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Articles should relate to the study of any aspect of Hinduism. As such, the study of Hinduism is broadly conceived to include, not merely the traditionally recognized areas within the discipline, but includes contributions from scholars in other fields who seek to bring their particular worldviews and theories into dialogue with Hindu Studies. Articles that explore issues of history, ecology, economics, politics, sociology, culture, education and psychology are welcomed.

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The Temple That Houses The Gods

While the god(s) Meenakshi and Siva are felt as present throughout the length of Madurai, their presence, as far as the devotee is concerned, is more tangibly experienced within the temple precincts and more precisely defined in the *garbagrha* (inner sanctum, literally wombhouse). If one had to translate in lay terms the exigencies of the sacrality of temple space perhaps the words of one of my informants whom I caught just as he was about to enter the temple best sums it up. The informant, referring to the temple exclaim:

"You know, it may be that god is everywhere, but he is more so in the temple."

It is not so much the former part of the sentiment as the latter, *that god is more so in the temple*, that is more revealing. In other words it is not so much the god's (possible) universal (but invisible) presence that is of concern in as much as the adherents' perception and experience of the local deity's concentrated (visible) presence inside the clearly defined inner spatial realm of the temple. Merely affirming the god's omnipresence does not account for the pervasiveness and indeed popularity of worship in the temple. *Agamic* textual tradition also tells us that the temple is the place where the god 'lives'. The temple is thus accepted by the different categories of believers as being the dwelling place of the god.

The image that is to be installed in the temple is also meant to be beautiful since it will be the abode of a god in which the god will take up residence. While Diana Eck does not elaborate as to exactly what she means when she says 'ordinary' Hindu, she is of course quite right in

saying that for most Hindus, the idea of god as invisible is foreign, and that it is the Semitic religions that place a greater faith in what is referred to as the 'Word' as opposed to the image.

Quite aside from what any neo-Vedantic interpretation that one might be tempted to impute to them, the images of the gods in the Meenakshi Temple do not refer to any transcendent reality beyond themselves. This is apparent from the connotation of the terminology surrounding the images. For the Sanskrit word *pratikrti* according to Eck, suggests the "likeness" of the image to the deity it presents.[1] Furthermore *murti* is defined in Sanskrit as that which has definite shape and limits, "a form, body, figure, an embodiment, incarnation, manifestation."[2] The image of the gods Meenakshi and Sundaresvara are thus not merely images. Rather as the *agamic* ritual texts construe it, the image "is a body-taking, a manifestation, and is not different from reality itself."[3] In other words if we had to understand the ritual texts, it is deemed that worship to the images of Meenakshi and Sundaresvara is worship to the deities themselves. This is something that the two categories of adherents lay and specialist alike take very much for granted. The ritual process that is said to allow for the god to inhere not only in a particular place but more specifically in the particular image is the enlivening ritual that consecrates and animates the presence of the god in the *murti*. It is thus not merely in popular memory fed by tales of sacred games of the god that the lay believer is made to acknowledge the intimate presence of her god, but by the enlivening ritual which is the act that is seen as taking possession of the god. The image is now not merely an image but the god itself. And as custodians of the ritual texts, the brahmin is the one who is ritually empowered to facilitate the god taking up his residence in the image through *nyasa* or the mantric imposition of the form of the deity onto the *murti*.

In a visually orientated culture Hindu images thus become visual "theologies," and they continue to be "read" as such by Hindus today.[4] One example is of course the image of the fish-eyed goddess Meenakshi and the devotees' exegetical understanding of these eyes as being those of a maternal mother.

Worship of the Image in the Temple
Image worship for the Indian theistic traditions appears to have been known prior to the time of Panini (6C BCE) who speaks of two kinds of images, one for living and one for sale.[5] Bhatt states that Panini speaks

very lightly about image worship by claiming that one worships the images merely for ones maintenance.

Appukuttan Nair in an article entitled "Siva Temple Worship In Kerala", unfortunately adopts an hieratic hermeneutic in his explanation for the use of image worship. Reminiscent of the romanticist hermeneutics of the early Orientalists he explains it thus:

"During Krtayuga, when human mind-control was of a very high order, worship took the form of meditation...."

According to this writer, by the time of the Dvaparayuga, "man required more familiar forms of concentration and this led to *Vigraharadhana* or image worship."[6]

It is however wholly different as far as the *agamic* texts go. Image worship is what the *agamic* tradition is all about. Here image worship is considered to be obligatory and it is seen as the duty of the priest to perform the daily worship at temples for the benefit of the kingdom and the devotee.[7] The worship of a deity in an image is the central ritual concern of the *agamic* literature,[8] and this is very much the vein in which the participants come to understand worship offered to the image housed in a temple.

At the centre of (most) temples is the *garbhagrha* or wombhouse within which the god is said to reside and which is a small dark space that is enclosed on all three sides by the walls of the shrine. And the image, especially the image in the *garbhagrha* to which worship and rituals are offered is especially powerful as it is supposed to house the concentrated presence of the main deity.

The Inner Sanctum of the Temple
The spatial definition inside the temple thus describes the concentration of the god's presence read in terms of the god's power at that particular place. Shulman (and also Kinsley) does not speak of space in terms of sacred and profane. Rather, Shulman verbally couches his understanding of demarcated spaces in terms of complementary dichotomies of chaos (or impurity) and order (purity). Order is that which reigns within the 'sacred' space while chaos prevails beyond the limits of the demarcated space. There is an echo of this notion of order (and by implication the inverse, chaos) in Kramrisch's description of the square space, which she

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sees as being "literally the fundamental form of Indian architecture."[9] Kramrisch claims that the square (which is the shape of both the temple as well as the city of Madurai) is a mark of order.

To Shulman the locked shrine (which, one might add is also in the shape of a square) marks the limits imposed on a concentration of power and he points out that this idea is expressed in the structure of the south Indian temple at the centre of which lies a focus of violent power. This violent power he says is circumscribed by the temple walls and located within a ritually ordered universe. It is in the inner sanctum- or "womb" that the deity is supposed to be "conceived anew."[10]

Shulman goes on to describe what he terms to be the qualitative difference in the spaces as a sense of separation, detachment and control. Says Shulman:

The strict limits applied to the sacred force detach the shrine from the surrounding, less ordered sphere, which is saturated with impurity and evil in contrast with the pure, harmonious realm within the temple walls ... The idea of limitation is joined to the guiding principle of separation in this scheme; the sacred power is controlled, and in this way... its separation from the outside world creates a zone of purity.[11]

The sacred power is described as a violent power. The god and goddess in the inner spaces of the temple are described as possessing a power that can be construed as violent. I have to admit that I'm not so sure I accept that the Meenakshi devotees order their own understanding of spaces in explicit terms of order and chaos. None of my informants made use of terms in English or in their native Tamil language, that closely or even vaguely came near capturing the dichotomies of chaos and order expressed by Shulman. However, Shulman has worked extensively with the Sanskrit myths where the metaphors of order and chaos are indeed strongly articulated and appear as sustained throughout many mythic narratives.

Although the devotees did not speak in terms of order and chaos, they nonetheless did emphatically speak of the power of the gods housed in the *garbhagrha.* And especially that of the goddess whose power was conceived by the devotees as being potentially violent.

Fear as a Means for Understanding the Goddess

I had occasion to experience this sense of fear of the goddess in vivid terms while compiling a tape recording of the devotees attending a float festival, the Teppukulam Marieammanvila, one of the fourteen festivals celebrated by the temple. Here I was able to record several of the devotees, while straining and pushing to catch a glimpse of (both) the deities, exclaim to themselves and to those around them that:

"We should never do anything to offend *Amman* (Mother)" and "*Amman* would take care of us".

It was also clear from one of the groups that I interviewed regarding the dominance of the respective gods that the religious community of Madurai, Saiva as well as Vaishnava, saw the goddess Meenakshi as responsible for every facet of their well being. As such she was also perceived to be responsible for any misfortune that might befall them, in which case special propitiation to her was required to reverse the tide of events.

It would often emerge during the course of my interviews that, as the presiding deity of the city of Madurai, the power of goddess Meenakshi was tangibly experienced by her devotees. I recall recording an informant's story that he knew of someone who had come from another part of India and settled in the city of Madurai. This individual had apparently failed to understand the power of the goddess Meenakshi. According to my informant, this person was as a consequence of this irreverence perpetually visited by misfortune. The informant went on to say that it was only when the individual acknowledged the power of Meenakshi and showed deference to her, that his long spate of ill luck abated.

The veracity of this story becomes something of a moot point. The point being, the meaning that this particular recounting of events held for the believer. This recounting belied the informant's implicit belief of the part that his goddess played in the existential reality of the Madurai community, and the fear that the goddess might wreak misfortune on her devotee if she were to be offended in any way.

It thus appeared that with regard to their relationship to Meenakshi, the devotees' symbols and practices were more readily grasped by acknowledging their sense of fear of transgressing the goddess. I believe

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that it is more appropriate to read this fear not as a fear of the goddess as such, but rather a fear of offending her.

O'Flaherty, referring to goddess in general, points out that although the goddess also brings with her elements of destruction, the devotee does not merely desire to placate the goddess but also wishes to have her never leave him. She claims that "if the essential function of the Goddess is to be there for you, you want her there even when she is in her shadow aspect", and that "the only unbearable harm that the Goddess can inflict on the worshipper is to abandon him ... [12]

In the instance of the Madurai devotee, this fear is that one may offend Meenakshi and that she may choose to unleash some sort of misfortune on the devotee, or worse yet, to abandon the devotee. Abandoning the devotee means that the devotee no longer has access to the concentrated power of the deity housed in the image which stands in the recesses of the inner sanctum.

The fear that this goddess elicited together with the reverence and awe the devotee appeared to feel toward her appeared to connect her with the (more capricious) village goddesses who were at once responsible for averting major calamity as well as bringing it on, both in the life of the villager or 'devotee', as well as for the village as a whole.

What was most interesting for me was what this element of fear possibly pointed to. After all, Meenakshi was still the aesthetically pleasing image that I described in the opening lines of the previous chapter. What emerged however was the possible connection between the emotion of fear and the earlier personality of the goddess.

The Place as the Body of the Divine or Place as Goddess

I was led to enquire from some of the priests about the *lingam* (phallic Siva), which in terms of Madurai history was discovered as a natural structure. This question itself was prompted by my observance of the numerous occasions that devotees would point to the *svayambhu* (self manifest) nature of the *lingam* using this 'fact' as some kind of legitimisation for the power of the god. To my question as to whether the *lingam* was found attached to a *yoni* (that is the lower half or base of the *lingam* and which was symbolic of the goddess), the priest's reply was no. When I asked whether this was usual, the reply was that:

"It was not unusual, especially in the case of Madurai where the ground to which the lingam was attached was itself the *yoni*".[13]

This point was reiterated by some of the lay devotees with whom I spoke. These devotees were elderly gentlemen retired from their respective professions who spent their afternoons at the temple. From my discussions with them it was apparent that the conceptualisation of the holy ground of Madurai as the *yoni* portion of the *svayambhu lingam* was shared also by them.

The belief that the earth contains or holds Siva finds something of a parallel in the story of the goddess Sati. The Sati myth narrates that Sati's dismembered body falls to the earth and wherever a piece is said to fall, a *pitha* (sacred space), is consecrated. The version in the *Siva purana* depicts the grief-stricken Siva who is the spouse of Sati as following her to earth and "finding her *yoni* established in Assam, he plunges into her."[14]

Here the space upon which the piece of Sati's body falls becomes sacralised earth and in Assam it comes to be represented in the form of a *yoni*. Interestingly, at Madurai the city as a space was perceived to be the *yoni*. And Siva in the form of the *svayambhu lingam* is claimed to be standing in this sacred *yoni*. For the informants the land was further personified as Meenakshi.[15]

Whether one can safely see a convergence between Hudson's thesis[16] that the city of Madurai is Meenakshi and my research where the informants identified the goddess as the land of Madurai, is somewhat premature. However there is enough of a semblance between the literary sources in Hudson's research[17] and the data that emerged from the field, in terms of the perceptions of the present devotees for me to conclude that the informants' reference to Madurai as the *yoni* was not merely metaphoric. And that Meenakshi, personified as the land of Madurai is indeed one of the ways in which the believer understands the goddess. This understanding may well allude to the complex folk character of the goddess.

For David Kinsley[18] writes that in the case of village goddesses the goddess is sometimes represented by merely the form of a head placed directly on the ground. He points out that this may in fact imply that the goddess' body is the village itself, and that she is in effect rooted in the

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soil of the village. Thus while in the Sanskritic tradition the land of India, as a whole, is revered as the feminine Divine, in the popular traditions the land is seen as being divided into individual villages, each with it's own local *grama devata* (village deity). Whitehead[19] states that before the coming of the Aryans, the population was divided into small agricultural and pastoral communities and that each village seems to have been under the protection of some spirit or deity, which was more often than not a goddess. One adds that here the goddess is the earth, but not through a narrative that tells us of some kind of divine adventure with Siva as with the Sati narratives related earlier. In the context of village goddesses, she is the earth in her own right.

As Shulman notes, the local goddesses of south India can also be seen to be the earth or the "universal womb from which life issues."[20] This thesis of Shulman makes sense, but only if we take "universal womb from which life issues" to be life in very real agricultural terms as opposed to theological or philosophical. Seen in this way, the devotees' understanding of Meenakshi as the land of Madurai may not be so much off the mark if we start to consider her as a local goddess from the folk tradition.

Meenakshi in Folk Sources
Thus, the way the goddess is understood by her lay worshippers points to the possibility of older elements of the goddess' personality before she comes to be installed as the brahmanic deity in the main temple. These elements appear to survive together with the 'official' version found historically later. This aggregate of different layers in the mythic structure of the goddess' identity and ancestrage does not form part of the concern of the local devotees as I discovered through my many interviews. However from a history of religions point of view it is crucial to our understanding of the goddess, and what marriage, in brahmanic terms, does to her. For this we are compelled to unpack the various older strands of the goddess's personality in order to sift out residual beliefs that lie alongside later 'intrusive' traditions.

Henry Whitehead who, although criticised by subsequent anthropologists and historians of religion regarding some of his theoretical assumptions about the origin of the worship of village deities, remains nevertheless a valuable reference especially for the vividness of his ethnographic writing which derives as he puts it, from "purely his own observations."[21] Another reason that writers like Whitehead, Elmore, Srinivas et al. are

important, is because, aside from their work being largely ethnographical, they write from the standpoints of the folk traditions. This is unlike writers like say, Shulman and Kinsley, (although excellent scholars, especially the former who I have used extensively) who work mainly with the Sanskrit based traditions and what they see as the local variants and 'localised' versions of the original Sanskritic myths.

Whitehead's account of a popular shrine to the goddess Meenakshi is interesting and worth repeating. Whitehead narrates:

At Cuddalore I visited a shrine of Minachiamman at the village of Devananpatnam. It stands on the seashore on a low ridge of sand. There is no building, but an oblong space about 20 by 12 feet is enclosed on three sides by rows of clay figures, the eastern end towards the sea being left open. On the western side of the oblong, facing the sea, there were two small clay figures, apparently a man and a woman, seated in the centre. They were about a foot high with the remains of old garlands on them. To the left and right of them were figures of seven virgins (or *Saptakannigais*), very well modelled in clay and about nine inches high. In front of and beside them were the figures of male guardians and attendants. On each side of the images of the virgins was a figure of a large round fish with open mouth and staring eyes and seated on the back of each fish were the figures of a man and a woman. The *pujari* [non brahmin officiating priest] of the shrine told me that the woman was Minachi the fish-goddess, and the man Madurai-Viran. Beside each fish were figures of guardians and attendants ... .

Animal sacrifices, consisting of goats, cocks etc. are offered to these deities once a year at an annual festival ... the goddess Minachi, who is seated on it [the fish], is commonly worshipped by fishermen who swear by her name.[22]

Whitehead ends what has been up to then purely a descriptive account of the seashore shrine with a theologically derived conclusion, stating, "She [Meenakshi or Minachi as it is read in Tamil] is the goddess worshipped in the great temple of Madurai together with the god Siva."[23] However, while Meenakshi in the main temple in Madurai is housed within the confined sacred enclosure of the dark inner sanctum, Whitehead's Minachi is in an open shrine, easily accessible to her worshippers, and with an altogether different more and liberal dietary preference. And while at the main temple her guardian Munisvar is well outside the

temple precincts on the side of the north tower, here Minachi sits next to her guardian, the divine-hero, Madurai-Veeran. Indeed they take their meals together. As Whitehead tells us, blood sacrifices are offered to them both at the annual festival.

There are also 'pieces' of a popular story that tell us that Meenakshi is actually a fisher-king's daughter, as opposed to being the daughter of the Pandyan king. The *tala puranic* text in another chapter however, makes out that this is in fact the goddess Meenakshi incarnate in the fisher caste because of a curse placed on her by Siva.

According to this understanding Meenakshi is herself the incarnation of Parvati. Siva marries Meenakshi again, incarnate as the fisher-king's daughter and this is to be understood as the god's second marriage. These are however again theological issues that are subjective. What does emerge though is that in terms of textual structure the *puranic* version of the Meenakshi marriage myth has absorbed and modified many of the early traits of Meenakshi's personality, leaving us to tease out what must be certain strands of the original folk story. It is quite possible that the older fisher-king story is a folk tale that became assimilated into the *puranic* myths where the fisher-king's daughter Meenakshi comes to be identified with Parvati. This would perhaps explain the reason why Meenakshi is especially revered by the fishing communities in some parts of Tamilnadu. Whitehead's description of the seashore shrine would then be the popular worship of the goddess Meenakshi that survived even though Meenakshi had been absorbed into the brahmanic tradition. Unfortunately it was outside the limited scope of this study but it would have been interesting to have undertaken some fieldwork in a fishing community where a Meenakshi-like goddess was being propitiated. And although there does not appear to be any in-depth study of the folk origins of the goddess Meenakshi many writers point to the possibility of an older personality of the goddess.

W. T. Elmore[24] writes in a footnote that Meenakshi was originally a powerful queen in the Pandyan dynasty, who comes to be deified after her death. He states that Meenakshi in turn comes to be worshipped by the subjects in her kingdom. Elmore claims that the original god of Madurai was Chokkalingam. Indeed some of the lay devotees would insist to me that Siva's proper name at Madurai was not Sudaresvara but Chokkalingam. Elmore judges from this name as well as the attributes of this god that the god was one of the local demons. He states that the

brahmins adopted this local deity into the Hindu pantheon and turned him into an *avatar* (incarnation) of Siva. Elmore continues that:

... there was another powerful local deity, a goddess, who was much more feared by the people than was Chokklingam, as a Sakti is always more terrible than male god. Her name was Minakshi. The Brahmans (sic) wished to attach this powerful cult also, and accomplished this by arranging a marriage between Minakshi and Chokkalingam, [by] now called Siva.[25]

Harman[26] cites Subramanian as looking at the contrast between the mythology and the ritual and concluding that the Meenakshi was originally a local goddess. Harman[27] also cites Jan Gonda as contending that Meenakshi's marriage to the god Siva was a way to incorporate a powerful, locally important Dravidian goddess into the brahmin Saiva pantheon and that she was originally unrelated to the northern male, Sanskritic import Siva.

It is also said that in the early and middle Cola periods that there are no separate shrines to the goddess. The notable exceptions being, that of goddess Durga at Mahabalipuram, goddess Kanya Kumari at Kanya Kumari Temple and goddess Meenakshi at Madurai.[28] When a so called Dravidian goddess marries into the brahmanic tradition, she retains a separate shrine for herself. This appears to be the pattern in Saiva temples. A few of my informants, who were traditionally trained scholars and appeared to be die-hard Siva supporters maintained that the goddess shrine was a much later addition to the temple. However the original mythic narrative in the *tala purana* tells us that Kulecekara Pandyan ordered that two shrines be built, and that one would be for the goddess.[29]

Of course Meenakshi does not have quite the destructive nature of the village goddesses Sitala or Manasa. However there are surviving elements of the devotees' perception towards Meenakshi from which one may speculate that she too has roots to a pre-aryan goddess that is able to evoke fear in her adherents. The people I interviewed although well aware that the goddess ought never be transgressed, seem long since to have forgotten earlier versions of the folk story.

This in large part is as a result of the *tala purana* which would have us believe that where as before the marriage Meenakshi was merely a queen, she comes to be deified after the marriage to Siva. The legitimacy of this

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claim however cannot be sustained in the light of the overwhelming evidences that point to her status of goddess in the folk tradition. The classical tradition appears to have merely assimilated the goddess while effectively taming her character to fit the description of a normatively acceptable divine consort. This brahmanic device of taming the wild goddess from the outside tradition through marriage is however, somewhat undermined by the devotee's attitude towards the goddess. For the behaviour of the lay devotees resident in Madurai as shown earlier appears to reflect strands of folk elements of the Meenakshi cult.

The element of fear on the part of devotees may well answer the possible theological dominance of the goddess, if not in the brahmanic text, certainly in the religious realty of the devotees. The reality is that while the *Tiruvilaiyadal Puranam* constructs the perception that the space belongs to Siva, the lay devotees understand that as presiding deity of Madurai, the city is under the control of the goddess. This paradox between the goddess's textual status and the way she is understood by her lay worshippers, one suggests, points to the possibility of older and popular elements of the goddess that predate the Madurai marriage myth in the *tala purana*.

Ritual Prerogative
This sense of fear of the potentially violent power of the goddess in the inner chamber surfaced early on in the course of my research when, on the first occasion that I visited the temple I was cautioned by my companions that I ought to always proceed to the shrine of the goddess before entering that of Siva. I recall making a mental note when told by my informants that all rituals were first offered to *Amman* (Mother goddess) before being offered to the god Siva. I remember catching myself reacting to this unusual practice not practised at the other major Saiva temple in South India, Chidambaram and which appeared to be peculiar to the Saiva Meenakshi Temple. For in all other major Saiva temples in India "the worship of the Mother follows the worship of Siva."[30] In other words, in the Meenakshi Temple, ritual prerogative is vested with the goddess.

To me this peculiarity had significant implications in terms of the theology of the gods themselves. It was also clear from the behaviour of my companions that the ritual protocol, what Laidlaw would describe as "ritual commitment"[31] of proceeding to the shrine of the goddess first was not to be made light of and that any indiscretion on their part, or mine for

that matter would anger the goddess and we in turn would be visited upon by grave misfortune.

While these two companions were brahmin the rule that the goddess' shrine was to be visited first was widely pervasive and certainly not restricted to the brahmin classes in the Madurai community. I found that regardless of which class or which of the Hindu traditions I observed that even a child of five was conversant with this religious protocol.

One would naturally be led to assume that because the male god was deemed by the *tala puranic* text to be the primary deity the devotees would seek out Sundaresvara-Siva over and above that of the goddess. However, my informants (both brahmin as well as non brahmin) would often point out that on the occasions when they were rushed, or during the season of pilgrimage when the traffic at the temple was even denser than is usual, they would not leave before receiving the *darshan* (literally 'sight') of Meenakshi. And if things were really rushed, they would leave even before visiting the shrine of Siva. But they were emphatic that they would not leave without offering worship at the shrine of the goddess. In a survey conducted some twenty years ago it was estimated that the daily visitors to the temple, on average numbered fifteen thousand. The average number of daily visitors on a Friday, a day considered to be sacred to the goddess, was twenty five thousand.[32]

Catherine Bell claims that ritual acts are articulated and are to be understood within a semantic framework. The significance of the act depends on where it is articulated, and the context of all other ways of acting, that is to say, "what it echoes, what it inverts, what it alludes to, what it denies."[33] If one has to extend this to the articulation and the sequential ordering of the daily public worship to the gods in the Meenakshi temple we see that it can facilitate a heuristic interpretation of the theological import of these deities. The order of worship between the two main deities is itself simple. The daily ritual public worship is first offered to Meenakshi and thereafter to Siva or Sudaresvara. This arrangement prevails even though scholars like Kasirajan contend that according to the architectural features of the Meenakshi Temple, the Sundersvara shrine is the main and more ancient of the shrines in the temple.[34] This claim is based on the sizes of the respective shrines both of which face the auspicious east. The inner sanctum of the male god is a square structure measuring 33 feet on all sides while that of Meenakshi which lies south-east of that of Siva's, measures only 25 square feet. The

former is thus obviously the larger, and one assumes, in terms of temple architectural exigencies, the more important of the two.[35]

Both the shrines however have the essentially the same basic design. Fuller tells us that in terms of temple plan the Meenakshi Temple complex is not exceptional to the other Saiva temples where the male god is prominent.[36] In the Madurai temple however, Meenakshi is seen as the pre-eminent deity.

It thus made sense for the Meenakshi devotees at Madurai to offer worship at the goddess shrine before proceeding to Siva's shrine. To the devotees this behaviour mirrored the fact that all rituals were themselves offered to the goddess first. The temple's head musician Ponusami Pillai revealed to me that although the exact time varied, usually all rituals to the goddess (accompanied by the full complement of temple musicians), were offered approximately fifteen to thirty minutes before being offered to Siva. He did add though that there were times when the priests began to offer worship in Siva's shrine before the worship to the goddess had been fully completed. All this was confirmed in a subsequent interview with the temple priests.

My informant Gnana Sastrigal quite rightly pointed out that in all the other major Saiva temples in south India, ritual was always offered first to Siva and only thereafter to the goddess. This point was borne out by another informant, this time a young scholar by the name of Sankarasastri who also maintained that as far as the Saiva *agamic* texts are concerned ritual was prescribed to be performed first to the male god and only thereafter to the female goddess. He too stated that for the order of worship to be any other way at the Meenakshi Temple meant that the order had been somehow inverted.

Bell states that priestly control of sacred texts promotes a kind of standardisation of what comes to be accepted as the orthodox ritual practices in textual form, establishing in turn a basis for a type of interpretative and exegetical discourse.[37] Of course as Bell herself shows, this sort of discourse functions to create a class of experts, and the experts function to sustain the standardised texts, which in turn validate their (the ritual specialists) behaviour towards the deities. The one feeds off the other, authenticates and perpetuates the other in a mutual relationship. The distinction though is that it is the ritual specialist or the *gurukuls* at the Meenakshi temple that actively maintain both the past and their

access to it through the elaborate medium of rituals in public worship and their particular interpretation of the order of that worship.

What is even more interesting in the case of the officiating priests at the Meenakshi temple is that they were in any case not following the *agamic* texts (the Karana and Kanika which they claimed to mainly use). These Saiva *agama* by all accounts prescribe that rituals are to be performed to the male god Siva and only thereafter to the goddess. What had come to be standardised was the inverse of this *agamic* prescription. Here the priests' particular interpretation granting pre-eminence to the goddess in the ordering of the public worship to the gods in the inner shrines was not culled from these texts.

There are two reasons that one is able to adduce for the relative importance of the goddess over the god, in terms of ritual dominance as well as theological import.

(1) The devotees' attitude towards the goddess which alludes to certain features of the goddess' personality, who if we accept as an ancient goddess from the local Madurai folk tradition appears deeply embedded in the religious consciousness of the devotees. Alongside the obvious reverence felt towards the goddess (seen as the mother who takes care of her children, epitomised by the devotees) is the strong element of fear that the goddess must not be transgressed. My informants were all emphatic that they would not leave the temple without having received the *darshan* (sight) of Meenakshi.

(2) The ordering of the public worship offered to the two main deities in the Meenakshi Temple which reinforces the primacy and centrality of the goddess in the existential welfare of the Madurai devotees. All daily *pujas* from four thirty in the morning, from the *tiruvanantal puja* (waking up the deity) to the *palliyarai puja* (putting the deity to bed) at nine thirty in the night is first offered to the goddess housed in the inner shrine, before being offered to Siva.

While (1) is a reflection of the devotees' religious feeling towards the goddess, (2) can be suggested more as a result of a political strategy on the part of the ruling Nayaks of the thirteenth century.

What emerges from a few scarce literary sources[38] and informants like Gnana Sastrigal was that Tirumala Nayaka in the thirteenth century, who was a Vaishnavite, that is a worshipper of the god Vishnu rather than

Siva, was also a strong follower of Mother goddess worship. And interestingly, although we come across the names Cokkar, Somasundera, etc., well established in the literary works during the Nayak period (1600-1750 BCE), the name Meenakshi Temple, although not found in the literary tradition is used in popular tradition from the days of the Nayak rulers.[39] One suggests then that it was during this period that the original order (as would have been prescribed by the Saiva *agama* texts) of performing the *puja* at the Sundersvara shrine was altered to afford the mother goddess a more prestigious place thereby affording her the ritual prerogative to grant the first *darshan* to the devotees. This was collaborated by my interview with Gnana Sastrigal which revealed that the old scholar felt very strongly that the ritual order had been inverted by the priests at the Meenakshi Temple. He said that he believed that the daily *pujas* were as a rule to be performed initially to Sundaresvara and thereafter to Meenakshi. While he was not able to explain coherently as to why the order of the daily rituals would have been changed around, he remained adamant that this was indeed the case.

The order of the public worship thus alludes to the ritual (and theological) importance of the mother goddess. It is also reflected off the order in which the devotee will now visit the shrines of the gods (even at times other than that of the eight periods of prescribed public worship) to offer their worship and seek *darshan*. It further reinforces the manner in which the Madurai devotees view their goddess, as the primary divinity in their lives and inverts the (textual) superiority of the male god.

If we had to apply the argument that relations of power are rarely engendered from only the top down, but from the bottom up as well[40] to the Madurai devotees it is clear that ritual behaviour is not only structured from the top, by the texts and brahmin specialists, but also engendered by the devotees themselves. The devotees seek out the *darshan* of Sundaresvara-Siva, but only after they have had the sight of the goddess Meenakshi.

Re-ordering of Public Worship
King Tirumala Nayaka who ruled the city of Madurai during the thirteenth century, being a Vaishnava (like the Vijaynagar rulers before him) appears to have been more comfortable with promoting the ritual dominance of Meenakshi over that of Siva, who is traditionally considered to be the rival of Vishnu. Saivism and Vaishnavism as

sectarian schools of thought are considered to be rival and competing theologies in the late classical and medieval periods.

In the *tala purana* however, Vishnu (although nowhere spoken of as the son of Malayadvaja Pandyan, Meenakshi's father) is made to be the brother of Meenakshi. Maladvajaya Pandyan's early death is thus fortuitous in that it makes possible for the bride to be given away in marriage by the brother, as is the custom in traditional Tamil marriage ritual.[41] While in the local lay myth[42] in the Madurai's popular tradition it is meant to be the local god Alagar (Vishnu) who is to hand over the bride to Siva, in the brahmanic ritual re-enactment of the divine marriage, Vishnu as Pavalakkanivay Perumal (according to the official as opposed to the lay myth) is one of the chief actors as he represents the bride's family. Through the divine marriage, Siva and Vishnu are now brothers-in-law.

The point is that, affording ritual prominence to Meenakshi translates to the fact that now both the shrine and the city hold significance for the local Vaisnavas as well as Saivas. According to many of my lay informants who were Vaisnavas, paying homage to Meenakshi was deemed fitting as the goddess was accepted as the sister of Vishnu.[43]

Victor Turner is said to have worked out a description of ritual whereby ritual, as a mechanism, periodically converts the obligatory to the desirable.[44] This statement is a wonderful illustration of the devotees' attitude towards the ritualised action of visiting the shrine of the goddess first. As I've mentioned, it has become obligatory that the devotees offer worship first at the shrine of the goddess. In this instance what is obviously obligatory and what as far as the priests (who in the period of the Nayaka kings would have facilitated his relationship to the deities in the Meenakshi Temple) here are concerned, what ought to be done, is turned into what is desirable for the devotee.

The devotee now wishes to see Meenakshi first and obtain her *darshan* before proceeding to the shrine of Siva. This sequence of ritualised action is what is deemed as correct, and just as importantly, is seen as desirable by the socialised devotees. The devotees come to believe that the goddess' shrine is to be visited first. A few attempted to explain to me that it made more sense at home to first approach the more approachable and less formidable father if they wanted their wishes met. They added that it was the same in the temple.

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While as far as I'm aware there is no literary evidence that supports my suggestion that the order of public worship was inverted during the period of Tirumala Nayaka, there is both oral evidence as well as written sources[45] that indicate that another strategic change was effected by Tirumala Nayaka who is said to have changed the date that the wedding of the gods is celebrated from the month of Maci (February-March) to that of Cittirai (April-May).

The other festival held by the Alagar Temple outside Madurai in the month of Cittirai is that of the god Alagar's Journey. As the month of Cittirai was that of the harvest, Tirumala is said to have found a shortage of manpower to draw the two massive festival cars on their ten day ritual journey around the city streets. He is said to have altered the date of the marriage and the car pulling to Maci, which was a time when the harvesting was traditionally over. Large numbers of people were now able to attend both the festivals and were available to draw the cars.[46]

While this move sounds sensible and highly pragmatic, it is nevertheless a manipulation of the previous timing and it appears to have also been politically motivated. Hudson suggests that to Tirumala (a Vaishnava) the union of both the festivals, that of Meenakshi-Sundaresvara's marriage and Alagar's (Vishnu's) Journey would have allowed his expression of devotion to Visnu in the predominantly Saiva area of Madurai. Moreover, it also allowed for a public statement and ritual expression of the unity of the northern region of Madurai, over which the king was sovereign. This is said to be a vital public political statement as Tirumala Nayaka was the first Madurai Nayaka to have gained political independence of the old kingdom of the Pandyas from the previous Vijayanagara dynasty.[47]

There thus appears sufficient evidence to support the contention that Tirumala Nayaka altered the period of celebration of the Marriage festival. This move seems to have been motivated by reasons of devotional allegiances as well as political. There is however, merely a small body of oral testimony that suggests that Tirumala Nayaka was also responsible for inverting the order of the public worship to the deities, Meenakshi and Sundaresvara.

This claim is itself based on the testimony of some of my (brahmin) informants. The claim is though premised upon other realities. According to the readings of most traditional scholars ritual *puja* in the Saiva *agamas* is prescribed as being offered to the god and thereafter to the

goddess. Both categories of informants, the traditionally trained scholars as well as the many officiating priests at the Meenakshi Temple were unanimous about this. What is also true is that at present, the ritual order is not what is prescribed by the Saiva *agamas*.

Summary : Assigning Ritual Prerogative

It has been pointed out that Tirumala Nayaka, aside from being a Vaishnava, was also an ardent worshipper of Mother goddess. While as the king he would have had to sponsor and act as patron to the predominant Saiva faith of the kingdom, he would have also wished to express his faith to Vishnu. Promoting the ritual dominance of Meenakshi would have allowed the expression of his Vaishnava leanings as Meenakshi is made out, in the classical *tala puranic* text to be the sister of Vishnu.

In addition, as a worshipper of the matriachical centred Mother goddess cult, Tirumala Nayaka would have been familiar with the aspect of protective personality of the goddess. It is interesting that Dennis Hudson, whose article on the Marriage Festival I have referred to, in another publication refers to Meenakshi, not only as the presiding goddess of Madurai, but also the city's protective goddess.[48] If Meenakshi is, as Hudson claims, not merely the city's presiding goddess, but also its protective deity, Tirumala Nayaka might well have sought to actively promote the goddess' pre-eminence. For while the distinction between protective and presiding might well appear superfluous to some, it is I believe legitimate while 'presiding' is an appellation applied to both gods and goddess, the epithet 'protective' is especially used in the context of (village) goddesses. Although there are male guardian deities like Munisvar, Aiyanar, and Karpanasvami who stand guard at certain temple gates, it is the goddess who is perceived as protecting the village from the attacks of spirits that reside, spatially outside the village.[49] As the warrior-queen who ruled Madurai prior to her marriage to Siva, Meenakshi was vested with the protection of the kingdom and its subjects. Describing Meenakshi as protective goddess thus further defines her character over that of presiding goddess.

When the priests were questioned as to why the public worship at the Meenakshi Temple did not follow the *agamic* rules, they all pointed out that this was because Meenakshi was the presiding deity of Madurai. While all the priests I spoke to were in concert that this was the reason, there was no consensus among them as to when, if at all, the order of worship had been changed.

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As none of the priests could with any certainty claim that this was the order of worship since the time Madurai was consecrated as sacred space and the temple was erected, there exists some grounds for believing that the order had indeed, somewhere along the line been inverted. More importantly the priests also did not deny the possibility of this having happened. Their many responses indicated that they had never sought to question the status quo, implicitly accepting that this was just the way it was.

And unlike most other events in a city like Madurai that could be explained or justified by pointing referentially to a mythic story, here none of the priests (or lay devotees for that matter) made recourse to a story offering divine (as an instruction from the gods) justification explaining the unique arrangement at this particular temple.

In the final analysis, however it has come to be, it is Meenakshi who reigns superior within the sacred inner spaces of the temple. She has been granted the prerogative, not shared by the other main female deities in other Saiva temples, to be the deity who devotees look upon first, and to whom she is able to offer the first *darshan*. Conjecturally, one adds that perhaps that is this interesting connivance of circumstances and events that take us back to the earlier folk roots of Meenakshi. For in the context of the older popular worship of Meenakshi, there would have been no first or second ordering of worship. There would have been no equal male god counterpart holding rival court in an adjacent inner sanctum. The male god would have been assigned the task of guarding access to the goddess. If you offered worship to him it would have been with the aim of seeing the goddess and having her see you.

[1] Eck, 1981: 27 (Footnote no. 51)

[2] Ibid. Eck states that the uses of the word *murti* (image) in the Upanisad and the Bhagavad Gita suggest that the form *is* its essence. 'The flame is the *murti* of fire (Svetasvatar Upanisad 1.13), or the year is the *murti* of time (Maitri Upanisad 6.14).

[3] Eck, 1981: 27-8

[4] Ibid.: 30

[5] Bhatt, 1988: 28

[6] Nair, 1988: 1

[7] Bhatt, 1988: 33

[8] Surdam, 1988: 54

[9] Kramrisch, 1976: 22

[10] Shulman, 1980: 192

[11] Ibid.

[12] O'Flaherty, 1980b: 280

[13] Interview with the *gurukal* Ugra Pandiyan, one of the senior priests at the Meenakshi Temple.

[14] Kinsley, 1987: 38.

[15] One of my informants, Chandrasekharan maintained 'Siva would never, and could never exist in any *ksetram* [place] without *ambal* [mother goddess]'.

[16] Dennis Hudson, as I've mentioned elsewhere, has written extensively from both textual sources as well as his own observations about the Meenakshi-Sundaresvara marriage. I was thus curious to learn from him as to whether he had, during his own field research, come across the notion of Meenakshi personified as the land of Madurai. In our correspondence Hudson informed me that he had put forth such a thesis himself in his article, 'Madurai : City As Goddess.' He added that this was however based solely on literary data, and that he was thus interested to learn from the writer that this idea of Meenakshi as city (or land) is alive in contemporary Madurai.

[17] I am grateful to Dennis Hudson, who, following an e-mail correspondence with me, was kind enough to send me his article entitled, 'Madurai : City as Goddess' (Hudson, 1993).

[18] Kinsley, 1987: 199

[19] Whitehead, 1983: 11

[20] Shulman, 1980: 139 Shulman points out that the earth is an incarnate goddess. He states that 'Bhumi (Earth) is, in classical *puranic* mythology linked specifically with Vishnu.' This, theologically speaking, means that *bhu* (Earth goddess), as the consort of Vishnu has no relation to (the spouse of) Siva. They come from different typologies, and reducing them to one another makes for unwarranted theological conclusions. However by recounting the manner in which the devotees perceive the land of Madurai, that is to say as Meenakshi personified, is not meant to be interpreted as an attempt on my part or that of the informants as identifying the two goddesses. It is merely the recounting of the way several of the devotees understood Meenakshi, an understanding that might appear to conflate the identities of the two goddesses who belong to two rival sectarian streams of thought.

[21] Whitehead, 1983: 7 in the preface of *Village Gods of South India*.

[22] Ibid.: 24-5

[23] Ibid.

[24] 1984: 84

[25] Elmore, 1984: 84 See also Ramananyya according to whom Meenakshi the local goddess of Madurai, married Chokkalingam, a local demon who comes to be identified with Siva (Ramananyya, 1992: 70).

[26] 1989: 65

[27] Ibid.

[28] Balasubrahmanyam, 1975: 27 Balasubrahmanyam also mentions the possibility of a goddess shrine at Kanchipuram, that of Kamashi.

[29] Periyaran, 1996: 20 Translated for me from the Tamil *Tiruvilaiyadal Puranam* by Mahavishnu Naidu.

[30] Subramaniam, 1988: 77

[31] Humphrey and Laidlaw, 1994: 88

[32] Fuller, 1984: 5 This survey was carried out by C. J. Fuller in 1977 as part of his research on the Meenakshi temple priests. My own observations in 1996 would indicate that these numbers have risen substantially.

[33] Bell, 1992: 220

[34] Kasirajan, 1985: 523

[35] Kasirajan, 1985: 524-5 and Fuller, 1984: 3

[36] Fuller, 1984: 3

[37] Bell, 1992: 137

[38] Kasirajan and Hudson refer to the Vaishnava Nayaks (Kasirajan, 1985: 523) and (Hudson, 1985: 104).

[39] Kasirajan, 1985: 523

[40] Bell, 1992: 201

[41] Harman, 1989: 61

[42] Both Hudson and Harman refer to it as such (Hudson, 1971) and (Harman, 1989).

[43] The Saiva brahmins confirmed this. The Smarta brahmins went on further to point out to me that although the Vaishnava brahmins did not openly offer worship to Siva, the mere fact that they (the Vaishnavas) revered Meenakshi, the wife of Siva meant that obeisance was also being paid to Siva.

[44] Bell, 1992: 141

[45] Most of the informants that I spoke with were aware of this point. It is also mentioned by Hudson and Harman (Hudson, 1982) and (Harman, 1989).

[46] Hudson, 1882: 137

[47] Ibid.: 138

[48] Hudson, 1993: 125 Hudson puts forward this suggestion in his article 'Madurai: City as Goddess'.

[49] Kinsley, 1983: 199

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GLOSSARY

Sanskrit

arati --- sacred flame offered during ritual worship

avatar --- incarnation

bhakti --- devotion

darshan --- divine sight

diksha --- initiation

garbagraha --- inner sanctum, literally wombhouse

lingam --- phallic form of Siva

mahapuranas --- major puranas or narratives

murti --- image, form, body, embodiment

nyasa --- mantric imposition of the form of the deity onto the image

paliyarai puja --- nightly public ritual where the gods are put to the conjugal bed

parartha puja --- public worship

pithas --- seats of the (usually) female divine

pratikrti --- likeness of the image to the deity

prasada --- right to blessing of deity

puja --- ritual worship to deity

svayambhu lingam --- self manifest phallic form of Siva

stala purana --- local myth or old narrative, place-history

tirthas --- literally, sacred fords

tiruvanantal puja --- daily ritual waking up of the deity

upapuranas --- minor puranas or narratives

vigraha --- sculpted image

vigraharadhana --- image worship

yajna --- vedic fire sacrifice

yoni --- base of the *lingam* symbolic of the goddess

Tamil

amman --- mother
tala --- place
tala purana --- local myth or old narrative, place-history
tiruvilaiyadal --- divine play
vilaiyadal --- play

The Technique and Yoga in the Scheme of Practical Discipline in Advaita

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The ultimate ideal according to Advaita is self-realization or restoration of the self to its native shore. This state is characterized by restful peace or absolute bliss. Śaṅkara looks upon the scriptures whose validity is admitted as the final means to the knowledge of ultimate truth. This knowledge which leads to the goal of life does not simply mean an intellectual apprehension of the nature of the self but an actual realization of it in our own experience. In other words, the sole aim of studying philosophy in India is not only to gratify a theoretic curiosity but also to live the right kind of life adopting oneself suitably to one's intellectual convictions. In order to acquire a hold on self-knowledge, a rigorous course of training ought to be undergone by an aspirant. As a preliminary step to attain this stage what is necessary first and foremost is concentration of mind.

In order to render the acquisition of concentration of mind possible, the yoga system prescribes the means. Patañjali's eight fold discipline of yoga is for attaining the final goal of life. These means are to be adopted by the other schools in their scheme of practical discipline. This is especially true in the case of Advaita Vedānta.

Śaṅkara while commenting upon the Brahmasūtra (2.1.3) points out that by the refutation of the Sāṅkhya school, the yoga school also should be taken to have been refuted. But this does not mean that Śaṅkara totally disapproves the doctrines of yoga system. He says that the techniques of yoga are supported by Śruti-s. Hence Śaṅkara's admission of this aspect of the yoga as valid. What is opposed to Śaṅkara is only their doctrines of evolution of the insentient Prakṛti etc. Madhusūdana Sarasvatī in his celebrated commentary on the Bhagavad Gītā called Gūḍhārthadīpikā points out that the teachings of the yoga school in regard to the means of acquiring concentration are fully adopted in Advaita at the stage of pursuing nidhidhyāsana - the most important constituent of Jñānayoga. In the introductory verses of his commentary he states -

tatastatparipākeṇa nidhidhyāsananiṣṭhātā
yogaśāstram tu sampūrṇaṃ upakṣīṇaṃ bhavediha[1] ॥

And he gives an excellent and extensive treatment of the yoga system in his commentary on the sixth chapter of the Gītā. Before explaining the place of yoga in the scheme of practical discipline in Advaita, some preliminary considerations are to be made. In the first place the performance of duty with no desire for its fruit as taught in the Bhagavad Gītā is the mode of discipline adopted exclusively by the orthodox schools. Śaṅkara states:

> In the smṛti texts such as the Bhagavad Gītā it has been explained that sacrifices, etc., when performed without desire for their fruits become the means to the knowledge of Brahman[2].

The Gītā teaching which advocates disinterested activity must be understood in the sense that deeds performed in this spirit have an end, namely, sattvaśuddhi or the cleansing of the heart. This is referred to in the Gītā as karma-yoga. In turn it gives rise to an intense desire to have the knowledge of Brahman (vividiṣā). Śaṅkara in his Aparokṣānubhūti says-

svavarṇāśramadharmeṇa tapasā haritoṣaṇāt
sādhanaṃ prabhavet puṃsāṃ vairāgyādicatuṣṭayam ॥

Actions relating to one's stage and class of life performed as an offering to God cleanses one's heart; gives rise to the ascertainment that everything apart from Brahman is non-eternal. This is known as nityānityavastuviveka. It is followed by absolute detachment towards objects of enjoyment here and in the hereafter. This is called ihāmutrārthaphalabhogavirāga. This in turn leads to śamādisādhanasampat.[3] They are śama - control of mind - dama control of external senses, uparati - asceticism, titikṣā - endurance of opposites like heat and cold, etc., samādhāna - concentration and śraddhā - faith. These culminate in the desire to get liberated (mumukṣutva) from the transmigratory existence. Madhusūdana summaries the above idea in the introductory verses of his commentary on the Bhagavad Gītā[4].

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[1]Introductory verse 17 of Gūḍhārthadīpikā (hereafter GD) C.on the Bhagavad Gītā (hereafter BG.).With the C. of Śaṅkara and six other commentaries, Vrajajivana Pracyabharati Granthamala No.64, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Pratosthan, Delhi - 7

[2] Brahmas J trabhsya 3-4-27

[3]Aparokṣānubhūti - verse No.3. complete works of Sankaracarya Samata Books Madras.

[4]Introductory Verses of GD on BG 12-15

The second stage involves Vedantic study and reflection (śravaṇa and manana) which are the constituents of jñānayoga which of course, is mixed with bhakti. Of these two, śravaṇa consists in the formal Vedantic study under a proper preceptor to know the truth about the self and it removes the false notion that the upanishadic texts do not teach non-dual reality. Manana or reflection represents the second stage of training. It consists in arguing within oneself on the basis of reasoning with a view to ascertain that the upanishadic teaching is valid and it is not stultified by the view-points of the other schools of thought. This enables the aspirant to get over the false notion - prameyāsambhāvanā - that the upanisadic teachings may not after all be true[5].

The aspirant now arrives at the third stage characterized by the intellectual conviction that the Upanishad's teach non-dual reality as identical with his true nature and that that teaching is not contradicted by any other proof or school of thought. Yet one is not able to realize the truth within oneself as one's mind is still afflicted by old habits

of thoughts or vāsanā-s. These vāsanā-s which have become long established will assert themselves and thwart the attainment of the ultimate aim.

To overcome this, one pursues nidhidhyāsana. This meditation is otherwise known as yoga. In this state there is a conscious mental effort to check the sense-organs and mind from comprehending the external objects with a view to maintain the continuity of the knowledge of Brahman, arisen from śravaṇa and manana. Patañjali calls it yoga and defines this stage as one where there is the subjugation of all the mental modes[6].

It has also been said in the Kaṭha Upaniṣhad -

> That is called the highest goal, wherein all the five senses
> and the mind remain in full control and wherein even the
> intellect does not function. This steadying of the senses is
> called yoga; the yogin is wide awake in that condition, for
> yoga is evolution coupled with involution[7].

Thus manana is for getting intellectual conviction that what the Upaniṣad's teach is true; and meditation is for overcoming the unconscious re-assertion of the old habits of thought. Nidhidhyāsana thus leads the way to self-revelation by removing obstacles

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[5]Ibid., 15-16

[6] Yogasūtra (YS) 1.2

[7] Kaṭha -Upaniṣad., 2.3.10 and 11

that obscure the truth of unity. It precedes the right comprehension of truth taught in the text - tat tvam asi[8].

Madhusūdana obviously refers here to the view of Vivaraṇa that verbal knowledge is immediate since the reality to be realized here is the self which is most immediate. Vācaśpati, however, is of the view that verbal testimony could give rise only to mediate knowledge, and can lead to immediate knowledge aided by a cultivated mind (samskṛtamanaḥ).

The direct knowledge of Brahman removes avidyā. By the removal of avidyā all doubts and misapprehensions vanish. All the accumulated merits and demerits are instantaneously destroyed then. Having attained the knowledge of the self no future merits or demerits would accrue in his case. But the fructified merit which has started yielding forth its fruit in the form of the present body by being present in which one attains the knowledge of Brahman, continue to exert their influence in the form of vāsanā or latent impressions. Madhusūdana explains this in his commentary on the Gītā[9]. In the Jīvanmuktiviveka Vidyāraṇya also states -

> That which generates mental impressions, such as rage and
> the like, rising up all of a sudden and without any thought of the
> past or the future is called vāsanā or latent impression[10].

Vidyāraṇya further refers to two kinds of cinmātravāsanā in the Vāsanākṣayaprakaraṇa of this text. Of these two, one is conceived through the mind and intellect and the other subsisting without them. The first kind of vāsanā is of the form of consciousness alone. This vāsanā being powerful gets destroyed only by samyama[11]. Patañjali in the Vibhūtipāda of the Yogasūtra states -

> trayamekatra samyamaḥ[12].

which means that the group of the three relating to one and the same object is samyama. The three factors of dhāraṇā, dhyāna and samādhi which are the proximate means to cognitive trance have the designation of samyama. Of these, dhāraṇā is concentering one's mind on a specific locus. It is defined as -

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[8] Introductory verse of G.D -18

[9] Ibid ., 19-21

[10] Jīvanmuktiviveka (hereafter JMV) of Vidyāraṇya, p.39. Edited by Pt. S. Subramanya Sastri and T.R. Srinivasa Iyengar. Adyar Library General Series.6, Adyar Library, 1978

[11] Introductory Verse of GD - 21

[12] YS, 3.4

deśabandhaścittasya dhāraṇā[13],

That is, the concentering of the mind in a locus such as the navel circle or the heart or the tip of the nose and the like with a view to attain cognitive trance is known as dhāraṇā. Dhyāna is a stream of mental states relating to the object of dhāraṇā uninterrupted by any other contrary mental states -

tatra pratyaikatānatā dhyānam[14],

Dhyāna itself having lost as it were, its identity and appearing solely in the form of the object that is meditated upon is called samādhi. Madhusūdhana in the introduction of the Gītā states -

samyamo dhāraṇā dhyānam samādhiritiyattrikam
yamādipañcakam pūrvam tadarthamupayujyate[15]

In the aphorism -

trayamantarangampūrvebhyah[16]

Non-injury consists in not inflicting injury either by mind or by speech or by body upon any living being at anytime. Satya means conveying a fact as it is for the benefit of others. Asteya means absence of stealing away the wealth of others either by force or without their knowledge. Brahmacarya means control of generative organs. Aparigraha means non-possession of any means of enjoyment excepting those which are sufficient for the sustenance of one's life[17]. Niyama signifies cultivation of virtues such as Purity (śauca) contentment (santoṣa) penance (tapaḥ), study (svādhyāya) and īśvara praṇidhāna (loving devotion towards God)[18]. Āsana or posture is that which is conducive to steadiness and ease for the body. There are two kinds of āsana-s one relating to the body. The former consists of cloth skin of animals like tiger and deer and kuśa grass. Those relating to the body are padmāsana, svastikāsana etc[19]. Prāṇāyāma the next stage is achieved through the stability of posture. Herein there is

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[13] Ibid 3.1

[14] Ibid 3.2

[15] Introductory verse of GD, 22

[16] YS, 3.7

[17] Yogamaṇiprabhā (YMP) 2.30 C. on Yogasūtra of Patañjali. Edited and Translated by Tmt. Bala Krishnan, Nag Publishers, Delhi, 1996

[18] YS 2.46 Also see YMP on YS 2.46

[19] YS 2.46 Also see YMP on YS 2.46

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the stoppage of the external wind from going in and of the abdominal wind from going out[20].

The next stage of pratyāhāra consists in the absence of contact of sense-organs with their objects and withdrawal of sense-organs inward like the mind[21].

The three stages of āsana, prāṇāyāma and pratyāhāra aim to restrain the mind from the physical side. The last three stages of dhāraṇā, dhyāna and samādhi as mentioned earlier aim at directly controlling it, which is more important for us. They all refer to one and the same object which the contemplative may select. He, who practices the three successive stages of which trance is the last, concenters his mind upon the self. Then, he excludes all thoughts of other things. When this process reaches a particular stage he falls into a trance (samādhi) which is a state of joyous absorption. This is known as Samprajñātasamādhi. Herein the self which is contemplated alone is apprehended and even the fact that it is being apprehended is lost sight of, as the mind is fully absorbed in it. According to the Advaitins, however, in this state there is the awareness of all the three factors involved in knowledge (tri-puṭi) subject, object, and the knowledge (of the latter by the former). When we take Brahman as the object meditated upon it becomes necessarily saguṇa. Here although knowledge refers to a diversified unity, this diversity of subject, object, etc., is known merely as an appearance, as the unity in reality has already been realized. This state is called savikalpasamādhi according to the Advaitins. We may add here that this condition represents the waking experience of a jīvanmukta according to Advaita. It is because though he realizes Brahman, as in the waking state, he may also be aware of diversity.

In the Yogavāsiṣṭha, this idea is putforth by Vaśiṣṭha to Rāma[22]. There is yet another form of samādhi known as asamprajñātasamādhi in the doctrine of yoga which is the final goal of yoga discipline. Herein there is the intuitive knowledge of the physical universe as a whole. The designation given to this direct knowledge by the yogins is technically termed ṛtambharā[23].

According to the Advaitins this state is called nirvikalpasamādhi. In this state all empirical diversity including the subject and object is seen as merging in Brahman. The unity appears as the content of a state of consciousness. This is also called

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[20] YMP on YS - 2.49

[21] YS, 2.54

[22] Laghu Yoga - Vāśiṣṭha (LYV) VI - XV - 62 with the Commentary Candrikā, Nirnaya Sagar Press, Bombay, 1937

[23] YS, 1.48

akhaṇḍākāravṛtti which means a state of consciousness relating to the whole of reality. It is sākṣātkāra or direct intuition. We may note that the vṛtti although is there yet is not experienced as other than the unity of the self. In the Yogavāsiṣtha it is said that the world of duality is manifested like a dream state here[24].

One who has attained this stage is known as jīvanmukta and this state is known as jīvanmukti. The jīvanmukta's life has two phases. One is samādhi or the mystic trance and the other is vyutthāna or the reversion to empirical life. In the stage of samādhi he is one with Brahman. From this stage, on account of prārabdha-karma he would come back to empirical life on his own accord. He is known as Brahmavidvara. There is a more advanced stage of samādhi from which he would come back to empirical life only when prompted by others. Such a one is known as Brahmavidvarīya. There is then, the most advanced stage of samādhi from which he will never come back to empirical life either on his own accord or even when prompted by others. Such a one is known as Brahmavidvariṣtah. He alone is referred to guṇātīta, sthitaprajña, viṣnubhakta, and jīvanmukta[25]. With reference to him vedic injunctions and prohibitions will cease to operate[26]. It is also with reference to him, that the Lord promises in the Gītā that He takes care of him when he is in a state of nirvikalpasamādhi from which he does not revert to empirical life[27].

After any one of the three stages prior to the rise of the direct knowledge of Brahman if the body of the aspirant falls, he is a yogabhraṣṭa. To such a one what happens asks Rāma in the Yogavāsiṣtha and Arjuna in the Gītā[28]. Vasiṣtha replies:

> The sins of the previous transmigratory existence of that yogin whose life passes away from his body during any one of the stages of yoga are removed in proportion to the degree of development he has acquired in that stage[29]. Then he lives in the world of celestial beings and incarnates on this earth again. He is born in the house of some pious, rich, noble-hearted person of blemishless character; or in a family of wise yogins. Having then rapidly passed through the stages of yoga he has already gone over, he reaches the next higher stage[30].

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[24] LYV, VI . XII . 62

[25] Introductory verses of GD

[26] Ibid

[27] BG, 9.22

[28] LYV, VI, XV 53, BG

[29] Ibid 57

[30] Ibid, 59-61.

In the Gītā, Lord Kṛṣṇa replies Arjuna identically[31].

> Our land is known as Bhāratavarṣa. The word - Bhārata - etymologically means - men of spiritual enlightenment - that is those who revel in the ultimate reality, which is self-luminous pure consciousness. And this term is metaphorically applied to our land which abounds in such persons of spiritual enlightenment, like Śaṅkara, Sadāśiva Brahmendra, Bhagavān Ramaṇa, Śeṣādri Svāmi, Sage of Kāñci and others[32].

It is with these great personages in view that the Bhagavad- Gītā declares -

> anekajanmasaṃsiddhaḥ tato yāti parāṃ gatiṃ
> bahūnāṃ janmanāmante jñānavān māṃ prapadyate
> vāsudevassarvamiti sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ

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[31] BG, 6-41 - 43
[32] Ibid, 45 and 7.19.

Depiction of Hanuman in the Ramacaritamanasa

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Hanuman the well-known ape-man-God or 'Monkey King' of the Ramayana, is adored by Hindus, Buddhists and people of other religious persuasions. The Ramayana story was first consolidated by Valmiki in Sanskrit $\pm$ 2500 years ago and also has mention in the Mahabharata, together with Hanuman. Valmiki showed Hanuman as the powerful and devoted servant of Sri Rama the Hero, Prince and to millions, God Incarnate. Hence it is not unusual to find that Hanuman is also accorded reverence in various versions of the Ramayana, including the Adhyatma (spiritual) Ramayana and the Ramacaritamanasa of Goswami Tulasidasa written in the sixteenth century A.C. Goswami Tulasidasa offers salutations to Hanuman at the beginning of the Ramacaritamanasa as chief of the **vanaras** (either apes or forest-dwelling men), son of the wind God and foremost amongst scholars. Whilst Hanuman is especially invoked for his protection and help through another composition of Goswami Tulasidasa, viz. The Hanuman Chalisa, a eulogy of 40 couplets, Goswami Tulasidasa portrays Hanuman as the Saviour, benefactor and devotee to even the divine figures in the Ramacaritamanasa, such as Sri Rama Himself, His consort Sita, as well as His brothers Bharata and Lakshmana. In addition, Hanuman is shown as true friend and associate of other beings who follow the path of righteousness through their devotion to Sri Rama. Since the theme of the conference is Spiritual Dimensions

of Hanuman in Ramayan, greater emphasis will be on this aspect. The fact of Hanuman's being man or monkey does not require much discussion since the Hindu spiritual view is that all created beings qualify for God's grace.

The personality of Indian literature known as Hanuman, variously described as an ape, a man or Monkey Chief, is adored by Hindus, Buddhists and people of other faiths and cultures. It is futile to engage in a discussion about what he was; it is sufficient to know who he was; i.e. a spiritual being closely identified with the Lord and His laws (*dharma*). In the context of Hindu values, The Lord Sri Rama descended on this earth, in the words of Vasistha, with the following attributes and objectives:

Sri Rama is true to His word and maintains the standards of morality set ups by the Vedas; His very advent is a source of blessing for the world (Ramacaritamanasa, Ayodhyakanda 253-2).

Hanuman, often described as messenger and devotee of God (Sri Rama) has the appropriate attributes as stated by Goswami Tulasidasa himself:

Vidyawana guni ati chatur, Rama kaja karibe ko atur
You are well versed in all sciences, you are full of virtues.You are always eager to fulfill the missions of Sri Rama (Hanuman Chalisa Chaupai 7).

The servant of the Divine Master Sri Rama must unavoidably possess spiritual characteristics dominant in his being, regardless of species. Even in our blighted Kaliyuga, souls that are endowed with animal bodies hanker for God. Some months ago it was reported that a dog in a town in Portugal walks 26 kilometres to church every Sunday. Amazing stories of other spiritually oriented dogs are documented by Bhakta Ramsharan Das (2001 : 51 -56) including a dog devoted to Hanuman!

While this information will obviate the need for any further discussion of what Hanuman was, it is necessary to take note of the traditional view that Hanuman was born with a divine purpose from the womb of mother Anjana. Acharya Dwarika Nath Tiwari (1979 : 151) confirms Hanuman's parentage through Anjana and Kesri and adds:

> It is mentioned in the Puranas that Lord Siva Himself incarnated through the womb of Anjana to serve the righteous Lord Rama.

Tulasidasa accepts this and also the boons offered to Hanuman by Pavan Deva that he (Hanuman) would be as illustrious as the sun, fire and gold, knower of the Vedas and revered throughtout the world. Thus the antecedents of Hanuman make him a perfect instrument of the Lord in achieving His goals of Jagamangal (welfare of the world).

There cannot be a Ramayana without the Divine figures, the Mother of the Universe Sita, or Bhagavan Sri Rama. But Hanuman is also a crucial figure. Krishnagopal (1975 : 9) states that "The notion of a Ramakatha without Hanumanji is untenable", but also adds that "A Hanumankatha is meaningful only with Sri Rama in it". The inseparability of Hanuman and Sri Rama is the pivotal point in any discussion on the Spiritual Dimensions of Hanuman, and is recognized in different ways in the various versions of Sri Ramakatha from Valmiki onwards. It is therefore appropriate to take a brief look at the way the various Ramayanas introduce Hanuman at the beginning of the work.

Srimad Valmiki Ramayana shows Narada giving Valmiki a synopsis of Ramayana. Balakanda 1.1.58-59 states that Sri Rama "came into contact with the monkey chief, Hanuman, on the brink of the Pampa Lake" and that "at the intercession of Hanuman alone he further made friends with Sugriva". The introduction to Hanuman can be viewed in a spiritual perspective: Sri Rama bereft of His Shakti (Sita) finds support and guidance through Hanuman, whose advice He accepts. It is also Hanuman who re-established contact between Sri Rama and Sita. It is inconceivable that Sri Rama would have considered friendship

with a being lacking in virtue and spirituality. Valmiki further refers to Hanuman's strength (*Hanuman Bali*) (Balakanda 1.1.72) and his role in informing Bharata of Sri Rama's return in Balakanda 1.1.87. Thus Hanuman is introduced as a being who naturally inclines towards the Divine Sri Rama, serves Him as a devotee with his mental and physical energies, and also acts as His messenger.

Adhyatma Ramayana emphasizes the spiritual facets of existence; according to the translator Munilal "Sri Rama is the very embodiment of spirituality". Adhyatma Ramayana accords Hanuman a very exalted position within this spiritual environment dominated by Sri Rama and Mother Sita. Balakanda canto 1 (Ramahridaya) 25-31 shows that Hanuman is equal to Sri Rama and Sita as a means to Moksha. Sitaji affectionately calling him *Vatsa* explains to Hanuman about Rama's true nature. Thereafter Sri Rama Himself expounds the concepts of Atma, Anatma and Paramatma to Hanuman. Thus from the beginning Adhyatma Ramayana shows Hanuman to be spiritually developed and a worthy recipient of metaphysical knowledge. Such a being qualifies to be Guru to others e.g. Tulasidasa.

It is acknowledged that Goswami Tulasidasa adopted the Adhyatma Ramayana as the basis for his Ramacaritamanasa. He not only empasizes the divinity of Sri Rama who is carrying out a divine mission in human form, but also portrays Hanuman as one who lives only to serve and worship Sri Rama. Tulasidasa's personal life, too, became immersed in supplications to Hanuman as the greatest devotee of the Lord.

Goswami Tulasidasa wrote the Ramacaritamanasa to sing the glories of Sri Rama, in which Hanuman is also included. However, realizing the special potencies of a devotee of Sri Rama, such as Hanuman, he eulogized him in the Hanuman chalisa and even made supplication to Hanuman for relief from pain in Hanuman Bahuk. Goswami Tulasidasa came into direct contact with Hanuman in the guise of a leper, and it was Hanuman who pointed out Sri Rama to him at Chitrakut. Hanuman thus continues to perform the duties prescribed by Sri Rama before His departure to Vaikuntha.

Tulasidasa has accorded Hanuman very high status in the Ramacaritamanasa. In the Invocation sloka 4 he salutes Valmiki and Hanuman, both of whom "haunt the holy forest of Rama's and Sita's perfection". Hanuman is invoked before Sita and Rama. Although invocations to the gods are repeated in the Soratha, Hanuman's name is missing, perhaps because he equates Hanuman with the Guru invoked in the Soratha. The Hanuman Chalisa itself is supposed to be a eulogy to Hanuman, but Tulasidasa describes the Hanuman Chalisa as a eulogy of the meritorious deeds of Rama (*Barnau raghu vimala jasu*) and entreat Hanuman to give him strength and intelligence. Thus Hanuman and Sri Rama seem to be one, Bhagavan and Bhakta being inseparable. This is probably the reason for invoking Hanuman first; as explained by Chaupai 33 (*Tumhare bhajana rama ko bhavai*).

Goswami Tulasidasa wrote Ramacaritamanasa in the Bhakti period and propagated Ramabhakti as the solution to the ills of Kaliyaga (Balakanda 27). His depiction of Hanuman is that of a Bhakta first and foremost. Bhakti is defined as *Premaswarupa* and *Ishvaranurakti* - Hanumanji is characterised by both : He loves Sri Rama with all his being, is dedicated to Him without a second (*ananyabhakta*) because Sri Rama is the merciful, loving God. Hanuman's status as a devotee *par excellence* is unchallenged.

It is also true that Hanuman was born with spirituality already part of his personality, especially if we consider the circumstances of his birth. In the Ramacaritamanasa Tulasidasa introduces Hanuman in Kishkindhakanda as a minister or counsellor (*sachiva)* to Sugriva, and only in Sundarakanda does he accord him the highest salutation after Sri Rama. This perhaps signifies that Hanuman's spiritual characteristics and bhakti were dormant, and became activated after he met Sri Rama, and thereafter offered himself as the servant of Sri Rama. The Herculean tasks performed by Hanuman could only have been executed through the power that derives from Bhakti.

In Kishkindhakanda Hanuman is introduced as the counsellor of Sugriva. Inspite of all his prowess and powers, he could not help Sugriva because he was unaware of his abilities on account of a curse.

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He therefore performed duties for Sugriva, even acquiescing in Sugriva's tactical manoeuvres of changing his appearance into a brahmin to accost Rama and Lakshmana. The proximity to Sri Rama begins to remove the veil of ignorance over Hanuman and he recognizes the Lord as described by Tulasidasa in Kishkindhakanda 1.3.

Now Hanuman recognized the Lord and falling to the ground, clasped His feet. Hanuman's recognition of, and humble submission to the Lord overrides the purpose of Hanuman's mission in accosting the Divine brothers; the drama vis-à-vis Sugriva and the kingdom of Kishkindha continues only for the purpose of discovering Sita. That is Hanuman's spiritual mission. Hanuman's role and status and the glory of bhakti are confirmed by Sri Rama in Kishkindhakanda 2.4:

> "Listen, monkey", he said, "be not depressed at heart. You are twice as dear to me as Lakshmana. Although I am said to be like-minded toward all beings, yet a devotee is particularly dear to me because he looks to none other for salvation".

This emphasizes the majesty and importance of total surrender to the one Lord. The introduction to Hanuman in Kishkindhakanda in Goswami Tulasidasa's Ramacaritamanasa depicts Hanuman as a humble, committed, self-effacing devotee, who depends totally on the grace of the Lord, and surrenders himself totally to Sri Rama:

> On top of it, I swear by Raghubara, I know no devotional song nor any other means (of pleasing you). It is because of his confidence in his master that a servant feels quite carefree as does a child that trusts its mother. (Kishkindhakanda 2.2)

Goswami Tulasidasa probably felt that in order to emphasize Hanuman's devotional surrender for his spiritual growth, it was not apposite to portray him as a scholar learned in rhetoric and diplomacy, and endowed with all the gifts to perform difficult feats. The humble devotion of Hanuman convinced the Lord that Hanuman could be trusted to carryout the mission of finding Sita. The Lord gives His ring to Hanuman; to identify himself to Sita as his messenger. Realizing

that His work was going to be accomplished by him, called him to himself. He touched his head with his Lotus hands and recognizing him to be his devotee, gave him the ring from his finger (Kishkindhakanda 22.5)

Sundarakanda shows Hanuman departing for Lanka after Sampati gives them directions of Sita's whereabouts. In Sundarakanda Hanumanji comes into his full glory as devotee, servant and messenger of God. Goswami Tulasidasa pays homage to Hanuman in the invocation thus:

> I make obeisance to the son of the Wind, the home of immeasurable strength, possessing a body shining like a mountain of gold, a fire to consume the forest of the demon race, the foremost among the wise, storehouse of every excellence, the chief of the monkeys, Raghupati's noble messenger. (Sundarakanda - Sloka 3)

Hanuman is full of confidence after Jambavan reminded him of his powers and the loftiness of the task Hanuman has to perform. Even Tulasidasa accords him the epithet of *Vanaranamadhisham*, relegating Sugriva to the background in the hierarchy of the inhabitants of Kishkindha. Acharya Dwarika Nath Tiwari (1979: 153) says of Hanuman that "He is the Deity Personified (*Saksat Istadeva*) of this yuga". Hanuman has inspired many human attributes such as devotion, heroism, patriotism. A detailed procedure for the worship of Hanuman has also been proposed by Tiwari.

The extraordinary prowess and dedication of Hanuman may be seen in Sundarakanda and Lankakanda. Having become fully aware of his powers, and met his beloved Sri Rama, Hanuman is ready in every sense to work for the Lord like an infallible instrument (*amogha astra*).

Hanuman's superhuman feats begin with the leap across the ocean to Lanka. Refusing to rest until his mission is accomplished, he journeys on until he meets Sursa. Speaking courteously to even those who desired to obstruct him, Hanuman enters Lanka in dimunitive form. He recognizes the abode of Vibhishana as that of a Ramabhakta in the

midst of ungodly Rakshasas in the Golden Lanka. Hanuman obtains information of Sita's whereabouts and proceeds to the Asoka Grove. Hanuman was neither distracted by the fascinating beauty and wealth of Lanka nor was he intimidated by the presence of Rakshasa warriors on alert at every turn.

He approaches Sita's abode in the Asoka grove in a tiny form (like a mosquito-masak) in order to evade detection, and more especially not to alarm Sita by appearing suddenly before her. Hanuman has deep consideration for Sita's predicament of being surrounded by tormentors in the form of Ravana and his Rakshasa retinue, whilst grieving for being separated from Sri Rama.

Hanuman's deep human empathetic qualities and understanding of emotions are beautifully described by Goswami Tulasidasa in this scene.

Firstly Hanuman becomes greatly distressed on beholding Sita "sitting the whole night through, emaciated in body, her hair knotted up in a single braid on her head, and repeating to herself the host of Rama's excellences" (Sundarakanda 7.5).

Hanuman's pain at beholding the Divine Mother in this condition was increased by the arrival of Ravana who tried to intimidate Sita into accepting him. Sita's rebuffs to Ravana and Goswami Tulasidasa's description of Sita's lament and her desperate efforts to end her life constitute the most beautiful poetry of human emotions and unswerving love. Noticing that Sita was now alone after Ravana and his attendants' departure, and unable to contain himself any longer witnessing Mother Sita's suffering, Hanuman gently drops Sri Rama's ring towards Sita. The sight of the ring evoked mixed feelings in Sita - joy, and dejection - who could conquer the invincible Raghunatha ? (*jiti ko sakai ajaya raghurai*) and yet no magic could have fashioned such a divine ring ?

Considering the moment opportune to reveal his presence, Hanuman sings the praises of Sri Rama in order to reassure Mother Sita who finally accepts Hanuman as the Lord's emissary. Mother Sita's

enquiry about Sri Rama and His concerns about her welfare elicit a magnificent response from Hanuman, whose intellectual, devotional and practical qualities come to the fore.

In Sundarakanda 13.4 Hanuman says:

Mother, the Lord and His brother are both well, except that the All Merciful sorrows with your sorrow. Yield not to remorse, mother, Rama loves you twice as much as you love Him.

Hanuman's message from Sri Rama to Sita not only exhibits Tulasidasa's superiority as poet and devotee, observing decorum (*maryada*) whilst delivering the deepest personal feelings between husband and wife, but also exalts Hanuman's status as messenger between God (Rama) and the Jiva (Sita). The whole of Doha / Chaupai 14 of Sundarakanda can be identified as the basis of the name Sundara for this kanda. God in human form expresses human feelings; Hanuman a spiritual being and total celibate delivers these feelings of pangs of separation (*viraha*) in the loftiest manner, pointing the way to a sublime form of conjugal relationships within the four corners of dharma and bhakti.

Hanuman is in a monkey body, refers to him as Son. However, she is not sure that a monkey army could help to rescue her, whereupon Hanuman showed himself in his own proper form, colossal like a mountain of gold, terrible in battle and exceedingly mighty and valorous (Sundarakanda 15.4). Hanuman remembers to tell Sita that all would be possible with Sri Rama's grace. Sita's blessings upon Hanuman (Sundarakanda 16.2) "May you never grow old or die, my son; be a storehouse of virtue, and may Raghunatha be most gracious to you " complete the development of his personality as a divine or spiritual entity. Sita representing, in Tulasidasa's belief, the Divine Mother (*Jaga-janani*), accepts Hanuman as her son and bestows upon him the boon of everlasting youth and life. Being already a confirmed devotee of Sri Rama, Hanuman can only do what is in accordance with Dharma. This explains the adoration he receives from Hindus, as well as the admiration of people of other religio-cultural systems.

midst of ungodly Rakshasas in the Golden Lanka. Hanuman obtains

Hanuman refers to Sita as Mother (*mata, janani* etc.) while Sita, knowing that Goswami Tulasidasa's portrayal of Hanuman as the ultimate devotee of Sri Rama, and his instrument in his mission to maintain Dharma, adds to Hanuman's spiritual and intellectual lustre in the scenes that followed his capture by Meghanada. Hanuman's bold and forthright responses to Ravana's enquiries, and his identification of himself, demonstrated even to Ravana that Hanuman brought him inauspicious tidings. Rambachan (1990: 63) writes:

> Ravana asked a number of insightful and honest questions ..... His second question (Why did you slay my guards? Are you not afraid of losing your life?) is particularly revealing because he realized, by witnessing Hanuman's daring and courage, that he must be motivated by service to some higher being.

According to Rama the highest status, Hanuman answers this second question first, saying that he was the servant of the Supreme Lord, by whose grace alone the whole universe continues, and by an iota of whose powers Ravana achieved his own feats. This answer identifies Rama as the Lord Supreme; and Ravana his creature. Hanuman's humility in describing himself as the mere messenger of Rama contrasts starkly with Ravana's arrogant claims about himself. This is the difference between a true devotee who serves only for the love of God and others who acquire material gifts from Him for self-aggrandizement.

Hanuman's retort to Ravana's proud boasts exhibits "sarcastic humour" in the words of Rambachan (1990 : 66) because Hanuman acknowledged that he knows Ravana's exploits with Bali and Sahasrabahu. Rambachan continues that "These two encounters were, in fact, among the most humiliating episodes in Ravana's life". Hanuman's rebuke to Ravana shows that a devotee does not entertain egotistic thoughts and that anyone in conflict with Sri Rama is in grave error.

Hanuman then makes a lengthy, though futile attempt to convince Ravana to release Sita and embrace the merciful refuge of the Lord. Hanuman, being also a political and diplomatic genius, appeals to the

(non-existent) better instincts of Ravana, to avoid a futile war and obtain Sri Rama's mercy at the same time. As a devotee of the Lord, Hanuman could not have done better. It is indeed remarkable that a learned and spiritually evolved devotee such as Hanuman implores a wrongdoer such as Ravana to become Sri Rama's devotee! Such are the ways of Sri Rama, who dissolves all opposites and conflicts in his love.

The greater significance of this episode of Sundarakanda (Doha 20-21 and Chaupais) is captured remarkably by Rambachan (1990 : 70) thus:

> Hanuman's address to Ravana is perhaps the most important one which he delivers in the Ramayana. It is addressed to Ravana directly, but also to the Ravana-like urges and actions in all of us.

Hanuman's solicitous counsel to Ravana fell on deaf ears because his death was close (*vinasha kale viparita buddhi*). Thus Hanuman's tail was set ablaze, he burnt Lanka, dipped his tail in the ocean and approached Sita to take leave of her and assure her of Sri Rama's arrival to rescue her. Hanuman realized that Sita would already be more optimistic after his exploits. He remembers the Lord's work even in the midst of his own toils and travails, and asks Sita for a token to take to Sri Rama, just as Sri Rama had sent his signet ring. Hanuman also shows his humility by asking for this token; although Sri Rama would have completely believed Hanuman's report, Hanuman does not presume this.

Sita's appeal to Rama to rescue her without delay, in Sundarakanda 26.3, "If my Lord does not come here within a month, He will not find me alive", filled Hanuman with anxiety and sense of urgency. He reassures Sita that she will be soon rescued, and prepares to depart. Sita thereupon says to Hanuman (Sundarakanda 26.4) "You too, my son, now speak of going, and it was only the sight of you that brought relief to my heavy heart". These words indicate the close relationship of mother-child as well as protector that developed between Hanuman and Sita. Mother Sita found Hanuman worthy of being the bearer of her innermost feelings to her husband Lord Sri Rama. In this context

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Hanuman can be seen as being one with the Divine Pair Sri Rama and Sita.

Hanuman's report to Rama about Sita's condition and message show Goswami Tulasidasa and Hanuman as the poets *par excellence*. Hanuman, a celibate, could intellectually understand and convey human emotion and feel compassion for the desolate. Although Sita's direct words to Hanuman were brief, perhaps out of modesty, Hanuman gave an elaborate account of her suffering, in order to move the Lord to swift action.

In response the following very touching words of gratitude were addressed to Hanuman by Sri Rama:

> Listen, Hanuman...no god or man or sage that has ever been born into this world has been such a benefactor to me as you. What service can I do you in return? When I think of it, I am unable to look you in the face (Sundarakanda 31.3).

To the eternal glory of Hanuman, and the love and trust Sri Rama and Sita placed in him, Hanuman only asks for unceasing devotion (*anapayani bhakti*), which is the source of the highest bliss (Sundarakanda 33.1).

Hanuman's diplomatic and political prowess has been seen in his journey to Lanka. His compassion and approval of those who surrender to the Lord are evidenced when Vibhishana abandons Lanka and seeks refuge in Sri Rama. Whereas Sugriva was in favour of keeping Vibhishana as prisoner,

Sri Rama countered that while Sugriva's view is wise, His own is to dispel all fears from the minds of those who seek refuge in Him (Sundarakanda 42.4). Hanuman was in agreement with the Lord's righteous and compassionate view, and "rejoiced to hear the Lord's reply and said to himself, "How like a loving father the Blessed Lord loves all who flee to Him" (Sundarakanda 42.5).

Hanuman as a heroic devotee and messenger is matched by the warrior and military strategist Hanuman in the battlefield of Lanka. When Sri Rama's army was repulsed by Ravana after an initial advance, Hanuman defended the west gate where Meghanada led the assault. Unlike Ravana's soldiers who fought out of fear of Ravana, Hanuman fought for his beloved Lord and Master Sri Rama, without fear or selfish motive. Again and again Hanuman saves the army of Sri Rama from the onslaughts of Ravana. Perhaps Hanuman's most meritorious service to Sri Rama was saving the life of Lakshmana when he fetched the Sanjivani herb. Rambachan (1991 : 63), examining Sri Rama's lamentations at Lakshmana's coma (Lankakanda 60 b : 5) describes Hanuman's role thus:

> Hanuman's role in the recovery of Lakshmana was critical for the outcome of the entire battle. It is quite possible that Rama would have lost the will and interest to engage Ravana in war with the loss of Lakshmana.

Some of the more significant episodes in which Hanuman's attributes of devotee, messenger, warrior and servant of Sri Rama come to the fore have been examined in this paper. Hanuman became Sri Rama's devotee / servant from the first moment that he beheld Him in Kishkindha. Whilst Hanuman encouraged the alliance between Rama and Sugriva out of loyalty and patriotism to Sugriva and Kishkindha respectively, it would appear that his bhakta heart leaned in favour of the pact so that Sugriva would be bound to help in the search for Sita. The fact that Sugriva became immersed in royal pleasures after being reinstated, and Hanuman had to politely remind him of his duty towards Rama, confirm Hanuman's constant mindfulness of Sri Rama and His needs. Hanuman undertook the service of Sri Rama voluntarily, since it was Sugriva who benefited from the pact: nevertheless Hanuman performed his duties with greater dedication than any paid or conscripted soldier would have done. This is because of his love for Sri Rama, and the divine qualities of righteousness and compassion Sri Rama embodied. Finding Sita, guiding the war and saving Lakshmana's life were but small acts of service for Hanuman, which gave him

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immense joy, but Sri Rama acknowledged them with the greatest gratitude and praise. To the extent that a devotee could serve the Lord, Hanuman did: to the extent that a devotee could save the Lord (i.e. from sorrow etc.). Hanuman did that for Sri Rama instinctively or spontaneously.

Goswami Tulasidasa extols Hanuman's services to Sri Rama, and the position he acquired in the divine court of Sri Rama, in the Hanuman Chalisa which is after all, eulogy to the Lord Himself. Tulasidasa has also shown Hanuman rescuing Sita from not only sorrow but possible suicide had he not found her and reassured her (Sundarakanda 26 : 3/4). This was also service to Sri Rama.

Goswami Tulasidasa portrays Hanuman as a boat rescuing one from drowning. In Sundarakanda 13.1 Sita tells Hanuman:

> To me, who was sinking in the ocean of bereavement, Hanuman, dear friend, you have come like a ship to save me.

Hanuman rescues Sita for a second time from fear and depression when the war is over. Hanuman was sent by Sri Rama to give Sita the news of victory and enquire about her welfare. Hanuman refused any reward from Sita, who was overjoyed at seeing Hanuman and hearing his good tidings. His only reward is the joy of service to Sri Rama. He says in the chhand after Doha/chaupai 106 in Lankakanda

> Listen Mother, Hanuman replied, assuredly today I have attained the sovereignty of the whole world when I behold the unblemished Rama and his brother triumphant over the ranks of the enemy.

Rambachan (1991 : 67) comments that

> Hanuman had, once again, brought Sita life-saving news and Sita's heart was full of gratitude. She was accustomed to expressing her gratitude in some tangible way.

Hanuman had already received the desired gift of eternal devotion, nothing else remained to aspire to.

The imagery of a boat portraying Hanuman as a saviour is also used in another context. If Hanuman were twice as dear to Rama as Lakshmana, he was dear to Sri Rama equally as Bharata. Rama's lament over the fallen Lakshmana indicates just how dear Lakshmana was to him; hence to be any dearer to him than Lakshmana elevates the love into the transcendental realm. Having met Bharata on his way to Lanka with the Sanjivani, Hanuman had already become acquainted with his devotion to Sri Rama. Indeed, after an initial cynicism towards Bharata when he suggested that he "mount on my arrow, mountain and all, and I will send you straight into the presence of the Lord of Grace (Lankakanda 59.3), Hanuman acknowledged Bharata's strength and devotion to Sri Rama.

Hence when Sri Rama sent Hanuman to Ayodhya to inform Bharata of his return, Hanuman undertook this task with great joy. He arrived at Bharata's abode and found his mind "drowning in the sea of separation from Rama. The son of the Wind god came disguised as a Brahmana, like a boat come to his rescue (Uttarakanda 1.a).

Hanuman, gifted with all kinds of powers, flew to find Sita and the Sanjivani. The imagery of flying, as well as of a boat, in the service of the Lord, reassures the devotee of the Lord that His servant Hanuman would rescue him from the ocean or the heavens if he sincerely calls upon the Lord for succour.

Hanuman was granted the boon of eternal youth and life by Mother Sita. He was also inseparable from Sri Rama in devotion and service. Wherever Sri Rama is worshipped, so is Hanuman. The identity between Hanuman and Sri Rama in the Advaita tradition is indicated in this dialogue between Sri Rama and Hanuman. When asked by Sri Rama what attitude Hanuman cherished towards Him, Hanuman replied:

O Rama, when I think I am the body, You are the master and I am the servant; when I think I am the Jivatma, You

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are the whole and I am the part; but when I have the knowledge of reality (*atman*) , I see that you are I and I am you.

Goswami Tualsidasa extracted every drop of devotion to Lord Rama from his heart to write the Ramacaritamanasa. Tulasidasa's Hanuman spends every breath in the remembrance and service of Sri Rama. In Valmiki Ramayana Sri Rama instructs Hanuman to remain in the world promoting his ideals. Hanuman assured the Lord that "as long as the divine story of Sri Rama is remembered, I shall carry out your order". Hence Hanumanji is *Chiranjivi* - eternally living in the world to help and guide humanity, because the Ramakatha itself is eternal.

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The Concept of Sacrifice in the Bhagvad Gita

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Sacrifice was one of the main pillars of the Vedic Religious System, and descriptions of sacrificial rites constitute substantial parts of the sacred text. A vedic injunction makes sacrifice an essential condition for salvation : svarga-kamo yajeta, 'the heaven desiring must sacrifice'. Sacrificial ceremonies were an integral part of the Vedic way of life and the source of the earliest hymns, the earliest poetry and probably the earliest drama and dance.

The oxford dictionary gives these meanings of sacrifice: giving up of one thing for the sake of another, surrender of a possession, offering to a deity, slaughter of animal or person. As far as slaughtering of animals is concerned nowhere in the scriptures and other authentic books it is written that animals should be killed and offered as a sacrifice in the sacred fire, called Homa. Often a layman questions "What about Ashwamedha?" The Shathapatha Brahmana (XIII,1,6,3) says on the subject, "A king governs his people justly and righteously. This is called Ashwamedha." "A learned man gives free gift of knowledge to the people." This is also called Ashwamedha. "The burning of clarified butter and odoriferous and nutritious substances in the fire in order to purify the air is also called Ashwamedha."

In daily life we talk about the sacrifices we make. Parents talk about making many sacrifices for their children's happiness. This means we give up things or perform action for the benefit of others i.e. We give up our selfish motives 'svartha ' for for the good of others 'parmartha'. In our homes one must be 'upyogi' i.e. we have a duty to give our best to the family. Secondly, one must be 'sahayogi' i.e. have to perform actions for benefit of society and lastly, one must become 'udyogi' i.e. become industrious for the benefit of

the country. Let us consider the sacrifices made by the people for their country. Freedom fighters like Bhagatsingh, Laxmibai of Jhansi and Nelson Mandela totally surrendered themselves for the benefit of others so that the people of their country may enjoy a free and better life. This type of action is known as balidaan, a 'nishkama karma' i.e. action performed without expecting any reward for oneself. Action performed for some gain is known as 'sakama karma'.

According to Bhagvad Gita 'Sacrifice is the fulfilling of the law'. "This law of selfless action of Yoga I taught in ages gone before us," says Shri Krishna to Arjuna. Action for the sacrifice means acts of selfless service dedicated to God. Shri Krishna explains yajna as sacrifice:

> yajnarthat karmano 'nyatra loko' yam karmabandhanah
> tadartham karma kaunteya muktasangah samacara (Gita 3.9)

The world is bound by actions other than those performed as yajna. Do thou. therefore, perform action as sacrifice, free from attachment.

Let us reflect for a moment about attachment and non-attachment i.e. according to Gandhiji, aasakta and anasakta yog. Sacrifice and attachment, even in thought, cannot go together. The popular Gujarati bhakta kavi Nishkulanand says 'tyaga na take vairaga vina' i.e. one's sacrifice of anything will not be permanent without non-attachment. Many of us take a vow or vrata during the period of fasting. Say we tyaga or give up something, which we like e.g. laddo or sweatmeat for that period. According to Nishkulanand that tyaga is temporary since you still have a desire in your mind that after the fasting period is over I will be able to eat it. The desire is still inherent in you. The true sacrifice would be when you develop a feeling of non-attachment i.e. vairaga to it.

The term yajna is used to denote Vedic ritualism but here the meaning is extended to apply for all selfless co-operative activities.

The yajna, sacred fire, holds a place of great importance in all the sixteen sanskaras or sacraments and at other religious performances as well. The yajna literally means worship; hence sacrifice but it is not a worship of the visible fire. Agni is one of the important names of god. It means all

pervading, adorable and effulgent. Fire is an indicator of radiance and heat. We pray to God and sing verses in praise of him. These verses describe the attributes and functions of God. The verses urge us to perform good deeds. One of the benefits from the yajna is that it purifies the air and the surrounding atmosphere. The yajna also has an effect on the seasons. It helps to regulate rainfall and temperature. The possibility of the yajna helping in the causation of rain is also given in the Gita (3.14) which states: 'from food springs all life, from rain is born food, from sacrifice comes rain, and sacrifice is the result of action.' This is physical yajna.

The yajna takes the spiritual form when it disciplines the mind and the intellect and kindles the inner spiritual light of the atma and it burns up evil desires such as anger, greed, jealousy, pride etc. with the fire of knowledge. Yajna means an act directed to the welfare of others done without receiving or desiring a return for it. Act must be taken in its widest sense, and includes thought and word, and others embrace not only humanity but also all life. Therefore, it will not be a yajna to sacrifice lower animals even with a view to the service of humanity.

The Gita, in the third chapter declares that yajna came with creation itself. This body therefore has been given us, only in order that we may serve all creation itself. And therefore, says the Gita, he who eats without offering 'yajna' eats stolen food. 'Earn thy bread by the sweat of thy brow', says the Bible. Sacrifices may be of many kinds, one of them may be bread-labour. If all laboured for their bread there would be enough food and then there would be no cry of over-population, no disease and no misery. Such labour will be the highest form of sacrifice.

In the fifteenth shloka of Chapter Three it is explained that "Know thou that action comes from brahma and brahma comes from the Imperishable. Therefore the all-pervading brahma ever rests in sacrifice. The idea is that sacrifice is both the cause and consequence of creation. Tolstoy said the same thing in simpler words that work produces food, food produces work.

The main principle of Karma Yoga of the Gita is that in the carrying out of our work, there must be no motive of reward. The desire for reward must not accompany the action. The thought of reward or gain must be completely absent in the action and it must be done dutifully with love. Every Hindu

should perform the panchmahayajna. These are - 1 brahmayajna: prayer, meditation, and study of the scriptures; 2 devayajna: performance of agnihotra; 3 pitriyajna: service to mother father and the elders: 4 atithiyajna: hospitality and service to the learned ones and visitors: 5 bhootyajna: service to living beings.

All these sacrifices must be performed with a selfless attitude, in a spirit of dedication and welfare of all. If one is ready only to take and not to give, he is verily a thief as mentioned in the Gita (3.12). If we look at Prakriti - nature, can we not see the spirit of sacrifice. The Sun gives light, the Earth yields our needs, and the Fire gives heat and so on. Between the plant and the humans there is a reciprocal service. What man gives out, including his outgoing breath full of carbon dioxide, is food for the plants. Whatever the plants give, including the oxygen that they breathe out, is food for man. Hindi's famous poet Rahim expresses these sentiments clearly. He says:

> No tree eats its own fruits, neither does the lake drink its own water.
> Rahim says that a noble person accumulates wealth for the benefit of others.

He who rejoices in the pleasures of the senses, refusing to serve others, is like the tree eating its own fruits! It is sin. He destroys himself ultimately. He transgresses the Law of God. So long as you yourself are dependent on others, serve others also. Man wants to enjoy all the comforts at the expense of the others. He would cheat others dependent on him but would moan if he himself were let down. The golden rule is "Do unto others as you wish them to do unto you ".

In addition one must not forget the cardinal truth that service to mankind is service to God. Saint Narsinh Mehta asks, "Who is the true devotee of God?" and says,

> He is the true devotee of Vishnu, who understands the pain of others,
> He serves others and even then he does not let pride enter his mind.

Shri Krishna in discussing sacrificial action states that any work performed as a sacrifice does not bind the doer with the fruit of such action. All other actions bind us to the Laws of Action, karma. Therefore without any desire

for the fruit, perform deeds without selfish interest. Whatever action a man does he will reap its reward. Desires arise from good or bad actions and because of such desires Man becomes entangled in actions to satisfy desires. What is the escape from this attachment? Krishna says that actions performed as sacrifice do not bind the performer to their fruit. In our prayer when we perform the physical yajna it is said idam agnaye idam na mama that is, all this is for the Lord, it is not for me.

In Chapter 4 of the Gita, Krishna discusses the different types of sacrifices. In shloka 24, it is said that 'the sage who is established in wisdom regards his whole life itself as a sacrifice.' Nothing can be outside the Infinite God. Nothing can be apart from His Being. This creation too, is within Him. All the activity that is experienced takes place within Him.

Some yogis perform sacrifice to the Gods. Others offer as sacrifice yajna in fire of brahman. In the Gita, brahman often refers to the Veda. Through these Vedic sacrifices the performer is encouraged to give up his desires in order that his action may lead him to the Supreme. When these sacrifices purify one's heart the Light of the Self reveals itself. (Gita IV.25)

Then again some offer as sacrifice the sense of hearing and the other senses in the fires of restraint; others sacrifice sound and the other objects of sense in fire of the senses. The restraint of senses - hearing and others - is one thing and directing them only to legitimate objects, e.g. listening to hymns in the praise of the Lord, is another. (Gita IV.26)

Others sacrifice all the activities of the senses and of the vital energy in the yogic fire of self control kindled by knowledge. (Gita IV.27) that is to say they lose themselves in the contemplation of the Supreme. Once the oblation is offered into the fire it becomes one with the fire which alone shines. Thus when the senses and the vital force are offered into the fire of atma-amyama, the Self alone shines, after absorbing the oblations into itself.

Others again offer wealth, austerity and yoga as sacrifice, while the ascetics of self-restraint and rigid vows offer study of scriptures and knowledge as sacrifice. (Gita IV.28)

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Others absorbed in the practices of the control of the vital energy sacrifice the outward in the inward and the inward in the outward, or check the flow of both the inward and the outward vital airs. (Gita IV.29) The reference here is to the three kinds of practices of the control of vital energy - puraka, rechaka and kumbhaka.

Actions in all the sacrifices mean mental, physical and spiritual action. No sacrifice is possible without this triple action and no salvation without sacrifice. To know this and to put the knowledge into practice is to know the secret of sacrifice. Unless the mind and the body and the soul are made to work in unison, they cannot be adequately used for the service of mankind.

Sacrifice through Knowledge is superior to sacrifice performed with material things. For all actions without exception culminate in Knowledge.(Gita IV.33)

Of the sacrifices described here the wisdom-sacrifice is the best. All other gifts and all other activities are transitory in their effect. Knowledge liberates the soul from bondage to samsara or the ever-revolving wheel of birth and death. Whereas actions are inevitable, knowledge is the goal. The inevitable actions should be performed in the spirit of sacrifice; but knowledge should be acquired and imparted at every turn. For that is the goal of actions themselves. Unless every act is informed with knowledge, it lacks perfection.

Further in explaining the importance of knowledge Krishna says, " O Arjuna, just as the fire burns up all wood, in like manner the fire of knowledge reduces all actions to nought. (Gita IV.37)

Even working with the spirit of non-attachment man must aim for success. In order to achieve this he must have the essential knowledge for the execution of his duty. It is like a man who takes on a job of repairing cars without knowing its mechanism, will work many hours and even then there will arise a doubt as to whether he will successfully complete the work or not.

In discussing the gunas in Chapter 16, Sri Krishna explains how the gunas can also influence sacrifice. Sholka 11 shows that sacrifice which is offered

by men without desire for reward, as enjoined by the scripture, with a firm faith that to do so is a duty, is sattvic or pure. Next, the sacrifice which is offered, seeking a reward and for ostentation, know that to be a rajasic yajna. Then that sacrifice is tamasic which is contrary to the ordinances of the scriptures, in which no food id distributed, which is devoid of mantras and gifts, and which is devoid of faith. This covers all forms of rituals and worships and could be extended to embrace all facets of life itself.

In his final discourse, Shri Krishna, after having expounded the path of salvation, say, "O Arjuna, seek refuge in the Lord with full devotion and surrender yourself unto Him. You will find eternal peace and moksha (bliss) by His grace. Go unto Him, realize Him, and you shall be freed of all sorrows. (Gita 18.62)

When the devotee surrenders himself to the Lord whatever action he performs he does so for himself but in the thought that he carries out God's wish. He must not become inactive but must perform his actions with the attitude of yajna (sacrifice), without any selfish motives but with love and dedication.

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The Rasa Theory and Literary Appreciation

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The Rasa Theory (poetic sentiment) deals with
the response of the human heart to poetry. Rasa
results from a state of emotion in the poet and
recreates the same state of emotion in the
receptive audience or spectator.   In Indian
aesthetics the use of the concept Rasa began in
the post-Vedic period and continued well into
the 20th century. It was formalized as a doctrine
by Bharata in his Natyasastra which became a
handbook for poets and dramatists. It became
the vehicle for the search for the essence or soul
of poetry through the dictum *Vakyam
Rasatmakam Kavyam* (an utterance bearing rasa
is poetry). Whilst this paper attempts to outline
the process of evocation or arising of Rasa it
will also demonstrate the need to adhere to the
rules governing Rasa, especially in Sanskrit
literature, in an era when the concept of Rasa is
being marginalized.

The event that occurred over three three thousand years ago on the banks
of the Tamasa River, in Uttar Pradesh, India, exerted an influence on
Indian thought and culture which persists today: This event led to the
composition of the Ramayana by Valmiki, who obtained the following
boon from Brahma for his epic creation:

> *Yavat sthasyanti girayah saritasca mahitale*
> *Tavad ramayana katha lokesu pracarisyati*

> As long as the mountains stand and the rivers flow
> upon this earth, so long shall the Ramayana be
> recited in the world (Valmiki Ramayana,
> Balakanda 2: 36-37).

There is no doubt that the above mentioned prophesy has held good until
the present era. However, we shall avoid the esoteric realms and return to
the event which was so profoundly influential on Hindu life and Indian
literature.

Sage Valmiki who lived in a forest hermitage on the banks of the Tamasa
went out in search of twigs for the sacrificial fire. He came upon a pair of
Cranes (*Kraunca*) engaged in dalliance. Just then, a fowler shot the male
crane, upon which the female began to grieve in the most heart-rending
manner. This lamenting of the bereft mate evoked a feeling of deep
compassion and pathos in the heart of the holy sage, who recognized love
even in animals as a value to be cherished. Further, feeling that the act of
the fowler was indeed sinful, especially since the birds were sporting as a
pair, Valmiki was moved to curse the fowler for his cruel deed. These
words of imprecation emerged from the sage's lips in metrical form:

> May you not have peace of mind for endless years,
> O fowler, since you killed one of the pair of
> cranes, infatuated with passion (Valmiki
> Ramayana, Balakanda 2:15).

Upon realizing that his curse had been expressed in metrical form,
Valmiki pondered:

> *Sokarttasya pravritto me sloko bhavatu nanyatha*
> (Valmiki Ramayana, Balakanda 2, 18).

> That which proceeded from me who was
> overpowered by pathos shall be nothing but poetry
> or rhythmic expression (Sankaran's translation
> 1973:6).

Valmiki was overpowered by pathos - he was in Rasa-Dasha (a state of
emotion, specifically in the state of Karuna-Rasa, or pathos). The sorrow,
soka, led to a state of emotion which spontaneously gave rise to *sloka* or
verse. From the foregoing it may be deduced that poetry is inspired by

Rasa, and that Rasa is not a product of poetry; it is merely evoked by it under certain circumstances. It is also noteworthy that ethics and poetics combine to create the poetic utterance in this scene.

Poetry is a thing of, and for, the responsive human heart; it results from a state of emotion (Rasa) in the poet, and the words of poetry serve to recreate that same state of emotion in the receptive audience. Language is the vehicle for the conveyance of these emotions; and just as there are rules of language for the conveyance of facts in the empirical world, there are rules of poetic language and expression for the conveyance of sentiments in the mental-emotional world.

Valmiki was a hermit dwelling in the forest following a value system different from ordinary people. Prayer and compassion are two characteristics of holy sages. Valmiki was disturbed at the killing of the crane while it was sporting with its mate; his natural compassion was aroused and intensified by the realization of the hunter's sinfulness. To the fowler his act was quite normal, because he was engaged in an occupation for gain without regard for the pain he may inflict on living beings.

Valmiki's world differed from the fowler's, on account of their different preoccupations with life: Valmiki's humanity and compassion made him a poet from a hermit, whereas the fowler remained a hunter. Moreover, Valmiki's contribution to Indian culture may be gauged from the following statement of Madan Lal Gupta (2002:19)

> .....the killing of the crane produced pain which became everyone's pain; the Ramayana which Valmiki wrote in response to that pain became the chief source of Rama Stories....It becomes evident that literature has exercised a leading role in the rise of culture.

The ethical-cultural training and environment of the Sanskrit poets, together with their cultural heritage determined the nature and quality of their poetry. In order to arrive at a full appreciation of their works it is imperative to study the background of the poet and his period in addition to the history of Indian Culture and the Sanskrit language. Valmiki's experience with the fowler and the cranes is important for the Indian-held

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view that he was the father of poetry and secondly because in his very utterance

> *Sokarttasya pravritto me sloko bhavatu nanyatha*
> can be seen the need and scope for scientific interpretation.

Valmiki was a sage who lived a materially plain but spiritually lofty existence. The sublimity of the Ramayana is not merely to be ascribed to the inherent nobility or status of the characters therein: the personality of Valmiki as the embodiment of the highest knowledge and virtue had a definite relationship to it.

The Sanskrit poets were very much governed by their environment; hence the necessity of understanding the milieu of the poet. A mere knowledge of Sanskrit would not do: or else we shall have translations that would not be meaningful in their contexts. The acclaimed Sanskrit scholar AB Keith stated in his "Sanskrit Drama" that the more serious questions of life did not engage the mind of Kalidasa, the great Sanskrit poet and dramatist. Hazariprasad Dwivedi responds to this view of Keith in his Nibandha Sangraha (1966:168) :

> "It was necessary to place the question in the context of the vast ethical-moral background. If, in the context of this background, Kalidasa and Valmiki do appear insignificant, then they will certainly be regarded as such. But the matter is not so. In this context the writer has committed the error of looking at the problem through the spectacles of his own culture".

The foregoing may serve to set the tone of the remainder of my submissions. An attempt will be made to outline the development of the Rasa Siddhanta and its importance in the interpretation of Sanskrit literature.

Sankaran 1973:3 traces the use of the term Rasa from the Vedic Period. Rasa in this context signifies sentiment or aesthetic pleasure; the thrill accompanied by joy or elation experienced by an audience witnessing a masterly enactment of Drama. He states:

"Although during the Vedic period there was no clear forecast of the theory of Rasa (Rasa Siddhanta), yet it should not lead us into believing that the Vedic poets had not developed any sense of appreciation and love for poetry ....the rich poetry, the wealthy illustration, the high imagination and the elevated thought of the Rigveda and the Upanishads fully testify to the possibility of the exhibition of the literary sense by the Vedic Bards."

Nagendra 1969:3 agrees that the concept Rasa as we know it did not have its roots in the Vedic period; and that those meanings of the word Rasa which apply today outside the field of aesthetics or poetics obtained also in the Vedic period: e.g. juice of fruit, sap of plants, the substance of grains and the juice of the Soma plant.

Valmiki's utterance contains in embryo form the theory of Rasa which was developed later. It is significant that Karuna (pathos) which caused the utterance is one of the Nine Rasas or sentiments accepted today, viz. Sringara, Hasya, Karuna, Raudra, Vira, Bhayanaka, Bibhatsa, Adbhuta and Shanta. Being the prevailing Rasa of the Ramayana, Karuna is often given primacy of place amongst the Rasas.

The doctrine of Rasa emerged in concrete form in the Natyashastra of Bharata. This development of the Rasa-Siddhanta must be seen in the context of the search for the essence or soul of poetry - It is accepted today that Rasa is the soul of poetry; and the concepts of Alankara (figurative language), Dhwani (implied sense of word), Riti (Diction), Vakrokti (innuendo) and Auchitya (decorum) take subsidiary place.

There is no agreement amongst scholars as to the exact date of Bharata or his Natyashastra; but it is common cause that he existed before the period of Kalidasa, one of the world's greatest poets, and supporter of the Rasa-Doctrine together with Bana, Magha and Bhavabhuti.

Before stating Bharata's doctrine it may be apposite to observe what the Rasa theory attempts to achieve: According to Sankaran (1973:15)

"the theory of Rasa is an earnest attempt to indicate the character of the emotional effect of the

> drama; or it successfully explains the rise and
> nature of the aesthetic pleasure that a responsive
> (Sahridaya) audience experiences while witnessing
> the skillful enactment of a play".

Words seem inadequate to convey the Indian's conception of this
aesthetic pleasure: it may be compared to Kabir's statement about the
Divine Experience - a mute cannot tell, but can only enjoy the taste of
sweets; so the devotee can only understand the bliss of communion with
God but cannot explain it. The aesthetic experience is transcendental and
akin   to   the   Divine   experience-   *brahmasvadasahodara,*
brahmanandasahodara.

The source of the Rasa Siddhanta is the following Sutra or Aphorism of
Bharata's Natyashastra (Nagendra 1969:79)

> *Vibhavanubhava vyabhicarisamyogata*
> *rasanispattih*
> The sentiment or aesthetic pleasure (Rasa) arises
> (nispatti) as a result of the harmonious blending
> (Samyogata)of the Vibhavas (external factors),
> Anubhavas (the actor's reaction) and the
> Vyabhicaribhava (transitory emotions).

These three elements are essential for the arising and development of
Rasa - the aesthetic pleasure.

Nagendra (1969:10) is of the view that the definition of Rasa in this sutra
is so comprehensive and complete that the conclusion is inescapable that
there existed a long tradition of intellectual enquiry on the subject. This
also shows the beauty of the aphorisms of Sanskrit - a few words could
convey a vast canvas of ideas.

How does Rasa arise - or how does this blending of three elements give
rise to the aesthetic pleasure ? It must be noted that to the Sanskrit poet
Kavya meant poetry or drama, Sravya Kavya -aural poetry and Drishya
Kavya - visual poetry or drama. Both could be applicable, although
drama is regarded as the medium *par excellence* for the rising of Rasa.

Bharata's aphorism does not include one fundamental component of the
process of Rasa Nishpatti - he mentions the Vyabhicaribhavas, the

transitory emotions, but not the dominant or permanent emotions found in man; the sthayibhava, which determines the type of Rasa in the aesthetic experience.

The nine Rasas are evoked by corresponding sthayibhavas or dominant emotional moods. Sringara Rasa, involving love and passion is evoked by the sthayibhava *Rati* (love); Hasya Rasa has *Hasa* (humour) as its sthayibhava, Karuna Rasa has *Soka* (pathos), Raudra Rasa has *Krodha* (wrath); Vira Rasa has *Utsaha* (heroism), Bhayanaka Rasa has *Bhaya* (terror), Bibhatsa Rasa has *Jugupsa* (disgust), Adbhuta Rasa has *Vismaya* (wonder or mystification) and Shanta Rasa has *Nirveda* (detachment). These sthayibhavas encompass the main human moods.

During the aesthetic experience, one of the above dominant emotional moods is evoked; and the Rasa is characterized by it. Now let us examine the process of Rasa Nishpatti or the arising of the Rasa.

The Vibhavas (external factors) are the causative agents of the emotions such as pathos or love e.g. the season of spring, a beautiful garden, moonlight - will evoke thoughts of love.

Anubhavas are the visible effects of the emotions in the actor. Anubhavas include raised or flickering eyebrows, sidelong glances, gesticulation, suffusion of the cheeks, etc.

The Vyabhicaribhavas are temporary or transitory moods that tend only to develop the dominant mood (sthayibhava); be it love, anger or pathos. The harmonious blending of the appropriate vibhavas, anubhavas and vyabhicaribhavas evokes in the audience an emotional climax accompanied by a sense of joy. This is the aesthetic pleasure or Rasa.

Kalidasa's acclaimed drama "Shakuntala" may be used to illustrate the process of Rasa-Nishpatti in the audience. It is assumed that skilled actors and actresses will enact the roles. Dushyanta and Shakuntala first meet in the park-like surroundings of Kanva's hermitage. This idyllic environment provides the vibhava. Dushyanta and Shakuntala are captivated by each other's beauty and look longingly at each other. At parting Shakuntala steals a last glance at Dushyanta. These glances constitute the anubhava. During the period of separation the pair pine for each other. This pining or viraha makes up the vyabhicaribhava, which is an evanescent emotion in the sentiment of love, but which works towards

heightening and preserving it. The ultimate union of Dushyanta and Shakuntala helps to kindle the deep-seated instinctive sentiment of love (Sringara Rasa) in the hearts of the audience. This develops to a climax when, through total emotional sympathy with the situation on the stage, the audience, oblivious of the differences of persons, time and place, experiences the condition of blissful consciousness or Rasa.

The art of poetry employs the limited medium of language to express unlimited possibilities. Through poetry the poet attempts to transfer his emotional experiences into the minds of the audience. The appreciator or audience is expected to have a "sound aesthetic instinct" (Tarapada Chakravarty 1971:1). Sanskrit rhetoricians called this kind of appreciative audience *sahridaya*, the instructed appreciator who is in a position to share the feelings of the poet, as represented by the actors and through the poet's feelings, the feelings of humanity at large. The Indian scholars and rhetoricians gave high value to the development of the aesthetic instinct and poetic sensibility - this line of Bhatrhari bears testimony to this:

> *Sahitya sangita kala vihinah saksatpasuh puchha*
> *vishana hinah*
> He who is devoid of leanings towards poetry,
> music and art is comparable to an animal, but
> without tail and horns.

The foregoing makes it abundantly clear that one has to study not only the poet's milieu, but also the aesthetic theories developed within a culture to be able to appreciate literature or art fully. The Rasa Siddhanta is a product of Sanskrit literary and philosophical thought; and the interpretation of the theories and philosophies is inextricably bound with the language as well.

Valmiki's utterance in a moment of pathos

> *Sokarttasya pravritto me sloko bhavatu nanyatha*
> (Valmiki Ramayana, Balakanda 2, 18).
> That which proceeded from me who was
> overpowered by pathos shall be nothing but poetry
> or rhythmic expression.

causes translators difficulty. This translation is by Sankaran. The controversy is over the word *Nanyatha* which literally means "Not Otherwise".

Sankaran renders *Nanyatha* as "Nothing But". The Gita Press Valmiki Ramayana English Translation (1969) renders this as "And Not Otherwise". Nagendra (op.cit.) remarks that Sankaran's translation as "Nothing But" is contrary to the context. Valmiki is emphasising that his utterance, made in a grief-stricken mood, emerged set in four metrical feet, eight letters in each foot and possessing the rhythm of a song that can be sung to a lute. Thus Valmiki meant that this MUST BE poetry. Thus Nagendra interprets *Nanyatha* composed of *na – anyatha* as not false: i.e. the fact that it is poetry is the truth. A simpler explanation would be to say that it must be poetry and not non-poetry. If one does not adopt the view, then one can err on the side of zeal and interpret Valmiki's statement as implying that no other type of expression, uttered under any other condition or circumstance, can be poetry. This would be also contrary to the context, and out of keeping with the mood of pathos. After Valmiki's experience and subsequent utterance, the realization dawned upon him that he had suddenly acquired the poetic gift; and he was carried on the wave of "pathos-filled ecstasy" or euphoria to compose the Ramayana. The mood does not seem consistent with any possible claim to his being the sole poet of the world, particularly since Valmiki himself refers to the concept of poetry or sloka.

Kalidasa, as mentioned earlier, subscribed to the Rasa Siddhanta. He was learned as well as gifted with poetic powers. It was Kalidasa who actually enunciated the *soka-sloka* origin of poetry (i.e. poetry is born out of pathos) after Valmiki's utterance: In Raghuvamsha 14.70 Kalidasa wrote *slokatvamapadyata yasya soka* - poetry is born out of pathos. Keith's indictment of Kalidasa, above, and his view that Shakuntala portrays a constricted world have to be weighed against the above facts mentioned vis-à-vis Kalidasa.; as well as examined in the light of what Kalidasa wrote. This is not an attempt to demonstrate that Western scholars did not or do not understand Sanskrit literature: indeed, examples below will illustrate that Indian writers also failed to appreciate and interpret Kalidasa satisfactorily.

Kalidasa is a faithful exponent of the Hindu view of life and the world. In Shakuntala, Sage Kanva's advice to his foster daughter Shakuntala at

the moment of parting, is, in the words of Dimbeshwar Sharma (1968:181)

> "......the crest of ideals reached anywhere in the world. It can never be properly understood in the west, and may be explained away as imposed drudgery and a device to keep woman ever in bondage".

Yet through this paternal advice Kalidasa places his understanding of Indian life in proper perspective. The following parting words of Kanva from Act IV of Shakuntala will be examined to bring this discussion to a close:

> *Bhutvah ciraya caturantamahisapatni*
> *Dausyantimapratiratham tanayam nivesya*
> *Bharttra tadarpitakutumbabharena sardham*
> *Sante karisyasi padam punarasrame asmina*
> Having lived for a long time as co-wife of the earth, and after handing over burdens of state and family to your unrivalled brave son, when you come with your husband, then you may live happily in this peaceful hermitage (From Hindi Translation of Pandey Ramateja Sastri, Abhijnanasakuntalam, Varanasi 1961).

Kanva's parting words carry all the desired blessings for Shakuntala - favourite queen, mother of brave son, long life of wedded bliss etc. The fatherly advice in this and other verses in Act IV are most practical. In the present sloka Kanva implies that Shakuntala must learn to find her own ways of solving life's problems, since she has been given sound ethical instruction; and that she may only return to the parental home when she and her husband have attained mature age. Thus the differences and quarrels of youth should not be carried back to her father. The point of interest from the interpretive aspect is the difficulty presented by the compound *mahi* = earth; *sapatni* = co-wife - one of a number of wives of a single man.

The concept of co-wives has already been established in the preceding verse, where Kanva advises Shakuntala to befriend the other wives (Vasumati and Hanspadika) of Dushyanta. In view of these two human

co-wives why must Shakuntala, in addition accept, or live as, a co-wife of the earth ? Indian tradition has it that queens, because of their particular and peculiar status, were called by epithets such as Mahisapatni implying co-wife or "rival" of the earth. Kings desired above everything, sovereignty over the earth - thus territory or power were their greatest goal. A queen had first of all to achieve the status of *pattamahisi* or chief queen; and then had to be content with sharing the husband's attention with his possessions or empire. She probably could not, or did not think it judicious or feasible to achieve total or "priority" attention of the husband.

To the uninitiated, "co-wife of the earth" would make little sense: The above explanation is also inadequate if one does know the prevailing notions of kingship in and up to Kalidasa's time; that the king had to give his loyal and constant service to state; he thus could not give priority to a wife in preference to the state and all the duties it entailed.

From Kanva's point of view, Shakuntala is being blessed to achieve the highest possible honour and status. By becoming the co-wife of the earth, she would automatically supersede Vasumati and Hansapadika and attain favoured position; and then would have only Dushyanta's kingly duties to contend with.

Here are a few translations of *mahisapatni* in the context :

1. Pandey Ramteja Sastri : co-wife
2. Vyas, Mehta & Maideo : co-wife
3. Arthur W Ryder : "when you have **shared** for many years the king's thoughts **with the earth**".
4. Raja Laxman Singh, the first translator of Shakuntala in Hindi (1863) totally misconstrues *caturantamahisapatni* and renders it thus : "Vasumati does not have four co-wives" - implying that Shakuntala would not have many co-wives.

My personal view is that while Kalidasa meant that Shakuntala should attain the highest possible station, more than that is implied. Kanva is a hermit, and a father by adoption, yet he states that parting from this daughter is heart rending. While observing the traditions and advising Shakuntala accordingly, that she must not allow her position to make her arrogant, and that she ought to serve and treat all with due respect and care, Kanva acts characteristically of a real father, expressing in the word

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mahisapatni the wish that Shakuntala should supersede all the other wives of Dushyanta and become chief queen.

I submit that this line has many possibilities of interpretation; but one may not stray from the guiding tenet that one must observe the poet's intention and the Rasa evoked by the play. There is sweet pathos at the last moments of parting. Kanva cannot withhold this ultimate benediction especially if one notes the presumption that the child Shakuntala is carrying would be a son. This would most probably elevate her to chief queen. In this state of mind Kanva used an expression which must have been commonly used for chief queen. He could not have consciously thought of "sharing Dushyanta's thoughts with the earth" or being co-wife of the earth. This would constitute an impediment to Rasa as it develops in the context.

The foregoing attempt to emphasize the need for a knowledge of poetics as well as the poet's milieu for a proper appreciation of poetry may be applied to works of other language and cultural backgrounds just as it applies to Sanskrit.

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From the Womb to the Tomb -
The Sixteen Sacraments in Hinduism

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this paper is the sixteen sacraments in Hinduism.
Knowledge of these ceremonies are secured from the Vedas and are
intended to be performed at the different stages of a person's life. The
essence of this paper is the different sacraments with some focus on
whether South African Hindus are influenced by these sacraments.
Also an area of focus is an analysis of the context of some the
sacraments and their distinct relationship to areas of medicine,
psychology and alternate medicine.

Ceremonies are an essential part of the social construct of any culture. The
sixteen sacraments ordained by Hinduism are essentially determined by the
mental and physical development of one's life. Before delving into the
different sacraments, it is essential to firstly explore the word Hinduism. The
term Hinduism is a term that has lent itself to a great deal of discussion
amongst scholars. Often even the origin of the term is brought to question.

Kumar comments that "defining Hinduism is probably the most difficult
exercise facing both scholars and adherents alike. What exactly is Hinduism
and what exactly does it encompass? Answers to these questions cannot
easily result in any unanimous understanding amongst scholars. ...The term
Hindu itself comes from a relatively recent history of India and hence the
uncertainty amongst scholars as to whether it really captures the essence of

the range of beliefs and practices of the people in the sub-continent. While scholars have begun to question its usefulness in understanding the religious vista of the vast region we know as India, more traditional pundits began to proffer the use of a native term 'Sanatana Dharma' (the eternal religion) or Vedic Dharma. While the debate about a common term that can capture the vast range of religious and cultural heritage of India continues, most people, both scholars as well as lay people continue to use it for practical purposes of general identification". (Nidan, p 31)

Singh and Nath maintain that it was really the encounter with the west that gave the religious beliefs of India a name. Singh further suggests that many of the practices of India can be seen in different parts of the world, for example, the Ram Sita festival celebrated in remote Mexico. (Singh, 48)

When one considers the varied linguistic and cultural tapestry of the Indian continent, it does appear parochial to subject varied ways of life to one term of definition.

Scholars of Hinduism however tend to prefer the term Vedic Dharama which essentially refer to the Vedas which are considered the foundational scriptures of Hinduism. (Sivananda, 7)

The Vedas are believed to be the most esteemed, authentic and sacred books of the Hindus. It is also regarded as the first and foremost books of world literature. Regarded by Hindus as repositories of divine knowledge, and the root of the Vedic-Sanatana religion, they are the main sources of all Hindu literature. (Friedrichs, 403)

Materlink, the Swedish philosopher and nobel prize winner has described the Vedas as the first ever system of ethics known to man and it is the loftiest, plausibe and most admirable that man has hitherto known. He claims that " this tradition attributes to the vast reservoir of the wisdom that somewhere took shape simultaneously with the origin in man; to more spiritual entities, to beings less entangled in matter." (Sharma, 34)

All religious texts or spiritual texts, as some may prefer to call them, are intended to help create a better society. The sixteen sacraments described in the Vedas are intended to have a profound place in an individual's life. The

sixteen "samskaras" or sacraments are intended to ennoble the life of an individual to enable him to achieve the high ideal of purity of mind and contribute positively to both the immediate environment he lives in and the world at large. What follows is a brief description of the different ceremonies.

1. Garbhadhana: (Conception of a Child - A Gift to the Womb)
This ceremony effectively refers to that ceremony where a couple decides to be blessed with a child. Often this is done as part of the wedding ceremony. This ceremony sanctifies the act of procreation. Beginning at a pre-conceptual stage, this ceremony invokes the creative, divine energy for the creation of a child. The ceremony itself constantly refers to elements of nature like ritu (season-weather), kshetra (soil-ground), ambu (water) and beej (seed). The sense of the ceremony is that those who ask for divine interference in the actual conception of a child invariably are blessed with a child with divine attributes. Oblations are offered after the success of this ceremony. (Siddhantalankar, 155)

2. Punsavana : (The Pro-creation Ceremony)
This is a ceremony that is performed three months after the conception of a child. Prayer is offered for the sound development of a child. The objective of the procreation ceremony is the physical fitness of the child. In this ceremony proper, much reference is made to the perfection in the creation of the universe, indicating that the child is part of this perfect creation. (Siddhantalankar, 193)

3. Simantonnayana (Mental Development Ceremony)
Performed at the end of the sixth or eighth month after conception this ceremony is considered essential for the full development of the organs. In this particular ceremony, the bondage of the couple carrying the child is required to be intimate. Patriarchal concerns are set aside and both the husband and wife are expected to become involved in each other's normal routine. The husband is expected to adorn the wife's hair, giving focus to the mental development of the child. During the ceremony the mother asks for the ability to be sensitive towards the child's psyche and this has significant similarities to present dialogues in the field of psychology where psychologists repeat so often today that the child's psyche is a reflection of the mother's psyche during her pregnancy. (Siddhantalankar 207)

4.   Jatakarma: (Ceremony for the New-Born)

On the day of the birth of the child, the child is welcomed into the world with this ceremony. This ceremony involves bathing the child, ensuring the functioning of the different organs i.e. eyes, ears, nose etc, and a significant part of this ceremony is the writing of OM on the tongue of the child with a piece of gold. OM is considered to be the primordial sound in Hinduism. This ceremony is intended to strike an ideal balance between a materialistic life and spiritual life. Interestingly this ceremony in South Africa is conducted on the sixth day of the arrival of the child. (Vedalankar, 97)

5.   Namakaran (Naming Ceremony)

On the eleventh day after birth this ceremony is performed and the child is given a name. The name chosen is intended to be a source of inspiration in the life of the individual. One of the more interesting aspects about the naming ceremony is that the name chosen should be astrologically determined according to lunar configurations and also the name chosen should be one that carries a pleasant meaning so that a child can aspire to the meaning of his name. (Vedalankaar, 98)

6.   Nishkramana: (Introduction to the Outer Environment)

After the forth month the child is taken out in the open air for his acquaintance with nature. The child is exposed to health giving rays of the sun and the child is offered to nature as a source of nurturing. In this ceremony, the child is given a sighting of the moon and the sun. The significance of this is to invoke the blessings of these great parts of creation to protect the child. Whilst the sun is responsible for nurturing, the moon is largely responsible for mental stability. (Siddhantalankar, 284)

In the South African context this ceremony is not performed at all. Perhaps the reason for this is ignorance and of course a complete change of life style amongst South African Hindus.

7.   Annaprashana (Intake of First Solids)

This particular ceremony is done when the child's teeth begin to appear (around the 6th to 8th month). The child is now introduced to solid foods. The significance of this ceremony is not only to allow the child to be weaned from his mother but also to expose the body to other types of nourishment. (Vedalankar, 92)

8. Choodakarma (Shaving of the Crown)

This ceremony is performed within one year of birth or in the third year of the child's life. One of the scientific explanations offered for this ceremony is that:

> During the time of teething, the child feels heavy and is warm, he suffers from a head-ache, the gums swell, saliva flows and he suffers from heavy loose motions, inflammation of the eyes and is generally very irritable. Teething affects the head, therefore to keep the head light and cool, the child's hair is shaved off, and this is the aim of this particular ceremony. (Siddhanttalankar, p313) Most Hindus in South Africa follow this ceremony.

9. Karna-Vedh (Piercing of the Ear)

The lower lobe is pierced when the child is three years of age and a prayer is said for the child's physical and spiritual well being. The act of piercing the ear is believed to have a healing presence. Piercing of the lobe has interesting links with acupuncture. Garber maintains that acupuncture in the lobe has direct links with the pineal gland.

He states:

> The past mystical associations of this center with the pineal gland is well- known. From an evolutionary standpoint, it is interesting to note that in the lower animals such as reptiles, the pineal gland is still associated with a rudimentary third eye, complete with lens and retina-like photo-receptor. (Garber,P347)

Cheng Xinnong, author of Chinese acupuncture and Maxibustion, also refers to lobe piercing being an attempt to work on the pineal gland, which is on the base of the brain. He further adds that this is a material representation of the third eye. (Xinnong,P.987)

10. Upanayana (Beginning of Education)

This is performed anytime between the ages 5 to 8. This involves placing the child in the care of a guru ie, a teacher. This is probably the most stimulating part of the different ceremonies. A yajnopavit, sacred thread, is placed around the body of the child. This thread symbolises the vow of the child to

follow a path as laid down by the scriptures. Formal education commences immediately after this ceremony and the focus of life become knowledge, action and devotion. (Sivananda, 94)

11. Vedarambha (Initiation into the Studies of the Vedas)

This ceremony is conducted immediately after the previous ceremony. At this stage the child's spiritual knowledge commences and all branches of knowledge become his field of interest and study. There's a simultaneous development in the spiritual and material world. Sound intellect is the focus of the child's education. (Sivananda, 94)

12. Samavartana (Completion of Education)

Performed between the twenty first to the twenty fifth year, this ceremony is engaged in when a student has completed his studies. The graduate is then on a threshold of a new life of self-reliance and independence. Hereafter he is expected to perform fully in the social and economic life of his family and his community. (Siddhantalankar, 425)

13. Vivaha (Wedding Ceremony)

This is the wedding ceremony. The stage of a householder is introduced to the young adult. The marriage ceremony is one that is filled with a great deal of love. All close members of the family are closely involved in the ceremony where each person involved pledges to make the marriage good one. Not only are family members involved in the ceremony; the fire is seen as an embodiment of God and different elements and aspects of nature are included in the ceremony for example, prayers are offered to the sun to keep the couple "bright" in all literal and figurative interpretations of the word. (Vedalankar, 105)

14. Vanaprastha (Renunciation)

This ceremony is significant as it marks the completion of the life of a householder. The suggested age for this renunciation is fifty years. (Vedalankar,100) A person renounces all preoccupations with personal benefits and hands over family responsibility to the next generation freeing him to follow a life of austerity and meditation.(Siddhantalankar, 620)

15. Sanayasa (Total Renunciation)

Observed at the age of seventy-five, this ceremony entails renouncing wealth, family ties and a desire for fame. One dons a saffron robe, a symbol of austerity. One belongs no more to any family, community and has no fixed abode. One's outlook becomes totally universal and the thought of parting from this world does not disturb the tranquillity of the mind. (Vedalankar, 100)

16. Antyesti (Death Ceremony)

This is the ceremony that is performed at the death of a person, as new age thinkers would describe it, the period of transition. When the body is consumed by the fire of the funeral pyre, it becomes part of the five elements of nature, that is, earth, water, fire, air and ether. And through the recitation of mantras the family gives back to the universe gracefully what was given to them. (Siddhantalankar, 620)

An analysis of the 16 ceremonies in Hinduism lends itself to some very interesting dialogues on present day life and various modern interpretations on various aspects of life. Like most ancient cultures for example the Mayan and Inca cultures of the indigenous people of America, there is a great deal of focus on nature, seeing life as an extension of the universe, a concept that new age thinkers propagate a great deal. The different ceremonies also indicate that ancient cultures had already discovered aspects of childrearing that are in vogue nowadays. All to often one hears nowadays dialogues on how important the mother's well being is for a foetus to be mentally healthy. That a happy home is possible through the combined efforts of both spouses is also well revealed in the ceremonies. Also of significance is the scientific reason for ear piercing particularly with regards to acupuncture.

However, although these are the sacraments largely followed, some sects of Hinduism believe that there are fifty two sacraments, the above-mentioned being the most important. (Sivananda, 92)

Given the fact that Hinduism as a religion is about 5000 years old, the age-old question remains and that is do practising Hindus observe all of these ceremonies. Within the South African context, the answer is no, not entirely. Most of the initial ceremonies go unnoticed. For eg. the ceremonies that are supposed to be conducted immediately after the birth of a child. The neglect

of these ceremonies is probably the result of ignorance. Given the background of the Indians in South Africa, most people came as lay people with the result little attention was given to matters of religion.

Further the linguistic divide amongst Hindus in South Africa indicate that the different linguistic groups have certain set of practises that are determined by the region of origin in India i.e., the practices of South Africans who have their origin in the South are different from those who have their origins in the North. Common practices are birth, wedding and death ceremonies, although there are different ways of executing these ceremonies. This difference lend authenticity to Kumar's and Singh's discussions on whether the word Hinduism is a true description of the different practices of people if India.

However, with the emergence of neo-Hindu movements, there is a resurgence of interest and practice amongst Hindus. Bodies like the Ramakrishna Movement. The Swami Sivananda Ashram, the Hare Krishna Movement, the Arya Samaj movement all propagates an awareness of these ceremonies.

Interestingly enough, new-age philosophy is evoking a great deal of interest in the theory that all living beings are an extension of the universe; a concept that the Vedas have propounded through its prescription of the different sacraments.

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Contribution of Mīmāṃsā to Language: A Metaphysical Approach
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Introduction
In Indian philosophical linguistics, there are basically two important approaches: 1) metaphysical, and 2) epistemological. The metaphysical approach raises the question of the relationship between the human language and reality. In other words, it deals with the relationship between the word and the things which it denotes. The epistemological or dialectical approach raises the question of the operation of language as a means of communication. That is to say, the epistemological questions deal with the proper use of language in discussions and communication of ideas.

In the present chapter, I shall deal with the Mīmāṃsā metaphysical approach to linguistics. The Mīmāṃsā school features prominently in the classical Indian thought. It is the only system which sought to preserve the original purport of the Veda and remained loyal to the old Vedic order. All the other schools of thought have developed their own world view, and do not operate on the foundations laid down in the early Vedic period. Nevertheless, all those systems, with the exception of Buddhism, Jainism and Materialism, claim to be orthodox in the sense that they pursue a Vedic tradition. They find in the Veda their main source of information. By Veda what is actually meant by them is the Upaniṣads. Although the Upaniṣads belong to the entire body of the Veda, they are essentially different from the spirit of the Ṛg Veda. The so called orthodox systems of philosophy derive their support mainly from the Upaniṣads. But it is only the Mīmāṃsā school that carries the old polytheistic (henotheistic, as Max Müller calls it), sacrificial and mythological world view into the classical time (first half of the first millenium C.E.). So they are somewhat anachronistic, in that they try to defend what appears to be an outdated, archaic world view against

the onslaught of the modern philosophical approaches to the question of liberation (mokṣa).

Dating of the Mīmāṃsā Literature

There is difference of opinion among scholars about the period of the Mīmāṃsā tradition. Accepting Jacobi's dating, Keith suggests a greater antiquity to the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā school.[1] Frauwallner suggests that Sāṃkhya is the oldest philosophical system, the Vaiśeṣika being the second. The logical system of Nyāya and the ritual system of Mīmāṃsā are the related systems of the Vaiśeṣika.[2] Dasgupta is also of the opinion that the Sāṃkhya is the oldest system of Indian philosophy. With regard to the date of Jaimini's *Mīmāṃsā Sūtras*, Keith accepts Jacobi's dating as earlier than the Vijñānavādin idealism which is dated between 200 and 450 C.E.[3] He places the *Mīmāṃsā Sūtras* of Jaimini at 200 B. C. E. Dasgupta also concurs with that date.[4] Jaimini's *Mīmāṃsā Sūtras* was commented upon by Śabara Swāmi in his Mīmāṃsā Sūtra Bhāṣya, commonly referred to as *Śābara-bhāṣya*, the dating of which is not certain. Dasgupta accepts Ganganatha Jha's dating of Śabara around 57 B. C. E.[5] With due respect to a scholar such as Dasgupta, it must, however, be pointed out that he did not seem to have read the following passage in Jha's *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā in its Source*. In the following passage, all that Jha points out is that Śabara may have lived prior to 400 B. C. E. For the sake of clarity on the issue, it is useful to quote the passage. Referring to the conventional passage often quoted by pundits in India, Jha points out

> Here (in the *śloka* quoted by pundits) the persons spoken of as sons of Śabara are — (1) Varāhamihira, the great astronomer, from his *Brāhmaṇa*-wife, (2) king Bhartṛhari and (3) King Vikrama, from his *Kṣatriya*-wife, (4) Hariśchandra, the great *Vaidya* and (5) Śaṅku, the learned, from his Vaiśya-wife, and (6) Amara, from his *Śūdra*-wife. The date of the astronomer Varāhamihira, however, has been fixed by scholars to be somewhere in the fourth century A. D. — Vidyāpati Thakkura, in his *Puruṣaparīkṣā*, speaks of Śabara as the 'Guru' of Vikramāditya.— The name Vikramāditya continues to be shrouded in mystery. The only conclusion, therefore, that we can come to is that Śabara lived before 400 A. D.[6]

The Bhāṣya of Śabara was commented upon by Bhartṛmitra, Bhavadāsa, Hari and Upavarṣa. The exact details and dates of these

commentaries are not available except references to them in various texts.[7]   Nevertheless, the most well known commentators on *Śābarabhāṣya* were Prabhākara and Kumārila Bhaṭṭa. The dates given by Keith are c.600 and c.700 respectively.   On the basis of the researches conducted at Madras university, Jha believes that Prabhākara, Kumārila and Maṇḍana lived during the sixth and seventh centuries B. C. E.[8]   Prabhākara's commentary on *Śābarabhāṣya* is called *Bṛhatī* (the great one) and his view is known as *"Gurumata"*. Kumārila's commentary on *Śābarabhāṣya* is divided into three parts: *Ślokavārtika*, *Tantravārtika*, and *Tuṣṭikā*. Kumārila's view is referred to as *"Bhāṭṭamata."* For the purposes of this chapter I shall mainly refer to the *Śābarabhāṣya*, although mention of the views of Prabhākara and Kumārila will be made occasionally.

The Concept of Dharma
The translation of the term *"dharma"* poses a problem. English terms such as 'duty,' 'virtue,' 'law,' 'righteousness' only approximate the meaning of the term. Therefore, in order to retain its technical usage in the Mīmāṃsā parlance, I shall use the term untranslated.   Jaimini's Sūtra 1.1.2 defines *dharma* as *"codanalakṣaṇo 'rtho dharmaḥ"*— *"dharma* is an object distinguished by a command." Śabara defines the terms rather carefully.   He points out that *'codana'* refers to the "injunctive text" in the Veda; *'lakṣaṇa'* refers to something that is indicated (e.g., fire is indicated by smoke); and *'artha'* refers to what is conducive to the highest good. He also points out in his commentary that *dharma* is something not perceptible by senses, and therefore, cannot be obtained from any human source. Only the words of the Veda can reveal *dharma* as they are not of human origin. In other words, since anything of human origin is susceptible to error, Śabara posits the non-human origin of the Veda which alone can reveal *dharma* which is characterized as the highest good (*artha*).[9]   With regard to the question of how *dharma* is to be known, Śabara categorically rejects perception (*pratyakṣa*), inference (*anumāna*) etc., as means of knowing (*pramāṇas*). While pointing out why perception could not reveal *dharma* Śabara qualifies it as "something that is yet to come, and it does not exist at the time that it is to be known."[10] Therefore he affirms that *dharma* is cognizable only by means of verbal injunctions. It is in this sense that he discusses the inseparable relation (*autpattika*) between the word and its denotation. I shall return to the question of "inseparable relation" later in this chapter.

Authority of the Veda

In general, the other schools of philosophy emphasized *jñāna* as the means of liberation or a means to attain heaven. In contradistinction to this kind of Upaniṣadic approach to liberation, the Mīmāṃsā school emphasized the older model of *'karman'* in order to perpetuate the Vedic order. It is in their effort to defend the old Vedic order they had to defend the authority of the Veda. Thus the affirmation of the truth value of the Vedic injunctions is crucial for the defense of the *'karman'* model. In other words, the question is "what makes the scriptural injunctions valid?" In many world religions, the validity of scriptures lies in their affirmation that they are revealed directly from God. In the later sectarian Hinduism also this kind of belief survives. The Mīmāṃsakas, however, did not rely on the belief in God in order to affirm the validity of the Veda. They rather affirmed the eternality of the word (*Śabda*). In that sense, the Veda is self-evident (*svataḥ prāmāṇya*).

It is because of the authoritativeness of the Veda that for the Mīmāṃsakas the inquiry into *dharma* begins after the study of the Veda under a reliable teacher. Thus, according to Śabara's interpretation, the first *sūtra* of Jaimini (1. 1. 1) points to the inquiry into *dharma* after previous study of the Veda. Responding to the objector Śabara affirms "*Reading of the Veda* would be the required *event*; as it is only after *Reading the Veda* has been accomplished that *inquiry into Dharma* follows."[11] He further states that the reading of the Veda is essential — "Because in the course of this inquiry there will be various kinds of discussion over Vedic texts (and until we have studied the texts there can be no discussion of them)."[12] Śabara, however, does not deny the possibility of inquiring into *dharma* prior to the study of the Veda. What he is concerned about is the sequence of events. Explaining the significance of the term *'atha'* he says,

> We do not mean that inquiry into *Dharma* should not be carried on after any other act (than the *Reading of the Veda*); all that we mean is that after having read the Veda, one should not hasten to take the Final Bath, he should immediately seek to know *Dharma* — Such is the meaning of the term *'atha,'* 'next.'[13]

Thus, inquiry into *dharma* is intrinsically connected with the authoritativeness of the Veda. Although Śabara accepts Smṛti also, he, nonetheless, subordinates it to the injunctions of the Śruti. Thus, where

there is a conflict between the two, the Śruti must be accepted as more authoritative than Smṛti. (*Śābarabhaṣya*. 1. 3. 2).

The Concept of Apauruṣeya

As alluded to above, the Mīmāmsakas affirm the eternality of the Vedic injunctions or *śabda* not by attributing to them some divinity but rather to the very self-revealing (*svataḥ prāmāṇya*) nature of the Veda, and thereby favouring the non-human (*Apauruṣeya*) origin of the Veda. Gūchter points out that Śabara's notion of *codana* provides an insight into the notion of *Apauruṣeya*. He says

> This insight (i.e., *codana* incites action) poses on the one hand the problem whether the non-injunctive statements of the Vedas are also reliable in the same way as injunctive ones, i.e., the problem whether these non-injunctive statements are mere human insights and human compositions; but on the other hand it provides the key to Śabara's explanation of the entire Veda as being *apauruṣeya*.[14]

Emphasizing the fact that the knowledge proceeding from the human origin can be false due to illusion, Śabara points out, "...and in the case of the Veda there is no room for illusion or wrong knowledge, as there is no human agency involved, while in the case of human instructors, there is always a chance of mistakes and illusions and ignorance."[15] Thus, since the Vedic injunctions are of non-human origin, there is no possibility of their assertions being false. In other words, for Śabara, the Veda had to be of non-human origin in order to maintains its authoritativeness both in terms of its injunctive statements as well as its non-injunctive statements.

Śabara also makes it clear that Vedic statements cannot be regarded as false by a reference to a non-Vedic statement of human origin. Since Vedic statements cannot produce false cognition, the entire Veda is the only *pramāṇa* that has all the parts of being the *śabda pramāṇa*. He also rejects the opponent's view that because the Vedic texts are named after specific persons, such as Kāṭhaka, Kāpālaka, Pippalāda, and so on, the Vedas must be from human origin. He says that those are some exceptionally great expounders, and therefore the texts that they expounded have been associated with their names.[16] Śabara also emphatically rejects the view that some of the Vedic utterances are

like those of the lunatics and children. He says that utterances, such as, "Trees sat at the sacrificial session" serve the purpose of eulogizing the sacrificial session.[17]

Śabda as the Right Means of Cognition

At a fundamental level Śabara affirms that reality can be understood through the means of language. In other words, the reality and language are intrinsically related. Śabara accepts all the other *pramāṇas*, such as perception (*pratyakṣa*), inference (*anumāna*), etc., as useful in revealing the reality that is perceptible to the sense-organs, i. e., the *dṛṣṭa* reality. But with regard to the unseen (*adṛṣṭa*) reality which is not accessible to the sense-organs, it is only the Vedic injunctions that can reveal such reality. For Śabara the Vedas, both injunctive and the non-injunctive statements, constitute the *śabda pramāṇa*. The reason why Śabara includes only the Vedic statements as constituting the *śabda pramāṇa* is that the Vedic statements are the only ones that are capable of producing right cognition, whereas the human statements can be susceptible to unreliability, and can produce false cognition. Therefore, when Śabara speaks of *śabda*, what is intended is the Vedic sound or utterance. *Śabda*, in that sense, is synonymous with scripture (*Śāstra*). Śabara points out that it refers to "only the particular form of 'Word,' 'Injunction,'" i.e., in reference to the means of cognizing *dharma*.[18]

As Gūchter rightly points out, the word *śabda* is difficult for translation into English. He suggests terms, such as, 'sound,' 'noise,' 'speech' as approximating the term *śabda*. He also points out that it is more comprehensive, and therefore, should include terms, such as, 'phoneme,' 'vowel,' 'word,' 'resonance,' 'language,' (primordial and human), 'unity of sense/signs/language,' 'manifestation of word,' etc.[19] What is meant by *śabda* is made clear when Śabara points out that "the term '*śabda*' stands for the Vedic or scriptural word, and '*artha*' for '*Dharma* and *Adharma*' which form the special subject-matter of Scripture."[20]

The Concept of Autpattika

Śabara's view of '*śabda*' as a valid means of right cognition depends on his notion of natural(*autpattika*) relation between the word and its object. He argues that the relationship between the word and its

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object is natural and inherent. In order to establish the validity of '*śabda pramāṇa*,' he explains,

> If the connection of the word with its meaning were dependent upon other means of Cognition, then all those words and expressions which speak of things not amenable to the other means of Cognition, might be regarded as of doubtful validity; when however the said connection is self-sufficient, then there is nothing to shake the inherent validity of what is spoken of in the words of the Veda.—*Bṛhatī* and *Rjuvimalā*.[21]

Śabara makes a distinction between words which being used by man are often invalid because the speaker ignores their natural relationship between them with a particular object. The words of the Veda show the self-sufficient nature of language because of the non interference of the human speaker. He points out that as soon as the Vedic word is uttered, the thing that is meant by such a word is made known by itself. It is precisely here while discussing the relationship between the word and its meaning, Śabara gets into the discussion of language.

Rejecting Śabara's view of *śabda*, the opponent lists five kinds of relationships between the word and its meaning: a) that of the nature of contact or conjunction; b) that which exists between the material cause and its product; c) that which exists between the efficient cause and its effect; d) that which exists between the container and contained; and e) that of birth. The opponent further states that these relationships are not possible in the case of the 'Word.' Replying to this, Śabara says that his opponent does not mention the only relationship that exists between the word and its meaning, i.e., the denoter-denoted or name and named. In affirming this inherent and inseparable relation between the word and its meaning, Śabara falls back on tradition or experience. He says,

> ...in fact the meaning of a word is understood only when it has been heard (used) as many times as makes it definitely recognized that 'this word is the *name* and this thing is the *named*. [Nor this need for repeated experience vitiate the denotativeness of the word; because] in the case of the Eye also it is found that it is unable to *see* if there is no external light, and yet this does not mean that the Eye has not the power to see.

[Thus then, the conclusion is that there is a definite relation between the Word and what is denoted by it.].[22]

What seems to be clear, when he takes the position that the relation between the word and its meaning is based on our daily hearing or usage, is that Śabara does not want to go into the question of the origins which only leads to the state of *infinitum regressus*.[23] He rather takes the relation between the word and its meaning as eternal and established in our experience of speech.

The opponent raises some interesting objections; firstly, he says that the form of the word and that of the object it denotes are different; secondly, whether the meaning is apprehended by the letters severally or together. The objector rules out the possibility of the cognition of meaning through the letters severally because, for instance, in the word '*gauh*'— at the time of hearing the letter '*ga*' the letters '*au*' and '*h*' do not exist. Similarly, at the time of hearing '*au*' and '*h*' the letter '*ga*' does not exist. That leaves us with the option of the composite whole, i.e., all the letters together. But even that, says the opponent, is not possible. He argues that if the meaning of the word is cognized from remembrance, then even that remembrance of the word, he says, is a "momentary existence." So, just as the letters themselves cannot bring out the meaning, the word as a whole also cannot bring out the meaning.

It is obvious that Śabara here is clearly responding to the Buddhist theory. With regard to the first point, namely, that the form of the word and the object are different, he points out "Further, the form of the cognition is never apprehended except in terms of the object."[24] In other words, it is only the object that can be spoken of having a form and not the word. Therefore, the question of difference of form of word and the object does not arise. On the other hand, hypothetically he suggests that even if their form is identical, it is the "*Cognition* that would have to be denied a separate existence, and not the *Object* which is actually perceived."[25] He further says,

As a matter of fact, however, the two are *not* identical in form; when we infer a *Cognition* (from the fact of the object being cognized), we infer it without a form (simply as 'cognition,' not as 'cognition of such and such a thing'), — whereas when we directly perceive an object, we perceive it *with* a form.[26]

With regard to the second objection, namely, that the cognition of the meaning does not appear through letters severally, Śabara says,

> ...what happens is that each letter, as it is uttered, leaves an 'impression' behind, and what brings about the cognition of the meaning of the word is the last letter along with the impressions of each of the preceding letters.[27]

Thus, Śabara, while affirming the compositeness of the words, also affirms that there is no 'word' apart from the letters. In other words, what Śabara rejects is the notion that 'word' is distinct from the letters. He affirms that the "letters themselves are the word."[28] By the same token, just as the all the letters constitute the word, the object that the word denotes also is constituted by its *class*, and not simply the individuals severally. Śabara asserts "that the *class (or genus) characterized by the dewlap and other features* is what is denoted by the Word."[29]

While Śabara upholds the notion of the eternality of word-meaning relation, he also affirms the eternality of the word itself. The opponent raises an objection that since there is human effort involved in uttering the words, the words must be treated as produced. Śabara counters this argument of the opponent by pointing out that the word is "*manifested* (not *produced*) by human effort; that is to say, if, before being pronounced , the word was not manifest, it becomes manifested by the effort of pronouncing."[30] In other words, the word is already there and it is made manifest by the act of pronouncing. As a matter of fact, it is because of the eternality of the word, the comprehension of meaning is possible. It exists for the sake of making known the meaning of another. The criterion for the eternality of the word lies in its capacity to reveal something without being sublated upon subsequent revelation. In view of Śabara, the Vedic word has such capacity to reveal something. The word, in so far as it reveals the meaning of something, is eternal. So, the word does not cease to exist as soon as it is uttered. Śabara argues,

> If the word ceased to exist as soon as uttered, then no one could speak of (make known) any thing to others; and in that case the word could not be uttered for the purpose of another. On the other hand, if the word does not cease to exist, then it is only

right that on hearing the word many times, there is comprehension of its meaning."[31]

Thus on the one hand, Śabara affirms the eternality of the word itself, and on the other hand, the eternality of the word-meaning relation. And the two positions are intrinsically related. In order to affirm the eternality of the word-meaning relation, Śabara had to affirm the eternality of the word itself.

The Mīmāmsā theory of the word and its *manifestation* in the act of speaking must be seen in the wider ontological context of this system. Like Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāmsā belongs to the realist category of Indian Philosophy, that means it suggests the true mind-independent existence of the phenomenal word . It shares with Vaiśeṣika the belief in the substance ether *(Ākāśa)* which is an eternal and all pervasive substance.

It is this ether which is thought by both schools to be the substratum of sound, which is one of the qualities of reality.The decisive difference is as follows:-
Whereas to Vaiśeṣika the sounds which form the phonetic components of the words are *produced* by the speaker and cease to exist immediately after their pronunciation, Mīmāmsā teaches the eternality of the sounds and, thereby, of the sound-composite word.

This being a rather puzzling theory, Mīmāmsā explains it as follows: Sounds are eternal qualities of the eternal substance ether. They are, however, not audible under normal circumstances. What happens in the act of "speaking" is, that the speaking person presses a stream of air through his speech organs: throat, tongue, lips and so on, thereby giving this air stream, which is material and consisting of atoms, a particular form. When the air hits the ether outside the mouth of the speaker the speech is *revealed*, that means, it becomes temporarily audible— the adequate sounds as they latently reside in the ether.
By this re-interpretation of the Vaiśeṣika theory of the sounds, Mīmāmsā offers a plausible explanation for the empirical fact that sounds and words which are thought to be eternal and not produced are only audible if somebody "speaks".

Expressiveness of Sentences

The eternality of the word, and word-meaning relation are affirmed in the context of the means of knowing *dharma*. The Vedic injunctions are not merely words but they are sentences. Therefore, Śabara had to deal with the question of expressiveness of the sentence in the context of knowing *dharma*. Thus, the question is whether the sentence is eternal. Śabara, in keeping with his position on the eternality of the word-meaning, further affirms an inherent connection between the words and the sentence. He argues that a sentence has no separate meaning independent of the meaning of the words. He says,

Even the last letter of the sentence along with the impressions left by the previous letters has no power, independently of the meanings of the component words, to express any meaning totally different from what is expressed by those words.[32]

He further explains,

What happens is that each of the words (composing the sentence) ceases from activity after having expressed its meaning, — and the meanings of the words thus comprehended bring about the comprehension of the meaning of the sentence (as a whole).[33]

Śabara points out that words (such as, 'white' or 'black') that express quality also have the power to denote the object that is qualified. So by making use of the word that expresses quality, one can also denote the thing that possesses the quality. In other words, the qualified thing is also brought about by the mention of one word that denotes the quality. This is what is referred to as the "notion of the qualified thing."[34] To put it in the words of Śabara, "the idea of the qualified thing follows from the idea of the quality."[35] Words individually refer to the universal qualities and genus of things, while words combined in a sentence in a syntactical order refer to specific things. As such, for Śabara, word refers to the universal and the sentence stands for the particular. Therefore, the meaning of a sentence is not different from that of the word.

In view of his notion of *autpattika*, Śabara affirms the eternality of the relation between the word and its meaning. This is fundamental to his theory of language. Moreover, in as much as the word is eternal, the sentence also is eternal because of their inherent connection. It is a relationship that exists between the universal and the particular. By rejecting the possibility of any creator of the word-meaning relation, Śabara not only eliminates the problem of *infinitum regressus*, but also provides a viable basis for a theory of language that takes reality in its fullness, i.e., both the *dṛṣṭa* and the *adṛṣṭa* reality. As such, the word-meaning relation, in the scheme of the Mīmāṃsakas, is one of ontological relation rather than an artificial cause-effect relation. It is not an "accomplished" relation but rather an "eternal" relation. He makes it amply clear when Śabara deals with the question whether the word denotes the '*class*'/'*genus*' or the individual. In response to the opponent's query that if the word denotes '*class*,' whether such denotation is an accomplished one, Śabara reiterates, "Being actually perceived, it cannot be something yet to be accomplished."[16]

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[3] Keith, *Op.cit.,* p. 472.

[4] Dasgupta. *Op.cit.,* p. 370. Also cf. Ganganatha Jha. *Pūrva-Mimāṃsā in its Sources.* (Varanasi: Benaras Hindu University, 1964), p. 12.

[5] *Ibid,* p. 370.

[6] Jha. *Op.cit,* p. 12.

[7] Dasgupta. *Op.cit.,* p. 370.

[8] Jha. *Op.cit.,* p. 17.

[9] See *Śābarabhāṣya,* tr. by Ganganatha Jha. vol.1. (Baroda: Oriental Institute,

1973), p. 5. (*Sūtra* 1.1.2).

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 8. (*Sūtra* 1. 1. 4).

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 1. (Sū. 1. 1. 1).

[12] *Loc.cit.*, p. 1.

[13] *Ibid.*, p., 3

[14] Othmar Güchter, *Hermeneutics and Language in Pūrvamīmāṃsā: a Study in Śābara Bhāṣya.* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), p. 79.

[15] *Śābarabhāṣya*, p. 6.

[16] *Śābarabhāṣya*. 1. 1. 27—31.

[17] *Ibid.*, 1. 1. 32

[18] *Śābarabhāṣya*, p. 15. (1. 1. 5).

[19] Güchter. *Op. cit.*, p. 39—40.

[20] *Śābarabhāṣya*, p. 15. (1. 1. 5).

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 24.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[25] *Loc. cit.*, p. 14.

[26] *Loc. cit.*, p. 14.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 21. Also see, p. 38ff. (*Sūtra* 1. 1. 19).

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 44. (1. 1. 25).

[33] *Loc. cit.*, p. 44.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 45.

[35] *Loc. cit.*, p. 45.

[36] *Loc. cit.*, p. 21.

Kauṭalya's Arthasastra: some reflections on authorship and date

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The text of the Arthasastra has been hailed by both Indian and western scholars as one of the most important contributions of India to the study of Indian polity. The first manuscript of the text was discovered by Dr. Shama Sastri of the Mysore Oriental Research Institute. He published the text based on a single manuscript in 1909. He published his translation of the text in 1915. Between 1924-25 T. Ganapati Shastri brought out his translation with his commentary known as Śrīmūla. Ganapati Sastri's translation was based on four manuscripts that were found in Trivandrum, Kerala. The debate between Shama Sastri and Ganapati Sastri on whose edition is more accurate does not concern us in these reflections. Subsequently other editions either in parts or in full appeared in India-- Harihara Sastri (1958); K. Sambasiva Sastri (1960 in Malayalam); R. P. Kangle (1963). (T. Ganapati Sastri 1980: 64).

The text contains fifteen books which deal with the main topics such as the internal administration of the state, its relationship with neighbouring states. (Kangle 1992: 19). According to Kangle the style of the work is that of the early sutra works. It exhibits both prose and verse. The verses are characterised by their simplicity. (Kangle 1992: 37).

The name

In the manuscript used by Shama Sastri, the name is spelled as Kauṭilya (with an 'i' in the middle) whereas in the four manuscripts used by Ganapati Sastri, the name is spelled as Kauṭalya (with 'a' in the middle). According to Ganapati Sastri, the name "Kauṭilya" is wrong as its root "Kuṭila" is not "explained in Nighaṇṭus as Gotrarṣi and crooked. On the other hand, the word Kuṭala is mentioned by Keśavasvāmin in his Nānārthārnvasaṃkṣepa as meaning both Gotrarṣi

and an ornament." He, therefore, thinks that the correct form is Kauṭalya, which has its root as "Kuṭala".(T. Ganapati Sastri 1980: 2). Supporting the view of Ganapati Sastri, N. P. Unni says "Words like Kautsa are used as names in the Raghuvaṃśa of Kālidāsa, though the radical meaning may be unsavoury. The word Kauṭilya with an "i" may be such a word, but what we have uniformly in the text is Kauṭalya meaning the descendant of Kuṭalagotra. It has no such stigma as to warrent its omission." (Ibid., : 9). However, Kangle argues—

> Kuṭala is supposed to be derived from *kuṭa* 'a jar' plus *la* from the root *lā* 'to take' (*kuṭāṃ ghaṭaṃ dhyānyapūrṇaṃ lānti gṛhṇanti iti Kuṭlāh*), so that the word is understood to mean 'one who has a large store of grains (*kumbhidhānya*). This etymology is hardly satisfactory, as the root *lā* is not attested early. One could get the same meaning from *kuṭila*, with a better etymology, by understanding *kuṭa* plus the suffix *ila* (*ilac*) which has the sense of possessive. In that case, one can suppose that Kuṭila as a *gotra* name really meant one having a *kuṭa*, with no connection with *kuṭila* which has the sense of 'curved, crooked.' It seems that the confusion between Kuṭila as a *gotra* name and the adjective *kuṭila* meaning crooked, which is indicated by the pun in the Mudrārākṣasa passage, led to a desire to distinguish the *gotra* name from the adjective *kuṭila*, Kuṭala being thought of for the former. This seems to have happened fairly early, before the twelfth century A.D., to which the Devanagari fragmentary manuscript is assigned. But even when the new form of Kauṭalya was substituted and adopted by certain authorities, the original form Kauṭilya has continued to be in use all through. (Kangle 1992: 112-13).

Aside from Kangle, other scholars also think that both forms, viz., *kuṭila* and *kuṭala* can have reference to *gotra* name. (Ganapati Sastri 1980: 3). While Ganapati Sastri claims that all the five manuscripts of Kerala origin use the form Kuṭla, (Ganapati Sastri 1980: 2) Kangle points out that a change in favour of Kuṭla "seems to have happened fairly early on, before the twelfth century A.D." (Kangle 1992: 112). Even though Kangle uses the form Kauṭilya, he does admit that "There are many scholars, however, who prefer the form with ṭa." (Kangle 1992: 109). In the absence of any categorical evidence, neither position might be taken as final.

Authorship
The question of greater importance, however, is who this Kauṭalya is, and whether or not he was indeed the author of the text. Three names

appear actually in this connection. Kautalya, Cāṇakya and Viṣṇugupta. According to Ganapati Sastri, "the author of Arthasastra was named as Kautalya, because he was of Kutalagotra and since he was born at Caṇaka, he was called Cāṇakya, and his parents baptised him as Viṣṇugupta." (Ganapati Sastri 1980: 4). The actual place of Kuatalya's birth is also riddled with controversy. Several possibilities, however, have been proffered-- from Caṇaka in Punjab to Kanchipuram in Tamilnadu to Kuttalur in Kerala. (Ganapati Sastri 1980: 10-11). Western scholars such as Winternitz, Jolly and Keith have raised questions about the authorship. N.P. Unni summarises the points of these scholars and the gist of Ganapati Sastri's responses—1) to the point that Kautalya did not mention the place Pataliputra, Ganapati Sastri points out that even though Kautalya may not have mentioned the place, he mentions the name of the river, Pāṣikā which flowed in that area. The assumption is that if he knew the name of the river in that region, he would have know the nearby area as well; 2.) to the point that Kautalya's political strategies make sense in the context of smaller states rather than an empire, G. Sastri points out that 15th and 16th sections of the 7th chapter deal with an empire; 3) to the point that Megasthenes mentions Chandragupta and not Kautalya, G. Sastri points out that in the context of eulogising the king it was not necessary to make reference to his ministers. Besides, since we only have fragments of Megasthenese "Indika" it is difficult to know if the missing sections contained any reference to Kautalya; 4) to the point that Kautalya's views have been dismissed by others in the same text, G. Sastri points out that it is not unusual for one to present the opposing views; 5) to the point that the name Kautalya suggests an unsavoury meaning, G. Sastri point out that the name Kautalya refers to the descendant of Kutalagotra and threfore no stigma is attached to it. (Ganapati Sastri 1980: 8-9).

Kangle deals with the issue of authorship of the Arthasastra in more detail than any other scholar. He agrees that the traditional view that Kautalya was the author of the book called Arthasastra is entirely based on indirect evidence. For example, the Nītisāra of Kāmandaka associates the Arthasastra with the one who destroyed the Nandas hinting Kautalya; Dandin refers to Daṇḍanīti (Arthasastra) as the work of Viṣṇugupta; Mudrārākṣasa of Viśākhadatta gives evidence of his familiarity with both Kautalya and the Arthasastra; Jain canonical works such as Nandisūtra mention Koḍillaya (Kautilya) among the false doctrines; Bāṇa in his Kādambari refers to Kautilyaśāstra. Kangle agrees that all of these are not decisive evidences. (Kangle 1992 : 60-61). He then debates with modern indologists' arguments. As per A.B. Keith's objection that the Arthasastra does not indicate that its author

knows anything about the fall of the Nandas and the Maurya empire,
Kangle suggest that the Arthasastra is not Kautalya's memoirs and
"that in ancient Indian references to contemporary events in works of
any kind are, as a rule, hard to find." (Kangle 1992: 63). He dismisses
R.G. Bhandarkar's argument that Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya does not
refer to Kautalya even though it refers to Chandragupta's court by
saying that Patañjali does not mention anything about the entourage of
Chandragupta. He also dismisses Winternitz's claim that Megasthenes
who was in the court of Chandragupta was silent about Kautalya by
saying that he (Megasthenes) was in fact silent about all the minsters.
(Kangle 1992: 62). He likewise dismisses J. Jolly's contention that
since rules of the building were mentioned the city of Pāṭaliputra shoud
also have been mentioned by saying that the author's aim is to describe
the building rules for a palace in general and not with reference to any
particular one. (Kangle 1992: 63). Turning to the contention that the
text of the Arthasastra was intended for smaller states than the emipre
of the kind ruled by the Mauryas, Kangle argues that the Arthasastra's
case is the same as other *smṛti*-s such as Manu, Yājñavalkya, and
Viṣṇu which also do not reflect any contemporary political situation.
(Kangle 1992: 64). Kangle also rejects the view of O. Stein that the
Arthasastra does not reflect the conditions that Megasthenes describes
arguing that Stein himself admits of the unreliability of Megasthenes'
account and secondly that the Arhasastra is not "expected to describe
the actual conditions as they prevailed at Pāṭalīputra during the reign of
Candragupta Maurya." (Kangle 1992: 67).

Date of the Text

Much of the debate on the date of the text is based on what the text
says or does not say about the empire of Chandragupta Maurya. Most
scholars including Kangle agree that the text does not say much about
the empire of Chandragupta Maurya and therefore might not have
been written during that period. However, Kangle points out —

> It does, indeed appear strange to us that an author writing a
> work on politics should so completely keep out all references to
> contemporary events, particularly when he is believed to have
> taken an active part in shaping the political events of his time. A
> partial explanation of this may be that he wished to stick to the
> method of the śāstra which was intended for the use of rulers in
> general, not of any particular ruler. It may also be that he had
> written this text before he took part in active political life."
> (Kangle 1992: 108).

However it might be, since the text is written without much reference to any particular political conditions, it can be argued that it would be equally difficult to deny that it could have been written during the time of Chandragupta Maurya.

Some tentative remarks

Arthasastra is one that has been studied very widely not only by traditional indologists but also by other social scientists both in India and in the west. Nevertheless, there are very few texts that have the difficulties that this text has in demonstrating the authorship and date. Inspite of all the scholarly debates around these issues in the last few decades, no one has conclusively placed the text at a particular period and associated it with a particular person. Nevertheless, the popular tendency is to associate the text with Kautalya/Kautilya and place it around the time of Chandragupta Maurya. The difficulties are far too many. First, there is the problem of the name as to what it meant and where the person came from. The second problem has to do with whether it was written by Kautalya/Kautilya or by a Pundit. Third, the text makes no reference to the political conditions of the Mauryan empire and the text seems to have been written as a timeless general guide for any king or political administration. In view of these fundamental difficulties and no further evidence coming through, it might be that the popular view will prevail, namely that Kautalya/Kautilya is the author of the text and that he was the minister of Chandragupta Maurya.

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