to many of the incarnations. The *Irāmāyaṇam [Yuddhakāṇḍa]* states that at the time of Vāmana incarnation he travelled at lightning speed all around the world and the nail of his toe touched the highest peak of mountain *Mahāmeru* who considered it as an insult and cursed him to be ever old. The Tulasidāsa *Rāmacaritamānasa*[25] *[Kiṣkindhā Kāṇḍa, Chaupai* IV following Doha 28] refers to Jāmbavān as '*Riccesā*' or '*Riccapati*' with the Hindi form '*Rīcca*' for Bears. The *Giridhara Rāmāyaṇa*[26] *[Yuddhakāṇḍa]* states in the conversation of the spies Śuka and Sāraṇa with Rāvaṇa describing about the strength of the army of Rāma. In this context, the text mentions that Dhūmraketu, the younger brother of Jāmbavān and a resident of *Kāśi* was a leader of about 12 crores of bears while Jāmbavān, a dweller of the banks of the river *Narmadā* had 60000 bears under his command.

Sage Vyāsa's *Mahābhārata*[27] also has several references to bears. The *Ādi Parva* [l. 71.25] mentions bears and monkeys living on the banks of river *Mālinī.* The *Nalopākhyāna [Vana Parva,* 12.9] has a mention of Damayantī seeing hordes of bears, bisons and wild snakes in the forests. The *Vana Parva* also has a reference to female bear *(Ṛkṣī).* Bears also move in herds *[yūthasaḥ]* as stated in the text *[Vana Parva,* 6l.8]. Elsewhere the text *[Vana Parva, Tīrthayātrāparva,* Chap. 100] while describing the hermitage of sage Dadhīci states that bears, deer, buffaloes, *Chamaras* [yak] wandered at pleasure without fear of tigers in its spiritual environment. The *Mahābhārata [Vana Parva Tīrthayātrāparva,* Chap. 146] states that boars, bears, deer, lions, tigers and other wild animals began to cry being terror stricken with fear as Bhīma rushed forward in his search of the *Saugandhikāpuṣpa* (celestial flower in garden of Kubera). The *Mahābhārata [Vana Parva,* 170.42] states bears appear at the release of *Raudrāstra.* The Kauravas

are stated to have chased bears in *Dvaitavana* as stated in the text *[Vana Parva,* 229.10]. The text *[Vana Parva,* 260.13] states that some bears live at will *(yathecchakanivāsaḥ).* The text *[Vana Parva Rāmopākhyāna]* also mentions Jāmbavān who leads several troops of bears who are black with patches or marks on their faces or heads:

कृष्णानां मुखपुण्ड्राणां ऋक्षाणां भीमकर्माणां॥ *kṛṣṇānāṁ mukhapuṇḍrāṇāṁ ṛkṣaṇāṁ bhīmakarmāṇāṁ.* ॥

Some state that the term *'mukhapuṇḍrāṇāṁ'* has a variant *'mukhapāṇḍūnām'* [white faced]. The text *[Vana Parva, Rāmopākhyāṇa,* 266.6] also states that bears are devoted to Sugrīva. The term *'Bhallūka'* is also mentioned by the text *[Bhīṣma Parva,* 116.6]. The *Mahābhārata [Droṇa Parva,* 131.26 and 142.35] has a mention of hide of bear *[Ṛkṣacarma]* that covers the war chariot of Ghaṭotkaca.

Several *Purāṇas* describe various aspects of bear. The *Matsyapurāṇa*[29] [118.57] also mentions that bears, hyenas, *Golāṅgulas, Vānaras,* rabbits, wild cats, jackals and other wild animals and birds live in the *Śivālik* and adjoining *Himālaya* range. The *Kūrmapurāṇa*[29] [I.25.6] states that Lord Kṛṣṇa saw several animals including bears in the hermitage of sage Upamanyu in the *Himālayas.* The *Varāhapurāṇa*[30] [199.32-33] while describing the torments of hell states that the servants of Yama throw sinners into the grove of palms full of swords, tigers and bears. The text [Chap. 215] while describing the greatness of *Śaileśvara* states that the forests full of *Śleṣmātaka* trees were filled with sounds of several wild animals including that of bears.

The *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*[31] *[Skandha* X], *Matsyapurāṇa* [Chap. 46], *Viṣṇupurāṇa*[32] [Section 4, Chap. 13] and *Harivaṁsapurāṇa*[33] *[Viṣṇuparva]* mention the episode of *Śyamantaka* jewel in which both *Jāmbavān* and his daughter Jāmbavatī are portrayed. The text mentions the valour of Jāmbavān in fighting with Lord Kṛṣṇa who was falsely accused of stealing the jewel. Earlier, there is a reference to Jāmbavān having fought a lion from which he is said to have taken possession of the jewel. The text mentions about Jāmbavatī who was the offspring of

Jāmbavān and portrays the magical power of copulating with humans to produce human offspring. The *Brahmapurāṇa*[34] [14.30-33] states that Lord Kṛṣṇa searched the *Ṛkṣavan* and *Vindhya* Mountains for the jewel. Thus *Ṛkṣa* was a chain of mountains in Central India in the forests close to *Narmadā* river. The Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa [Kiṣkindhā Kāṇḍā,* 27.9] also mentions about the *Ṛkṣavanta* mountains. Strangely Jāmbavān also has his origin here.

The *Garuḍapurāṇa*[35] [V.28] in context of describing various sins states that he who cuts off his lineage, by embracing a woman of his own family, having become a hyena and a porcupine, is born from the womb of a bear. The *Vāmanapurāṇa*[36] [12.54] while describing the actions leading to hells mentions the *'Rkṣarāja'* among the wild animals (वनौकसेष्वेव च ऋक्षराज). The *Agnipurāṇa*[37] [231.18-19] mentions that bears wander day and night. The *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*[38] [2.3.38.32-33] mentions that a chance meeting of bear *[Bhallūka]* is an ill omen when starting on a journey or a march. The *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa*[39] [4.75.37] mentions that one who steals the wealth of a brahmin is born as a *Bhallūka* for 100 births. Elsewhere the text [4.85.19] states that flesh of *Bhallūku* must not be eaten. The *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*[40] *[Khaṇḍa* II.164.26-28] states that the sight of a bear is not desirable. The same text *[Khaṇḍa* II. 164.95] states that if a bear comes in front of a marching army, then it forebodes the destruction of army. The wild animals such as monkeys, *Golāṅgulas,* bears were seen by king Purūravas in the forest on the banks of river *Haimavatī* as stated in the text *[Khaṇḍa* I.164]. The *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa [Khaṇḍa* 1.151. 51] also mentions that bears, hyenas, monkeys, hares, wild cats, dogs and other animals lived a life bereft of mutual enmity in the spiritual sanctity of sage Atri's hermitage. The text *[Khaṇḍa* 1.252] also describes the origin of Bears. Harī, the wife of sage Pulaha gave birth to a monkey Śvetā. From Śvetā, a monkey named Ūrdhvadṛṣṭi was produced. This ape gave birth to a tiger, lion and a *śarabha* (an eight legged mythical animal). Śarabha became the father of bears *[Ṛkṣa]* who had a sister called *Ṛkṣī.* From her all bears including Jāmbavān [begot of Prajāpati

by her] were born. Dhūmra was the brother of Jāmbavān. The *Vāyupurāṇa*[41] *[96.33-34]* also mentions that Prasena, the brother of Satrājit was killed by Jāmbavān. The *Vāyupurāṇa* [69.208] states that bears were the progeny of Haribhadrā, wife of sage Pulaha. This may seem to be contradictory to the origin of bears as stated in the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa.* The *Skandhapurāṇa*[42] [IV1.3.38] while describing the spiritual influence of the hermitage of sage Agastya states that the bears sleep and the monkey examines the hairs of the bears picking up lice with its fingers thus abandoning any natural rivalry. The *Skandhapurāṇa* [33.1.32.1-65] narrates a legend of Dharmagupta, son of king Nanda who occupied a treetop during a hunting expedition pursued by a lion and bears. The bears spoke to the king to take rounds and share responsibility of keeping awake half the night. But provoked by the lion, the king dropped the bear when he was awake. The text further states that the bear was in a former life a sage named Dhyānakāṣṭha while the lion was a *Yakṣa* named Narasiṁha. This legend has a similarity to the one stated by *Devi* Sītā in the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* showing that it was an ancient tale. The *Liṅgapurāṇa*[43] [91.15] while describing portentious phenomena states that if one sees himself being drawn in a southern direction in a chariot yoked with monkeys and bears, then he would face imminent death. The *Padmapurāṇa*[44] [1.38.42] while mentioning about Rāma installing the image of Vāmana at *Kānyakubja* states that the king of bears namely Dhūmra came with his army of bears. The text [I.40.187-188] while describing the army of demons states that bulls and bears were used as vehicles by them in the battle. It is stated that crores of beings, lions, demons, bears, wolves, tigers, elephants and serpents ran towards Indra while describing the battle with demon Vṛtra in the text [1.73.21-22]. The *Padmapurāṇa* [V.7.28-29] states that the Gods took the form of bears and monkeys to assist Lord Rāma. In the context of Lord Rāma's departure to His celestial abode, the text [VI.244.65-66] states that He asked Jāmbavān to remain until end of *Dvāpara* age until He would fight him. Many bears are stated to have

cast their life by touching and dipping in the waters of river *Sarayū* in this context as mentioned by the text [VI.244.82-91]. The *Padmapurāṇa* [VI.249.30-36] while describing the *Śyamantaka* episode describes Jāmbavān's hospitality to Lord Kṛṣṇa before offering his daughter, Jāmbavatī. While describing the torments in hells, the text [VII.23.153-161] mentions that some sinners are being eaten by bears in abode of Yama.

Bears In Post Vedic Texts

Several Post-Vedic texts mention about various aspects of bears. There are several synonyms of bears in Kośa texts such as 'Kapardakaḥ', 'varāṭaḥ', 'Carācaraḥ', 'Varyaḥ' and 'Bālakrīḍānakaḥ'. The Amarakośa[45] mentions the synonyms *'Accha'* and *'Acchabhalla'*. The *Abhidhānavastukośa*[46] [*Avibhinnārtha Kāṇḍaṁ, Mṛgapakṣivargaṁ,* 3] of Nāgavarma gives the synonyms of bears as given in Sanskrit texts while adding the Kannada term for bear as 'Karaḍi'. The Medinīkośa[47] mentions the terms 'Achhabhalla' and 'Bhalla'. It adds that the word 'Bhalla' means one who kills [bhallate].

भालुकः भल्लते हिनस्ति प्राणिनः इति। *bhālukaḥ bhallate hinasti prāṇinaḥ iti*।

The *Vaijayantīkośa*[48] of Yādavaprakāśa gives the synonyms in the text *[Paśusaṁgrahādhyāyaḥ,* IV.7] as-

भल्लूको दीर्घरोमर्क्षो भल्लाटो वृकघूर्तकः। विकरालोऽच्छभल्लश्च गण्डके खड्गखड्गिनौ॥

bhallūko dīrgharomarkṣo bhallāṭo vṛkaghūrtakaḥ । vikarālo' cchabhallaśca gaṇḍake khaḍgakhaḍginau॥

The *Śabdaratnākara*[49] *[Chatuṣpadādhyāyaḥ]* also gives the synonyms such as *'Ṛkṣa'*, *'Accha'* and *'Acchabhalla'* and *'Bhallūka'* for bear. The *Vācaspatyam*[50] includes bears among the placental *[Jarāyuja]* mammals. It also adds that several commentators derive that the word *'Ṛkṣa'* from the verb *'Ṛkṣ'* which means to kill or to cause injury. The *Kalpadrukośa*[51] *[Sarabhādiprakāṇḍa,* XI.11-12] of Keśava mentions several synonyms of bear that mentions its characteristics .

दुर्घोषो भल्लुको भल्लो भालुकः पृष्टदृष्टिकः। द्राघिष्टायुर्दीर्घकेशो भाल्लूको भल्लकोऽपि च॥ भल्लो भाल्लश्च भालूक ऋक्षोप्यथ।

durghoṣo bhalluko bhallo bhālukaḥ pṛṣṭhadṛṣṭikaḥ।
drāghiṣṭāyurdīrghakeśo bhāllūko bhallako'pi ca ॥ bhallo bhāllaśca
bhālūka ṛkṣopyatha।

These include the synonyms namely *'Durghoṣa'* [as it makes terrible noise when provoked], *'Pṛṣṭhadṛṣṭikaḥ'* [one having the habit of turning and looking back while it walks], *'Drādhiṣṭāyu'* [as it is long lived], *'Dīrghakeśo'* [as it has long and thick hair].

The *Suśruta Saṁhitā*[52] includes bears among the cave dwelling animals *(Guhāśaya).* The text [I. 46.72-73] states that the flesh of bears is sweet, heavy, subdues deranged *Vāyu* and is strength giving. The *Charaka Saṁhitā*[53] *[Sūtrasthāna,* 35-36] includes bears among the *Prasahavarga* [group of animals that grab and tear food and may be either carnivorous or herbivorous]. Their flesh is stated to have same properties as stated in *Sūsruta Saṁhitā.* The *Charakopaskāra* commentary[54] of Ācārya Jogindranātha Sen mentions bears by the name *'Bhallūka'*. The *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayasūtram*[55] (AHS) *[Sūtrasthāna, Yantravidhiḥ,* 25.4] of Vāgbhaṭa describes a surgical instrument having a mouth shaped liked a bear. The *Madanapālanighaṇṭu*[56] of king Madanapala *[Māṁsavarga,* 13] also gives the synonyms of bear similar to the *Kośas* while also mentioning the properties of its flesh as stated in the *Suśruta Saṁhitā.* The *Bhāvaprakāśanighaṇṭu*[57] *[Māṁsavarga,* 13] includes bears among the cave dwelling animals and gives properties of its flesh. The *Rājanighaṇṭu*[58] of Naraharipaṇḍita *[Siṁhādivarga,* 5] also gives the synonym of bears as in the *Kośas.* The *Nāṭyaśāstra*[59] [XXXll.429-430] of Bharatamuni while describing *Dhruvā* songs to indicate the movements in dance when bulls, elephants, lions and bears are being portrayed states that the songs should be made of heavy syllables that can be uttered with force. The Kauṭilya *Arthaśāstra*[60] [ll.7.73] states that the skins, hooves, claws, nails, bile and others such products of wild animals including bears contribute to forest produce and must be stored.

The *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*[61] of Varāhamihira dated to 6th c. A. D. states that bears are both diurnal and nocturnal as in the text [LXXXVllI.3]. The sight and cry of bears is auspicious but the uttering of its name is inauspicious as stated in the text [LXXXV.42]. According to the text [LXXXVI.21] the omens of bears are strong in the South. Likewise, Varāhamihira states that omens of bear are of no concern in the months of *Mārgaśīrṣa* and *Pauśa* as in the text [LXXXVI.28]. Varāhamihira in his *Horaśāstra*[62] describes the symbol of the third *Drekkāṇṇa* of constellation of Leo *[Siṁha]* as a man having face of a bear and movements of a monkey [ऋक्षाननो वानरतुल्य चेष्टो बिभर्ति दण्डं फलमामिषं च। *ṛkṣānano vānaratulya ceṣṭo bibharti daṇḍaṁ phalamāmiṣaṁ ca* ।]. It is interesting to again note the association of bears and monkeys. The *Bṛhatjātaka*[63] of Varāhamihira also has the same verse with a slightly different commentary on it by Bhaṭṭotpala. Several Buddhist and Jain texts also flourish some information on bears. The *Vidhura Jātaka*[64] makes no reference to bears but it is represented in the *Bhārhut* sculptures. In the *Kunāla Jātaka,* the Buddha describes the forests infested with wild animals including bears. The *Vessantara Jātaka* mentions about the bear in the forest in context of prince Vessantara dissuading his wife to accompany him to the forest. The *Pañcopasata Jātaka* mentions one habit of bears especially eating ants of the anthill and is greedy. In the *Naliṇikā Jātaka,* a courtesan mentions to a young sage that she is a [male] sage who has been attacked by an *'Accha'* (bear) who has bitten off his genitalia thereby leaving itching wounds.

Aśvaghoṣa in his *Buddhacarita*[65] [XllI.19] while describing the defeat of Māra mentions that Māra's followers had the faces shaped like that of boars, fishes, horses, asses, bears, camels, tigers, lions and elephants. The *Vinayapiṭaka*[66] [1.200] includes fat of bears that may be used by monks as a medicine. The *Mahāvagga*[67] *[Khaṇḍaka* VI] also mentions cooked fat of bears. The Jain text *Nāyadhammakahāo*[68] [1.33] in context of a forest fire in Vindhya mountains describes several animals like

lions, tigers, deer, bears and jackals shedding their mutual enmity and assembling together. The *Ācārāṅgasūtra*[69] [ll.1.5.42] also mentions of a similar assembly of animals including bears shedding their mutual enmity. Tamil *Saṅgam* literature also gives glimpses of bears and their behaviour. The bear is termed *'Eṇku'* and *'Karaḍi'* in Tamil. Poet Kaccippettu Kathakkaṇṇanār in the Tamil *Saṅgam* anthology *Narrinnai*[70] [125] speaks about a male bear which hunts nests of white termites at night putting its long snout through the hole and blowing in it so as to bring the termites out. Poet Madurai Kārulaviyār Kūttanār in the same text *Narrinnai* [325] describes a hairy bear with lowered head putting its long sharp claws deeply into an anthill destroying the structure and snakes housed inside digging up the eggs and eats them. A similar instance of a herd of bears surrounding the anthills full of cool tunnels where serpents dwell digging up their eggs and termites is mentioned in the text *Narrinnai* [336]. The Tamil epic *Silappadikkāram* [71] [XIII. 7-12] of llaṅga Aḍigal in the description of Madurai states that bears that are clever in fighting enemies do not stir out of their lair being disciplined during the reign of *Pāṇḍyan* kings. Poet *Māmūlanār* in the Tamil anthology *Ahanānūru*[72] (AH) mentions about a herd of strong armed bears with their mouths chewing fresh blooms shed from stalks of wayside *Iruppai [Madhuca longifolia]* trees rush and break hollow fruit hanging from the branches of *Konrai [Cassia fistula]* trees to eat them. Poet Ilattu Pūtan Tevanār in AH [88] mentions about bears digging ant hills killing snakes leaving their claw marks. The instance of big herds of bears with their cubs eating hollow blossoms fallen from bunches of *Iruppai* tress is described by poet Orātakattu Kantarattanār in AH [95]. Poet Neytal Cāyttuytta Avūrkīlar in AH [112] describes herds of bears moving in short steps due to their hunch-back nature to dig for white pith inside anthills. Poet Māmūlanār in AH [331] mentions that bears that littered cubs gather like herds of sheep climbing branches of *Iruppai* trees to eat white flowers. Poet Erukkattūr Tayankaṇṇanār in AH [149] mentions herds of heavy handed bears that cull white pith for food from tall

termite hills and then proceed to eat white flowers of *Iruppai* trees. Poet Kallatanar in AH [171] mentions about roar of ferocious bears heard by hunters. Poet Māmūlanār in AH [201] describes male bears enjoying its mate of withered breasts who is the mother of densely dark haired cubs. Poet Madurai Marutaṅkilar Makanar Peruṇkaṇṇanār in AH [241] describes a male bear with its herds eating flowers of *lruppai* trees and also breaking open tall termite ant-hills. Poet Uraiyūr Maruttavan Tāmotaranār in AH [251] mentions bear cubs seeking food at night that dig ant-hills with small side holes with their paws causing snakes to roll inside. An association of male dark faced monkeys and herds of bear gathering and eating *Iruppai* buds is mentioned by poet Palaipatiya Peruṇkaṭuṇko in AH [26]. The *Kuruñcippāṭṭu*[73] mentions that mountain caves conceal at night animals like tigers, bears and *Yāli* (an unknown animal). The *Malaipadukaḍam*[74] mentions about dumb bent legged cubs of bears that lives on high mountains. The *Tirumurugāṭṭrupaḍai*[75] also mentions that bears wander with their crooked feet in the mountain clefts.

Several *Kāvyas*, drama and prose literature also reflect various aspects of bears. The bear is mentioned in Kālidāsa's *Kāvyas.* The *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*[76] [Act II] also mentions about Vidūṣaka restraining king Duṣyanta from enjoyment of hunting stating that he may be prone to attacks of old bears who are fond of biting human nose. The *Raghuvaṁsam*[77] [XIII.72] mentions the term *'Ṛkṣaharīśvara'* [Lord of bears and apes] in context of Rāma introducing Sugrīva to Bharata. Subandhu in his *Vāsavadattā*[78] [86] while describing the *Vindhya* mountains states that the shadow of its foot is haunted by bears, gayals, griffins, lions and lotuses just as *Sugrīva* had the shadow of his feet honoured by his followers namely *Ṛkṣa, Gavaya, Śarabha, Kesari* and *Kumuda. Bhavabhūti* in his *Uttararāmacarita*[79] [IT.21] describes the nasal sounds of young bears and intensified by echoes -

दधति कुहुरभाजामत्र भल्लूकयूनामनुरसितगुरूणि सत्यानम्बूकृतानि॥
dadhati kuhurabhājāmatra bhallūkayūnāmanurasitagurūṇi satyānamambūkṛtāni॥

Bāṇabhaṭṭa's *Harṣacarita*[80] [Chap. VIII] describes a *Śabara* youth who had a broad mouthed quiver made of bear's skin with upper woolly hair being wrapped around with spotted leopard skin. Bāṇa's *Kādambarī*[81] also mentions that prince Chandrāpīḍa hunted wild bears, lions, yak and deer. The *Haravijaya*[82] [46.10] of Rājānaka Ratnākara, a poet of the 9th c. A. D. refers to the army of bears and apes led by Jāmbavān. Bilhaṇa in his *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*[83] *[13.23]* describes bears lying in the paths leading to houses of hunters :

निपत्य वीथीषु किरातवेश्मनां। हृताच्छभल्लप्रतिभल्लतां गताः॥

nipatya vīthīṣu kirātaveśmanāṁ। hṛtācchabhallapratibhallatāṁ gatāḥ॥

The *Yudhiṣṭhiravijaya*[84] [I.46] of Vāsudeva refers to bears toppling down to the earth with trees falling down due to a forest fire in context of fight between the demoness Hiḍimbā and Bhīma. Somadeva sūrī's *Yaśastilakacampū*[85] [Chap. V] describes a scene in the forest where a pack of bears are scared by a herd of deer rushing past :

क्वचिदुपलम्बाप्रलम्बस्तम्बविलम्बमानजानकोत्त्रासितहरिणप्रयाणभरभीतभल्लूकनिकरम्।

kvacidupalambāpralambastambavilambamānajānakottrāsitahariṇaprayāṇabhar abhītabhallūkanikaram।

The text also states that a quiver made of bear skin was worn by a spy of *Yaśodhara.* The *Pañcatantra*[86] of Viṣṇuśarmā also describes the story of a pet monkey hitting a sleeping prince by mistake to drive away a bee. In the Persian versions of the story, a pet bear is mentioned instead of a monkey. It relates how a solitary gardener encounters a lonely bear and they decide to become companions. One of the bear's duties is to keep the flies off his friend when he takes a nap. Unable to drive off a persistent fly, the bear seizes a paving stone to crush it and kills the gardener as well. The *Kathāsaritsāgara*[87] (KSS) [III. 1.45-51] of Somadeva Bhaṭṭa mentions an attack of a monkey on a false

ascetic tearing off the nose and the ears. In another portion of the text KSS [X.64.20-26], a monkey who attacked a man tells his father that he has been attacked by hairy fruit-eaters (लोमशैः फलभक्षिभिः— *lomaśaiḥ phalabhakṣibhiḥ)* and in this context the term *'Ṛkṣa'* is used for monkeys rather than for bears. The same text also describes the legend of the prince Hiraṇyagupta who spends the night on the top of the tree during a hunting expedition accompanied by a bear and a lion. This legend is similar to the one described in Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Skandhapurāṇa* as stated earlier. A similar story of a faithful bear and ungrateful prince Vijayapāla, son of the king of Nanda of *Viśāla* is described in the text *Siṁhāsanadvātriṁśatī*[88] (stories narrated to king Bhoja by the 32 images in the throne of king Vikramāditya). In this story, the bear curses the ungrateful prince that he would become insane like a *Piśāca* [goblin] and roam over the forest uttering four syllables [स, से, मि, रा *sa, se, mi, rā*].

The *Lokopakāra*[89] [Chap. X, *Viṣavaidyam,* verse 36] of Chāvuṇḍarāya II, an encyclopaedic text of Karnataka also mentions a remedy for the poisonous bites of bears. The *Mānasollāsa*[90] of *Chālukya* king Someśvara advises that a king should avoid hunting *Gavaya* [wild species of ox], *Acchabhalla* (bears), tigers and buffaloes as stated in the text *[Viṁśati* IV, *Mṛgayāvinoda,* 15.1451]. The *Basantarājaśakuna*[91] [Chap. XIV, *Catuṣpadaprakaraṇa,* 31] includes *Bhallūka* (bear) under the class of cave dwellers. The text [Chap. XIV, *Catuṣpadaprakaraṇa,* 36] also states that the omens of bears moving from the left during the night are good. The *Mṛgapakṣiśāstra*[92] (MPS) of Jain author, Haṁsadeva dated to the 13th c. A. D. has some interesting details of behaviour of bears. It states there are three types of bears and based on their attributes, colour and behaviour they are grouped with stupid animals as stated in the text MPS [IV.163-164]. The characteristics of bears as stated in the text MPS [IV.183-208] are briefly tabulated in Tab. 1.

Tab. 1. Classification of bears in *Mṛgapakṣiśāstra* of Haṁsadeva

Type/Class of bear	Brief Characteristics
ṛkṣa [Sloth bear]	They have long sharp claws, protruding teeth, dense body, hair, lips and quivering tongue, froth trickles from the mouth. They yell harshly and are frightening to humans.
Acchabhalla [Brown bear]	Bears are tall. Their shoulders are of different colors and have red spots on body. The body is black with the sides and feet being white in color. They are powerful at night and like human flesh and can kill them. Their mouths are full of froth and cannot be captured easily.
Bhallūka [Himalayan black bear]	They have long teeth, small ears and long snout. They roam in the day time and are engaged in fights with one another. They have a frothy mouth, their bodies stink and have white hair on their skin. Bears have cubs twice or thrice.

The *Mṛgapakṣiśāstra* offers some interesting details of mating behaviour and pregnant behaviour of bears. It states that bears become sexually active in spring season and at age of 3-4 years are fully mature. Their sex urge is maximum at end of day or at day break. The males fondle the females under the shade of tress, bushes and on river banks with females responding with repeated jumping and playing. After mating, the females go to sleep indicating that they are going to conceive. The males woo the female even after conception but sometimes if the sex urge is strong they go to the extent of tearing females with teeth causing serious wounds. Females in pregnancy are languid and eat very little. After 9-10 months, cubs are born. Females deliver cubs thrice or four times. New born cubs drink mother's milk several times a day for about a year.

The *Khagendrāmaṇidarpaṇa*[93] [XIII. 18-19] of Maṅgarāja, a toxicological text in Kannada dated to 14th c. A. D. gives remedies for

the poisonous bites of bears due to their teeth or claws. The *Sangrāmavijayodaya*[94], a text on warfare tactics extracted from the *Yuddhajayārṇava* mentions the use of oil or fat of bear along with other ingredients to cause boils in enemy ranks as in the text [XXII.4-5], also a web of insects to disturb enemies [XII.7] and in preparation of a paste *(Śīghramṛtyukārī Lepa)* to cause death quickly as in the text [XXII.9]. The *Haṭhābhyāsapaddhati*[95] [27], text on Yoga dated to about 17th c. A. D. mentions about the bear posture *(ṛkṣāsana)* as follows : "Assume the Elephant pose after bending each leg in turn. This is the bear pose". The *Śrītattvanidhi*[96] [18] of Mummaḍi Kṛṣṇarāja Woḍeyar also describes the same posture.

Bears in Indian Culture

There exists various beliefs, rituals and costumes associated with bears in the vast tribal cultures spread in our country. Various tribes have *Septs* or Totems named after the bear. Likewise folktales about bears are also dealt in literature[97]. All over the world, there exists several taboos concerning killing of bears that are documented in literature and discussed by J. Frazer[98]. There are also some strange customs practiced all over the world to call bears out of its den before a hunt, then have some conciliatory speech with bears as well as rites related to its killing and feasting on its flesh that have been documented in literature[99]. In India also similar beliefs are found among various tribal cultures. The *Mirzapur Pataris* use euphemistic names to call bears such as *Jaṭarī* (one with long hair) and *Dim Khaiya* (eater of white ants)[100]. In Bihar, it is considered inauspicious to take the name of the bear, monkey and an owl on rising in the morning[101]. The *Bugun [Khowa]* tribes of Assam have a myth as to why the women in the tribes do not eat flesh of bears[102]. The *Lhota Naga* warriors wear a head wig *[Thongo]* from long hair of the neck and shoulder of the Himalayan Black Bear[103]. Young pregnant women of *Lhota Nagas* do not eat flesh of bear. *Lhota Naga* warriors also carry horn suspended at the back to which is attached long tail of bear skin. The *Lushais* of North-East India are good bear hunters and have special methods to kill them[104]. They believe that a hooter will die if a bear on having a

shot in its body falls on its back and lies with its legs in the air. Asiatic black bears are threatened due to poaching for their gall bladder and skin. The growing demand for bear products in Asia has led to serious impacts on the bear populations in India. In Arunachal Pradesh and North Eastern states, people hunt black bears for its skin and meat. The *Nishi* tribes (earlier known as *Daffla)* wear bear skins on the back of their neck and use them in making knife holders (known as *Dao)*[105]. The Mishmi and Behejiya tribes of North-East India have sorcerers who claim to have miraculous powers. There are reports of use of bear claws and teeth of bear in necklaces that adorn them[106]. Charmers trap and remove bear cubs from bear dens thus affecting bear populations. The *Kalandars* are a widely spread endogamous ethnic group of nomadic entertainers found in South Asia who are skilled in handling, training and entertaining sloth bears. Early historical evidence suggests they have performed since the late Vedic era and also in the courts of Mughals in medieval times. In Modern times, they perform for public audiences to earn income. Their mode of capturing and training bears has been discussed in literature[107, 108]. They believe that wearing of amulets containing hair of bear or a bear claw protects one from evil eye. In ceremonies related to children, the child is put on the back of the bear and it is made to walk around or an amulet as described above is tied on the child for protection. Bear cubs suffer ordeals when their nose is pierced and a thick rope inserted through the cheek tissue and removed from its mouth. Crude iron needles are heated in coal fire and plunged in with a group of men holding the squealing cub tight. *Kalandars* generally use Sarsoo oil (a type of traditional oil) instead of indigenous ointments to ease pain and soften tissues but it is a type of sweet oil and attracts flies. In Karnataka, brass rings are put into the nose of the bear and then a chain or rope is attached. The claws are cut using brass or iron betel nut crackers. Other tribes of Karnataka also have some beliefs regarding bears. The *Kāḍu Gollas* have one *Sept* called *Karaḍīvayas* [Bear tribes] and is believed to have originated as one of their ancestors was nourished by a bear[109]. The *Karaḍi Goravas* of Mysore in Karnataka imitate bears and also wear bear skin cap[110]. The *Soliga* tribes of Mysore

region have methods to track the bears by their footprints[111]. The *Darveshis* of Karnataka who are a class of beggars carry about bears and tigers and give their hairs to women to wear so as to keep off ghosts and evil spirits[112]. Among the *Poona Kunbis,* there is custom of tying bear hair kept in a small silver or copper box around the necks of children so as to guard them against spirit attacks. Several dances and songs related to bears as practiced by the *Juangs* of Bengal, *Mundas* of Chota Nagpur, *Kolams* of Yeotmal [in Satpura range, Maharashtra], Irulars of Kerala, Sauras of Orissa and other such tribes has been documented in recent literature and not elaborated in present context[113]. In some places of Andhra Pradesh, hair of bears enclosed in a casket or cylinder is tied to the girdle around the loins of male children as a remedy against fever and to prevent involuntary discharge of urine during sleep. The *Gadabas* of Koraput district in Orissa narrate a legend of how sheep turned into a bear[114]. The *Konds* of Ganjam district in Orissa also mentions a legend in which bears are afraid of goats. The *Didayis* of Koraput district in Orissa narrate a legend as to how the bear made its home in the forest. The *Konds* of Chhota Nagpur and Orissa and *Yeṇāḍis* have *Sept* names of a bear. The *Elugu Sept* among the *Yeṇāḍis* also eats the flesh of a bear[115]. The *Vettuvans* of Tamil Nadu have a clan named after the bear[116]. It is believed that when a bear seizes a man, it tickles him to death. Bears are supposed to gain an additional pair of kidneys every year of their life[117]. It is also believed that bears collect ripe wood apples [*Feronia elephantum*], store them in a secure place and after a large quantity is collected, mix honey and petals of sweet smelling flowers with the pulp, thresh them with their feet and then feast on them. Hunters watch them when they do so and rob this feast which is generally sold in markets by them as *Karaḍi Pañcāmṛtaṁ* (bear delicacy made of 5 ingredients)[118]. The hair of bear is enclosed in a small cylinder and tied to the girdle around the loins of male children and in strings round the necks of female children as a remedy against fever and to prevent involuntary discharge of urine during sleep. It is also believed that if one does meditation sitting on the skin of a bear one gets *Siddhis* (powers) of propitiating *Bhūtas, Pretas, Piśācas, Kinnaras, Karṇapiśācinīs* and Goddess

Bagalāmukhī[119]. It is believed that by keeping the flesh of bears in front of a serpent mound, serpents come out easily. The nails and hair of bears are used as talismans to avert evil eye. In India, there are some shrine devoted to bear worship as well as shrines of other deities being frequently visited by bear. *Jāmthun* village in Ratlam Tehsil of Madhya Pradesh has traces of the bear cult and is said to be the city of Jāmbavān[120]. Jāmbavān's cave is located at village named *Ranavav* which is 17 km from Porbandar, off Rajkot-Porbandar highway in Gujarat[121]. Inside the cave there is the spot where Lord Kṛṣṇa and Jāmbavān fought over the *Śyamantaka* jewel for 28 days continuously day and night. Strangely one finds natural *Liṅgams* inside the cave which some locals believe that they were worshipped by Jāmbavān. A similar *Lingam* worshipped by Jāmbavān is stated to be there in the *Śivakozhunthīśvara* temple in Thiruthinai Nagar, Cuddalore in Tamil Nadu[122]. The place also has a sacred pond denoted by the name *'Jāmbavān Tīrtham'*. Another place connected with the *Śyamantaka* jewel episode is the *Alagu Mallāri Kṛṣṇa* temple in *Mannār Polūru* village in Nellore district of *Rāyalasīma* region in Andhra Pradesh[123]. There is a belief that Lord Kṛṣṇa defeated Jāmbavān in a duel here and took this posture or form of the idol. There is a shrine for *'Hariśreṣṭha Ādi Jāmbava'* in the hills surrounding Avani in Mulbagal, Kolar (Karnataka) where *Devi* Sītā is believed to have lived during her exile and gave birth to her sons namely Lava and Kuśa[124]. According to the belief there was an ancient cave radiating with incomparable glow in regions around Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh[125]. When asked about the source of light inside the cave, Lord Rāma replied to Jāmbavān that the brightness was due to the divine presence in the cave. Later when Jāmbavān went inside, he saw an idol which was emanating the divine glow. This later became famous as the *Kodaṇḍarāmasvāmī* temple. There exist various sites all over the world where cave bears have been worshipped and documented in recent literature[126]. The *Chaṇḍīmāta* temple in Chattisgarh (India) is frequently visited by bears during the evening prayers held in the temple when lamps are waved before the deity[127]. A similar instance of a bear couple that frequents the *Bhairava* temple in Malkangiri, Orissa is reported[128]. The hunting and poaching

of bears is taking place all around the world on a large scale. Even in India, between 1981-1907, the hunting parties of the *Maharaja* of Cooch Behar had shot 133 bears in parts of North Western Bengal and Western Assam[129]. The Colonial times also witnessed several bears being hunted in various parts of India. Such reports of bear hunts are documented in literature[130]. Bear bile is used to treat many diseases and is sold in the form of whole gall bladder, raw bile, pills, powder, flakes and ointment[131]. There exist special bear-farms in various parts of Asia to legally extract bile and gall bladders of bears. The scale of bear bile trade is very high in Asia involving many countries like China, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Vietnam, India and is also unchecked across the borders of these countries.

Thus one finds that bears are described extensively in ancient Indian literature and also portrayed in cultural legends, art and architecture.

Conclusions

Throughout the world, there are different species of bears and their evolution is being studied by scholars. There have been significant discussions in literature about bear cult, folklore and their worship since ancient times. Bears have been described in ancient Indian literature and it is interesting to note the various observations of bears made by our ancestors. Vedic Literature gives a glimpse of both terrestrial and the celestial bear. The epics throw marvellous features of bears led by Jāmbavān. These include their qualities, behaviours and their portrayal in the war fought at Laṅkā. The *Smṛtis* outline several expiations for killing bears that are to be viewed in regard to taboos of bears described by J. Frazer. The *Purāṇas* also offer certain omens and beliefs surrounding bears as also regarding its origin. The geographical distribution of bears as described in epics and *Purāṇas* in ancient times is yet to be mapped in its entirety based on various versions of the available texts. It is also interesting to note several synonyms of bears mentioned in Sanskrit and vernacular *Kośa* texts. The Jain and Buddhist literature portray several preter-natural behaviour of bears. The vast *Kāvya* literature and the folklore of various tribes portray several aspects of bears through the legends. The *Mṛgapakṣiśāstra* (MPS) of Jain author, Haṁsadeva presents information about bears

more scientifically with regard to their physical features and behavioural attributes. It is interesting to note that Haṁsadeva makes observations regarding their behaviour, knowledge of pregnancy period, stages of life and age, sexual behaviour that are not found described extensively in other Vedic or other Post-Vedic texts. Thus one finds a scientific approach to these observations on bears. *Āyurveda* and Tantric texts point out various properties of the products of bears such as claws, nails, flesh and hair that are widely reflected in the vast beliefs and customs among tribal cultures. Indigenous knowledge of bears in still untapped literary and cultural sources needs to be documented on a large scale and this knowledge can be verified by proper multidisciplinary research. Modern field studies will help to discover the habits, characteristics and other unknown behaviour of bears so that one can admire these ancient observations. Bear habitats are being threatened by various problems of agricultural and urban expansion, trade in claws, teeth, bile and skins as well as by illegal poaching. In this context one needs to conserve this wonderful animal knowing the glorious aspects reflected in ancient Indian literature

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Sacred Communities in the Sahajiyā Traditions of Bengal

Kaustubh Das

I. Introduction

In an article published in Geopolitica, Blake Archer Williams argues that different cosmologies and worldviews will produce different values and value priorities in the context of nations, and these differences will lead nations to produce different legal constitutions.[1] To understand the differences in the polity of Iran versus the United States, he argues we need to make two import distinctions, the first between covenantal or dispensational polities and conventional polities.[2] Which leads us to the second distinction that he makes; one between sacred communities and civil societies. Sacred communities are the result of a communal consensus on a given covenant and civil societies are the result of conventional communal consensus.[3] Simply put, the polity of a country that collectively believes that the word of God mediates material affairs will be significantly different from the polity of a country that relegates religion to matters of private belief. In this paper I shall attempt to bring out the problems inherent in both poles of this seeming binary opposition between sacred communities and civil society and I will attempt to outline a third option that integrates aspects of both sacred communities and civil societies. For this purpose I will be examining how communities are sacralized within the largely oral context of the *Bāul-Sahajiyā* traditions of Bengal. Contrary to Archer Williams's articulation of a sacred community I ask the question: Is it possible to have sacred communities that are not based on a top down hierarchical covenant but rather are formed bottom up through the direct experience of sacrality? My concern is not so much with the legislative aspect of the debate,

rather my concern is how multi-ethnic, multi-religious populations can come together with shared values to form a sacred community. In this paper I will be referring to existing research on *Sahajiyā* and *Bāul* traditions as well as my own ethnographic fieldwork done among *Sahajiyā* communities in Nadiya, Bankura and Birbhum districts between 2009-2019.

II. Civil societies, sacred communities and their limitations

Let us start with what Archer Williams sees as the major differences between civil societies and sacred communities. A sacred community is formed by consensus on a dispensation from God whereas a civil society is formed by a consensus to agree to disagree[4]. The key difference between constitutional monarchies or republics and covenantal Islamic government is that in the former case the monarch or the representatives of the people frame the laws, and these laws can take any shape or form as long as the said government enjoys a majority. In the case of covenantal polities, the law is received only from a singular source: that of the divine juror, God himself.[5] Archer Williams argues that the excessive individualism of civil societies leads to alienation and to a loss of social consensus and cohesion. Such a lack of cohesion can result in the loss of the social contract. As a result, while being a member of society, the individual still finds oneself in the Hobbsian brutish state of nature.[6] In such a state 'man' is pitted against 'man' and the whole system is dehumanizing to the extent that it is called a 'rat race'. It should be pointed out that Williams is not the first one to point out these problems. Western social theorists of modernity beginning with Max Weber have voiced serious concerns regarding 'value-fragmentation' that have resulted from the secularization of western society.[7]

Archer Williams contrasts the chaos of supra-individualistic civil societies with covenantal polities such as *Waliyic* Islam of Iran. *Waliyic* Islam is not a democratic system rather it is a hierarchical, it is based on a hierarchy of knowledge and learning.[8] God's regent on earth is a guardian of the law, and he is given comprehensive authority to interpret and implement the divine dispensation. It is only in matters

that are not covered by the holy dispensation that elected officials are allowed to legislate.[9] This kind of legal formation is suitable only for a religiously uniform community, that has committed itself collectively to faith. For there to be a community there has to be a consensus around values that are collectively held to be sacred; without such a consensus authority will always be illegitimate or at the very least will be conventional and hence subject to decay.[10] For Williams achieving a sacred consensus on divine dispensation is the only way a purposive community can be achieved. While democracies provide individuals with freedom it does not necessarily provide the ground of shared values and purpose on which a shared community can be founded and is thus ultimately open to be hijacked by some form of authoritarianism. Instead Williams says "the only way to escape from the tyranny of the absolutism of law is for that absolutism to have absolute legitimacy".[11] The purpose of the community of *Waliyic* Islam is not to establish the kingdom of God themselves, but rather to hold the value fragmentation of modernity at bay by returning to tradition. The return to tradition is seen as an awaiting of the arrival of the Imam al-Mahadi who will be a universal savior. The Imam al-Mahadi upon his arrival will be aided by Jesus Christ and the Lady Mary and together they will rescue humanity from their fallen state.[12]

While Williams sets up conventional and covenantal polities as opposing binaries, I would argue that there are foundational metaphysical similarities between both systems. Modern western polity, as well as the covenantal polity of *Waliyic* Islam, are both founded upon a binary opposition of matter and spirit, sacred and profane, reason and faith. In the case of modern western political institutions this opposition is fairly clear, religion is considered only to be a matter of private faith and belief whereas the material world itself is to be ruled by instrumental rational calculations. On the other hand in *Waliyic* Islam also we have such an opposition, the material world is considered a degenerated state of humanity, modernity is thought of as the final stage of this degeneration where humanity is cut off from the presence of the sacred.[13] In this account the only way God interferes in mundane matters is by revealing the holy book and the covenant

within it. It is only by following these proscriptions that humanity may eventually rise to the level where it may be worthy of being in the presence of the sacred. So a metaphysical binary between the sacrality of God and mundane materiality is also played out in how the sacred is constituted by the discourse of *Waliyic* Islam. Furthermore, not only do conventional and covenantal polities subscribe to the same metaphysical outlook in terms of a sacred-secular binary, these formulations are not opposed, rather they are overlapping. To put it in Latour's terms, even though Williams presents them as purified categories, they are in fact, hybrids. According to Latour, purification is a foundational gesture of modernity where it presents matter and consciousness, religion and science, reason and faith, nature and culture as ontologically separate, watertight categories. What this process of purification hides however is the process of translation whereby these seeming opposites are increasingly combined to produce newer hybrids.[14] The production and hiding away of hybrids ensures the status-quo of power by projecting a myth of utopian modernity that is always in the future never in the present, meanwhile the individual finds oneself deeper in the mesh of disciplinary technologies. The idea of modernist supra-individuals only exists in the contexts of an expanding net of disciplinary technologies. The freedom to 'agree to disagree' only exists in so far as the boundaries of reason are policed and what is thinkable is framed within strict limitations. Following Latour's work, Randall Styers demonstrates how the scientific mechanical view of nature, that is foundational to modernity and modern ideas of governmentality and citizenship, is founded on the naturalization and universalization of particular post-Reformation Protestant constructions of nature and subjectivity. It is only by isolating magic and esotericism as a category separate from religion and science that modern science comes about.[15] On the other hand the creation of sacred communities according to Williams is based on a community of the faithful, willfully submitting their individual wills to the will of God (as represented in the holy text). However, if we ask the question 'how is faith produced?' then we see that this formulation too is a hybrid. In the absence of any direct

gnostic insight or a communion with the divine, the only way faith can be created and maintained in a large community is through mundane social means.[16] Any faith that is created through peer pressure or through enforced social conformity cannot be real or enduring. It is only when faith is complemented by direct insight that faith becomes strong. Thus, both the secularism of Protestant-modernity and the sacrality of Islamic social-traditionalism are hybrids that while presenting the social and the sacred as opposites, combine them implicitly in various ways.

In this paper I will reject a simple binary opposition between modern western secular civil societies and Islamic traditionalist sacred communities, and I will attempt to outline a model wherein rationality and sacrality can co-exist, where reason is not the enemy of faith but its accomplice, wherein material world is not separate from divine presence but endures because it exists every moment within divine presence. My approach draws from the Indian experience as a multi-religious society that itself is witnessing a conflict between civil society and sacred communities. Caste Hinduism too was a hierarchal sacred community, in that it positioned itself as a divine dispensation that regulated the material affairs of the people. However, sacred or not, social justice was never a strong suit of casteism and it was the modern ideas of equality and humanism that contributed in some limited way to legally check the institution of caste. The point is unquestioning faith in religious scriptures rarely lead to ethical communal behavior, at least in the Indian experience. Modernity however was not able to solve the problem with any degree of efficiency because it is founded on secularizing the material world of any divine interference, an idea that goes against the very basic beliefs of most pre-modern Indian communities. Instead I propose, a third way may be found if we look closely at medieval folk-popular and vernacular syncretic traditions in India. To be clear, I am not positing Hindu ideas in opposition to the Archer Williams's Abrahamic formulation of Protestant-Secularism versus Islamic sacralism. Rather I am interested in looking at the experience of Islam in medieval and early modern India, and examining not just how Hinduism and Islam coexisted as separate

communities in a single space, but rather my focus is on examining the nodes where they grew into each other and influenced each other to the point where it becomes difficult to distinguish and separate them. I am looking at how individuals of various kinds of religious, caste and social identities can come together and form a sacred community that is respectful of individual differences and proclivities and yet somehow manages to surrender their will to the direct presence of the divine. Though such tendencies can be found across medieval India, my focus in this discussion will be upon the various *Sahajiyā* traditions of greater Bengal.

III. *Mānuṣ dharma* and the *Sahajiyā* traditions of Bengal

Definitions:

Sahajiyā traditions is an umbrella term and multiple traditions are subsumed under it, chiefly: the *Bastubādi Bāuls*, *Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas, Sahajiyā Śaktas,* and the Bengali *Fakiri* tradition. These diverse traditions are brought together though a shared non-dual metaphysical framework wherein the material world and the state of liberation are seen as complementary and not as exclusive or opposed to each other. Furthermore, together, they constitute a system of conjugal initiation, wherein asceticism and renunciation are rejected in favour of soteriological methods that acknowledge and utilize all natural human senses and tendencies as tools to achieve full liberation while still alive. That which causes the fall of humanity is repurposed for humanity's liberation. These three factors, namely: non-dual metaphysics, non-ascetic methods and the notion of living liberation unite these various traditions and allow them to merge into a singular meta-tradition that is popularly called *mānuṣ* dharma (the religion of the human) or *premer* dharma (the religion of love) or *rasika* dharma (the religion of the aesthete) or just *Sahaja* dharma (the natural religion).[17] It is these three factors combined that also make them distinct from mainstream Brahmanical Hinduism that generally subscribes to a separation between liberation and material existence, thereby implying that material existence has to be left behind through asceticism or ritual to attain liberation and this liberation too can be

complete only after death.[18] It should be noted that the *Sahajiyā* traditions do not exist in opposition to Brahmanical Hinduism, but rather exist through transcending them. That is to say, from the viewpoint of the highest *Sahajiyā* realization, the realizations of particular sectarian groups offer only limited descriptions of ultimate reality. This is why the Sahajiyās do not consider themselves a sect or a religion. Even though there is a particular sequence of practice that may be taught after initiation, the ultimate state is not something particular that one can be initiated into or that is generated through any particular action such as ritual, chanting etc., nor is it something that is generated through particular cognitions or insights. The ultimate state of *Sahaja* is pure consciousness that is the ground for the existence of all individuated consciousness, thus it is something that everyone is born with, it is something that makes possible the mundane states of waking, dreaming and sleeping. *Sahaja* literally means natural, co-emergent, that with which one is born with.[19] Being the ground of all particular actions and particular knowledge, no particular action or cognition can comprehend it. However, when we stop clinging to particular actions, knowledge and limited identities; then we may recognize this natural perfected state and simultaneously be individuated and universal. Thus the particular conceptual teachings and practices within the *Sahajiyā* tradition do not produce the ultimate state of consciousness, they merely counteract our obsessive clinging to particular kinds of sensory or cognitive experiences. Rather it is through non-conceptual forms of yoga that are beyond the limitations of individual subjectivity and particular traditions that the natural state of *Sahaja* may be recognized directly. Clinging to any kind of social or religious identity or practice is seen as a sign or residual ignorance that leads eventually to hatred or jealousy. Those perfected in the *Sahajiyā* practice call themselves *mānuś* (human) not as *Śākta* or *Vaiśṇava* or *Fakir*, because to do otherwise would be clinging onto limited social constructs. It is only *mānuś*, or the heart of consciousness that is undifferentiated in difference and beyond any artificial social constructs.[20, 21]

History

The roots of *Sahajiyā* traditions go back to the non-dual tantric traditions of India, including the Śākta-Śaiva traditions of Kashmir as well as the Buddhist Vajrayāna in eastern India.[22, 23] Scholarship by Sanderson, Goodall, Sferra and others has pointed out that these traditions despite their manifest differences, non-dual Śākta-Śaiva tantras and Buddhist Vajrayāna tantras utilized a shared metaphysical framework through which the particular conceptual practices of each school were developed.[24, 25, 26] However the idea of *Sahaja* as the highest state of non-conceptual undifferentiated consciousness which contains in itself all differentiation and limited concepts, was developed and popularized by a group of teachers variously called the *Mahāsiddhas* or the 84 *Nāthas*. The hagiographies of both Śākta-Śaiva and Vajrayāna traditions have in common many names of these Mahāsiddhas. The discovery of the *charyāpada* and *vajrapada* manuscripts in proto-Bengali script suggests that these Mahāsiddhas were active in developing and popularizing the practice of Buddhist Mahamudrā in Pala-era Bengal.[27] After the destruction of the major Buddhist *viharas* in Bengal, there is a hiatus of a few centuries. Between the 12th and the 15th centuries only a few Bengali authors such as Sri Jayadeva, Vidyapati and Chandidas created compositions that bore the marks of *Sahajiyā* thought.[28] It was only in the early 16th century with the rise of Sri Caitanya and Sri Nityānanda as major religious teachers and reformers in Bengal that the *Sahajiyā* traditions were revived in a major way. Both Caitanya and Nityānanda advocated love as the ultimate path for reaching the divine, however there were certain differences between them as to how this path was to be traversed. Caitanya inclined more towards *rāgānurāga bhakti* that is the complete and total surrender of body, mind and soul to the loving devotion of the supreme consciousness that he saw as Krishna.[29] Nityānanda understood the path of total loving devotion but realized that such an extreme renunciation of all material concerns was not possible for normal householders. Thus he propounded *vaidhi bhakti* which was the step by step methodological purification of mundane desires into pure love.[30] Caitanya's method had a more ascetic inclination and his

followers congealed into a group called *Gauḍīa Vaiṣṇavas*. Nityānanda method had a tantric inclination and his followers congealed into a group called *Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas*. However the *Gauḍīas* and the *Sahajiyās* should not be considered two separate groups, rather the *Sahajiyās* are better understood as a group concealed within the *Gauḍīas*. The difference between the two being that, the *Gauḍīas* read the doctrine literally and are more invested in external ritual; whereas the *Sahajiyās* interpret the doctrine esoterically and are more interested in transformation of the nature of the body-mind entanglement and a direct experience of divinity. However the tradition considers both Nityānanda and Caitanya to be *Sahajiyās*.[31] The movement centered around Nityānanda and Caitanya also created a spiritual community that cut across lines of caste, class and religion.[32] It is the metaphysical and practical foundations of this community and its ability to accommodate multiple religious identities within itself; that we will be exploring in the rest of this paper.

Metaphysics

The philosophical outlook that informs both *Gauḍīya* and *Sahajiyā* Vaiṣṇavism is called *Achintya Bhedābheda*. The key innovation of the Gauḍīa-Sahajiyā school was the resolution of the debate between Adavita Vedānta and the other theistic schools of Vedānta, by synthesizing their views into one formulation. According to Śankara's Advaita Vedānta, Brahman is the one eternally unchanging reality. The emergence of limited souls and insentient objects of the world is due to the ignorance caused by Māyā. He emphasizes the identity of Brahman, Māyā and Jīva (individual souls) to the extent of arguing that only Brahman is real and the others are illusory. The way to liberation according to Śankara is jñāna or knowledge of the identity of Brahman the supreme consciousness with all individual souls and insentient objects.[33] The theistic schools of Vedānta take issue with this formulation. They argue if there is complete identity between supreme consciousness and individuated souls then there cannot be a loving relationship between the supreme and the individual, no realization of Brahman would be possible because some degree of

individuality would still be required to apprehend the highest planes of existence. Theistic teachers such as Rāmānuja and Mādhava on the other hand stress the difference between the world and Māyā and Māyā and Brahman. They advocate Bhakti or loving devotion as a means to liberation as opposed to knowledge.[34] The Gauḍīa-Sahajiyā school does not emphasize any one of the two aspects of the identity or difference between the world, Māyā and Brahman. They conceive of the relationship between Brahman, Māyā and the world as that of identity in difference and difference in identity. This position finds support from the followers of Nimbāraka for whom Brahman is both different and non-different from the world of finite minds and material objects. However the Gauḍīa-Sahajiyā formulation adds to Nimbāraka's model is the theory that the finite selves and the material world may be reduced to the Śaktis of Brahman.[35, 36]

At stake in this debate is the question of the reality of the material world and its connection with Brahman. For Śankara the world is an unreal appearance. For theistic Vedāntic schools, the world and individual souls emerge as a substantial modification of Brahman. For the Gauḍīya-Sahajiyā schools the integrity of Brahman is unimpaired because it is the *śaktis* of Brahman that transform and produce the entirely real world and limited souls. Since Śakti is different from Brahman, thus, Brahman remains unchanged. Since Śakti is non-different from Brahman, the *jīvas* and insentient objects are non-different from Brahman as well. Since neither aspect can be ignored and because it cannot be logically reconciled either, thus the Gauḍīya school considers the relationship between that of Śakti and Brahman to be one of inconceivable difference in non-difference or *Achintya-Bhedābheda*. This relationship between Śakti and Brahman for the Sahajiyās is not just a matter of faith or theoretical speculation but anyone who practices the Sahajiyā methods to their conclusion will experientially realize the co-emergent difference-in-non-difference of Śakti and Brahman.[37] The Gauḍīya School, taking inspiration from *Viśṇu Purāṇa* identifies three primary Śhaktis of Brahman:

1) Bahirāṅga (external) Śakti: also known as Avidyā Śakti or Māyā Śakti, is the power relating to the creation of the insentient objects of the world and all transient phenomena.[38]

2) Tatastha (marginal) Śakti: also known as Jīva Śakti, it is responsible for the manifestation of all limited souls within the phenomenal world. However this Śakti has a dual nature being different and non-different from Brahman. Since Brahman manifests as individual souls through Jīva Śakti, thus this Śakti has a dual inclination for material as well as divine life.[39]
3) Antaranga (Inner) Śakti : also known as Parā, Svātantrya Śakti or Svarūpa Śakti, this power manifests the internal nature of the lord. The Antaraṅga Śakti has the same nature as the lord and manifests everything related to him.[40]

The relationship between Krishna and these three Śaktis has been explained by Jiva Goswami through an analogy of the sun and its splendor. The solar orb is likened to Krishna and the fiery radiance within the orb is likened to his Antaranga Śakti. The rays of the sun can be likened to the Jīva Śakti, given that the jīva has the same nature as Krishna but less intense.[41] Finally the sun's reflections are like the objects of the world which are produced through the activity of Bahiraṅga Śakti.[42, 43]

Svarūpa Śakti is the inner nature of Brahman and it is the ground for Jīva Śakti which manifests limited subjects. Jīva Śakti in turn is the ground for Bahiraṅga Śakti that manifests all insentient objects. Being modifications of Svarūpa Śakti, Jīva Śakti and Bahiraṅga Śakti cannot be considered unreal or illusory. The Svarupa or Antaraṅga Śakti is accordingly further subdivided into three parts corresponding to these functional attributes:

1) *Sandhini Śakti:* through Sandhini aspect of his Svarūpa Śakti, the lord holds up all existence, including his own. [44]
2) *Samvit Śakti* : this Śakti consists in enabling him to know and to make others know. According to Gauḍīyas, Śankara's notion of Brahman focuses only on the Samvit aspect of the Svarūpa Śakti.[45]
3) *Hlādini Śakti* : is the highest and most dominant aspect of Svarūpa Śhakti. It is Krishna's innermost nature as pure and supreme delight and his ability to make other experience this delight. Being the highest aspect Svarūpa Śakti forms the ground for Samvit and Sandhini Śaktis along with the lower Jīva and Māyā Śakti.

> The *hlādini śakti* is of the nature of pure bliss or *ānanda*. Hlādini is infinite and dynamic and it is only as mirrored in her that Brahman is regarded as ultimate reality.[46]

The highest ideal of pure love is *hlādini śhakti*. She is the innermost and most dominant aspect of Krishna's *svarūpa śakti*. She has been identified by the Sahajiyās and Sri Jayadeva before them as Śrī Rādhā Rāṇī. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are not seen as separate from each other but rather as inseparable. The scriptural description of Brahman as *rasa* or *ānanda* has been taken to mean the unity in duality of the ultimate reality as *Śakti* and *Śaktiman*. *Rasa* and *ānanda* have no meaning except as enjoyment, implying a duality of subject and object. Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas consider the true nature of reality to be consisting of perfect self-enjoyment in the eternal communion of Rādhā as Mahābhāva (the highest emotion) and Kṛṣṇa as Rasarāja (the greatest aesthete or enjoyer of emotion). Kṛṣṇa's own enjoyment of his own blissful nature is called Svarupānanda. However even more relishable than Swarupānanda for Kṛṣṇa is his bliss of enjoyment of *hlādini śakti* reflected in the hearts of his devotees. This is called Śāktyānanda.[47] This notion of Śāktyānanda is the foundation for Gauḍīya-Sahajiā advocacy of Bhakti as the ultimate means of liberation.

Rupa Goswami defines Bhakti as "the highest devotion is constant and devoted service to Krishna, performed in a favorable way. It is free of all other desires and unobscured by knowledge (jñāna) or fruitive activity (karma)".[48] The highest form of this Bhakti is called *rāgātmika* or *rāgānurāga*, this is a spontaneous and passionate outburst of love, leading to surrender of one's individual will to Kṛṣṇa's divine will. Those for whom such immense and deep form of love does not come naturally the tradition prescribes *vaidhi* bhakti, which is the methodological cultivation of emotion using the Rasa Śāstra and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, etc[49]. Five kinds of activity are considered most important for developing devotion : (1) associating with devotees, (2) chanting Kṛṣṇa's names (3) Studying the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (4) Living in Vrindavana (5) Worshipping the deity in the temple.[50]

While the *Gauḍīyas* would interpret these five activities in a literal or exoteric manner, the *Sahajiyās* would take a more esoteric approach. Let us look briefly at the *Sahajiyā* versions of these activities[51]. Association with devotees does not simply mean physical contact with people of different castes. Association here means opening out one's mind and psyche to be influenced by those who are already on the path of devotion and whose body and psyche have been transformed by it. When we open ourselves out and serve those who are already advanced on the path of love and devotion, we absorb their *bhāvas* (emotional posture), this allows for our mind and prāṇa to expand beyond their mundane limitations and prepares us for the internal transformation that happens through chanting. The chanting of names is interpreted in the *Sahajiyā* context not just as audible (*vaikhari*) chanting, but also a chanting done through the mind which draws the name of Kṛṣṇa via the breath into various parts of the body, particularly the heart, and thereby transforms the individuated *prāṇa*. Studying the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* indicates a process whereby the activities of Kṛṣṇa are remembered over and over again leading to a release of obsessive tendencies in the individual and a purification of emotions and desires. Ultimately, the *līlās* of Krishna have to be interpreted not as objects of faith, not as a description of past events, but as a description of the present. When we understand them experientially, in terms of one's own psycho-physical make-up; then the *gopīs* that Kṛṣṇa dances with are one's own nerves, physical and mental faculties, life processes etc., and Kṛṣṇa is the supreme consciousness that gives life to all living beings. Living in *Vrindāvana* is the transformation of one's community or society through the realization that all *jīvas* essentially yearn for Kṛṣṇa in the same way. It is the ability to see every human being irrespective of caste or gender as a *gopī* or a *gopa*. This is only possible through a transmutation of limited desires into pure love that results in single-minded devotion to Kṛṣṇa. Again, here devotion to Kṛṣṇa shouldn't necessarily mean faith in an idol, rather here Kṛṣṇa is pure undifferentiated consciousness that contains all differentiation. The final activity, worshipping the deity in the temple is to establish the supreme lord

unwaveringly in one's heart. It is to realize one's oneness with Krishna, yet still being a servant or a friend or a lover to him. This is the state when one is acutely experientially aware that one's limited individuality is nothing but a manifestation of and within the unlimited space of pure consciousness. Here one is one with Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa/ Brahman-śhakti/ Consciousness and its energies, yet one can view their play from a state on individuation. This is the state which we have earlier called Śāktyānanda, where Kṛṣṇa takes pleasure by watching his union with his supreme energy reflected in the hearts of the devotees. It is the state when difference in non-difference is finally comprehended as one is transcendent in *nirvāṇa* and imminent in *samsāra* or the material world simultaneously.

IV. Vrindāvana on earth : Sacred Communities, Sankīrtana and the Guru

So far we have seen that the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavism follows a non-dual metaphysical system where in the material world and limited souls are seen as different from supreme consciousness because of their limited nature; but are also view as non-different because they are ultimately products of the supreme Śakti that is non-different from Brahman. This means that existence in the material world is not seen as a state of degeneration but rather as space of opportunity wherein supreme consciousness may actualize its highest state of delight. Even though the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas use a Vaiṣṇava metaphor to discuss their theology and practices, whatever we have discussed so far, is also true for the other Sahajiyā traditions such as the Bastubadi Bāuls and the Bengali Fakiri tradition. While Vaiṣṇavas would chant the names of Kṛṣṇa, the Fakiri tradition may chant the names of Allah, the Bastubadi Bauls who generally avoid icon and deity worship may use the *Aham* or *Hamsah* mantras, which is simply the sound that the breath naturally produces during the inhalation and exhalation. The equivalence of various Sahajiyā groups is well established by figures such as Lalon Fakir. Lalon was a prolific composer of mystical songs and it is very difficult to classify him as a *Bāul* or a *Fakir* or a *Vaiṣṇava*. This is because Lalon would sometimes present his teachings in a Vaiṣṇava metaphor, sometimes he would use an Islamic metaphor;

and sometime he would reject both and use the theologically neutral language of a Bastubādi Bāul.[52] Gurus of the *Sahajiyā* tradition utilize exegetical strategies that are based upon their own realization of non-duality. This allows them to chart out the various stages of spiritual progress across various religious idioms and not be limited to one identity. All these groups agree that the individual soul, though separate because of individuation, is also non-different from supreme consciousness and exists moment to moment because the supreme consciousness is the ground for its existence. These *Sahajiya* systems are not faith based in the sense that faith requires one to wait for some point in the future or the after-life, but *Sahajiyā* practice is only concerned with the present moment. It is only in the present that the connection between limited consciousness and supreme consciousness can be apprehended. Once this connection is apprehended, then one's consciousness is able to apprehend both individuality and universality. This is the apprehension of the *mānuṣ* the consciousness that underlies all individuals. It is because the *Sahajiyā*s experientially realize that the same *prāṇa*, the same consciousness, animates all human beings regardless of social status, caste or religion; that they endeavour to treat all humans as embodied forms of God.

The sacred community of *Sahajiyās* is not a community of the faithful, it is a community of practitioners, regardless of their sectarian affiliation, social status and religious identity. All these limited identities are subsumed under the larger identity of being *mānuṣ*. *Mānuṣ* in the *Sahajiyā* context doesn't just mean being a human, but it refers to the larger non-dual consciousness from which all human and non-human beings and insentient matter arise from. In other words, to be a *mānuṣ* means to be an individual and the entire universe simultaneously. Those who achieve this realization of the *mānuś* attain the status of guru in the *Sahajiyā* traditions. Those who are still under the spell of their individuality and cannot see their connection with the rest of the universe, associate with these gurus. Loving association with these perfected gurus facilitates the expansion of individuated consciousness into the state of cosmic consciousness. Caitanya and Nityānanda institutionalized this understanding of a sacred

community of practitioners centered around the realized gurus through the performance of the *saṁkīrtana*. In the *saṁkīrtana*, individuals of various religious and caste identities come into physical contact with each other, thereby breaking caste taboos and shedding their previous social identities that had limited their consciousness previously. Leaving their social identities behind this community sings and chants the names of Kṛṣṇa, filling their hearts and minds with a collective love for the divine. The music and the chants, being formulated through the aesthetic theory of *Rasa Śāstra* allows for the transcending of their limited identities and forges an identification with the non-dual consciousness of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, the object of their devotions.[53] This transcending of limited identities is facilitated by the presence of the Gurus who act as intermediaries between the individuated consciousness of the devotees and the non-dual consciousness of *mānuṣ/ Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.* The extent to which a devotee is able to transcend their individuality and assimilate into non-dual consciousness is dependent upon the extent they are able to integrate their own embodied *prāṇa* into the embodied prāṇa of their guru. The guru in the Sahajiyā context is to be considered non-different from Kṛṣṇa. Nilakantha Gosai expresses the status and the work of the guru succinctly in the following song:

> "I have no home, but I roam in all houses,
> I catch snakes in the ponds of the forest….
> All these houses you see, they're all mine,
> On all these houses I have an equal claim
> I show the games of the snake-charmer
> And the ladies of high clan, they
> Give me their pearl necklaces in delight……..
> Nilakantha narrates, 'listen' said Rādhā
> 'In the guise of this snake-charmer, is the black Krishna!
> Throw away your hatred and find contentment
> Hold a heartful of wealth in your heart'"[54, 55]

Nilakantha in this song is using the metaphor of the snake-charmer to describe the guru. The snake-charmer says he has no home of his

own, this indicates that he has transcended all grasping for his own physical embodied existence. Then the snake-charmer claims proprietorship over all houses, this indicates that by virtue of transcending his own physical existence he is now identified with all the bodies of the congregation. He feels the body-mind of all beings as if they were his own. The snake is the metaphor for the *kuṇḍalinī* of the devotees which is the consciousness that has limited itself within materiality. The guru as the snake-charmer makes the sleeping *kuṇḍalinī* rise beyond the crown of the head, thereby merging the limited individuality of the disciple into cosmic-consciousness. The 'ladies of high clan', here refers to Śakti, or Rādhā, and who gifts him the pearl necklace. The necklace is the *mātṛkā-cakra*, or the collectivity of all possible mental representations. When she gifts him this necklace, she is giving liberation to the limited souls whose *kuṇḍalinī* the guru is lifting. In the final verse Nilakantha speaks in the words of Rādhā to indicate the authoritative nature of his pronouncement. This snake-charmer, the guru, is Kṛṣṇa in disguise. So one should leave behind regret and hatred and fill the heart with the prāṇa of the guru-Kṛṣṇa.[56]

V. Conclusion

Within *Sahajiyā* contexts the aspirant transcends the limitations of individuality by merging their mind-stream with the enlightened mind-stream of the guru. This is essentially a process of the cultivation of *prāṇa* or the vital life force. This cultivation of *prāṇa* occurs through the purification of emotion via loving devotion to the guru and via the guru, devotion to supreme consciousness that occurs through the practice of *saṁkīrtana*. The guru in turn, has an outward appearance and social behavior of an individual but internally the guru is in a state of both individuality and cosmic consciousness. It is because of this dual-nature that the guru can be at one with himself and the congregation of devotees at the same time. It is this dual nature that allows him or her to feel and interact with all body-minds as if they were his own body-mind. So when the aspirant merges their mind-stream with the guru's mind-stream, they are not just merging with another individual; rather they are merging to some degree or the

other with the entire community that is present in the group ritual of the *saṁkīrtana*. It is this merging of minds that makes the community sacred, and fosters respect for all individuals in the *Sahajiyā* context. The foundation of *Sahajiyā* sacred communities is not the surrender of individual wills to a vision of the future enforced from above by social elites. Rather, the *Sahajiyā* sacred community rises from the ground up, through the coming together of individuals regardless of social status, and merging their individual wills into the guru's will, the guru in turn merges himself/ herself into the community of devotees and the cosmos in general. Rather than the profession of faith, this process is centered around the expansion of the individual psyche through spiritual practices and resultant experiences.

Conflicts of Interest : The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Notes

[1] Blake Archer Williams, "Sacred Communities and the Emergent Multipolar Landscape", *Geopolitica*, 25th April, 2017, accessed on 24th August, 2019, https://www.geopolitica.ru/en/article/sacred-communities-and-emergent-multipolar-landscape, Part 1.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Kim, Sung Ho, "Max Weber", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/weber/, 4.1.

[8] Williams, Part 1.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Williams, Part 2.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, *trans.* Catherine Porter, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993, 12, 30.

[15] Randall Styers, *Making Magic: Religion, Magic and Science in the Modern World*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, 11

[16] Given that Gnostic insight is not possible if the Iman al-Mahadi's arrival has been relegated to some uncertain date in the future.

[17] The human in Sahajiya-Bāul and Fakiri contexts is not referring to

enlightenment humanism. Depending upon the contexts, the word mānuṣ can refer to the embodied human being; or in other contexts it can also refer to the supreme consciousness that is the ultimate ground for all other limited consciousness.

[18] In this description of Brahmanical Hinduism I am bringing together aspects of Advaita Vedanta and Dualistic tantrism. Given that Brahmanism is defined through its dialectic of purity and impurity, one would be justified in putting Advaita and Dualistic tantric traditions together. Advaita too is dualistic in the sense that it posits Māyā as separate from Brahman.

[19] Shashibhusan Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, Kolkata: University of Calcutta Press, 1946, 90.

[20] Jeanne Openshaw, "*Seeking Bauls of Bengal*", New Delhi: Foundation Books Pvt. Ltd., 2004, 158-162.

[21] Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, 91.

[22] Jeff Lidke, "Sahaja Samādhi- The Innate Mystical Experience. A Discussion of Sadhana in the Trika-Kaulism of Abhinavagupta" in *Epochē: University of California Journal for the Study of Religions Volume XIX*, Santa Barbara: Department of Religious Studies, 1994, 1-34.

[23] Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, 10-12.

[24] Alexis Sanderson, "Vajrayana: Origin and Function" in conference Proceedings '*Buddhism into the year 2000*', Bangkok: Dhammakāya Foundation, 1994.

[25] Dominic Goodall, "On the Shared 'Ritual Syntax' of the Early Tantric Traditions*", in Tantric Studies: Fruits of a Franco-German Collaboration on Early Tantra,* edited by Dominic Goodall and Harunaga Isaacson, Collection Indologie 131: Early Tantra Series 4, Pondicherry and Hamburg: Instuit Francais de Pondichéry and École Française D'Extrême-Orient Asien-Afrika-Instuit, Universität Hamburg, 2015.

[26] Francesco Sferra, "Some Considerations on the Relationship Between Hindu and Buddhist Tantras" in *Buddhist Asia 1*, edited by Giovanni Verardi and Silvio Vita, Kyoto: Italian School of East Asian Studies, 2003.

[27] Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, 11-12

[28] Ibid, 132.

[29] Ibid, 76.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid, 133.

[32] Ibid, 134.

[33] Ravi Gupta, *The Caitanya Vaisnava Vedānta of Jiva Goswami: When knowledge meets devotion*, Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2007,2.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Śhakti may be defined as the energy of pure consciousness that allows it to perform the functions of creation, maintenance and destruction of the world as well as the individuation and liberation of souls in it.

[36] Sudhindra Chandra Chakravarti, Philosophical foundation of Bengal Vaiśṇavism, Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Pvt. Ltd., 2004, 46.
[37] Ibid, 47.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Here we can see parallels with Pratyabhijna theory, according to which the Jiva performs the same five functions as Śiva, except in a limited or less intense manner.
[42] This is another important point of commonality between the Abhasavada of Abhinavagupta and the Sahajiya Vaishnavs. Both consider the object of the world to be real but reflections.
[43] Ravi Gupta, *The Caitanya Vaiśṇava Vedānta*, 42-43.
[44] Chakravarty, *Bengal Vaiśṇavism*, 41.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid, 49.
[48] Ravi Gupta, *Jiva Goswami*, 20.
[49] Ibid, 6.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Here I am interpreting on the basis of my own fieldwork, conversations with Sahajiyās and participation in congregations. I am not aware of any textual source for this interpretation, however within an oral context I have heard these ideas repeated several times.
[52] Shaman Hatley, "Mapping the Esoteric Body in the Islamic Yoga of Bengal" in *History of Religions* 46, 2007, 351-68.
[53] Guy L. Beck, *Sonic Theology: Hinduism and Sacred Sound*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008, 110.
[54] Lakkhan Das Baul, "Naam Kalo Krishno Bede," YouTube Video, 16th August 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jWPapS4KIEk.
[55] The translation is my own.
[56] This translation and discussion excludes the second verse of the song to keep the discussion relevant to the concerns of this paper.

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The Religious Landscape of Eighteenth Century Shahjahanabad: An Alternative Reading of Islam in the City

Rohma Javed Rashid

In the year 1794, Thomas Twining, a British officer serving in the East India Company decided to visit Delhi. Once here, he expressed a desire to see first, "the Cathedral of Delhi, the Jumma Masjid".[1] He found the mosque "second only, if second to the S. Sophia in Istanboul." Accompained by his "hindoo (sic.), servants", he was also much pleased to see that the structure was source of admiration for both Hindus and Muslims of the country.[2] The Jami' Masjid was however only one, albeit the grandest, of the mosques that dominated the skyline of Shahjahanabad. Exactly 68 years later, in the year 1862 the newly appointed managerial committee of the Jami' Masjid came up with a list of rule regarding the mosque. One among these, banned "Non-Muslim Asiatics" from entering the mosque.[3] The jami' Masjid and in all probability all mosques of Delhi now only belonged to the Muslims. This was but one small consequence of a tireless effort being made by the colonial administrators of the early twentieth century to introduce in its history. The idea of an "Islamic Conquest" of India.[4] Study after study of the history of the 'Muslim Invasion' stressed on the cultural clash between the 'Hindu' and 'Islamic' civilizations, leading to a resounding 'triumph' of Islam India and its people. Once this idea made an appearance, it was very enthusiastically adopted by the many Indian historians who found, like their colonizers, India's 'Golden Age' destroyed with the coming of Islam.[5] Islam was seen as the causative factor in the political, social and culture developments in the period identified as medieval. Consequently the entirety of the cultural forms associated with what later came to be

known as the medieval period of Indian history, came thus to be associated with Islam. Epithets like Islamic culture and Islamic architecture, continue to be employed even today when referring to medieval culture and architectural forms in India. Fortunately today there exists an extensive historiography on the dangers of such characterization.[6]

The urban centers of North India however, are yet to benefit much from such revisions. Very early on in fact, many historians had intrinsically linked the cities of north India with Islam. Thus while Mohammad Habib agrued that the Islamic principal of equality among the community of believers, was the most important factor in bringing about what he calls an "urban revolution" in medieval India, K. M. Ashraf stressed on the urban nature of Islam from its very inception as the raison d'etre of the emergence of cities in medieval India.[7] Although referring specifically to the cities of the Sultanate period, Habib and Ashraf's opinions were for a long time seen to have universal applicability across the medieval period to account for the emergence of cities. Although a more nuanced approach to the study of urbanization in or period has developed since, an undeniable link between medieval cities and Islam continues to be stressed upon. In his study on Shahjahanabad for instance, Stephen Blake identified the city as an Islamic one based on the fact that its urban plan and layout closely resembled the cities of the larger Islamic world with a central congregational mosque, bazaars and cul de sacs.[8] The very idea of an Islamic city and Blake's arguments of such a city existing in India have been extensively critiqued[9]. Yet even scholars like Janet Abu-Lughod, while critiquing the Islam city model concede that the juridical and legal framework of Islam does affect the way cities of the larger Islamic world were planned and functioned.[10] Abu-Lughod leads us to an interesting idea that Islam's dominance or the lack of it is best reflected in the way a city is planned. Do we then accept that a skyline dominated by minarets and domes, the existence of waqf establishment, of serais and hammams are enough to identify a city as Islamic? If that is the case most cities of Mughal India could be

identified as such. The problems must therefore be addressed differently. One could take recourse to the official Mughal discourse on their cities but the conventional literary tropes of the Indo-Persian text are again seeped in a rhetoric that is heavily Islamic. Consider for instance Chander Bhan Brahman breaking into poetry to compare the building within the Place-fortress of Shahjahanabad to Quranic paradise :

Every house is like a sublime heaven
And every building has a paradisiacal garden
Its avenues are so utterly delightful
You might say they are by-lanes off the road to paradise.[11]

How do we question the Islamic associations of cities with so much evidence pointing to the contrary ? What if we left behind the rhetoric world of the court chroniclers and tried to look into the colourful religious landscape of a Mughal city? This will allow us to not only locate the religious experiences of the ordinary folk in the city but also see what role Islam and Islamic institutions played in their lives. We can then judge, based on their religious experiences, how much of totalizing way of life Islam was able to impose on the city's Muslim populace. I will take as my case study, the city, of Shahjahanabad in the eighteenth century, which had the honour of being the capital of the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan who bestowed it with numerous structures and institutions that could be identified as Islamic. By the eighteenth century, fascinating dynamics of change engulfed the entire city and its religious world too. It will be interesting to see how Islam fared in this dynamic.

There is no gain saying the fact that Islam was a pronounced presence in the built form of Shahjahanabad. It was created by and remained the capital of an empire which extensively used Islam and symbols derived from Islam as one of the many sources of legitimacy. They built Islamic places of worship and patronized its holy men. One can see in the built environments of their cities expressions of loyalty to the Islamic faith. The ruling elite and their families

(particularly royal women), made contributions to the built spaces of these cities by providing Mosqus, Sarais and Shrines. These would give the impression that Islam was an important part of the city's life with its manifestations so pronounced everywhere.

The Mughal emperor's Islamic allegiance was firmly conveyed to the world by the placing of a large congregational mosque in the centre of the city, whose dome dominated its skyline. The Jami' Masjid therefore was an important symbol of the empire. It was placed opposite the fort, the two facing each other proclaiming their creator to be master of both *Din* and *Dunya*- the spiritual and temporal world. The mosque took six years to complete and was the largest mosque in the subcontinent at the time of construction. It was called *Masjit-i-Jahanuma*. Most contemporary historians of Shah Jahan would attribute the creation of the mosques and other religious structure to the emperor's personal piety. He was after all Badshah Ghazi, a warrior of faith. A title he proved himself worthy of by lavishly spending in the name of God in his realm as well as the holy cities, making lavish grants to shrines and establishing *waqfs* or religious endowment.

Muhammad Salih Kambo who provides an authoritative account of the built structures of Shah Jahan's capital city, begins his account of the *Masjid-i-Jami'* with the statement that the construction of religious edifices is the most beneficial form of everlasting charity (*Nafetareen Khairaat-i-Jaria*), this he says is particularly true of shrines, mausoleums and mosques, which according to the letter of the book and the injunctions of the *Sunnah*, are the basis for attaining highest levels in paradise.[12] Kambo proudly reports that the Emperor decreed that all cities with a Muslim population must have mosques in every neighbourhood. According to Chander Bhan Brahman, the construction of this mosque had transformed Shahjahanabad into the center of the Islamic world, as the *Qibla* (the sacred building to which Muslims turn to pray) had now shifted to Delhi.[13]

Built on a high hillock at the cost of a million rupees, the *Jami' Masjid* was indeed a sight to behold. Other members of the royalty and the nobles took cue from their emperor and put up mosques

throughout the city. Chief among these were the Fatehpuri Masjid, Akbarabadi Masjid and the Sunehri and Roshan ud Daulah Masjid. Besides these, there were numerous Mohalla level mosques built usually by the initiative of the city's ordinary inhabitants.

The other important religious institution in the city was the *Madrasa*. The *Madrasa* was essentially an educational institution where students were educated in the Islamic religious sciences including Quranic exegesis, the study of Hadith or traditions of the prophet and of Fiqh or jurisprudence. While some *Madrasa*s like the Darul Baqa near the Jami' Masjid were provided by the state, most others were provided by individuals as acts of personal piety. We come across a number of *Madrasas* in Shahjahanabad, the *Madrasa Rahimiah* belonging to Shah Abdul Rahim, Shah Waliullah's father, built with the active support of Muhammad Shah, *Madrasa Ghaziuddin* Khan near the Ameri Gate, *Madrasa Raushan ud Daulah* associated with the moque of the same name, near the Kotwali Chabutra and many more.[14] The Madrasas provided Islamic education to those interested, the *Taliban-i-Ilm*.[15] Endowed with significant funds, these institutions created and nurtured a significant number of religious scholars who later went on to man important religious institutions and acquired significant social prestige. These *Madrasas* also provided social mobility to those who lacked financial resources to pursue a career in Islamic learning.

Beyond these architectural marvels, lay the rich spiritual heritage of the Sufis, who been the most popular inhabitants of the Delhi area since the fourteenth century. Numerous Dargahs dotted the city proper but the most popular ones lay beyond its wall. Known then as Dehli-i-Kuhna, the area extending from the Din Panah to Mehrauli housed the Dargahs of some of the greatest Sufi saints of all time. Most important among these were Nizamuddin Auliya and Quttubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki. Other important structures included the Dargah Shah Mardan, Dargah of Nasiruddin Chiragh-i-Delhi and Qadam Sharif. Frequented by hundreds of people, these Dargahs lent the city an air of spirituality and centrality in the Islamic realm.

The physical landscape of Shahjahanabad was therefore dotted with many religious structures. Let us now see how religiosity manifested in these structures. The most ubiquitous religious structures in the city were the mosques. They were a constant reminder of the considerable investment of the pious in religion and also of the importance of the practice of Mosque-going.

At the top of the hierarchy of mosques in the city stood the Jami' Masjid. The weekly Friday prayers were performed here which gave the emperor the opportunity to impress his majesty on his subjects as the procession marched to the mosque in all their finery. It was here at the mosque that the *khutba* was read in the name of the emperor. It was therefore a significant political institution for the royalty. The role of the mosques both the Jami' Masjid and other neighbourhood ones in the lives of the city's ordinary inhabitants is, however, shrouded in mystery. Our sources do not easily volunteer information of the religious lives of the ordinary people. Yet, it is possible to join together small pieces of information and reach a somewhat clear picture of religious life in Shahjahanabad. Mosque going seems to be a well established activity in the city. There are numerous Mohalla level mosques mentioned in our sources. Prominent inhabitants of the Mohalla often provided mosques in their locality. For instance, in the area opposite Kucha Pandit, we come across the Mosque of Miyan Khan Saheb, the Sabz Masjid of Adina Beg and the Mosque of Nawab Fath Ullah Beg.[16] Almost every Mohalla housed a mosque indicating preference for these on the ordinary days. On Friday, focus must have shifted to the Jami' Masjid.

The central congregational mosque must have attracted huge crowds for prayers on Friday. The performance of prayer was only one part of the Friday rituals and was followed by exhortations or *Wa'az* and the mosque provided the ideal setting for it. Our sources indicate that after the obligatory prayers, numerous *Waaiz* held simultaneous sermons in the mosque. Maulana Hakim Sayyid Abdul Hayyi who visited Delhi in 1894 compares the Jami' Masjid after the obligatory prayers to a "wrestling arena". When he visited the Jami Masjid for

the Friday prayer, we are told that their were four people in different parts of the mosque preaching simultaneously. One of them, Maulvi Muhammad Akbar, was furiously disparaging the followers of the *Hanafi Fiqh*, while another sitting by the Hauz reciting Munajat and Ghazals was desperately trying to gather a crowd.[17] Often, religious debates led to confrontations that often turned violent. The mosques then became sites of contestation and confrontations. Our sources record many such instances. We hear of a commotion at the Jami' Masjid when a group of young men belonging to the Shia sect, wearing amulets and beads of Karbala clay, barged into the mosque and threatened a preacher Shah Abdullah who in his last sermon had attacked the beliefs of the Shia sect claiming the concept of *Panch Tan Pak* (the five holy bodies, i.e. the Prophet, Ali, Fatima, Hussain and Hassan), was contrary to the teaching of the Sunni sect. The supporters of the Wa'iz (preacher) then intervened and forced the men out of the mosque.[18]

Mosques also provided the more pious of the city's populace space to observe supererogatory prayers. The most popular among these was the observance of *I'tikaf* of retreating into seclusion for the last ten days of the month of Ramzaan. Shah Waliullah himself observed this practice every Ramzaan and on one occasion claimed to have had a vision of the twelve imams while in seclusion.[19] Spending time in seclusion connected only to God, the men observing I'tikaf usually did so in mosques that were not very busy. Hence the Mohalla mosques and old mosques in and around the city must have been the preferred spaces for these people.

Some mosques acquired unusual importance on certain days when an important religious personage visited them. On such occasions these mosques attracted unusually large crowds. Mirza Mazhar Jaan-e-Janna for instance visited the Masjit-i-Jahan Numa (located near Dargah Rasul Numa and not to be confused with the Jami' Masjid which was also thus called) every Thursday and people who desired to meet him gathered there in large number.[20]

For the ordinary city dweller therefore, the mosque was much more than a symbol of imperial authority or that of some nobleman's piety. It was space that allowed him to express his piety. It may have been a social space to meet and greet people of the neighbourhood, and when the need arose he could take to the central congregational mosque to express his dissent.

Dargahs, Shrines and Mausoleums of saints were the next and perhaps more important places for pious expressions in our period as these places drew crowds much larger than the mosques. These have also attracted much more scholarly attention as activities of the masses are much better documented at these sites than at mosques.[21] Sufi Dargahs appear to have been frequented by the people of Delhi with much more vigour than the mosques. Visitations or Ziyaras to the tombs of saints was a well established Islamic practice. From the 13th and 14th century onwards there existed across the country numerous silsilahs of Sufis, which had expanded considerably in their influence owing to the tradition of assigning the best disciples with spiritual territories to preach and practice their faith among the people. Although it was the Chishti Silsilah that was the most popular in Shahjahanabad, with three great Sufis of the Silsilah resting here in their elaborate Dargahs, there was no dearth of Sufis belonging to other silsilahs as well.

The Dargahs and shrines it seems provided the believers the opportunity to express their religiosity without having to conform to a norm. Even today Dargahs of famous saints are the places to observe the ingenious ways in which people connect to God. Some repeat his name while others cry. For our period there are numerous sources that detail the atmosphere at the Dargah, where the people gathered to pay respects to the Saints, seek their blessings and ask for intercession in their prayers. The *Muraqqa-i-Dehli* describes the vibrant atmosphere at the Dargahs of Delhi. At the Dargah Qadam Sharif, huge crowds gathered on Thursday. People circumambulated the place, offered prayers and drank from the Hauz.[22] The saints were known not only for their piety but also for their supernatural abilities to cure

diseases. The spring flowing outside the Dargah of Nasir ud Din Chiragh-i-Delhi was believed to cure the oldest of ailments. A large number of people, we are told, therefore gathered here to bathe in the spring.[23] Dargah Quli Khan reports that the mausoleum of Hazrat Baqi Billah was so blessed that its courtyard remained cool even in the hottest summer months.[24]

The celebration of saints' Urs was the single most important event at the Dargahs. People gathered here in large numbers along with musicians, qawwals and dancers. Lighting candles at the graves, and participating in the Sama were the usual practices on Urs. The Urs of Nizamuddin Auliya, fondly called Mashuk-i-Ilahi was held on the 14th of Rabi-us-Sani. While the Qawwals mesmerized believers with their musical renditions and the Sufis gathered there went into ecstasy some sat around the saint's grave reciting the Quran and contemplating.[25] The Urs of Shah Turkman Biyabani was celebrated with equal fervor with the lighting of lamps and Qandils in the courtyard of his Dargah.

Both the mosques and the Dargahs were created by the state. It was the state that ensured their upkeep by granting Awqaf, but these Dargahs thrived because of the initiatives of the ordinary folk who visited them and invented new means of veneration. Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of the Dargah was that it attracted people from all faiths. It was here that people of different faiths shared a common sacred place and nobody existed on the margins.

Moving beyond the organized world of the Mosques and Dargahs, lay different locales — the city's streets and bazaars, public gardens and houses hidden in its lanes and by lanes that allowed the ordinary folk to invent novel ways to experience the divine. It is in these spaces outside what was recognized and accepted by society, that there emerged a world that often challenged the limits of acceptable religious behavior. This is the world that bred the impious and the deviants, those whose activities would appear suspect to believers of puritanical Islam.

Deviance in religion can be defined in various ways. It could mean an open defiance of the doctrine of faith or adopting practices deemed as innovative or not conforming to the accepted religious behavior.

Unlike Christianity Islam has no central institution defining what is right or wrong. Yet there was constant discourse on what is right and wrong. Wrong or impious behavior is not strictly defined in sources. One can however speculate that there were in those times as today various manifestations of impious behavior. These may include, an outright denial of the tenets of Sharia or challenge its injunctions, indulging in practices that find no reference in the Quran or Hadith (bidat), and also transgressing the boundaries of what is acceptable social and religious behavior. In our period the category of the impious would then be populated by those who did not conform to the prescribed religious behavior, adopted practices that were in contravention to established Islamic practices, those who set up new sects or claimed to be Prophets.

Our sources introduce us to a variety of religious personages who subverted the social and religious norms and yet continued to find acceptance and even a high degree of respect and reverence from the city dwellers. European travelers to India from the 17th century onward noticed the almost complete obsession Indian had with *Derweshes* or holy men, often referred to as '*Fuqara*'. By no means a monolithic group, these religious divines were united only in their spiritual prowess that made them especially popular with the people. While some were wandering *Derweshes* who went preaching from place to place others were settled in the many urban centres that dotted the political map of Hindustan. Hidden in the nooks and corners of Shahjahanabad were an exceedingly large number of *Derweshes*. The most interesting perhaps was Shah Rehmatullah, who hosted gatherings of *Zikr* and *Sama* at his residence. Despite all his piety, he was extremely fond of and continued to consume wine.[26] We also hear of a *Salat Khani Faqir* (a mendicant who offers Salat), who wore a large turban weighing almost 20 sers on his head. His turban provided much amusement to the nobles.[27]

Another interesting mystic was *Majnun Nanak Shahi*, equally revered by Muslims and Hindus. People gathered at his hospice with offerings and he sat on his door in meditaion, completely silent. He was very

popular with women who came to meet him alone to discuss their "hidden desires".[28] Shah Kamal, a leading mystic of the time lived a life of luxury, wore the finest of clothes and ate choicest of foods. He composed poetry in Urdu and participated in numerous mehfils of *Sama*.[29]

These *Derweshes* lived within the city or connected to it, interacted with its people and participated in the religious rituals. They gathered around them an ardent following of Faqirs, mendicants and Sufis who lived in the vicinity of their spiritual masters. These *Derweshes* were nowhere like the *Qalandars* who had shunned urban society and its religious establishments, existing on the margins of 'civilized' society yet by breaking boundaries of acceptable behaviour many of them committed impious acts such as meeting women in solitude and drinking.

The most audacious act of religious deviance in our period was undertaken by a Persian adventurer, Mir Muhmmad Hussain of Mashhad who set up a sect of his own. He invented a new language, wrote a text and managed to gather a large following. At one time as many as twenty five thousand people were found gathered in his assembly! He claimed to receive *Wahi* like the Prophet Muhammad and invented some rather strange rituals of connecting with God. His followers were asked to offer only three prayers during the day as opposed to the five prescribed in Islam. When they met they greeted each other with a *Shast* (a motto) invented by their master. His popularity grew so much that he attracted a huge following from the nobility as well, even emperor Farrukh Siyar visited him once and returned impressed by his spirituality.[30]

Another interesting group of people working in the bazaars of Shahjahanabad, who narrated incidents from Islamic history, educated people on matters of faith like the benefits of fasting and performing the Umrah. Dargah Quli Khan introduces us to these people who he encountered in the Chowk Sadullah Khan.[31] Their narrations were so engrossing that the audience was moved to tears. After these sermons, the listeners were made to pay a fee. In his Urdu translation of the

Muraqqa, Khaliq Anjum[32] refers to these people as Waiz, while in their English translation Chander Shekhar and Shama Mitra Chenoy[33] use the word Fortune Tellers. Neither of these words however fit the description that Khan provides us. Their style actually closely resembles that of the Qissa/Dastan Gos who delighted audiences with their stories throughout the Islamic world and charged a fee for their service. In fact Dargah Quli Khan uses the term *Raaviyaan* or Narrators which fits in much better with the description provided in text. However, Khan does not seem to take this group or their very seriously, perhaps because they were not the legitimate transmitters of Islamic knowledge, a task best performed by those trained in the art viz. the *Ulema*. Yet he reports that the listeners sat captivated for hours. These Qissa Gos, rendered the textual tradition of Islam, which were out of reach, for the majority of the city's populace intelligible to them. Their narrations were perhaps the only way for a large majority to access Islamic knowledge even though the veracity of their 'sermons' could not be established. For the "idle folk" who sat through these narrations and paid for them, listening to these stories must have been a religious and pious act, their own way of being religious.

This staggering plurality of religious practice in Shahjahanabad was bound to have elicited a response from those who considered themselves the custodians of Islam and wished to build a homogenous Muslim community. This was a time when an increasingly large corpus of literature was being produced within the city on what was acceptable and unacceptable religious behaviour. Two religious personages in Shahjahanabad who took upon themselves the task of setting the record straight on what constituted "purely" Islamic practice were Shah Waliullah and Mirza Mazhar Jaan-e-Jaana. Both Sufis of the Naqshbandi Silsilah, they were both very well versed in the juristic Islam and wrote extensively on various issues concerning its practice. Shah Waliullah ran and taught at the Madrasa Rahimiya, one of the premier Madrasas of our period. He wrote extensively on matters of Islamic law, Islamic sciences, Hadith

and Mysticism.[34] Among his most famous writing were the *Hujjat Allah Al Baligha* and a Persian translation of the *Quran*. Mirza Mazhar Jaan-e-Jaana's teaching and thoughts are however best preserved in his Maktubat, or letters he wrote to his disciples, often answering questions raised by them on issues concerning Islam and Tasawwuf. Their writings offer us a glimpse into the Islamic rhetoric that was growing stronger in the city.

Both mystics saw the religious practices of Shahjahanabad's people as emblematic of the moral decay and corruption that was setting in, in the society. They repeatedly reminded the citizens that the most important market of religiosity in Islam was the observation of the *Shaair*. Shah Waliullah clearly mentions that the *Shaair*, or concrete entitles serving for the worship of God were paramount. These included respectful treatment of the Quran, Ka'aba, the Prophet and performance of Salaat, or the obligatory prayers.[35] In the *Maqamat-i-Mazhari*, the biography of Mirza Mazhar Jaan-i-Jaana, by his disciple Ghulam Ali Dehelvi, the saint's strictest observation of the *Salat* is emphasized multiple times. We are told that he once visited a Derwesh who was so engrossed in his *Zikr*, that he missed the *Maghrib* (dawn) prayer. Mirza Mazhar vowed never to take Bait (guidance) under this man. While describing his Manamat, Ghulam Ali Azad writes that the saint spoke extensively on religious actions. In another instance, the Sheikh says the best of or actions are those where we give unending attention of God and the love to the Mashaikh. Every religious action has a quality; of all these the Salat is the best as it is the combination of all qualities dear to God. The recitation of the Quran, says the Sheikh, is vital for the purification of one's heart. He similarly stresses on the need to fast during the month of Ramzan to attain the highest of virtues.[36]

The popularity of the cult of the Dargahs also appears to have alarmed both the mystics and the practice came under a very strong attack from the mystics. Mirza Mazhar claims that although it is rewarding and beneficial to visit the graves of the saints or friends of God (Wali Allah) to rake in the *Barakat* (blessings) of these holy sites,

to derive spiritual benefit from these places is impossible without a clear heart, Khawaja Naqshband therefore advised that spending time in remembering the Almighty was much better than visiting the graves of the saints. He also advises against participation in the rituals associated with *Urs*.[37] Shah Waliullah on the other hand launched a scathing attack on the practice claiming that visiting *Dargahs* for the gratification of a desire was a sin as great as murder or adultery![38] Despite these scathing attacks on the practice, the belief in the miraculous power of the Sufis continued to guide hundreds of people to this shared devotional setting.

A relentless 'presentism' in studies of medieval religious cultures often distorts and over look their complexity, fluidity and dynamism. Islam and Muslim religious practices are terms that convey markedly different things to the medieval and modern minds. While today Islam is understood as an all encompassing, monolithic entity, with a universal legal and juristic discourse on all aspects of life and religiosity in the medieval times the religious practices of the ordinary Muslims of Shahjahanabad were shaped by their personal experiences. Mosques and Madrasahs, Dargahs, hospices and mausoleums of mystics, both renowned and the not so renowned and even the bazaars of the city served as spaces where religiosity could be expressed and even redefined. Although it is tempting to draw a line between the religiosity manifested in the Mosques and that in the Dargahs, it would be too simplistic an exposition of the highly complex religious landscape of Shahjahanabad. The mosque vs. Dargah rhetoric may have been of importance to scholars like Shah Waliullah and Mirza Mazhar Jaan-a-Jaana but on the ground those who prayed in mosques and those who visited shrines could not be clearly demarcated. The two practices were equally religious experiences for most people.

This highly eclectic world of religiosity then does not lend itself to the image of a city dominated by Islam. Islam, as we have established above, was a complex mixture of practices, beliefs and dogma. While sharing the Islamic religious spaces, people may have had completely divergent views of what Islam and that practice meant. The city's eclecticism was bolstered by not only the absence of a totalizing and

dominant 'religion' but also by a cultural pluralism reflected in the existence of ethnically diverse neighbourhoods and a secular utilization of space.

Shahjahanabad's mohallas or urban quarters were the building blocks of the city. Ehlers and Krafft argue that the mohallas were "sealed off from each other and could only be entered by passing through one of the gates. The gates were controlled by chowkidars who were paid by the Mohalla Community. The lanes and alleys were semi-private space. The Mohallas were fairly homogenous religious and/or ethnic quarters sometimes known by the name of the prominent person whose mansion had been built there. Others were known by the vocation and/or the ethnic origin of its residents."[39] This description fits perfectly with the authors' characterization of Shahjahanabad as an Islamic city. When we compare this to the description we find in the *Sairul-Manazil*, a fascinating record of Shahjahanabad's morphology in the early 19th century, it appears that the city's localities were far from homogenous. In the Chatta Lal Miyan for instance, there were homes of the riaya (common people), the haveli of Faiz Ali Khan, the houses of Kashmiri Pandits and the Haveli and Diwan Khana of Dayanand Pandit the wakil of the Raja of Balabhgarh.[40] With thana in every mohalla, it clearly seems to have been an administrative unit but our sources also tell us that the mohallas were not frozen, static entities but continued to exhibit immense dynamism in their demographic and social compositions. It is not possible to imagine a mohalla sealed off from another. This is demonstrated by massive mobility and circulation of people within the city and large scale migration from outside. The latter phenomenon is clearly demonstrated in the description of numerous havelis belonging to Mahajans in the city. We hear of the Havelis of Lala Basant Lal, Sukh Lal Mahajan, Sukh Chand, Mangat Rai and Sansari Mal.[41] Many mahajans also maintained Kothis or courtyard houses in the Dariba Kalan.[42]

This cultural and religious plurality was hallmark of Mughal cities across the empire. Where then does the association of these cities

with Islam stand? Borrowing theoretically from the inimitable Marshall Hodgson[43], we may argue that the cultural complex created by Islam that had a strong presence in many parts of what was the Islamicate world, was conspicuous in Shahjahanabad too. Yet the physical and religious landscape of the city was extremely dynamic and accommodative. This process was particularly well documented in the way religious experiences were tailored to fit the spiritual needs of different people. This astounding heterogeneity of religious practice within what is known as an Islamic or Muslim community in Shahjahanabad, along with evidences of cultural plurality cited above makes any attempt to associate the city with either Muslims or Islam completely futile. One wonders however, what should the city be associated with? The answer is simple enough. Shahjahanabad was and will forever be associated with a culture that was distinctly its own, this was a shared culture of conviviality, spirituality and festivity. This culture continued to survive and thrive in every lane and by-lane of this city until every aspect of this culture was systematically put to moral scrutiny by the colonial state in the aftermath of the revolt of 1857.[44] Mirza Ghalib exemplifies the grief of an inhabitant of Shahjahanabad, who seems to have lost his beloved city in this process in a letter he wrote to a friend in the year 1859.

Delhi meant the Fort, Chandni Chowk, the daily bazaar near Jama Masjit, the weekly trip to the Jamuna bridge of boats, the annual Phool walon ki sair. These five things are no more. Where is Delhi now?[45]

Shahjahanabad therefore existed as a physical space enclosing within it a complex, myriad and dynamic cultural influences that existed in this city. This was what Shahjahanabad was for its people and this is how it should be identified today.

Notes

[1] Tomas Twining, *Travels in India a Hundred years ago with a visit to the United States*, ed., William H. G. Twining, London, 1893, p. 228.

[2] Ibid. p 230.

[3] Delhi State Archives, Commissioner Officer, 1858, 5, vol. II, 'Restoration of Jama Masjid to the Muhammadans'.

[4] See for instance, M. Elphinstone, *A History of India*, London, 1843, pp. 497-506; H. M. Elliot and John Dawson, trs. & ed., *The History of India as Told by its Own Historians,* 8 Vols. Rep. Allahabad, 1964, here Vol. 1, p. 8.

[5] See K. M. Munshi, Preface in R. C. Majumdar, ed, *"The Struggle for Empire", vol. 5* of *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Bombay, 1957, viii. Munshi takes colonial rhetoric of an end to the glorious Hindu civilization with the coming of Muslim a step further by seeing the process set in motion by the raids of Mahmud Ghaznavi and not with the Turkish invasions as proposed by the Colonial writings!

[6] See Richard M Eaton, *India's Islamic Traditions*. 711-1750, Reprint, Delhi, 2006; Cynthia Talbot and Catherine B Asher, *India Before Europe,* Delhi, 2008; Bruce B Lawrence and David Gilmartin, ed., *Beyond Turk and Hindu : Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia,* Florida, 2000.

[7] Muhammad Habib, *Politics and Society During the Early Medieval Period,* Vol. 1, ed., K. A. Nizami, Aligarh, 1974, p. 81; K. M. Ashraf, *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan,* Reprint, Delhi, 1988, p. 142.

[8] Stephen Blake, *Shahjahanabad, Sovereign City in Mughal India*, Cambridge: 1993, p. 83.

[9] For a criticism of the Islamic city model see, Salma K Jayyusi, Renata Holod, Attilo Petruccioli and Andre Raymond, eds., *The City in the Islamic World, 2,* Vols., Leiden : 2008, Vol. 1, pp. 3-18; Amira K Benison and Alison Gascoigne, eds., *Cities in the Premodern Islamic World,* pp. 2-11; Andre Raymond, 'Islamic City, Arab City : Orientalist Myths and Recent Views', in *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 21, 1994, pp. 3-18.

[10] Janet Abu-Loghud. 'The Islamic City-Historic myth, Islamic Essence and Contemporary Relevance', in *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies,* 1987, p. 170.

[11] Chander Bhan Brahman, *Chahar Chaman*, tr, and ed., Seyed Muhammad Yunus Jaffery, Delhi, 2007, p. 125.

[12] Muhammad Salih Kambo, *Amal-i-Salih*, ed., G. S. Yazdani, 3 Volumes, Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta : 1939, Vol. 3, p. 51.

[13] Chander Bhan Brahman, *Chahar Chaman*, p. 127.

[14] Mirza Sangin Beg, *Sair ul Manazil*, Urdu tr., and ed., Shareef Hussain Qasmi, Delhi, 1982, p. 40; 60.

[15] For details on the development of the Madrasa based educational system see K. A. Nizami, 'Development of Muslim Educational System in Medieval India', in *Islamic Culture*, Vol. LXXXX, October 1996.

[16] *Sair ul Manazil,* p. 164.

[17] Maulvi Hakim Sayyid Abdul Hayyi, *Dehli aur Uske Atraf,* ed, Sadiqa Zaki, Delhi, 1995, p. 62.

[18] Gholam Hussein Khan, *Seir Mutaqherin*, English translation, Seir Mutaqherin or A Review of Modern Times by Nota Manus, Vol. I, pp. 77-80.

[19] J. M. S. Baljon, 'Religion and Thought of Shah Wali Allah Dihlawi : 1703-1762', in *Studies in the History of Religions*, Vol. 48, 1986, p. 94.

[20] Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa-i-Delhi*, ed. Khaliq Anjum, Delhi, 1993, p. 79 (henceforth Muraqqa).

[21] See Carl W Ernst, *Eternal Garden, Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center* (Second edition with a new preface.), Delhi, 2004; Christian W. Troll, *Muslim Shrines in India : Their Character, History and Significance*, Delhi, 2004.

[22] *Muraqqa*, p. 52.

[23] Rai Chaturman Saxena, *Chahar Gulshan*, ed. Chander Shekkar, Delhi, 2011.

[24] *Muraqqa*, p. 56.

[25] *ibid*., pp. 54-55.

[26] *Muraqqa*, p. 69.

[27] *ibid*, p. 64.

[28] *ibid*., p. 66.

[29] *ibid*., p. 68.

[30] *Seir Mutaqherin*, Vol., 1, pp. 206-222.

[31] *Muraqqa*, p. 60.

[32] Khaliq Anjum, tr, & ed., *Muraqqa-i-Delhi*, p. 126.

[33] Chander Shekhar and Shama Mitra Chenoy, trs, & eds., *Myraqqa e Delhi, The Mughal Capital in Muhammad Shah's Time*, Delhi, 1996, p. 21.

[34] See S. A. A. Rizvi, *Shah Wali Allah and His Times*, [A Study of Eighteenth Century Islam, Politics and Society in India] Canberra : 1980, pp. 279-286.

[35] J. M. S. Baljon, 'Religion and Thought of Shah Wali Allah Dihlawi : 1703-1762', pp. 95-96.

[36] Ghulam Ali Dehelavi, *Maqamat-i-Mazhari : Ahwal wa Malfuzat wa Maktubat-i-Mirza Mazhar Jaan-i-Jaana Shaheed*, tr. and ed., Muhammad Iqbal Mujaddidi, Lahore : 2001, pp. 330-331.

[37] *ibid*, op. cit;, p. 315.

[38] J. M. S. Baljon, *Religion and Thought of Shah Wali Allah Dihlawi : 1703-1762*, p. 100.

[39] E. Ehlers and T. Krafft, 'The imperial Islamic City : A Map of 19th Century Shahjahanabad', in *Environmental Design : Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre 1-2*, edited by Attilo Petruccioli, Rome; Dell'oca Editore, 1993, p. 176.

[40] *Sair-ul Manazil*, pp. 172-173.

[41] *ibid*, pp. 172-174.

[42] *ibid*, p. 184.

[43] Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam, Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, 3 Vols., *The Classical Age of Islam*, Vol. 1, Chicago, 1974, p. 59.

[44] For more on the effect of this process on the Urdu literary culture see, Frances Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness : Urdu Poetry and its Critics*, Berkley, 1994, i-iii.

[45] Ralph Russell and Khurshidul Islam, eds., and trs., *Ghalib, 1797-1869; Life and Letters*, Delhi, 1994, p. 171.

Revisiting Two Inscriptions from Chebrolu, Andhra Pradesh

Susmita Basu Majumdar and Smita Halder

Chebrolu is a village in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh. It is the headquarter of Chebrolu mandal in Tenali revenue division (Fig. 1). The excavations at Chebrolu have unearthed archaeological artifacts of the time of the Sātavāhanas and Ikṣvākus. The site is situated at the coastal tract of Andhra Pradesh and would have been an important activity centre in the ancient past. It is a potential early historic site and a lot of activity can be noticed under the Sātavāhanas. The site has yielded a few important archaeo-materials including two stone inscriptions[1] — one memorial inscription in Prakrit (Fig. 2) and the other is a Sanskrit record (Fig. 3) on a pilaster and besides these two records, two more sealings have also been reported[2]. Both the inscriptions need a fresh interpretation, and hence, this attempt. Besides these two epigraphs, Chebrolu also yielded several coins especially those of the ship-type coins of the Sātavāhanas (Fig. 4). We are indebted to Dr. K. Munirathnam, Director, Epigraphy Branch, Archaeological Survey of India, Mysore for kindly sending us the estampage and photograph of both these records.

I. Memorial Inscription from Chebrolu in Prakrit (Fig. 2)

The inscription is in four lines, in *Brāhmī* characters of 2nd-3rd century CE, in Prakrit language. It reads as follows:

Line 1: *tabāva vāsino bha(ga)*
Line 2: *vato gadasa maṭavo*
Line 3: *cātusālaṁ ca*
Line 4: *ca tuna cavo juna*

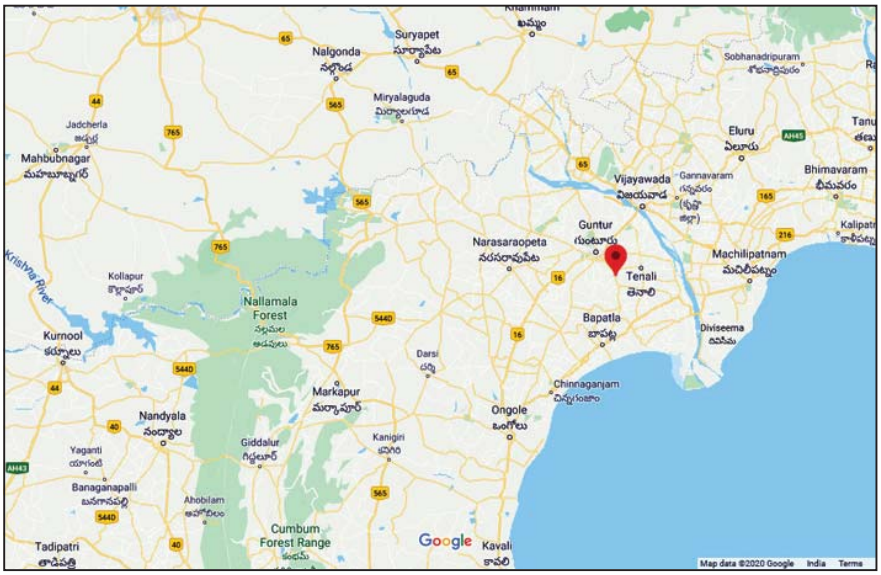

Fig. 1 : Location of Chebrolu

Probable Sanskrit Rendering[2A] :

1. tāmbrāpavāsino bha(ga)
2. vato gandhasya maṇḍapaṁ
3. catuḥśālaṁ ca-/(tya)
4. rcitaḥ(?) maraṇa(?) jīrṇaḥ(?) / ktaḥ tunaḥ maraṇa(?) jīrṇaḥ(?)

Translation :

In Bhagavata's (Buddha's) *Gaṁdha-maṇḍapa* i.e. ritual fragrant cell, (a monk) who was a resident of Tabāva died at an old age at the monastic establishment with cells on all four sides. (His body was) besmeared with sandalwood and other pastes, or his *tuna*, a musical instrument lies abandoned (in the *maṇḍapa* of the monastic establishment with cells on all four sides).

Tabāva is the Prakrit version of the ancient name Tāmbrāpa i.e. modern Chebrolu. The next inscription which is in Sanskrit clearly mentions the name of the place as Tāmvrāpa[3]. The present one is a memorial inscription as the word *'cavo'* clearly denotes death[4]. The record is in Prakrit, hence, Tāmbrāpa becomes Tabāva as *pa* becomes *ba* in Prakrit[5]. We have suggested two interpretations as the word *caca*

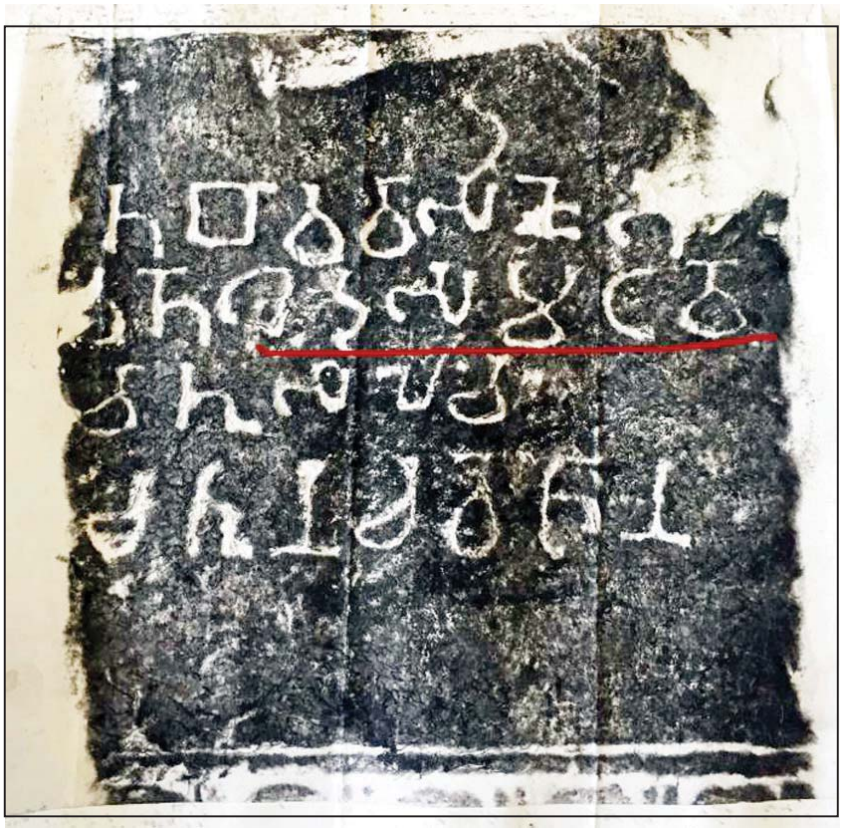

Fig. 2 : Memorial Inscription from Chebrolu in Prakrit

means besmeared with sandalwood and other pastes similarly *caca* in Prakrit can also denote *tyakta* i.e. abandoned. The following word is *tuna* which stands for a musical instrument[6]. If *caca* is taken as abandoned, it would mean following the death of the monk the instrument (which probably belonged to him or he played) remains or lies abandoned. Here the person whose death has been mentioned was a resident of a monastery with cells on all four sides, *catuśālā* (pillared cloister) and his body was lying in the *gaṁdha-maṇḍapa* i.e. ritual-fragrant-cell at Tabāva. The cause of death i.e. *cava* (death or going to the other world for new birth) has been mentioned as a natural one, due to ageing denoted by the word *juna* i.e. *jīrṇa*[7].

It is worth mentioning here that there is a Buddhist *maṭha* at Chebrolu which still exists and is also known as *Gaṁdhakuṭi.*

II. Chebrolu Sanskrit Pilaster Inscription of the reign of Ikṣvāku king? (Year 5)

Fig 3. Chebrolu Sanskrit Pilaster Inscription
(Photograph courtesy: K. Munirathnam)

The inscription was first reported in 2015-16 ARIE (B.14)[8] and was later published in *JESI* by K. Munirathnam[9]. It was found in a field engraved on a pillar at Bhimesvara temple, Chebrolu, Guntur district in Andhra Pradesh. It is engraved on a *maṇḍapa* pillar and consists of seven lines in *Brāhmī* characters of c. 3rd century CE and the language is Sanskrit[10]. Munirathnam attributes the inscription to the Sātavāhana king Vijaya and identifies him with Vijaya Sātakarṇi. According to him, this record was issued in his 5th regnal year (c. 207 CE who according to the *Matsya Purāṇa* is the 28th king of the Āndhras). Unfortunately, the author did not provide any translation of the same but gave a summary and reading of the inscription. It records the construction of a *prāsāda* (temple), a *maṇḍapa* and consecration of

images on the southern side of the temple by Kārttika, for the merit of the king at the (temple) of *Bhagavatī* (goddess) *Śaktimātṛkā* at Tāmbrape (Chebrolu). This is the earliest epigraphic reference of *Śaktimātṛkā* (it may be same or similar to the *Saptamātṛkā)* cult to which we get ample references but here it is distinctly mentioned as *Śaktimātrikā* so far found in India). From the available structural remains, it can be said that this temple was originally a Buddhist monastery and it was later on converted into a *śaiva* temple.

We would like to differ from the reading and attribution of the record to the Sātavāhana king. We would rather attribute it to an Ikṣvāku ruler. However, the name of the ruler is not mentioned in this record. Before delving into a fresh interpretation and a rereading of the record we would like to cite here the reading provided by K. Munirathnam in *JESI*[11]

"1. . . . Varmmaṇah. [mātru dakshano]
2. . . ra ... lo pā tēna Rājña Vijayā
3. . [[hi]ścha] hatārthaṁ Tāmprāpe Kārtika [pra]kyātta
4. nāmadhyēyaḥ Bhagavātyāḥ Śaktimāttṛiāyāḥ
5. [ma]ṇḍapāñca kāritaḥ bhavati chāttra ślōkaḥ
6. su prāsāda maṇḍapān devānā kārayet sammyak
7. īti Savatsaraṛ-Pañchama 5 He Pakhe diva 5"

Nagarjunakonda inscription of Ikṣvāku king Ehavala Caṁtamūla issued in his 11th regnal year (4th century CE) was considered as the earliest Sanskrit inscription in Deccan but this may be earlier than the above mentioned record, however, the name of the Ikṣvāku ruler is not mentioned here in this record and only his regnal year 5 is mentioned.

Fresh reading of the inscription is as follows :

Line 1: (Oṁ mātri)kāyaḥ rāmabh(y)udayaṁto
Line 2: Śrīmat-bhṭṭāla-pāteta rājñah(ḥ)[12] vijayā
Line 3: deśa-hitārtham[13](ṁ) tāmvrāpe kāñca(/ci)kalāpyutta
Line 4: ma(dh)umadheyaḥ bhagavātyāḥ śaktimāttrakāyāḥ

Line 5: (ma)ṇḍapa[14] kāritaḥ bhavati matṛu-ślōkaḥ
Line 6: sup[15]rāsāda-maṇṭapāt[16] devā[17]tākā[18]rayet samasaṅku
Line 7: īti saṁvatsara pa[19]ñcama - 5 he pakhe diva 5

Translation:

Invocation to the mother goddesses! At the end of the festival of Rāma at Tamvrāpa Śrimat Bhaṭṭāla falling down on (the feet of) the king for the benefit of Vijayādeśa i.e. Vijayāpuri (the capital of the Ikṣvākus) covered the *Bhagavatī Śaktimātṛkās* with girdle of intoxicating drink made from honey or from the blossoms of the honey tree *(madhumadya).* This *maṇḍapa* or hall has been caused to be made (for the *Śaktimātṛkās)* which is like the hymn of praise of the mother. From this beautiful *prāsāda-maṇḍapa* this hymn of praise of gods (emanates on) at the end of *samasaṅku* i.e. a planetary position of the sun's gnomon (i.e. altitude when it reaches the prime vertical circle). (Dated) regnal year five 5 (in numerals), on the 5th day (in numerals) of the month of *Hemanta* (late autumn*) pakṣa.*

This record is incised on the very *maṇḍapa* pillar which the record mentions twice. This inscription records a festival ritual of the consecration of the mother goddess with an intoxicating honey drink at Chebrolu. The ancient name of Chebrolu has been mentioned as Tāmbrāpa in this record. This is a unique record and one of the earliest Sanskrit inscriptions from Deccan. The uniqueness also lies in the use of symbols for *upadhmānīya* and *jihvāmūlīya* sounds. Sanskrit was used for the first time, hence, there are several peculiarities which were experimental and many letters have been written in a peculiar fashion, for example *ta* in line 2 and 6 has been added below; similarly a small *ma* has been used in line 3 in the word *hitārtham.* The word *samaśaṅku* has been written in a cryptic manner. Dr. Munirathnam attributes this record to the Sātavāhana ruler Vijaya Sātakarṇi, as already mentioned above. However, there is no use of matronymic here, neither Sātakarṇi is mentioned. Moreover, the word in the inscription is *Vijayā* and not *Vijaya* which raises doubt. Besides, the paleography of the record is a little matured or developed than the

Sātavāhana inscriptions and matches well with the Ikṣvāku epigraphs. It is worth mentioning here, that the capital of the Ikṣvākus was Vijayāpuri, and here it has been mentioned as Vijayādeśa. The ruler has not been named here. The record belongs to a feudatory or an employee of the Ikṣvākus, as he venerates at the feet of the ruler and issues it in his 5th regnal year. The inscription is one of the earliest records of the *śākta* cult mentioning the worship of conglomeration of *Śākta* deities (i.e. *śaktimātṛkās).*

Besides these two inscriptions, there are two sealings which have been reported from Chebrolu[20]. We have not examined these sealings, and hence, we are not discussing them in this article. Chebrolu seems to be a vibrant early historic site in coastal Deccan and coexistence of cults can be clearly seen here. Religious hostility may also have existed as there are evidences of turning of the Buddhist establishment into a mother goddess temple i.e. inscription no. 2. However in the absence of detailed archaeological evidences in support we are not delving deep into this issue.

Apart from the above mentioned records, Chebrolu has reported ship type coins of the Sātavāhanas. Ship type coins of the Sātavāhanas can broadly be divided into three varieties — one is double masted ship (fig. 4) which is depicted on most of the ship-type issues found from Chebrolu[21]. The coins bear bold depiction of ships on obverse and the Sātavāhana royal emblem i.e. Ujjain symbol on reverse. These

Fig 4. Ship type coin from Chebrolu
Courtesy : D. Raja Reddy : 2012, p. 47.

coins were minted for circulation in Coromandel Coast or east coast[22]. Scholars like C. A Padmanabha Sastry reported another ship-type coin of *Śrī* Yajña Sātakarṇi from Chebrolu in Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh[23]. The site is situated near the ancient city of Amaravati and Dharanikota.

The ship type coins reported from Chebrolu are also unique as the coins from Chebrolu display two ships on the obverse and Ujjain symbol with a dot in each orb on reverse. Until the discovery of the specimens the above mentioned two varieties of the Sātavāhana ship-type coins were popularly known as double masted ships issued by both the rulers - Puḷumāvi and Yajñaśrī, and a fleet of ships (of at least five ships) issued by Yajñaśrī *Sātakarṇi*. Besides the masted ship-types, there is another variety which bears a boat without a mast while the coins with the legend *siri Sātakanisa* display two ships which has added a new variety to the ship type coins of the Sātavāhanas. Ship type coins were issued by three Sātavāhana rulers namely *Vāśiṣṭhīputra* Puḷumāvi, *Vāśiṣṭhīputra* Sātakarṇi and *Gautamīputra* Yajñaśrī Sātakarṇi. All these varieties of ship type coins found or reported from Chebrolu which indicate maritime activities in and around Chebrolu and the eastern coast. Chebrolu was hence, a vibrant early historic site with lot of activities as is evident from the epigraphic and numismatic finds from the site. It was active during the Sātavāhanas and later also under the Ikṣvākus.

Notes

[1] Here it should be mentioned that D. Raja Reddy refers to 21 inscriptions aproximately reported from the area but according to him most of them are untraceable at present.

[2] D. Raja Reddy has mentioned about seals bearing the legend *amātyaputrasya Nagolasya* belonging to the time of the Sātavāhanas. Though he has used a note number 5, unfortunately there is no reference or note in the article.

[2A] We are thankful to Professor Debarchana Sarkar for suggesting this Sanskrit rendering.

[3] Interestingly, D. Raja Reddy in his article 'Ship Type of Sātavāhana Coins from Chebrolu' mentions that the ancient name of Chebrolu was Chembrolu, for which he does not provide any reference. Our inscriptions clearly prove that the ancient name of Chebrolu was Tāmbrapa.

[4] See *Paia Sadda Mahannavo* (Prakrit Dictionary), pp. 321 *cava = maraṇa/mauta/marnā/janmāntara me jānā.*

[5] The conjunct *mvrā* makes the previous vowel *a* short and rest becomes *ba* in place of *va* and the vowel becomes long as per grammatical rules.

[6] From *tunaya* which is a musical instrument.

[7] See *Paia Sadda Mahannavo* (Prakrit Dictionary), pp. 360. *juṇṇa>juṇa* i.e. *jīrṇa/jūnā* i.e. old.

[8] *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy,* New Delhi : Archaeological Survey of India, 2015-2016.

[9] K. Munirathnam, 'Chebrolu Inscription of Sātavāhana king Vijaya, year 5', *JESI,* Vol. XLIII, 2018, pp. 55-57.

[10] Mimeo : We are thankful to Arlo Griffiths for sharing the details of the record entry in their database EIAD 651, though he mentions that they have reedited the record but it still remains unpublished.

[11] K. Munirathnam, op. cit.

[12] Here instead of using a *visarga* mark a small '*ha*' has been added below the letter *jña* which is a typical character of this inscription.

[13] Just like the previous addition of *ha* for *visarga* here too a small *ma* has also been added below to indicate *ṁ*.

[14] Here above *ka* we find a mark used for *jihvāmūlīyaka*.

[15] Here we have a mark circle with a plus in between for indicting an *upadhmānīya* in *prāsāda* and *pañcama* in line numbers 6 and 7.

[16] Written below as a subscript *ta* (small) to denote *t.*

[17] It should be read as *va,* not *vā.*

[18] *Jihvāmūlīya.*

[19] *Upadhmānīya* mark or symbol.

[20] *Mimeo* We are thankful to Arlo Griffiths for sharing the information with us that these two inscriptions and sealings will be published soon by them.

[21] D. Raja, Reddy, 2012, p. 50.

[22] However, a coin of this type has been reported from Pune, Maharashtra. Thus, S. B. Deo has opined that the type was also in use in the western Deccan. However, a single piece of peripatetic-coin cannot ascertain it. Besides, it must be mentioned that the coin was obtained from a scrap dealer in Pune and thus, Pune could not be the find-spot of the coin.

[23] C. A. Padmanabha, Sastry, 'Three Satavahana Coins', *JESI,* Vol. 7, 1980, pp. 63-64.

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A Tale of Stones: Women, Patronage and Representation in Bharhut Relief Sculptures

Suchintan Das

The remains of the *toraṇa* (gateway)[1] and *vedikā* (railing)[2] which once surrounded the Buddhist *stūpa* at Bharhut (located in the present day Satna District of Madhya Pradesh) have had different stories to tell. The now non-existent *stūpa* at Bharhut is widely thought to have been commissioned during the Mauryan rule by either Emperor Ashoka or some other succeeding Mauryan ruler.[3] However, later embellishments in the form of sculpted reliefs adorning the *toraṇa* and *vedikā* are largely ascribed to the second and first centuries BCE i.e. during the rule of the Śunga dynasty.[4] The discovery of the remains and the subsequent excavations at the site of Bharhut carried out by Alexander Cunningham and J. D. Beglar in 1873-74 paved the way for subsequent debates regarding the fate, nature, date, and meaning of the sculpted reliefs that could be uncovered.

When Cunningham first encountered the site of Bharhut in its deplorable condition, he concluded that remaining stones would also be appropriated by the residents of the neighbouring villages who had hitherto been systematically pillaging the site for stones to be used in construction. The prospective danger was perceived to be so great that the remnant structures from the site were carried away to the then capital city of Calcutta. An exception to the rule of in-situ preservation was made by the Archaeological Survey of India and Cunningham acted pre-emptively to prevent the transportation of the Bharhut remains to London to be consigned to the "oblivious vaults" of the British Museum.[5] The remains, therefore, found their way into the then Imperial Museum (now Indian Museum)[6], Calcutta, which

was till then little more than a *Wunderkammer*[7] loaded with relics of natural history. The museumization of the Bharhut remains, therefore, marked the formal beginning of ex-situ conservation of art and archaeological objects in colonial India.

In 1910, Rakhaldas Bandyopadhyay joined the Archaeological Section of the Indian Museum before moving over to the Archaeological Survey of India a year later. Perhaps it was here in Calcutta that he first came across the remains of Bharhut. So great was the impact of this encounter that in 1914, Bandyopadhyay decided to author a novel in Bengali called *Pashaner Katha* (Tale of Stones). Bandyopadhyay's narrative began with the geological formation of the stones and mapped their journey of being shaped and sculpted into reliefs adorning the gateways and railings of the *stūpa* at Bharhut during its heyday spanning the Maurya, Śunga, Kuṣāṇa, and Gupta periods, before witnessing chaos, anarchy, and destruction and eventually passing into oblivion with the advent of the Muslim invaders. By making the voice of the stone subsume his own voice, Bandyopadhyay attempted to create a useful fiction of national identity.[8] The story of the Bharhut stones was thus rendered into a metonym for the history of India, both of whose self-fulfilment lay in being recovered by the colonial masters and in being consequently memorialized in some tangible form within the Museum at Calcutta to be studied and cherished by posterity.

The study of the Bharhut remains primarily took the form of description, categorization, appreciation and analysis of the relief sculptures. While Alexander Cunningham[9] and B.M. Barua[10] had attempted to ascribe explicitly Buddhist symbolic meanings to the Bharhut sculptured reliefs and had laid emphasis on the correct identification of scenes depictive of the *Jātakas* (stories of the Buddha's previous births as Bodhisattvas), later works by Arabinda Ghosh[11] and R.C. Sharma[12] tried to establish tenuous links of the sculptures with an overarching water cosmology[13] and a latent Hindu symbology[14] respectively.

The other form which a study of the Bharhut remains took, emanated directly from their unique character of being accompanied by denotative labels and donative inscriptions, engraved primarily in the early Brahmi script. The language has been identified to be a western dialect of Prakrit infused with some mixed elements from other dialects and languages, predominantly from Pali.[15] This form of epigraphic study of the Bharhut remains as carried out by Cunnigham, Hoernle, Hultzsch, Lüders, Chanda, Barua and Sinha among others with the implicit purpose of historicizing the donors and ascertaining the legends depicted through the sculptures.

Two approaches marked a departure from the conventional ways in which the Bharhut remains were hitherto studied. Romila Thapar argued that dynastic involvement in the construction and expansion of the *stūpa* at Bharhut was marginal and the large number of votive inscriptions which are attributed to people from non-royal backgrounds provide a case in point for studying the Bharhut remains in order to understand the dynamics of community patronage in the post-Mauryan period.[16]

Jason D. Hawkes' re-assessment of Bharhut as a site within a wider archaeological context[17] — taking into consideration the landscape with wherein the site was situated and the evidence of material culture in the form of Red Polished Ware potsherds among other objects, indicate the need to look into a complex nexus between the monastic community at the site and the local community nearby (which was often the source of patronage). This according to Hawkes, becomes evident from the possible pre-Buddhist popular or folk connotations of a majority of the non-narrative and non-doctrinal relief sculptures (which were later imbued with specific Buddhist symbolic meanings) associated with votive inscriptions recording donations by private individuals and members of the monastic community. In all probability this was a strategy of the latter to secure patronage from the non-monastic community that was still largely unfamiliar with Buddhist iconography.[18]

The non-monastic community of patrons included women. The monastic community had nuns recording their donations as well. Women were also represented in diverse ways — as *yakṣīs* and *devatās*, as popular folk deities, as depicters of specific motifs, as images of royal female patrons, and as characters within various narrative and doctrinal scenes. Thus, the contribution of women towards the construction of embellishments around the *stūpa* at Bharhut and the multifarious representations of women on the sculpted reliefs thereof need to be studied on their own merits. This will not only facilitate a better understanding of women's agency over wealth and property in the post-Mauryan period but will also enable a more nuanced perception of artistic modes in which femininity could be manifested on sculptures that had both popular and doctrinal significance. The Bharhut Gallery of the Indian Museum, Kolkata, which houses 167 major fragments out of the 421 total known fragments excavated from Bharhut can be a good place to start this exercise.[19]

The names of laywomen patrons which can be found inscribed on the remains of Bharhut had led Romila Thapar to ask some stimulating questions. Did these women enjoy property and inheritance rights? Were these donations made out of their *strī-dhana* over which in theory they had absolute control? Was this phenomenon of female patronage more prevalent in the context of heterodox sects?[20] Another feature of the Bharhut votive inscriptions which gives rise to significant questions is the large number of donations recorded against the names of nuns. How renunciatory was the Buddhist monastic order during this period? Did these donations refer to those made by newly inducted nuns who were supposed to give up their personal possessions on joining the *sangha?*

A partial answer to these questions perhaps lies in the discovery of late Mauryan and immediately post-Mauryan copper cast and silver punch-marked coins from the site of Bharhut. Jason D. Hawkes argued on the basis of this evidence that the monastic community at the site of Bharhut forged social relations with the nearby patron communities

of lay followers and that they at least facilitated if not actively engaged in a range of economic activities involving coinage.[21] In light of the large number of recorded donations made by women, it will perhaps not be unwise to suggest that women belonging to the laity as well as the monastery had somewhat of a role to play in directing and sustaining such economic activities.

The sculptures on pillars at Bharhut were commissioned by both members of the monastic community and private individuals. These included images of semi-divine beings — in both masculine *(yakṣas* and *nāgārajas)* and feminine *(yakṣīs* and *devatās)* forms. These seem to have been tutelary deities of important towns which were incorporated within the sculptural scheme at Bharhut, depicted as paying obeisance to the relics of Buddha contained in the *stūpa* and implicitly proclaiming the supremacy of Buddhism.[22] It was in these sculptural manifestations of semi-divine beings that an ideal femininity seems to have got exemplified.

Although R.C. Sharma argued that the feminine beauty in the Bharhut sculptures "seems to have remained untouched and undisturbed by the sensuous emotions ... [and] is expressive of purity, chastity, grace, and diviniry"[23], Vidya Dehejia claimed that the female (and male) imagery at Bharhut were characterized by "elegant, sensuous bodies". She further argued that this representation cannot be said to have been the product of the 'male gaze' as the *stūpa* "was visited by female and male, old and young, nuns and monks, and laypeople" alike.[24] Moreover, the donative inscriptions indicated that these depictions of semi-divine femininity as exemplified in the figures of *Candā yakṣī*[25], *Sudarśanā yakṣī*[26], *Sirimā devatā*[27], *Culakoka devatā*[28] — were also commissioned from within the monastic order and by nuns as well.[29] The agency of women in determining the representation of femininity cannot be underestimated in this regard.

A discussion on the representation of femininity in Bharhut relief sculptures would remain incomplete without a discussion on the practice of tattooing among women. It cannot be a mere coincidence

that almost all the female figures in the Bharhut sculptures happen to be more or less ornamented with tattoo marks of various kinds.[30] This representation must have derived its inspiration from some practice in reality. It needs to be noted that these marks were not restricted to the female semi-divine beings but also found depiction on the cheek of a female patron's sculpted bust.[31] Although Cunningham made much of this,[32] perhaps it can be safely argued that the practice of tattooing was a customary practice of manifesting a femininity which was not devoid of local-tribal undertones, at least in the region of Bharhut during the period when the embellishments to the *stūpa* were being built.

A very significant motif associated with femininity that is often found in artistic and literary contexts across Brahmanical, Jain, and Buddhist traditions and which is also invoked in the Bharhut relief sculptures happens to be that of pregnancy longing or *dohada*.[33] This visual motif of a woman standing beneath a tree (often depicted as bending a branch in what is called the *bhañjikā* / *shalabhañjikā* motif,[34] which is one of the most dominant motifs in early Indian art across regional and religious contexts) causing the latter to blossom by the touch of her foot seems to indicate a parallel fertility of trees and women. Frequent depiction of this motif at Bharhut works rather well in setting a context for one of the medallions depicting Maya Devi's conception of the Buddha as a 'sounding elephant' *(Bhagavato rukdanta)* in her dream.[35]

The presence of three other women in this nocturnal scene, one of whom is depicted as "waving a cow tail *chauri* to keep of insects"[36] offers some insight regarding the kind of service female servants were expected to render within the inner sanctum of royal households. Another representation of women at work is found on a sculpted coping stone of Bharhut, where in one scene, a woman attendant(?) is cutting corn (or wheat?)[37] for another woman (who is standing beside a large vessel) to cook, while in an adjacent scene, a woman (servant?) is seen serving food to another man and a woman.[38] These

scenes might be taken to provide unwitting testimony to the predominance of a gendered division of labour.

It can be an interesting aside to briefly comment on the role of the *sangha* in entrenching hierarchies of its own kind and perpetuating the same through the practice of employing monastic servants called *ārāmikas* or *ārāmakas.* The depiction of such practice can be found on one of the sculpted coping stones of Bharhut. The scene under our consideration portrays a scantily clothed and turbaned individual squatting on the ground and is perhaps wringing the cloth of a religious mendicant *(katha* or *kānthā).* In an inscription ascribed to the scene preceding this one, this individual is identified as the *ārāmika* Veduka and his status is ascribed in the inscription accompanying this scene which says "*Veduko katha dohati nadode pavate*" i.e. "Veduka milks/wrings the tattered garment on Mount Nadoda".[39] Considering the previous depictions of women at work in light of this one, it will perhaps not be out of place to suggest that the category of monastic servants comprised women as well.

An important presence of women en masse can be found in the scene depicted on one of the corner pillars of the western gateway which represents Ajatashatru visiting the Buddha at Jivaka's place. He is shown to be accompanied by many (500 according to *Saddharma Pundarika Sutra)* women attendants who were carrying elephants' goads (weapons according to the aforementioned text).[40] Were these women bodyguards of Ajatashatru? This question can lead us to the wider question of women's employability in the security corps of the monarch during the post-Mauryan period.

That women were increasingly becoming part of the renunciatory orders at this time becomes evident from the large number of votive inscriptions attributed to nuns.[41] Several scenes testify to the engagement of women with male sages as disciples, interlocutors, and sages themselves. There exist sculpted scenes on several coping stones depicting a great ascetic addressing his female(?) disciples *(Dighatapasisise Anusasati),*[42] a female arguing(?) with a male ascetic,[43]

and a female ascetic addressing her male counterpart while a layman offers a bunch of lotus stalks (*Bhiṣa Haraniya Jātaka).*[44] In these sculpted scenes from Bharhut, women were depicted as making their presence felt within a heavily male dominated sphere of spirituality.

Apart from the women who were departing from the society, women who were deviating from societal norms without renouncing their association with society itself also found representation on the Bharhut sculptures. "The principal scene of the legend where the blindfolded husband plays the harp while his wife and her lover dance before him"[45] *(Yambumane avayesi Jātakam* or *Andhabhuta Jātaka)* happens to be the classic depiction of the adulterous wife who deceived the husband and transgressed the authority of the society. The agency of women over their own bodies and destinies — whether considered legitimate or illegitimate by the society — could perhaps be claimed through subversions like these as well.

The Bharhut relief sculptures have had women as patrons and as subjects. Consequently, they can be made to tell stories in which women are not kept as mute bystanders but are vocal actors themselves. The remains of Bharhut, presently housed in the eponymous gallery of the Indian Museum (renamed reflecting the aspirations to cherish a collective national heritage) at Kolkata, do make audible the quiet histories of visible women (albeit the decision of what is to be displayed in the public gallery is rarely an innocuous one).[46] Rakhaldas Bandyopadhyay's 'stones of India' therefore find redemption in recounting the tale of those who held up half the sky in ancient times.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Prof. Suchandra Ghosh and Dr. Naina Dayal for their invaluable guidance and feedback that helped me prepare this paper. I am also thankful to the Indian Museum authorities for their kind help and to the Department of the History of Art, University of Michigan LSA for generously permitting me to reproduce photographs from their Visual Resources Collections (VRC).

Plate 1. *Toraṇa* (Gateway).
Image : Regents of the University of Michigan, Department of the History of Art, Visual Resources Collections.

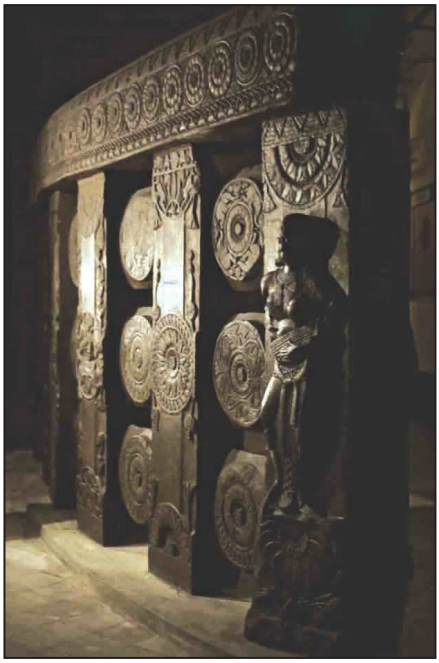

Plate 2. *Vedikā* (Balustrade).
Image: Regents of the University of Michigan, Department of the History of Art, Visual Resources Collections.

Plate 3. *Yakṣa* as a source.
Image: Regents of the University of Michigan, Department of the History of Art, Visual Resources Collections.

Plate 4. Greek (?) Warrior.
Image: Regents of the University of Michigan, Department of the History of Art, Visual Resources Collections.

Plate 5. *Candā Yakṣī.*
Image: Regents of the University of Michigan,
Department of the History of Art, Visual Resources Collections.

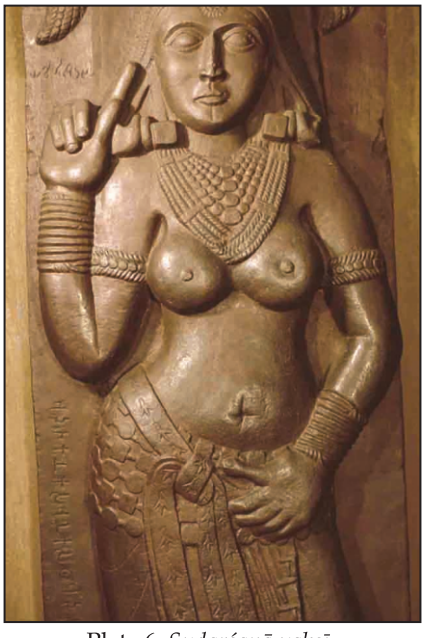

Plate 6. *Sudarśanā yakṣī.*
Image: Regents of the University of Michigan, Department of the History of Art,
Visual Resources Collections.

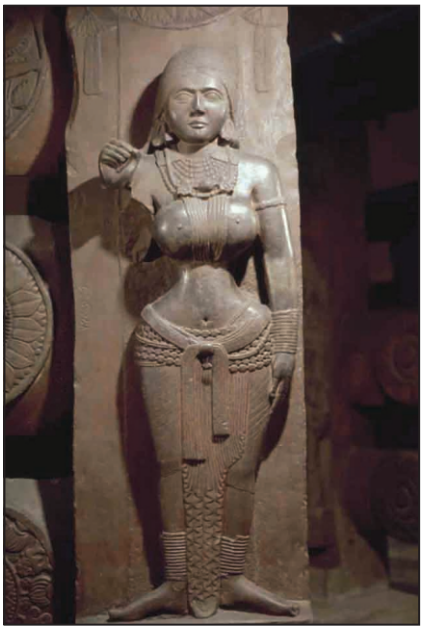

Plate 7. *Sirimā Devatā*.
Image : Regents of the University of Michigan, Department of the History of Art, Visual Resources Collections.

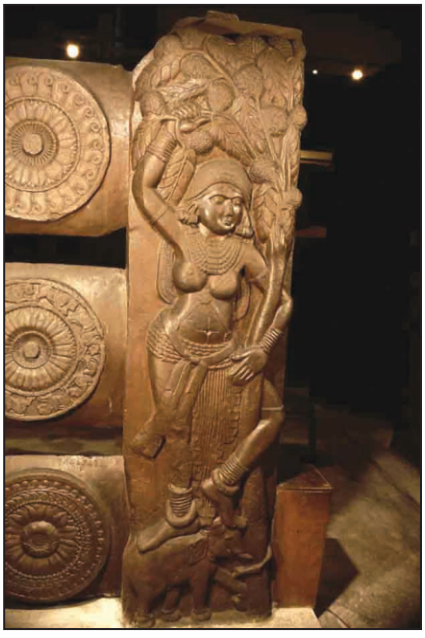

Plate 8. *Culakoka Devatā*.
Image: Regents of the University of Michigan, Department of the History of Art, Visual Resources Collections.

Plate 9. *Candā Yakṣī* ornamented with tattoo marks.
Image : Regents of the University of Michigan, Department of the History of Art, Visual Resources Collections.

Plate 10. *Sirimā Devatā* with a tattoo mark.
Image: Regents of the University of Michigan, Department of the History of Art, Visual Resources Collections.

Plate 11. Female patron within lotus roundel.
Image: Regents of the University of Michigan, Department of the History of Art, Visual Resources Collections.

Plate 12. *Śalabhañjikā* motif adorning a medallion.
Image : Regents of the University of Michigan, Department of the History of Art, Visual Resources Collections.

Plate 13. Maya Devi's dream.
Image: Regents of the University of Michigan, Department of the History of Art, Visual Resources Collections.

Plate 14. Narrative scenes depicting women at work.
Image: Regents of the University of Michigan, Department of the History of Art, Visual Resources Collections.

Plate 15. *Veduko katha dohati Nadode pavate.*
Image: Suchandra Ghosh

Plate 16. Ajatashatru's visit.
Image : Regents of the University of Michigan, Department of the History of Art, Visual Resources Collections.

Plate 17. *Dighatapasisise Anusasati*.
Image : Wikimedia Commons.

Plate 18. Woman arguing with a sage.
Image: Alexander Cunningham.

Plate 19. *Bhiṣa Haraniya Jātaka*.
Image: Author.

Plate 20. *Yambumane avayesi Jātakam* or *Andhabhuta Jātaka*.
Image : Alexander Cunningham.

Notes

[1] See Plate 1.

[2] See Plate 2.

[3] See Heinrich Lüders, ed., *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* (Vol. II, Part II), xxx-xxxiv for a detailed discussion on the dating of Bharhut.

[4] There is an inscription on the pillar of the Eastern Gateway which reads *"Suganam raje rano Gagiputasa Visadevasapautena Gotiputasa Agarajusa putena Vachchiputena Dhanabhutina karitam toranam silakammamto cha upamno"* which has been roughly translated as "During the reign of the Sugas (Shungas), the gateway was caused to be made and the stone work (i.e. carving) presented by Dhanabhuti, the son of Vachchi (Vatsi), son of Agaraju (Angaradyut), the son of Goti (Gaupti) and grandson of King Visadeva (Vishvadeva), the son of Gagi (Gargi)". See Heinrich Lüders, op. cit., 11. For an alternative dating, see Ajit Kumar, "Bharhut Sculptures and their Untenable Sunga Association".

[5] Alexander Cunningham, *The Stupa of Bharhut: A Buddhist Monument Ornamented with Numerous Sculptures Illustrative of Buddhist Legend and History in the Third Century B.C.*, v-vii.

[6] Some of the important Bharhut fragments can be found in Allahabad Museum, Allahabad, and in Bharat Kala Bhawan, BHU, Varanasi.

[7] For getting a better idea as to the character of the colonial *Wunderkammer,* see Carlo Ginzburg, *Threads and Traces: True False Fictive,* 46.

[8] Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Objects, Monuments, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Post-Colonial India,* 134-139.

[9] Alexander Cunningham, *The Stupa of Bharhut: A Buddhist Monument Ornamented with Numerous Sculptures.*

[10] B. M. Barua, *Barhut* (Books I-III).

[11] Arabinda Ghosh, *Remains of Bharhut Stupa in the Indian Museum.*

[12] R. C. Sharma, "A Fresh Appraisal of Bharhut".

[13] See Plate 3. Water Cosmology is the myth that this world originated from the primordial cosmic waters. Arabinda Ghosh argued that in the scene depicted in Plate 3, the giant flowers *padma* and *utpala* are blooming from the navel of the *yakṣa,* this symbolizes the common origin of these plants i.e. water. Also see Arabinda Ghosh, op.cit., 72.

[14] See Plate 2. R. C. Sharma identifies the female on the proximal baluster as the "Lady with Vina (Saraswati)". Most scholars, however, prefer to identify the same figure as that of an *apsarā* with a harp-like instrument. See R.C. Sharma, op.cit., 36-37 (Fig. 4).

[15] It is unclear whether the language can be called a koiné because of the limited available evidence. For a detailed exposition on the language of Bharhut inscriptions based on phonological and morphological analyses, see Heinrich Lüders, ed., *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* (Vol. II, Part II), xiii-xxix.

[16] Romila Thapar, "Cultural Transactions and Early India: Tradition and Patronage".

[17] That Bharhut was probably located at the crossroads on the *Uttarāpatha* and was fairly cosmopolitan in character becomes evident from the presence of the sculpted figure of what has been termed as a "Greek Warrior" (See Plate 4) and the presence of masons' marks in Kharoshthi (the script which was prevalent in the Gandhara region of the North West) sculpted on the bases or capitals of the balusters belonging to the eastern gateway (the sole surviving Bharhut *toraṇa*). It can be arguably said that the location of Bharhut facilitated economic activities carried out at the site to some extent. See Susan L. Huntington, *The Art of Ancient India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain,* 67-68. Also see Heinrich Lüders, op. cit., xxx-xxxiv.

[18] See Jason D Hawkes, "Bharhut: A Reassessment".

[19] Ibid, 8.

[20] Romila Thapar, op. cit., 22.

[21] Jason D Hawkes, op. cit., 4-5.

[22] Vidya Dehejia, *The Body Adorned: Dissolving Boundaries Between Sacred and Profane in Indian Art,* 81.

[23] R.C. Sharma, op. cit., 35.

[24] Vidya Dehejia, op. cit., 8l.

[25] Donated by the reverend Budharakhita who "has abandoned all attachment." See Vidya Dehejia, op. cit., 79. Also see Plate 5.

[26] Donated by the reverend monk Kanaka, a preacher of the law. See Vidya Dehejia, op. cit., 79. Also see Plate 6.

[27] Donated by a Buddhist nun. See Vidya Dehejia, op. cit., 79. Also see Plate 7.

[28] Donated by venerable monk Pamthaka. See Vidya Dehejia, op. cit., 79. Also see Plate 8.

[29] Ibid., 78-79.

[30] See Plates 9 and 10.

[31] See Plate 11.

[32] Alexander Cunningham, op. cit., 39-40.

[33] For a detailed exposition on the *dōhada* and the *bhañjikā* motifs, See Albertina Nugteren, *Belief, Bounty, And Beauty: Rituals Around Sacred Trees in India,* 98-103. Also see Plates 5 and 8.

[34] Ibid., 98-103. Also see Plate 12.

[35] Alexander Cunningham, op. cit., 83-84. Also see Plate 13.

[36] Ibid., 84. See Plate 13.

[37] Cunningham identifies the crop as wheat first before calling it corn elsewhere. See Alexander Cunningham, op. cit., 47, 98. See Plate 14.

[38] Alexander Cunningham, op. cit., 98. Also see Plate 14.

[39] Suchandra Ghosh, "Tracing 'inequality': An examination of the *ārāmikas* and the concept of *kamma* in Buddhist sources", 18. Also see Plate 15.

[40] Alexander Cunningham, op. cit., 89-90. See Plate 16.

[41] Heinrich Lüders, op. cit., 44-45.

[42] Alexander Cunningham, op. cit. 97. See Plate 17. R. C. Sharma disagrees with Cunningham's identification of the disciples/pupils as females. He argues that the hair of the four disciples are not tied as *jūdas* but as *jātās.* He further claims that the mistranslation by Cunningham (who translated *isise* as female rishis) had been subsequently revised in *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* (Pages 159-160) as *sise* (acc. masculine plural). However, as is evident from Plate 19, an unquestionably female ascetic is depicted as sporting a *jātā.* Moreover, one of the four disciples portrayed in Plate 17, has clearly let loose of (her?) hair. Sharma doesn't seem to have an explanation for the same save for stating that this figure "sits in a stiff masculine posture" as though suggesting that stiffness of posture was not a product of practised penance but one of gendered inheritance. As far as the translation of the inscription is concerned, the masculine form of a collective noun does not seem to justify why any or all of the individuals who happen to be a part of the collectivity should necessarily be identified as males. See R.C. Sharma, op. cit., 36.

[43] Ibid., 102. see Plate 18.

[44] Ibid., 79. see Plate 19.

[45] Ibid., 66. Also see Plate 20.

[46] For example, the medallion depicting the *Jātaka* story of the adulterous wife is not on display in the Bharhut Gallery, but is kept in reserve. This might be the case either because the medallion is not well-preserved or because it does not fit well within the wider scheme of the otherwise aesthetically sound arrangement of the fragments in the gallery. Whatever it be, we probably would not know the reason.

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RABINDRANATH TAGORE: SOME ASPECTS OF HIS SOCIO-ECONOMIC THOUGHTS AND 'SYSTEM APPROACH' IN AGRICULTURE

KARUNAMOY MUKHERJEE

I

Economic thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore were just not casual. Deep, yet divergent as they were, the problem of a researcher is how to bring them under a meaningful single analytical frame, especially because they are widely scattered in essays, speeches, letters, songs, poems, diaries, dramas, short-stories and novels. Backward and forward linkages of the importance of wide-ranging views in the context of which they were formulated are still more difficult to achieve. I am, however, convinced that by utilising available contemporary empirical data and by means of short-or long-term "period analysis", tests may be applied to establish trends and arrive at some sort of supportive generalisation of some of his theorems at the macro level.

Granted that Tagore was not a system builder in terms of a theory of economic development under colonial rule, but sure he gradually developed a clear perception (in the light of my own investigation) which amounted to a manner of 'system approach' in agriculture-cum-land economics. Not only was he clearly conversant with almost all aspects of persons' wealth-getting and wealh-spending activities, he was particularly aware of the nature and significance of the major elements of modern *production economics* in the realm of peasant or tenant family farm economy in its factor-product relations, and, secondly, the core of many aspects of economic organisation of agriculture for overall economy development as we understand them today.

Moreover, he clearly noted and sharply criticised some aspects of distributive injustice in contemporary semi-feudal colonial economic systems of India. He laid bare the malevolent implications of cornering resources by a few for self-aggrandisement and voluptuous consumerism at the one pole, and hunger and starvation at the other. With a feeling of pain and anguish he once observed : critics say what can he, born with a silver spoon in his mouth, know what poverty means and problems the poor have to face ! Impartial researchers know how in so many respects, Tagore of pre-Independence days out-radicalled the 'radicals' of 1980's. About 60 years ago he denounced the evils of Industrialism (although at that time he was misunderstood and vehemently criticised by a fire-eating revolutionary) and labour exploitation. Again, he clearly pointed out village-town cleavage and evils of transfer of resources into the latter in favour of urban elite. Himself fully involved in and aware of the implications of private property rights vis-a-vis socialism (abolition of such rights), he was nevertheless angry with what is now known as pre-capitalist semi-feudal absentee landlordism and consequential institutional constraints which hampered growth potential and other factors which prevented minimum enjoyment of opportunities of life and welfare, particularly in the vast sprawling rural social milieu. His own attitude to wealth, asset-possession, accumulation, Western living style often amounted to denunciation of vulgarity. Sometimes he could not disguise his disgust for the hedonistic style of life of millionaires in some affluent western countries.

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Space does not permit one to deal with his various views and observations as listed above by citing supporting recorded evidences. Very limited indeed is the purpose and content of this paper. We shall try briefly to locate, chronologically as far as possible, the unfoldment process of Tagore's ideas about effective reconstruction of rural life, of land and agriculture, and his own

programmes of practical gross-roots level work among the people and tenants of his father's Zamindari, broadly between 1890 and 1912, and secondly, between 1922 and 1941 in villages around Sriniketan-Santiniketan complex.

It is quite difficult to understand how a highly romantic young poet at his age between 29 (1890) and 35 (1896) could master the art of very efficient management of the farflung (though not so vast) copercenary estates of his father when the latter gave this youngest son necessary power of attorney to the exclusion of all other elder sons ! In my own view (excepting a saint and Yogi) the talents of a born genius (that Rabindranath undoubtedly was) possibly seek outlets in diverse directions of self-fulfilment in restless pursuit of material prosperity and psychic uplift to higher yet heigher levels of perfection. And, then, they always consciously and unconsciously gather inspirations from past and contemporary sources at certain crucial bends of their life's journey. I venture to suggest that the first ever call for alleviation or sorrows and sufferings of the down-trodden and rural poor reached his heart in January, 1894, Imitating a poet's imagery but reversing the gender, I would like to say that like Arethusa, *he* arose from *his* 'couchy' slumber amidst a romantic poet's dream-land of phantasies and imageries and expressed poignant ardour urging succour for the helpless and mute millions. We refer to his soul-stirring poem *ebar ferao more* (let me come back now amidst suffering humanity—translation mine). The 12 years between 1893 and 1905 was the gestation period of fuller development of his social-economic and political thoughts, which witnessed events of national and international import. Tagore was apparently influenced by them. To mention only a few :

(1) British repression in South Africa and perfidy against Metabili tribal king Lobengual, (2) impact of Vivekananda's Chicago lectures in September 1893, (3) Contact with Nivedita and Okakura, (4) European defeat in Bõer War, (4) Japan's victory over imperial Russia, (6) Pan-Asian sentiment, (7)

impact of Bankim-Aravinda-Renan doctrine of romantic nationalism. He composed Naivedya poems between 1901 and 1903 expressing height of patriotic fellings and soul force. English Viceroy Curzon's Bengal partition announcement dated third December 1903 and consequent anti-British upsurge and Swadeshi Movement which started on the 7th August 1905, among other events, produced cumulatively Tagore's *Swadeshi Samaj* and *Swadeshi Samajer Parishista* which latter contained recommended programmes of self-help and rural reconstruction and community development as in 1904. In 1905 in his essay on *Abastha O Byabastha* he gave a *call for a parallel government*. In 1908 revival of old panchayet system of local administration was effectuated by him in his father's Birahimpur Pargana estate of Nadia district by dividing it into five *mandals* or blocks.

3

Tagore's programmes of rural and social development easily admit of the major elements of three sectors of economy : primary, secondary and tartiary. Measures of technological innovations in the agro-industry sector constituted improved sugarcane crushing, textile weaving, paddy husking, oil pressing etc., by means of cheaper yet more effective appliances, such as, invention of better varieties of bullock-carts, dhenki, (for paddy husking), experiments in tiles manufactures and crockery, by using local clay, etc. In agriculture, improvement of farms and farmers' living conditions and quality of life in several directions was emphasised, e.g., use of better and technologically superior inputs, quality bullocks, cooperative joint farming , better roads, pastures, irrigation and drinking water, school and free basic education, better health and medical facilities, anti-malarial propaganda, organising community fairs, festivals, songs amusements, group meetings and discussions and so on. And what he preached he practised in *Nijkhas Khamar* lands, as he exhorted tenants and villagers of his father's estates to follow his example through practical help. He himself founded the first ever non-official cooperative credit bank

in Potisar in 1904 in which about ten years later he invested his entire NOBEL PRIZE money at his peril, because subsequently it failed and reportedly the deposited sum vanished. Organising consumer stores, seed stores, implements supply, weather forecast to forewarn farmers about approaching rain, storm flood or drought; personal intercession for debt-conciliation between moneylenders (Hindu Seths) and debtors (Muslim Sheikh) were some of his other pioneering works. All the above catatytic factors of social engineering and agricultural improvements were started while his father was yet alive (who died in 1905) and continued till he himself died in 1941. During this entire period of 50 years hardly any other contemporary Zamindars (big or small), patnidars, mammoth ijaradars, and other big tenure-holders took such practical personal interest in improving properties of the soil and/or tenants' living conditions in Bengal.

In the second phase of Tagore's work on rural-cum-agricultural development started in and after 1922 when Visva-Bharati was founded at Santiniketan and works started in villages around Surul (Sriniketan). If his earlier urge for rural development described above flowed from his perception that India lived in Villages and, therefore, 'back to villages' for self-help and improvement seemed to be the rallying cry, the main inspiration in this second phase appeared to be his conviction that civilisation was based on agriculture. In later years, of course, some foreign soil scientists, conservationists and agronomists propounded the all-important theorem that *human civilisation rested on one foot of top soil* in the sense that all the natural elements of soil productivity or fertility inhered in the humus content of one foot of top soil. But Tagore's approach which preceded them was a little wider. His approach to land and agricultural improvements partook of what I have understood to be a particular manner of 'system approach' in agriculture which I would now like to sum up in terms of seven F's : FOOD, FIBRE, FODDER (diary), FRUITS (horticulture), FISHERY, FUEL and FOREST (including

ecological and environmental constraints). Not that Tagore treated, or preached all these aspects of which I call 'system approach' as a separate theme in a well-coordinated coherent manner. But one notes his abiding interest in improved technological possibilities of agricultural development. His earlier debut in setting up costly agricultural science laboratory and library at Silaidaha and tractorisation in joint or large-scale farming after return home of his son, son-in-law and friend's son having training and obtained B. Sc. degree in agriculture and diary farming in U.S.A. around 1909-10 (defying the lure of Indian Civil Service or Bar-at-Law then irresistible among urban elite), and, also, large-scale experiments in diary (poultry) farming in Sriniketan, ultimately, of course, proved largely infructuous. However, ever since Visva-Bharati was founded and throughout 1920's and 1930's, the poets repeated exhortations encouraging love for trees and preserving woods and forests and other means of preventing soil erosion opened up new horizons. This can be noted from essays and books like Bana Bani, Briksha Bandana, Aranya Devata, Bhumi Lakshmi, Hala Karshan and Briksha Ropana ceremonies and, then, his inspiring procession song *maru vijayer ketan uro shunye hey prabala pran* (ye, mighty heart, hold aloft your banner to conquer deserts—translation mine)—which taken as a whole clearly exhibit his scientific total approach to preserve and promote the properties of the soil, environmental purity, help usher in rain-bearing clouds or weather conditions and control the ecosystem in the interest of larger crop yields, among other benefits.

Needless to mention that the different facets of the 'system approach' deserve fuller delineation in a comprehensive separate treatment.

It is interesting to see that Tagore himself translated into Bengali L. K. Elmherst's paper 'Robbery of Soil' under title, *matir upar dasyubritti* read by this young English friend of the poet at the foundation meeting of Visva-Bharati's Calcutta branch in

1932 (on 12th Shravana 1339 B.S.). In my own view, related implications are : People and peasants take so much from soil without fertility restoration by ploughing back investments in terms of water, manure, fertiliser, quality seeds, grass-cum-forest cover, etc. No wonder, what follow are : sheet and gully erosion of fertile top soil, desiccation, marching deserts, falling productivity and production, rainfall decline, food fuel fodder shortages in a chain manner.

Between 1922 and 1941 the poet adopted, as said above, a number of villages around Sriniketan-Santiniketan campus complex by means of elaborate extension work while trying to push and put into practice his earlier experiments with rural reconstruction recounted briefly above, on a firmer yet higher foundation. These were designed to deal with the WHOLE MAN—man in relation to his family, farm, collective village social surroundings, life and labour of different communities and cultures and in keeping with natural environment. In last years of his life, faced as he was with severe financial and human resources constraints, and blatant callousness of the imperial administrators of Bengal and India, Rabindranath the POET despaired but the undaunted MAN in him held high his personal optimism which albeit dimmed never deserted him altogether. Thus spoke he : 'I cannot bear the responsibility for the *whole of India.* I shall conquer only *one or two tiny* villagers'.

A Note on Karunamoy Mukherjee's Journal of the Asiatic Society (1987) Article on Economic Thought of Tagore

Arun Bandopadhyay

There is a classic statement in E.H.Carr that all history writings are dated. But there may be more sense in it than is apparently indicated. One obvious meaning of the statement is the limitation of all historical analysis in terms of time, questions and coverage. But there is a subtle limitation in the studies of history of thought, including economic thought and its analysis, as bounded by the prevailing thought of the time. But in this case, 'limitation' can pave the way for a simultaneous 'openness', as a key to an entry for an understanding of the state of contemporary thought from hindsight.

Karunamoy Mukherjee's article on Rabindranath Tagore's economic thought, as published in *The Journal of the Asiatic Society* in 1987 (Vol. XXIX, No 4), may be taken as a case study to highlight the point. The article is one of the early studies on Tagore's socio-economic thought, though brief in nature. Its positive features cannot be missed. There were few detailed studies when Mukherjee wrote on the subject, and his attempt was a sort of a pioneering one. He based it not only on the reading of Tagore's essays and creative prose writings, but also on his poems and songs. The coverage was apparently big enough. Then Tagore's thought was linked to his activity, particularly in the rural agrarian sector. Two time cycles were identified to elucidate the point, one between 1890 and 1912 and another between 1922 and 1941. Tagore was assessed here both as a zamindar and a developer.

While analyzing Tagore's thought on society and economy, Mukherjee has rightfully given due weight-age to his prose writing,

particularly the titles such as *Swadeshi Samaj* and *Swadesh Samajer Parishista*. His emerging viewpoint of India, particularly of rural Bengal, in contrast to what was predominantly presented as a Western viewpoint of development, is indicated in some of these writings. The analysis of his novels and short stories, poems and songs, though done in one or two places, was not worked out in Mukherjee in any considerable degree.

Mukherjee was rightfully emphatic on Tagore's role as a zamindar, a role that his father gave him with a power of attorney, for copercenary estates in Shilaidah and Patisar in Eastern Bengal, and those in Birhamirpur in Nadia and Sriniketan in Birbhum, both in Western Bengal. He is right to assume that Tagore's experience as a zamindar had a lasting effect in shaping his economic thought. This also gave birth to Tagore's interest in agricultural improvement and agricultural education, so much so that he sent his son Rathindranath, son-in-law Nagendranath Gangopadhyay and his friend's son Santoshchandra Majumdar to Illinois University in the USA to study agricultural science. His life as an agrarian developer was mostly confined to Sriniketan with a number of projects during 1922-1941, as explained by Mukherjee.

The most interesting part of Mukherjee's analysis is the search for a coherence in the content and process of Tagore's economic thought. He was aware that Tagore was not "a system builder in terms of a theory of economic development of colonial rule" but at the same time he was convinced that Tagore's thought "amounted to a manner of 'system approach' in agriculture-cum-land economics" of India of the time. For him, it was the product of Tagore's familiarity with the major elements of modern production economics on the one hand and many aspects of economic organization of agriculture on the other. In the first phase (1890-1912) of his thought, Tagore's concern for rural development "flowed from his perception that India lived in villages and, therefore, 'back to villages' for self-help and improvement seemed to be the rallying cry". The main inspiration in the second

phase (1922-1941) of Tagore's thought was "his conviction that civilization was based on agriculture". It was in this second phase that Tagore's thought assumed the "particular manner of 'system approach' in agriculture", which Mukherjee summed up "in terms of seven F's: FOOD, FIBRE, FODDER (diary), FRUITS (horticulture), FISHERY, FUEL and FOREST (including ecological and environmental constraints)".

It is important to note that there has been a remarkable shift in the direction of analysis of Tagore's agrarian and ecologic thought since the 1980s. One shift is the substantial factual research done on the subject by many scholars, notably by Uma Das Gupta and Bipasha Raha. The second, and more important, shift is theoretical: directing the search more decidedly with ecologic orientation. Tagore is now looked more as a visionary, with a poetic orientation in his environmental thought. This is tantamount for some to a futuristic historical view also. Some even call him as an early environmentalist of the twentieth century, along with Gandhi. Tagore is no longer judged by the coherence of his economic or agrarian thought, nor by any 'system approach' in understanding his socio-economic thought. Suddenly, the evaluation of Tagore as a zamindar of Shilaidaha subsided with an access to his deeper perception of rural life as depicted in the short stories written during this time. Similarly, the evolution of Tagore's thought on the efficacy of the zamindari system becomes secondary to his more radical, egalitarian and ecologic view of rural change, some of which found expression in his creative literature including novels. This shift of analysis in Tagore's thought became more prominent in the 1990s, and in the last twenty years, so much so that the search for a 'system approach' has lost much of its pioneering analytical significance.

Mukherjee's essay, in this sense, is dated, but this limitation does not make his analysis less significant. First of all, its significance as a pioneering venture should not be minimized. Secondly, it gives us a perfect view of a purely economic approach of rural development in

the 1970s and 1980s before the onslaught of the ecologic approach. The study of Tagore's thought is no exception, as it was done with the prevailing, predominant theoretical framework. In this sense, it throws more light on the analytical tools on contemporary economic thought than on Tagore. The fact that Tagore's economic thought still remains to be 'discovered' anew with its strong ecologic content is a mystery that is associated both with the intricacies of history of thought as well as with Tagore, the poet and visionary quintessential.

Klaus Mylius, *Śaurasenī : Grammatik und Glossar* (Beiträge zur Kenntnis südasiatischer Sprachen und Literaturen, 27), Wiesbaden : Harrassowitz Verlag, 2018. 89 pages.

Klaus Mylius, *Māgadhī : Grammatik, Textproben und Glossar* (Beiträge zur Kenntnis südasiatischer Sprachen und Literaturen, 29), Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2019. 74 pages.

Indian grammarians regard the Prākṛt as derived from the *prakṛti* 'source', which is Sanskrit. *Prakṛtiḥ saṁskṛtam | tatra bhavaṁ tata āgataṁ vā prākṛtam* (Hemacandra). The word *prākṛta* is derived from *prakṛti* a Sanskrit word, meaning origin, norm, or nature. But controversy rages over priority of Sanskrit and the Prākṛt languages.

Some people say that *prakṛt* means nature and *saṁskṛta* means refined, and therefore Prākṛt is older. This is favoured by some Jaina scholars and monks, e.g., by Nami Sādhu (11th century CE) in his commentary on Rudraṭa's *Kāvyālaṁkāra.* Prākṛt was the language of day to day communication, while Sanskrit, that of literary composition, works on religion, philosophy, and sciences. This is the reason why there are many such texts in Sanskrit but none in Prākṛt. The first Sanskrit inscription is from 150 CE., whereas we have Prākrit inscriptions from as early as 300 BC. However, the Vedic language is thought to be older than either classical Sanskrit or Prākṛts, even though there are no inscriptions in the Vedic language.

Mylius finds it difficult to maintain that the Prākṛt languages were directly derived from Sanskrit (Betrachtet man die von Pāṇini und Patañjali kodifizierte Sprache als das klassische Skt., so wird man nicht sagen können, dass das Prākṛt direkt vom Skt. abgeleitet sei. *Śaurasenī,* p.9).

It appears reasonable to me to derive *prākṛta* as the designation of languages from the word *prākṛta* itself. The word *prākṛta* means low, unrefined, uncultivated, an ordinary man, as in *(brāhmaṇāḥ) prākṛtāḥ saṁskṛtās tathā, Mahābhārata* 3.13437, *prākṛtāḥ striyaḥ,* ibid, 4. 276 (as cited in *Sanskrit- Wörterbuch), ayuktaḥ prākṛtaḥ stabdhaḥ, Gītā* 18.28; *prākṛtasya narasya, Rāmāyaṇa* 2.108.2; *yatrānyaḥ prākṛto janaḥ,*

Manusaṁhitā 8.336; *babhūva prākṛtaḥ śiśuḥ, Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 10.3.46; *puruṣaṁ prākṛtaṁ matvā,* ibid 10.56.22*: prākṛta iva paribhūyamānam ātmānaṁ na ruṇatsi, Kādambarī;* etc. Probably the languages spoken by *prākṛta* 'common' people were also called *prākṛta.* Prākṛt features as the language of low-class men and most women in the Sanskrit dramas. Several modern scholars, however, have asserted that the literary Prākṛt does not represent the actual languages spoken by the common people of ancient India.

Various Prākṛt languages developed in different regions, as may be known from their names, Śaurasenī, Māgadhī, Lāṭī, Āvantī etc. Their names indicate regional association eg, Śaurasenī comes from Śūrasena, the region of Mathura in Uttar Pradesh. Since this was also the region where Classical Sanskrit had its origin, the influence of Sanskrit on Śaurasenī is somewhat more than on the other Prākṛt languages, it is believed. But this influence is overestimated *(vielfach überbetont),* feels Mylius.

Professor Mylius has in recent years made valuable contributions to the studies of Middle Indian languages in various ways, by compiling several dictionaries, namely, *Wörterbuch Pāli - Deutsch* (Wichtrach, 1997), *Wörterbuch Deutsch - Pāli* (Wiesbaden, 2008), *Wörterbuch Ardhamāgadhī - Deutsch* (Wichtrach, 2003), *Wörterbuch des kanonischen Jinismus* (2005) and five volumes in the series Beiträge zur Kenntnis südasiatischer Sprachen und Literaturen, 23-25, 27, 29), 2013-2019.

They say, *iṣṭaṁ hi viduṣāṁ loke samāsavyāsadhāraṇam.* In his book *Zur Didaktik mittelindischer Sprachen* (2013), he enunciated the general principles that may be profitably followed for teaching four such languages, namely, Pāli, Ardhamāgadhī, Śaurasenī, and Māhārāṣṭrī. Thereafter he published separate books on Ardhamāgadhī (2014) and Māhārāṣṭrī (2016),[1] and he has now published similar books on Śaurasenī (2018) and Māgadhī (2019), thus completing the most important Prākṛt languages. These two, besides Māhārāṣṭrī, are found in literary use.

1 All these three were reviewed by the present reviewer in *Vedic Studies,* School of Vedic Studies, Rabindra Bharati University, Vols.VI and VII (2014, 2019).

Śaurasenī (2018)

The first part of the Introduction contains discussion on the linguistic position and importance of the Śaurasenī language in cultural history. It has been briefly noted how the Prākṛt languages differ from Sanskrit and how they share common characteristics, such as the loss of the dual number, retention of only one preterite, substitution of *ṛ*, *ai* and *au* sounds by other vowels, the loss of the *visarga*, reduction in number of declensional and conjugational forms, etc. There is also brief information on the history of Prākṛt studies in India and abroad, as made mainly by Vararuci, Jaina Hemacandra, Mārkaṇḍeya (whose treatment of Śaurasenī is specially notable), Christian Lassen, Eugen Hultzsch, Hermann Jacobi, Richard Pischel, Walter Schubring, and Richard Schmidt.

The second part of the Introduction deals briefly with the importance of Śaurasenī in cultural history, literature, especially in dramas.

Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* (2nd century AD ?) contains (in 18th chapter, 17th in some editions) many instructions about which language is to be spoken by whom under which circumstances in a drama. The *Nāṭyaśastra* mentions seven main Prākṛt languages,

māgadhy avantijā prācyā śauraseny ardhamāgadhī |
bāhlikā dāksiṇātyā ca sapta bhāṣāḥ prakīrtitāḥ // (48).

Surprisingly, Māhārāṣṭrī, regarded as the best of the Prākṛt languages by Daṇḍin, is not mentioned here. Bharata favours Śaurasenī (*śaurasenīṁ samāśritya bhāṣāṁ kāvyeṣu yojayet*, verse 46) in general and prescribes it to be spoken by the heroine and her friends in particular in a Sanskrit drama *(nāyikānāṁ sakhīnāṁ ca śūraseny avirodhinī*, verse 51), and Māgadhī is prescribed for a king's harem (*māgadhī tu narendrāṇām antaḥpurasamāśrayā*, verse 50). Under special circumstances, however, the conventions could change. The author has noted that in Bhavabhūti's *Mālatīmādhava*, Kāmandakī, a Buddhist nun, a learned lady of noble descent, speaks Sanskrit and so does also

Vasantasenā in *Mṛcchakaṭika.* A famous example of departure from convention is in the fourth act of Kālidāsa's *Vikramorvaśīya,* where king Purūravas switches from Sanskrit to Apabhraṁśa in his state of madness at having lost Urvaśī, indeed if the Prākṛt verses are genuine (they are omitted in some MSS and "the Apabhraṁśa of the type found in them is suspicious in a drama of such early date," (S. K. De. *History of Sanskrit Literature,* p.139, n. 1).

In practice we find application of Śaurasenī in the prose passages in dramas, mainly by women, children and the Vidūṣaka, who do not speak but understand Sanskrit. The author has mentioned the important dramas where Śaurasenī has been used, *Śakuntalā, Ratnāvalī, Mudrārākṣasa,* and *Mṛcchakaṭika.* That even the king speaks Śaurasenī in Rājaśekhara's *Karpūramañjarī* may appear as an exception, as accepted by Mylius, but in fact it may not have been so, for the author was probably just following the convention that Saṭṭaka, a variety of Sanskrit dramas (Uparūpakas) to which *Karpūramañjarī* belongs, is to be composed entirely in Prākṛt. Apart from literary use, writers belonging to the Digambara sect of Jainas wrote in Śaurasenī.

The main body of the book *Śaurasenī* is divided into three parts: I. Elementary Grammar (pp. 15-47), II. A text passage from Kālidāsa's *Śakuntalā* (pp. 49-54), and III. Basic vocabulary in the form of A glossary of Śaurasenī-German (pp. 55-88).

As in the previous books, it is presupposed that the learners are already acquainted with Sanskrit language. The phonological changes from Sanskrit to Śaurasenī are discussed with a table and examples. But as these changes do not always uniformly follow definite rules (eg *lakṣmī > lacchi),* it has been recommended that the learners should learn the corresponding Sanskrit words, called *chāyā.* The role of *Svarabhakti* (mostly *i* or *u* sound) has been noted, as for example, in *sneha> siṇeha: smaraṇa > sumaraṇa.* Some euphonic combinations are as in Sanskrit, eg. $a + a$ / $a+ \bar{a}$ / $\bar{a} + a$ / or $\bar{a} + \bar{a} = \bar{a}$.

Elementary grammar includes the usual topics, such as, declension, conjugation, syntax, compounds, noun, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection. The same plan as in the book *Māhārāṣṭrī*

has been followed also in the present book. The author has noticed that the changes from Sanskrit are much more to be seen in the verbal forms than in the nominal forms.

The second part consists of an annotated text passage from Kālidāsa's *Śakuntalā,* a monologue of the Vidūṣaka at the beginning of the Act II. This passage was included also in *Zur Didaktik* ... .

The third part is a glossary of Śaurasenī-German (pp. 55-88). Here the Śaurasenī words printed in bold characters are arranged in order of Devanagari alphabet. They are followed by grammatical classification (eg, the part of speech, gender, etc.), the Sanskrit source words *(chāyā),* and their German equivalents.

Different meanings of a single word are indicated by normal Arabic numerals, eg, agga *n* 1. Anfang; 2. Spitze.

Homonyms are treated as separate words and marked with superscript Arabic numerals, eg,

[1] appa m < ātman > 1. Seele; 2. Selbst

[2] appa *Adj* <alpa> klein, gering, wenig.

Different forms resulting from one and the same word are separated by comma, eg dukkara, dukkhara *Adj* <duṣkara> schwer, schwierig.

Māgadhī (2019)

With the book on Śaurasenī the author proposed to conclude his works on Middle Indian languages. But man proposes, God disposes. By His will, Prof. Mylius was encouraged to take care of Māgadhī as well, and as the result we have got the book *Māgadhī : Grammatik, Textproben und Glossar,* prepared according to the same plan as followed in the previous ones. Māgadhī, the Prākṛt used in Magadha, South Bihar, was used in some of the Ashokan inscriptions and also in dramas. The latter is described in the present book under review.

The Introduction deals with importance of Māgadhī in linguistic and cultural history. Magadha and its inhabitants were not favourably mentioned in some Vedic texts. May it be a reason why onslaught against Vedism in the form of Buddhism and Jainism arose in

Magadha? In all probability Māgadhī was used by Gautama the Buddha in his preachings. Māgadhī in literature is spoken by lower class people such as fishermen.

The main body of the book *Māgadhī* is divided into four parts: I. Elementary Grammar (pp.10-36), II. Text passages from Kālidāsa's *Śakuntalā* (pp.39-55), III. A brief note on the history of Prākṛt studies in India and abroad (pp. 56-57), and IV. Basic vocabulary in the form of A glossary of Māgadhī-German (pp. 58-72), necessary for learning and teaching the language.

Elementary grammar includes the usual topics, as in *Śaurasenī,* such as, declension, conjugation, syntax, compounds, noun, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection. A few linguistic peculiarities or special features of Māgadhī are as follows: *r* replaced by *l* (eg *rudhira > luhila), ś* is retained, nom. sing. masc. ends in *e* (not in *aḥ, eg saḥ. > se), y* is not changed into *j* (eg *yuga > yuga,* not *juga).* The phonological changes from Sanskrit to Māgadhī are discussed with a table and examples. But as these changes do not always uniformly follow definite rules ("Ausnahmen sind eher die Regel", observes the author), it has been recommended that the learners should learn the corresponding Sanskrit words, called *chāyā,* as advised also in the previous book. Since definite rules can hardly be framed, the author mentions a few important cases.

The Part II contains two annotated text passages, one from Kālidāsa's *Śakuntalā* and the other from Śūdraka's *Mṛcchakaṭika.* In p. 38. line 12. read Viśākhadatta for Śūdraka.

A brief note on the history of Prākṛt studies in India and abroad, which constitutes the Part III, could have been included in the Introduction, as in *Śaurasenī.*

The Part IV is a glossary of Māgadhī-German, following the same pattern as in *Śaurasenī.*

Both the books end with a list of secondary literature, almost identical, but the list at the end of *Māgadhī* adds Munishwar Jha's *Māgadhī and its Formation,* Calcutta, 1967.

A. C. Woolner observed :

> Degree courses in Sanskrit almost invariably include a Drama, of which a considerable portion is in Prākrit. In practice, whatever Examiners may imagine, the student reads the Sanskrit *chāyā*, which most editions provide for him on the same page… . Even the more advanced student who reads the Prākrit as it comes, at the slightest check looks down at the 'shadow.' Consequently few students have any definite knowledge of anyone of the Prākrits. . . . In India itself, the mediaeval Prākrits are in a more real sense *dead* languages, than is Sanskrit itself (in his Preface, *Introduction to Prakrit*, 1917).

Things have not changed, or have changed for the worse. The voluminous Prākṛt grammars are not much helpful for the beginners. As the author remarks, "Die Trennung von Wichtigem und weniger Wichtigem ist ein grunglegendes Prinzip der Didaktik gerade der Prākṛt -Sprachen wie auch des Sanskrit." (*Śaurasenī* p. 3) The books under review are intended mainly as a guide for teachers and students of the languages concerned. The author's aim is not to confuse the students with enormous variety of forms and rules, but to tell them the essentials of these languages, the basic vocabulary and elementary grammar, so that in minimum time maximum possible knowledge of the languages could be gained.

As a commendable effort to remove difficulties in learning and teaching Prākṛt languages, both the books, like the previous ones on Ardhamāgadhī and Māhārāṣṭrī, will be profitable for the interested. If the books are translated into English, a much larger number of people will benefit from them. Prof. Mylius, who has put the Prākṛt scholars under a debt of gratitude by bringing out immensely useful guides in form of these books, deserves congratulations and encomiums.

Samiran Chandra Chakrabarti

Klaus Mylius, *Wörterbuch altindoarischer geographischer Namen.* (Beirträge zur Kenntnis südasiatischer Sprachen und Literaturen) 31, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2019. 84 pages.

After several years of migration to MIA studies, Prof. Mylius has come back to his original area of OIA studies by contributing the book under review, a small dictionary of Old Indo-Aryan geographical names. There are already works on the subject, such as *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects* in two volumes by Macdonell and Keith (London,1912) for Vedic names, *An Index to the Names in the Mahābhārata* by Sørensen (1904; rpt. 1978) for the names in the *Mahābhārata*, and some other works that have a broader scope, eg Nanda Lal Dey's *Geographical Dictionary of Ancient and Mediaeval India* (Calcutta, 1899, 2nd ed. London,1927), and the very informative and exhaustive *Historical Geography of Ancient India* by Bimala Churn Law (1954, 2nd ed. Paris, 1967), etc. And Prof. Mylius himself contributed "Sanskritischer Index der jungvedischen Namen und Sachen" in *Ethnographisch-Archäologische Zeitschrift* (17-19, 1976-78), and *Das geographische Milieu der mittelvedischen Literatur* (Wichtrach, 2000), dealing with the subject in respect of Late and Middle Vedic literature.

Verzeichnis der Abkürzungen (p.7) and Literarische Quellen (p.57) enumerate the primary and secondary sources (some of which are mentioned above) used for the dictionary. The primary sources include mainly the Vedic texts, the great epics, the *Mānava Dharmaśāstra,* the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and some works of Classical Sanskrit literature. Names have been arranged according to the sequence of the Devanāgarī alphabet.

Appendices have added to the usefulness of the dictionary. The Appendix I is a critical appreciation and evaluation of the primary literary sources, giving in brief an idea of the source texts, the literary genres, summarizing the researches on the time limit of the Ṛgveda and tracing the eastward and southward expansion of Aryan culture. This brief but illuminating summary of the principal ancient Indian texts, though relegated to the status of an Appendix by the author, I believe, could have served better as the Introduction of the dictionary. It explains the author's plan, the choice of the entries made in the dictionary and importance attached. The dictionary naturally deals

with geographical names of mountains, rivers, important places etc., as expected from the very name, but also names of ancient peoples like Kuru, Kirāta, etc. found in the texts. Historical developments and geographical locations serving as the stage for them have been taken into consideration together.

Relations among various Vedic peoples, sometimes unity and sometimes feud, sometimes amalgamation and formation of new groups of peoples, transfer of cultural centres, and the various consequences, economic, religious, etc. have been reflected in the book.

Varied importance has been attached to the texts, according as their historico-geographical relevance. Not all the texts provide us with equally important geographical information. The late Vedic Saṁhitās (YV, SV, and AV), the majority of the Āraṇyakas and the Upaniṣads, as well as the Śrautasūtras are therefore not frequently cited. Special importance has been attached to the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa,* in this appendix (where an attempt has been made for ascertaining the locality where this Brāhmaṇa was compiled) as well as in the dictionary. It is found that the earliest (ṚV) and the latest (ŚB) of the principal Vedic texts are historically most useful. The *Mahābhārata* refers mainly to the north-west of India, wheras the *Rāmāyaṇa* to east and the north-east of the same.

Though the Purāṇas are not much dependable for history, geographical references contained therein are usable. Of the Purāṇas, the popular *Bhāgavata* has often been referred to in the dictionary. From the range of Classical Sanskrit, the *Raghuvaṁśa* and the *Meghadūta* of Kālidāsa have been profitably used, for they contain many significant geographical references. Occasional references to other texts like The *Kumārasambhava* and The *Śiśupālavadha* are there.

Buddhist literature in Pāli and Jaina literature in Ardhamāgadhī contain many geographical names. Though they belong to MIA (not OIA), some such information has been incorporated in the dictionary. Pāli names (eg Pupphavatī, Gijjhakūṭa) and Pāli versions of the Sanskrit names have been given in some cases (eg Takkasilā, Ujjenī). Māgadhī *Isigili* has also found a place. Similarly, for the sake of completeness, the Deccan, though not actually an old Indo-Aryan settlement, has

not been totally excluded. Thus Kāñcī is included as one of the seven holiest cities of Hindus. Some modern names like Bundelkhand and Elephanta have been accommodated too.

The Appendix II gives an account of geography of the ancient Indian sub-continent, which will be very useful for the readers as a background. And since maps are the most important help for geographical studies, this Appendix is followed by Appendix III, containing four maps, showing (i) broad geographical divisions of the Indian sub-continent, (ii) Indo-Aryan peoples and settlements in the early Vedic period, (iii) Indo-Aryan peoples and settlements in the late Vedic period, and (iv) settlements in the Maurya period.

The entries are usually very brief, mainly containing identification of places and important connections, sometimes probably too brief at least in a few cases. References to source texts are not always given, eg Anomā, Ambatthala, Ārjikīyā, and in some entries there is no information about their importance (eg Ekanāḷā, Kapisthala). For Pāripātra, alternative spelling Pāriyātra is not mentioned. Lauhitya is said to be a tributary (*Nebenfluss*) of Brahmaputra (p. 46), but *Lauhitya* in many places means Brahmaputra itself.

A few printing errors have come to my notice; read Kāmarūpa for Kāmarupa, Kurujāngala for Kurujangala, Gandhamādana for Gandhamadana, Vikramaśilā for Vikramaśīlā, Vṛndāvana for Vṛṇḍāvana (is this spelling found in any text?), Śiprā for Siprā (p. 15), Daśārṇa for Daśarna, "am rechten Ufer" for "am rechen Ufer" (p.43), Gaṇḍakī for Gandakī, TĀ I,31,2 for TA I,31,2 (p.44), Vinaśana for Vināśana (p.53), Geschichte for Geschiche, Dichter for Dicher (p. 70), and soll for solt (p. 77).

Dictionaries of different sizes serve different purposes. While large dictionaries obviously provide us with more information, the small ones help us quickly locate an entry and find the most important information. Professor Mylius deserves admiration for the present dictionary of the ancient Indian names of historico-geographical importance. This useful book, like his previous publications, will be welcomed by readers knowing German, and if it is translated into English, a much larger number of readers will benefit from the same.

Samiran Chandra Chakrabarti

Bandyopadhyay, Nirmal, *Unish Shataker Bangla Sadharan Rongalay: Itihas Jatiyatabad Samajjibon*; Kolkata : Saptarshi Prakashan, 2018; Rs. 550/-

The emergence of modern Bengali theatre was associated with the dawn of modernity during the colonial period when socio-economic changes led to the emergence of new social classes in an urban space and the formation of new entertainment sites in the colonial city of Calcutta. The growth of Bengali commercial theatre, with its organizational and spatial development in the initial days, to its progression as a potent weapon of nationalism had indeed been a significant historical journey. However, books on this aspect of history are few, although books on Bengali drama as a literary genre, or memoirs of notable actors, and actresses of Bengali stage written in the vernacular both as books and journal articles are not hard to come by. In recent years, researches had focussed upon the early actresses of public stage, and the forces of nationalism and colonialism at play in Bengali theatre in the twentieth century, and a comprehensive study of the development of Bengali theatre from its initial years till the end of the nineteenth century in the vernacular is certainly a welcome addition. Nirmal Bandyopadhyay's monograph *Unish Shataker Bangla Sadharan Rangalay: Itihas Jatiyatabad Samajjiban* indeed walked into those lanes of history where the Bengalis of yesteryears had invested in the making of proscenium theatre as the permanent site of entertainment and where dramatists, actors and actresses from the humble beginning had earned fame. As the title of the book suggests, the author emphasised upon the history of the growth of the public stage and its impact on the socio-political life of Bengal.

The book commenced with a long introduction with subthemes that discussed the source of Indian theatre and traced the growth of Bengali drama and performance tradition from the days of Charyyapad in ancient Bengal. While this journey of acting and performance during the pre-colonial period is a fascinating area deserving of a separate study, we are fortunate to have a glimpse of this aspect in the first chapter itself. The author had rightly begun his voyage from the roots indicating how earlier studies on theatre had mostly overlooked this

aspect and started the journey of Bengali theatre from 1795 when the Russian Gerasim Lebedev first staged a drama in Bengali. The introduction dealt in detail about the primary and secondary sources on Bengali theatre and gives detailed descriptions of old articles on Bengali stage located in copies of rare journals, as well as the body of secondary literature in vernacular that has grown around Bengali theatre and its actors and actresses. It also gives references of scholarly articles and books in English that dealt with the history of theatre, in Bengal and elsewhere. Bandyopadhyay's book is divided into six chapters with an extensive bibliography at the end and several appendices compiled from various published books in vernacular, which can be quite useful to future researchers and interested readers. The appendices run into almost hundred pages and included detailed list of plays performed by the Bengali *Bhadralok* in their private capacities before the growth of National Theatre, list of published dramas year-wise from 1852-1879, photographs of cover pages of published dramas, list of the actresses of Bengali stage and the plays in which they took part, copy of the Dramatic Performances Control Act, 1876, list of mythological dramas from 1852 to 1952 etc.

The first two chapters analysed the growth of modern Bengali theatre from 1852 to 1914. Chapter one delineated the existence of Bengali performance tradition in medieval Bengal and the growth of Calcutta as a colonial city with its folk theatre form called *Jatra*. Here, the author had touched upon the intimate relationship between *Jatra* and theatre. The study traversed the Bengali production of Lebedev to the growth of amateur theatre on the model of British theatre, by a section of middle-class Bengalis. This was the condition of the Bengali stage that engaged mostly with social dramas and farces before the growth of National theatre in 1872. The second chapter articulates the formation of National theatre as a commercial professional stage and in its wake, several other such theatre halls as permanent sites of entertainment. Detailed descriptions of such stages and their managers, short biographical sketches of the playwrights and performers, with subsections on the lukewarm relationship between Rabindranath Tagore and Girishchandra Ghosh centring on theatre and dramas

enacted there are the interesting highlights of this chapter. Besides, the author commented on the emphasis on mythological and historical dramas in the 1880s and '90s in line with religious revivalism in contemporary Bengal. Chapter three interrogated the relationship between nationalism and Bengali theatre, with colonialism and its mechanism of control acting as a backdrop. In explaining the growth of nationalism in Bengal and its relationship with Bengali plays and stage shows, Bandyopadhyay had analysed the plays of Michael Madhusudan Datta in a sub-section. The remaining part of this chapter had studied the impact of Dinabandhu Mitra's *Nildarpan* and of the plays of Upendranath Das, leading to the passage of the Dramatic Performances Control Act of 1876. Following this, how the Bengali stage concentrated to primarily mythological dramas till the upsurge of the Swadeshi movement of 1905 is depicted by the author. Although the book is confined to the nineteenth century, nationalist plays of the Swadeshi period find mention as also the Governmental regulation over them. The fourth chapter had examined the relationship between theatre and folk culture and how elements of folk culture have been adopted into the form of theatre has been shown by the author. However, the suppression of *Jatra* and folk forms of entertainment by a section of the *Bhadralok* is not adequately dealt with, which would have enriched this chapter. The fifth chapter is about social issues like racial discrimination and women's question which have raked the Bengali stage. Here, the question of the appearance of women as stage-performers thereby breaking a long-held taboo and the rhetoric that has grown around it is discussed. Although, in recent years, this subject has received attention and quite a few books in both vernacular and English have been published on this aspect, Bandyopadhyay's depiction that theatre has acted as a platform of women emancipation is indeed a necessary addition to the book. In this context, early actresses like Binodini's finesse as performer and writer and the social hypocrisy surrounding the public role of women has been brought forth. The sixth and final chapter is about Bengali theatre and communal question. It interrogates the growth of Hindu nationalism leading to an abhorrence of Muslims and the condition of Bengali

stage that resonated with social and mythological plays projecting a Hindu bias. In this situation, the works of a few Muslim playwrights like Mir Mosharraf Hossain is a valuable addition to this chapter.

Among other aspects, the author's examination of the types of spectators and their taste is surely an interesting area, and his introspection into the problems affecting Bengali stage arouses the curiosity of the readers. However, following standard citation practices, names of all the recently published books in the notes and references section in the first chapter would have been better. While the subject of the book is quite vast, the author could have certainly edited portions like some of the appendices, since these are also available in other books and added rare pictures of performers and stage performances. Although the cover design is quite attractive, it would have been convenient for the readers, if the publishers left more margins in page lay-out.

Nandini Jana

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Books :
Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India,* London, 1933, 7.

Articles in Books :
H.V. Trivedi, "The Geography of Kautilya", *Indian Culture,* Vol. 1, 202ff.

Edited Volumes :
C.W. Troll, ed. *Muslim Shrines in India : Their Character, History and Significance,* Delhi, 1989.

Articles in Journals :
G. Hambly, "A Note on the Trade in Eunuchs in Mughal Bengal", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (hereafter *JAOS*), Vol. 94(1), 1974, 125-29.

Articles in Edited Volumes
P. Gaeffke, "Alexander and the Bengal Sufis", in Alan W. Entwistle and Francoise Mallison, eds, *Studies in South Asian Devotional Literature, Research Papers, 1988-1991,* New Delhi/Paris, 1994, 278-84.

10. Book Reviews must contain name of the author/editor and the book reviewed, place of publication and publisher, year of publication, number of pages and price.

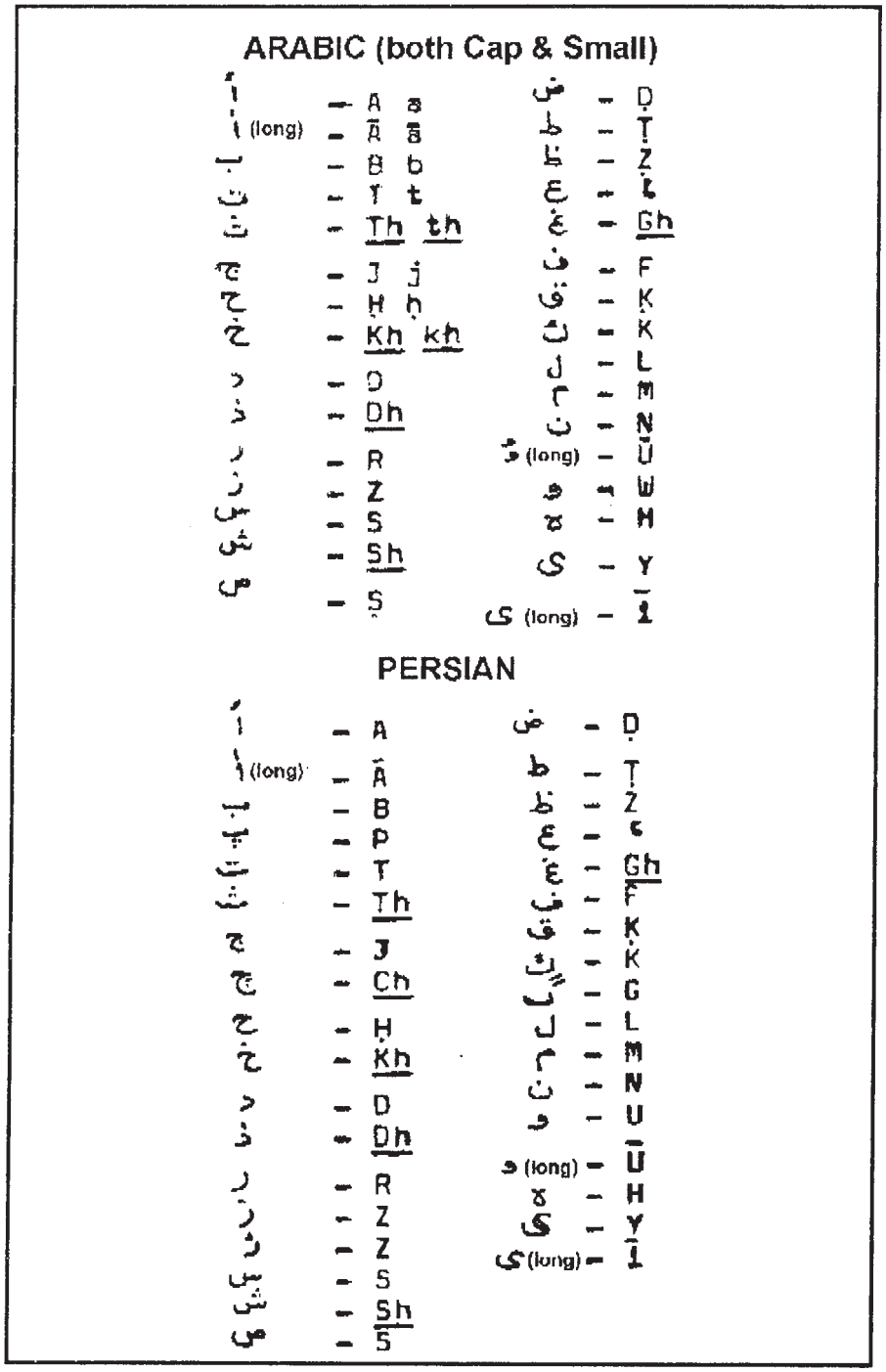
SYSTEM OF TRANSLITERATION

SANSKRIT

आ = ā	ई = ī
ऊ = ū	ऋ = ṛ
ङ = ṅa	च = ca
छ = cha	ञ = ña
ट = ṭa	ठ = ṭha
ड = ḍa	ढ = ḍha
ण = ṇa	श = śa
ष = ṣa	ं = ṁ

TIBETAN

= ka	= kha	= ga	= ṅa/nga
= ca	= cha	= ja	= ña/nya
= ta	= tha	= da	= na
= pa	= pha	= ba	= ma
= tsa	= tsha	= dza	= wa
= zha	= za	= 'a	= ya
= ra	= la	= śa/sha	= sa
= ha	= a		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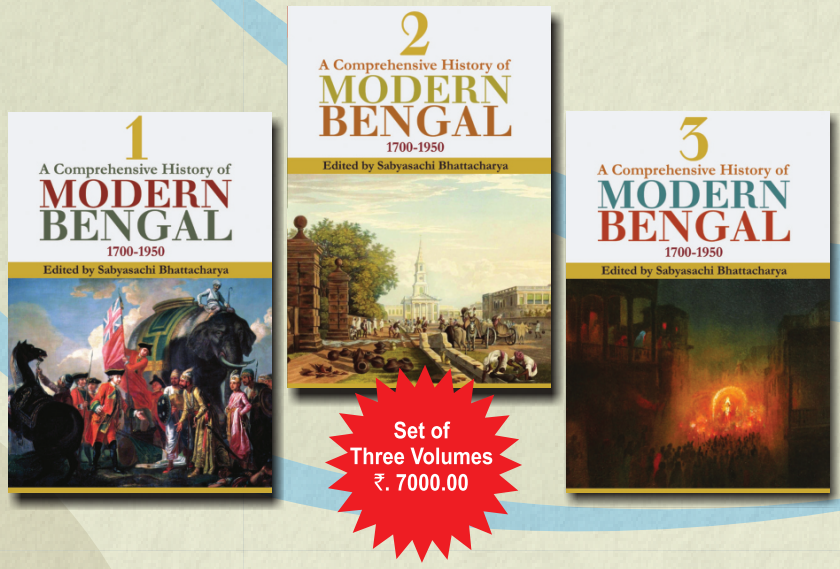

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It will flourish, if naturalists, chemists, antiquaries, philologers and men of science, in different parts of Asia, will commit their observations to writing, and send them to the Asiatick Society at Calcutta; it will languish, if such communications shall be long intermitted; and it will die away, if they shall entirely cease.

Sir William Jones
on the publication of the Asiatic Society

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