



*Comparison  
and Comparative Method*

*Program and Book of Abstracts*

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Institute of Oriental Studies

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The Coffee Break Conference – 6



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## Program

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### Introduction

09.00–09.05 *Introduction to the Coffee Break Project* Camillo Formigatti

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Thursday, 17th, 09.05–12.50:

### Linguistic Selves: Language and Identity in the Premodern World

chair: Andrew Ollett

09.05–09.10 *Introduction to the Panel* Andrew Ollett

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09.10–10.00 *Prakrit Poets and Troubadours* Andrew Ollett

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10.00–10.50 *“No Language, No Text, No Region”: Identity, Poetry, and Language in the Līlātilakam* Sivan Goren

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10.50–11.10 COFFEE BREAK

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11.10–12.00 *Mapping Out Social Identities: South Indian Society as Depicted in Sanskrit Messenger Poems* Lidka Szczepanik

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12.00–12.50 *The Utterly Barbarous Sanskrit of Nepalese Manuscripts or How to Write Incorrectly and Produce Meaningful Texts* Camillo Formigatti

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13.00–14.00

LUNCH

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Thursday, 17th, 14.00–19.00:

### The “Religion” Challenge: Comparative Religious Studies and the Trouble to Transfer Conceptual Terms from Europe to Asia

chair: Ann-Kathrin Wolf and Madlen Krüger

14.00–14.10 *Introduction to the Panel* Ann-Kathrin Wolf and Madlen Krüger

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14.10–15.00 *The Buddha Visits Revisited. History and Myth in a Comparative Perspective* Ann-Kathrin Wolf

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15.00–15.50 *The Sacrifice of Others and the Understanding of Early Modern India* Marianna Ferrara

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15.50–16.40 *Translating English: A Role for Philosophy in the Interpretation of Sanskrit Texts* Christopher Framarin

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16.40–17.00 COFFEE BREAK

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17.00–17.50 *The Goddess Kāmākhya: Religio-Political Implications in the Tribalisation Process* Paolo E. Rosati

17.50–18.40 *Religious and Political Notions on the Relations of the Religious and Secular Spheres in Sri Lanka* Madlen Krüger

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Friday, 18th, 09.00–15.30:  
**Is Theology Comparable?**  
**Comparison Applied to “Theology” and “God”**  
chair: Elisa Freschi

09.00–09.10 *Introduction to the Panel* Elisa Freschi

09.10–10.00 *On Comparing God: Incomparability, Non-Comparability, and the Difference between Them* Ralph Weber

10.00–10.50 *“Who” is Allah? Comparative Remarks on Islam as a Religious Phenomenon* Marco Lauri

10.50–11.40 *Beyond Compare? The Image of God in the Śaraṇāgatigadyam* Halina Marlewicz

11.40–11.55 COFFEE BREAK

11.55–12.45 *Sacrament: the Name for a Universal Religious Category?* Francesco Valerio Tommasi

12.45–13.35 *“The Poetry of Thought” in the Theology of the Tripurārahasya* Silvia Schwarz Linder

13.35–14.40

**LUNCH**

14.40–15.30 *Suffering and Well-Being in Buddhist Ethics* Stephen Harris

Friday, 18th, 15.30–19.15:  
**Knowing the Unknown:**  
**Extra-Ordinary Cognitions in Brahmanical Philosophies**  
chair: Marco Ferrante

15.30–15.40 *Introduction to the Panel* Marco Ferrante

15.40–16.30 *Hemacandra’s Response to the Mīmāṃsā Critique of Omniscience: Analysis of Pramāṇamīmāṃsāsvopajñāvṛtti 1.1.48–62* Ana Bajzelj

16.30–16.45 COFFEE BREAK

16.45–17.35 *Maṇḍana Miśra’s Two Concepts of Omniscience: A Dissident View within the Mīmāṃsā* Hugo David

17.35–18.25	<i>The Metaphysics and Epistemology of Supernormal Perception in Early and Late Nyāya</i>	Mike Williams
18.25–19.15	<i>Extra-Ordinary Language: On Grammar, Linguistic Yoga, and Levels of Speech in Bhartṛhari's Vākyapadīya</i>	Ma'ayan Nidbach

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Saturday, 19th, 09.00–12.00:  
**The Trans-Cultural Reshaping of Psychoanalysis,  
or the Perks of Comparative Psychodynamics**  
chair: Daniele Cuneo

09.00–09.50	<i>Introduction to the Panel: Perks and Risks of Comparative Psychodynamics</i>	Daniele Cuneo
09.50–10.40	<i>The Split Mother: Material Ambiguity, Hindu Mythology and Object Relations Theory</i>	Romina Rossi
10.40–11.30	<i>The Creation of Desire: Pages from Heinrich Zimmer</i>	Omar Abu Dbei

12.00–onwards  
**LUNCH**

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# Linguistic Selves: Language and Identity in the Premodern World

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chair:  
Andrew Ollett

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## Prakrit Poets and Troubadours

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ANDREW OLLETT

I will focus on two moments in the social life of language in premodernity which might at first seem to have nothing to do with each other: the beginnings of troubadour poetry in Europe in the twelfth century, and the beginnings of Prakrit poetry in India in the first century. Both moments produced a courtly, expressive, and largely secular literature that was unprecedented in their respective cultural contexts. Both employed for this purpose a language that marked a decisive break with the past. And both laid the foundation for a “language order” that would organize the way people thought about and used language in India and Europe for centuries: Dante used the model of troubadour poetry to theorize a vernacular literary language, and Indian thinkers made the dichotomy of Sanskrit and Prakrit one of the organizing principles of textual production. What I want to emphasize in this comparison is that the configuration of language and identity represented by each of these moments is not simply an early stage in the development of national languages. In fact they offer radical differences from what I will call the “primordial” view of language that has deep historical roots but became politically salient in the age of nationalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Primordialism says, circularly, that a language must always be defined in terms of a social identity that is prior to it, and that social identities in turn are constituted and reinforced by linguistic solidarity. It says that the languages that most closely map onto “natural” identities, as the nation was imagined to be at one point, are the most “natural” languages, and others—including Latin in medieval Europe and Sanskrit in medieval India—can be sustained only by massive interference in the natural order. The beginnings of lyric poetry in first-century India and twelfth-century Europe represent, in contrast, an “elective” view. Language was not defined in terms of its speakers but in terms of literary practices, and hence membership in these linguistic communities was not inherited through birth but acquired through education and talent. This electivism had elements of both universalism (the literary cultures organized around the “new languages” of *Langue d’oc* and Prakrit were in principle open to anyone, regardless of class, religion, gender and region) and elitism (effectively they were peopled by hyper-competitive courtiers and courtesans) that gave these languages a much different extension and sociality than national languages. And above all, they were deeply aestheticized codes: the community imagined through them was one of clever and sensitive readers. Comparing these two moments allows us not just to appraise the unique configuration of language and identity in their own worlds, but also to subject to critical scrutiny the deceptively-natural configuration of language and identity in ours.

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## **“No Language, No Text, No Region”: Identity, Poetry, and Language in the Līlātilakam**

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SIVAN GOREN

The decision to write a grammar is a dramatic one for any speech community. In many ways, it is a declaration of independence.<sup>1</sup> Yet, the main aim of Kerala’s first grammar, the Līlātilakam, is not that of defining or describing the spoken language, i.e. *bhāṣā*, but its literary ‘high’ variety, named Maṇipravāḷam and defined as a union of *bhāṣā* with Sanskrit.

Using an intricate network of internal opponents, the anonymous author of the Līlātilakam sets to prove that Kerala-bhāṣā is a separate language, and not a local variant of Coḷa language; that with the right combination of Sanskrit, this language is suitable to bear the best kind of poetry, and that being so, it deserves to have an articulated grammar. And yet, he writes it all in Sanskrit, and draws heavily from the tradition of Sanskrit poetics, and less obviously so, from that of Tamil grammar. In which way can a poetic treatise of this hybrid nature express the identity conflict of a group of people, or their ambition of self-determination? Does it configure it in any way? How is it different from other grammars, describing ‘natural’ languages? These questions will be dealt with comparison to two languages, upon which the author of the Līlātilakam himself was obliged to reflect, when attempting to establish the place of Maṇipravāḷam as a literary modus, and of Kerala-bhāṣā as an independent language: Sanskrit, the ‘cosmopolitan’ Indian language, and Tamil, the regional neighbor from the east, with its rich poetical and political past. I will give special care to the case of Tamil maṇipravāḷam, both as it was understood by the Līlātilakam’s author, and in a broader sense.

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<sup>1</sup>Panicker Venugopala 2013, “Language Nationalism and Language Planning in Traditional grammars in Malayalam”, p. 3, unpublished.

## Mapping Out Social Identities: South Indian Society as Depicted in Sanskrit Messenger Poems

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LIDKA SZCZEPANIK

Messenger poems (*dūtakāvya*, *sandēśakāvya*) arguably constitute the most fecund literary phenomenon in the history of South Asia. Patterned in most part after Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta* Cloud-Messenger, these poems usually posit a pair of separated lovers, one of whom sends an unlikely messenger – for example a cloud, the wind or a language – with a message to the faraway beloved. Typically, the route the messenger is to take is described in the first half of the poem and the second imagines it reaching its destination and delivering the missive.

Dozens of Sanskrit *dūtakāvya*s have been composed over the centuries in India and a whole other corpus of messenger poems exists in various regional languages, mainly South Indian vernaculars. However, this paper will focus on the two particularly fascinating South-Indian messenger poems composed in Sanskrit: the Keralan *Kokilasandēśa* of Uddaṇḍa Śāstrī (15 C.E.) and the more famous Tamil *Haṃsasandēśa* by Vedāntadeśika (13/14 C.E.).

Though both poems are composed in the *lingua franca* of pre-modern India, they exhibit a strong influence of vernacular literary models and manifest strong social identification with their respective geographical and cultural settings. They both aim at mapping out a certain area, yet these maps, as in the case of all *dūtakāvya*s, are not restricted only to topographical charts. Descriptions of the messenger's journey plot its progress over a specific terrain but also between areas of various social, religious, cultural and communal properties which form an environment projected on the basis of the poet's personal experience. The aim of this paper will be to trace the distinct social identification exhibited in the aforementioned poems, with special attention paid to the dichotomy of the southern 'Us' versus the northern 'them'.

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# The Utterly Barbarous Sanskrit of Nepalese Manuscripts or How to Write Incorrectly and Produce Meaningful Texts

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CAMILLO FORMIGATTI

*ekatra samkṣiptadhīyā prakīrṇajanavarṇanam |  
deśabhāṣāpadair miśram adhunā kriyate mayā ||*

In this [chapter] I present now synthetically a “Depiction of Various Classes of People” which includes words of the “local language.”

Kṣemendra, first half of the 11th century

In spite of our possessing three independent MSS., the Sanskrit is so utterly barbarous, as to render even the main thread of the story all but unintelligible to the ordinary reader.

Cecil Bendall, 1883

This barbarous Sanskrit tinged with Newari can only be translated: “After him the king of Bhoṭa came and established his rule in the Nepal valley.”

Luciano Petech, 1984

Deviations from Pāṇineian Sanskrit do not make for an ungrammatical text. [...] Quite assuredly, Newar Hybrid Sanskrit is legitimate Sanskrit, because correct and wrong Sanskrit only exists when the authors demonstrate that they master correct Sanskrit.

Axel Michaels, 2010

These four quotations should exemplify different understandings and attitudes towards the notion of language identity and purity of language. The ability to master (in speech and writing) an ideally pure language has been used throughout history as a fundamental criterion to include into or exclude people from a community (for instance Greek speakers vs. *barbaroi* or Sanskrit speakers vs. *mlecchas*). However, the perception of language purity and identity may vary from individual to individual, from cultural area to cultural area, and from historical period to historical period. The poet who in 11th century Kashmir declares the intentional use of words of the “local language” (*deśabhāṣā*) in his Sanskrit poem demonstrates to have a precise idea of the presence of different linguistic communities in his country—he even exploits this matter of fact as a literary device. The peculiar character of “Kashmirian Sanskrit” has been long recognized by scholars as an integral feature of the great literary achievements of Kashmirian authors, and their linguistic identity is considered an enrichment to the Sanskrit literary heritage.

On the other hand, when in the 19th century European Indologists started to study the texts transmitted in Nepalese manuscripts, they often described the Sanskrit of these texts as “barbarous” and simply incorrect. In the last decades however numerous scholars started to study the peculiarities of the so-called Newar Hybrid Sanskrit, both from a linguistic as well as a historical and sociological point of view. The role of Nepal as linking country between South and Central Asia fostered the encounter of different ethnic groups, cultures and languages. The issue of linguistic identity is therefore all the more central in the cultural history of this country. After a brief description of the political and cultural situation of Nepal from the 14th to the 17th century, I will try to present the challenges faced by researchers in the evaluation of Nepalese (Sanskrit?) manuscripts as a means for the assessment of linguistic identity (and possibly literary merits).

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# The “Religion” Challenge: Comparative Religious Studies and the Trouble to Transfer Conceptual Terms from Europe to Asia

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chair:  
Ann-Kathrin Wolf  
and  
Madlen Krüger

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# The Buddha Visits Revisited. History and Myth in a Comparative Perspective

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ANN-KATHRIN WOLF

In a letter from 1832 the British civil servant and orientalist George Turnour presented the Sri Lankan Mahāvamsa among other works as the “principal native historical record in Ceylon” (1836: ii). With this statement he set the career of this text as a historical source in motion. This idea of the Mahāvamsa being a historical source survived in studies on the text until today. Modern history books frequently rely on information of the Mahāvamsa and a major proportion of knowledge about Buddhism is derived from a specific reading-practice of this and similar texts.

However, using the Mahāvamsa as a historical source for the investigation of history is not without problems. One is the use of the European concept ‘history’ for the investigation of South Asian texts. Especially before the post-colonial turn, a positivistic and fact historical approach dominated. ‘History’, in European sense, had, since the seventeenth century, the status of a universal category that considered to be an authentic representation of the past. Everything that was not deemed authentic was classified as myths, legends, or simply forgery. As a consequence, elements of South Asian historiographical works, that did not fit the European criteria for plausible accounts of the past, were not considered as ‘trustworthy’ sources, as a quote from Wilhelm Geiger illustrates: “True, there is no lack of fables and marvellous tales. But they appear as outward decoration which can be easily omitted” (2006: xiv). But the omission of these elements implies the disregard of possibly important narrative structures and rhetorical figures that form (major) parameters of meaning making.

In my paper I will illustrate this in the case of the Buddha Visits, one important narrative strand of several historiographical works, including the Mahāvamsa. In the latter, the Buddha came three times to the island of Sri Lanka. Every visit is connected to a story and different sites. During his first visit he resettles demons from Sri Lanka to another island. The purpose of his second visit is to calm down a battle between two nāga kings. In the course of his third visit he sits on several spots performing meditation. Sri Lankan historiographies like the Mahāvamsa are not alone in claiming to be a land visited by the Buddha. According to Southeast Asian historiographies the Buddha visited several sites in Burma and Thailand. Likewise, in Gandhāra this narrative strand is found. This is obviously a pan-Buddhist pattern of ‘narrating space’, transforming raw spatial spots into meaningful places within an imagined cosmos. This narrative strand gives the legitimisation of being a Buddhist country, a country chosen and designated by the Buddha. Further, it represents an element of telling ‘proper’ history in a, at least Sri Lankan and Southeast Asian, Buddhist sense.

The paper investigates the Buddha Visits in Sri Lankan and Southeast Asian historiographical works as an important element of representing Buddhist history. Thereby, the paper will consider pre- and post-nineteenth century discourses on this important element of Buddhist representations of the past and as a narrative pattern of spatial

meaning-making, blurring the culture-bound binary distinction between ‘history’ and ‘myth’.

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GEIGER, WILHELM (2006), *The Mahāvamsa or The Great Chronicle of Ceylon*, New Delhi [1912].

TURNOUR, GEORGE (1836), *An Epitome of the History of Ceylon compiled from the Native Annals and the First Twenty Chapters of the Mahawanso*, Ceylon.

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## The Sacrifice of Others and the Understanding of Early Modern India

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MARIANNA FERRARA

As an object of study in the history of religions, the theme of ‘sacrifice’ in ancient South Asian exegesis is a controversial issue. Scholars have sometimes approached this category through short-cuts and generalisations. As an example, ‘sacrifice’ has been individuated as the semantic substitute to translate all the Sanskrit terms denoting the ritual activities prescribed in the Vedic compositions, impacting the modern interpretation of the religious practice called *yajña*. In that respect, some years ago the historian of religion Jonathan Z. Smith noticed that “[f]rom the immense variety of human ritual activities, a few have been lifted out by scholars as privileged examples on which to build theories of ritual – preeminently sacrifice”<sup>2</sup>, while more recently Ivan Strenski remarked that, among the most influential theorists about religion, “Hubert and Mauss were, in part at least, embarked on a constructivist project of saying what *ought* to be meant by ‘sacrifice’, rather than with some rough-and-ready survey of ordinary usage of the term. For this reason, Hubert and Mauss labour over several pages arguing how they believe the term, ‘sacrifice,’ *should* be used, to what sort of phenomena it *should* be applied, about what the term ‘*must* designate,’ for what the ‘name *must* be reserved,’ and so on”<sup>3</sup>.

To fully understand the modern debate on religion and ritual we should pull back and think carefully about which cluster of representations has impacted the European (and Judeo-Christian) understanding of the “bizarre” non-European (and non-Judeo-Christian) religious practices and beliefs from the XV century onwards. The most crucial event is certainly the time during which South Asia and other lands away became a good destination for traders, travellers, and evangelizers. Many sources from the XVI- and XVII-century historical archives show how ‘sacrifice’ as a descriptive and interpretative category has been privileged to understand Others, but also to mark or negotiate otherness in the colonial network of cultural and religious identities.

In this theoretical and historical scenario a crucial question arises: did the arbitrary choice to privilege an example *from the immense variety of human ritual activities* influence the modern interpretation of religion and religious practices, more specifically the European attempt to classify and translate the extra-European, in this case South Asian, religious practices and beliefs? What practices are classified as ‘sacrifice’? How these practices, if traceable in the South Asian sources, were defined in the native language?

Data for discussion will be drawn from the travel chronicles and the internal debate within the missionary world for the critical study of the *Indiaes Orientalis*’ religions. We have textual evidence to hold that, in describing the sacrifices of Others, Europeans – both travellers and missionaries – stressed the ‘idolatrous’, ‘pagan’, and ‘difficult to

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<sup>2</sup>J.Z. Smith, “Domestication of Sacrifice”, in R.G. Hamerton-Kelly (ed.), *Violent Origins: Walter Burkert, René Girard, and Jonathan Z. Smith on ritual killing and cultural formation*, Stanford University Press, Stanford (CA) 1987, pp. 191–205: p. 196.

<sup>3</sup>I. Strenski, *Theology and the first theory of sacrifice*, Brill, Leiden 2003, p. 211.

understand' nature of the new observed practices. But at the same time, 'sacrifice' as an interpretative category served them as a tool of comparison between the natives and them, as well as between the new religions and the old ones, i.e. those they knew from ancient Israel and the religions of Greece and Rome or from the vibrant relationship between the West and the muslim culture. As Guy Stroumsa has noted, "the intellectual and religious shock caused by the observation of formerly all-but-unknown religious rituals and beliefs... provided the trigger without which the new discipline could not have been born"<sup>4</sup>, i.e. the study of religion as cultural criticism.

From this range of perspectives, I will investigate the semantic efficacy of the 'sacrifice' paradigm in the description of the temples, idols, rituals, and ceremonies to illustrate how it successfully marks as 'other' the place – theological, social, political – in which the practices and the beliefs have been described as 'erroneous', 'immoral', or 'irrational'. At the same time I will argument that 'sacrifice', as well, was a good term to think because it allowed to overcome the cultural shock: it allowed the Western observers to turn their gaze from the natives to take them in the (known) whole world. The great difference between the travel chronicles and the missionary works is, obviously, due to the ultimate goal of their authors. The missionaries, as the most attentive ethnologists of the early modern age, have played a pre-eminent role in defining the odd religious phenomena in a historical and comparative approach in view of the conversion; as well, traders and travellers have produced a precious amount of descriptions, storytellings, and thoughts that show a 'modern' sensitiveness toward the new worlds, giving a different – sometimes more disinterested – glimpse of the 'passage to India' in early modern history.

I do not intend to discuss how to interpret the 'sacrifice' (as i.e. gift, communication, substitution, contract, etc.), rather to investigate what place the authoritative interlocutors – both of the *observed* ones and of the *observers* – have given to it, and how such privileged 'placing' might have oriented the academic way to look at the 'sacrifice' as a crucial category to compare cultures and religions, but also to classify and interpret their practices.

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<sup>4</sup>G. G. Stroumsa, *A new science. The discovery of religion in the age of reason*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2010, p. 2.

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## Translating English: A Role for Philosophy in the Interpretation of Sanskrit Texts

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CHRISTOPHER FRAMARIN

Any scholar who translates from one language into another knows the difficulty – and sometimes the impossibility – of finding words and phrases that accurately reflect the sense of the original. The difficulty of this task might seem multiplied in the case of translating from Sanskrit, since Sanskrit words are notoriously polysemic, reflecting one meaning in one context, and another, sometimes opposite meaning in another context. And yet, interpreters tend to ignore or minimize the more fundamental problem of the ambiguity and obscurity of the English terms into which they translate Sanskrit. I say this problem is more fundamental because a translator must be relatively certain about the meaning of her English term before she concludes that it translates a Sanskrit term adequately. Indeed, she must be relatively certain about the meaning of her English term before she even considers whether it translates a Sanskrit term adequately. Nonetheless, most interpreters use English words as if their meanings were self-evident, and known in common by all, when they are not. In the case of the non-English speaker, this problem is multiplied, since she must translate her own language into English or vice versa, and translate one or the other into Sanskrit. The work of clarifying English terms is commonplace in contemporary western analytic philosophy, as most of us know, and from the outside this work often seems tedious. We might be glad that we don't have to do the work ourselves. And yet, the result of this labor is a wide range of precise definitions and distinctions, generally devoid of the ambiguity found in ordinary language. Additionally, much of this work takes ordinary language and common usage as its starting point. Its technical terms and distinctions are typically meant to track ordinary language, rather than replace it. Consider an example. Some philosophers draw the distinction between sensory pleasure and attitudinal pleasure. Sensory pleasures are pleasurable bodily sensations or feelings (Feldman 2004: 54). The pleasant feel of a massage, the pleasant taste of good food, or the pleasing sound of running water are examples of sensory pleasures. Attitudinal pleasures, in contrast, are a class of object-directed mental states that include enjoyments, satisfactions, likings, and so on. Examples of attitudinal pleasures include my enjoyment of a baseball game, or my contentment that I am going to sleep. That states like enjoyment, and so on are properly categorized as pleasures is supported by the fact that they can be described as pleasures. To say that I enjoy a baseball game is to say that I am pleased with it, or that I take pleasure in it. At the same time, the translation of terms like 'enjoyment', 'contentment', and so on into talk of pleasure should not obscure the distinction between sensory pleasures and attitudinal pleasures. To say that I am pleased with a baseball game is not simply equivalent to saying that I feel pleasant sensations as a result of (or amidst) the baseball game (Feldman 2004: 56-7). The point of all of this is that the word 'pleasure' is used in various ways. Sometimes we use the word 'pleasure' to refer to physical, bodily pleasures – sensory pleasures – and sometimes we use the word 'pleasure' as a synonym for enjoyment, contentment and so on. It seems, at least

initially, that in translating passages that discuss pleasure, a translator who appreciates this distinction is better off than the translator who ignores it. In order to see this, consider some possible scenarios. If the Sanskrit word refers to a sensory pleasure in particular, or an attitudinal pleasure in particular, then obviously it is better to translate it as ‘sensory pleasure’ or ‘attitudinal pleasure’ than it is to translate it simply as ‘pleasure’. If the Sanskrit refers to both, then it is more accurate to translate it – at least the first time – as ‘sensory pleasure and attitudinal pleasure’ than simply as pleasure. If nothing else, the distinction might be relevant elsewhere in the text or tradition, or be helpful in bringing the text into dialogue with Western material. Now these first three scenarios might seem to ignore what is truly troublesome about utilizing the technical terms and distinctions of analytic philosophy. Each assumes that the distinction between sensory pleasures and attitudinal pleasures is at home in the Sanskrit material. The application of the distinction between sensory pleasure and attitudinal pleasure seems much more problematic in those cases in which the Sanskrit seems to note no such distinction. Furthermore, there might be reason to doubt that any Sanskrit material explicitly notes the distinction between sensory pleasure and attitudinal pleasure. If this is right, then the first three scenarios never even arise. The case against the employment of the distinctions of analytic philosophy is not so straightforward, however. In some of the cases that fall under this fourth scenario, a Sanskrit text might assume the distinction between sensory pleasure and attitudinal pleasure without stating it explicitly. I have made a lot of the technical terms ‘sensory pleasure’ and ‘attitudinal pleasure’ and tried to define them carefully. In the end, however, it is hard to see that there is much controversy in the claim that Sanskrit texts acknowledge pleasure in these two senses. Does anyone doubt that certain Sanskrit texts understand certain pleasures as physical feelings? Does anyone doubt that certain Sanskrit texts understand certain pleasures as positive attitudes toward objects – states like enjoyment, contentment, and so on? It still might be that in some cases that fall under this fourth scenario, the distinction between sensory pleasure and attitudinal pleasure is truly out of place in the Sanskrit material itself. If the distinction is truly out of place in the Sanskrit material itself, it must be because the Sanskrit term does not refer to sensory pleasure or attitudinal pleasure. In this case, however, the word ‘pleasure’ is just as out of place as the words ‘sensory pleasure’ and ‘attitudinal pleasure’. If the Sanskrit does not refer to sensory pleasure or attitudinal pleasure, then it does not refer to what we call ‘pleasure’. Before concluding, I want to offer a specific example from Indian texts, in which the distinction between sensory pleasure and pain matters. I am working on a project that considers ancient and contemporary objections to Hindu renunciate ideals. Some of these objections – like those of the Cārvākas – claim that the pursuit of renunciate ideals is foolish because it precludes such a wide range of pleasures in particular. Now it should be clear from the outset that the force of this objection crucially depends on how broadly the term ‘pleasure’ is understood. The common characterization of both the samnyāsin and the karmayogin as nirdvandva, in particular, is especially important in understanding the extent to which the life of the renunciate is devoid of pleasure. Monier-Williams defines nirdvandva as “indifferent to the alternatives or opposite pairs (of feelings, [such] as pleasure and pain), neither glad nor sorry etc.” (Monier-Williams 1960: 541). If the pleasures and pains toward which the sage is impartial are “feelings,” then they are sensory pleasures and pains in particular, since sensory pleasures and pains are just feelings or sensations of pleasure

and pain. If the sage's impartiality toward the opposites means that he is "neither glad nor sorry, etc.," toward the opposites, however, then his impartiality entails that he takes neither attitudinal pleasure nor pain in earthly things quite generally. This definition of nirdvandva implies that the distinction between sensory pleasure and attitudinal pleasure is at least implicit in standard characterizations of the samnyāsin and karmayogin. This makes the life of the sage seem especially pleasure-deficient. And this fact turns out to be important in assessing whether the sage forsakes the good life.

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## The Goddess Kāmākhyā: Religio-Political Implications in the Tribalisation Process

PAOLO E. ROSATI

It is possible to observe that cultural interaction between *hindū* tradition and local, tribal or non-Aryan cultures often ended up with the Sanskrit culture's attempt to manipulate the local beliefs with the purpose of incorporating them into the Brahmanic religio-political folds through the legitimisation of an authoritative orthodoxy legitimisation. In this interactive process it emerges that the local traditions are not only passive but they also appropriate and transform what they perceive to be orthodox elements: it is an attempt to obtain a legitimisation to enter into the Brahmanic system, often considered as a source of power.

In many South Asian contexts this process, defined by Srinivas (1952: 30; 1956: 481–482) as “sanskritization”,<sup>5</sup> resulted into an attempt “to acquire the traditional symbols of high status” (*id.* 1966: 28; cf. Carroll 1977: 355–360; Sahu 2001: 6). In the specific case-study of goddess Kāmākhyā that I am going to analyse, is not possible to apply the brahmanisation/sanskritisation concept because from her study it emerges that the *hindū* kings – through religion – legitimated the Assamese goddess as well as what can be considered the ritual praxis enrooted in the tribal (non- Aryan) traditions. This was conceived as tool to enhance their power, that appears as widely linked with the autochthonous liminal powers as the use of blood, violence and sexual fluids (*KP*: 85.13–14, 79–81; cf. Urban 2010: 91–98; White 2006: 67–68). Furthermore the sacrificial offers of blood were necessary for the preservation of the royal power, while if not officiated disasters would strike the kingdom (*KP*: 85.12–13).

In the Assamese context it is clear that the so (wrongly) called “little” traditions imposed their own religious customs above the “high” (Sanskrit) culture. Indeed they were able to manipulate and transform the mainstream *hindū* goddess, influencing the Brahmanic cult and religion with tribal elements (cf. Dold 2004: 90), perhaps a first step towards what is going to be known as *śākta-tantra* phenomenon.

The Assamese goddess Kāmākhyā may be considered a case-study of the cross-cultural interaction between tribal and *hindū* traditions, culminated in the cult of the *yoni* (vulva), core of the *hindū* state formation process in the ancient Kāmarūpa (Assam). The cult of the *yoni*, that was probably imported in north-eastern India by the Austroasiatic people, was at the origin of the Kāmākhyā's worship, already practiced by the Kirāta tribes before the Aryan invasion (Kakati 1948: 43–44).

In the Kāmākhyā case-study clearly emerges the relationship between political and religious power: the *hindū* (or hinduised) rulers need to use religion in order to maintain political control, or to found a state entity (cf. Kulke 1992: 57–58). The Assamese

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<sup>5</sup>Srinivas prefers the term “sanskritisation” instead of “brahmanisation” because it is a wider process that not only involves the *brāhmaṇa* caste but also the other “twice-born” castes; however the two concepts can be interchangeable, because of the custom variation (in time and space) of the *brāhmaṇa* caste.

*brāhmaṇas* manipulated the mythology of Dakṣa’s sacrifice, legitimizing the *yoni* symbol through the suicide of Satī and the dismemberment of her corpse, which originated the *śākta pīṭhas* (“seats of the goddess”) – as the north-eastern *purāṇas* evidence (*KP*: 16–18; *DBP*: 7.30.44–50; *MBP*: 11). So that the *yoni pīṭha* emerged as the core of *śākta pīṭhas* network, built upon ancient tribal sacred spots – all of them were dominated by blood sacrifices and sexual rituals –, then they were absorbed into Brahmanic religious folds through a wide cross-cultural dialectic (Urban 2011).

The Puranic mythology was not only an instrument for the assimilation of tribal deities as well as myths (Sahu 2001: 7), but also a stratagem to reduce the hiatus between Brahmanic and tribal tradition and to help the cultural melt. Particularly the manipulation of the Satī’s mythology produced two outcomes: firstly, from the religious perspective it allowed the fusion between Assamese tribal goddesses and the mainstream *hindū* goddess; secondly, on the political level, it ensured the local inhabitants’ support to the royal power. In short the mythology codifies and provides a religious sanction to tribal traditions (Nath 2001: 38–39), and it reflects a socio-political and a religious situation, that needs to be legitimized.

In the Assamese context this cross-cultural union is exemplified by the *yoni* symbol. It became the “*yoni* of Satī” that is preserved in the *garbhagr̥ha* (shrine) of the Kāmākhyā’s temple on the Kāmagiri hill (near modern Guwahati). This site, changed from being a sacrificial tribal site into the love meeting place of Śiva and the goddess in their aniconic shapes of *liṅga* (phallus) and *yoni*, while also becoming the burial ground of the goddess: it symbolizes a micro-replica of the Satī’s death as well as of the Śiva-Śakti eternal union (cf. *KP*: 62.1–3; 63.135–137; 67.69). Not only Kāmākhyā goddess was absorbed into the Brahmanical pantheon, then she was upraised to the *iṣṭādevata* (royal tutelary deity) rank, perhaps to facilitate the Kāmarūpa’s *hindū* state formation (cf. Kulke 1992: 57–58, 77–78; Mishra 2004: 26ff.).

The connection of Kāmākhyā with fertility and blood sacrifices is a common feature noticed in several sanskritised goddesses. These goddesses are usually represented in the *garbhagr̥ha* through an anthropomorphic image, thereby confining the aniconic worship to outside of the shrine and thus excluding the sexual and blood practices from the *garbhagr̥ha* – inherited from tribal traditions (cf. Eschmann 1978: 81–89; Mallebrein 1999: 140–142; Brighenti 2001: 28–30; Urban 2010: 57–58). So that why was Kāmākhyā not anthropomorphized after being entered in the Brahmanic pantheon? It may be because she had been absorbed into the *hindū* tradition well-before she became an *iṣṭādevata*, or perhaps the process was quick and there was not enough time for the creation of a goddess’s image. Moreover, while today the cult inside the *sanctum* may be considered orthodox, Kāmākhyā has been well-known to be a blood thirsty goddess as it is well testified by epigraphic records and textual prescriptions. The goddess aniconism and the highly polluting elements linked to her worship allow one to speculate that Kāmākhyā represents a case of tribalisation (or deshification) of the mainstream *hindū* goddess, placing the “tribalisation” on the opposite side of “sanskritisation” concept.<sup>6</sup>

Tribalisation and sanskritisation should be considered in relation to the Indian socio-cultural context dominated by the caste (*jāti*) system and a hierarchical ideology (Du-

<sup>6</sup>I do not agree with Srinivas’s (1956: 494–495) idea of sanskritization as a two-way process, but I prefer to use the concept of “tribalisation” to indicate the influence of the lower or non-Aryan groups above the “twice-born” castes.



mont 1991). While considering castes as an open and fluid system, Srinivas (1952: 30) also discussed sanskritisation as the tribal and/or low cast “adoption of the Brahmanic way of life”. I would define tribalisation as not only the permanence of tribal characters but even the predominance of them above Brahmanic ones: i. e. violent sacrifices, blood and meat offers, ritual consumption of alcohol and sexual fluids, aniconism of the deity in its *garbhagṛha*, etc...

The sexual rites, particularly the ritual intake of sexual fluids, have been well integrated in the ritual praxis of the Kāmākhyā temple, and, as stated by Urban (2010: 100), they can be considered the “counterpart to the public offering of blood sacrifice”. Satī’s suicide underlines the construction of a new cosmos, admitting on one hand Rudra-Śiva in the Brahmanic pantheon, while on the other hand leaving the possibility of a direct access to the goddess’s power on earth through the creation of the *śākta pīṭhas*. In this sense, her self-sacrifice is both a destructive and a creative act. It is with the worship of the *yoni* that the goddess’s body is ideally reintegrated; as an inversion of the primordial sacrifice, through the reintegration of Satī’s body the universe finds a new order (*ibidem*: 107–108).

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*Sanskrit Texts (ॐ Abb.):*

- DBP* = *Devībhāgavatapurāṇa*. Pandey, R.T. [ed.] 1956. Kashi: Pandit Pustakalya.  
*KP* = *The Kālikāpurāṇa: Text, Introduction and Translation in English*. Shastri, B.N. [ed.] 2008. Delhi: Nag Publisher [1st ed.: 1991].  
*MBP* = *Mahābhāgavata Purāṇa: An Ancient Treatise on Śakti Cult*. Kumar, P. [ed.] 1983. Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers.

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# Religious and Political Notions on the Relations of the Religious and Secular Spheres in Sri Lanka

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MADLEN KRÜGER

One feature of the modern concept of religion is its dissociation from the so called secular sphere. This differentiation between a religious and a secular sphere is especially seen in the modern distinction between religion and politics. In this paper I will demonstrate under which categories religion and politics have been debated through pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial times in Sri Lanka. In doing so, different sources will be used: For pre-colonial times the Pāli-canon and the Mahāvamsa and for colonial and post-colonial times the Sri Lankan constitutions. This comparison allows for a detailed analysis of modifications of the religious and political sphere and their relational structure during these times because all sources are significant for the approach of the terms religion and politics. According to premodern times the differentiation between religion and politics took place along the cultural patterns of *laukika* and *lokottara*. Therefore, a division occurred between the categories “worldly” – Buddhist kings – and “otherworldly” – Buddhist monks –, their scope of functions; areas of responsibilities and conjunctions. Of particular relevance in these pre-modern descriptions are the ties between these spheres. For instance, Religion as a “otherworldly” category has been seen in opposition to a non-religious section which concerns worldly affairs, but this classification consists of a specific relational structure. With the beginning of colonial times and the initiation of concepts like that of secularism, pre-colonial cultural patterns received new dimensions of interpretations. Now the relation between religion and politics is discussed in terms of separation. Thus religion has to be private and barred from politics. This colonial concept of religion is for example also mirrored in the Sinhalese term for religion – *āgama*. This term in a new/modern usage refers to the Christian and colonial concept of religion in the meaning of a textual tradition and is restricted to the Buddhist doctrine. So there is a *bauddha-āgama* as such as others like *kristiyāni-āgama*. The term Buddha *sāsana* on the other hand is used in a broader sense. It not only describes Buddhism in its doctrinal form but includes institutions that tie the teachings of the Buddha to society. In other words, the usage of the term Buddha *sāsana* for Buddhism implies a link between the religious and political spheres whilst the term *bauddha-āgama* stands for their separation. In this paper I will focus on different presentations of the connections between the religious and political sphere during pre-colonial times and their transformation in colonial and post-colonial times through the ‘Western’ concept of secularization. Furthermore, I will show how these transformations have been implemented in the first constitutions of Sri Lanka (starting with 1815/1818) as a colonial source to practically transfer the colonial taxonomy of the relations between religion and politics.

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# Is Theology Comparable? Comparison Applied to “Theology” and “God”

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chair:  
Elisa Freschi

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## **On Comparing God: Incomparability, Non-Comparability, and the Difference between Them**

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RALPH WEBER

In this paper, I will first present a philosophy of comparison and mark out the philosophical limits of comparison, including the meaning of frequent assertions of incomparability, colloquial and other. I then draw on a recent discussion in contemporary ethics, in which incomparability and non-comparability are strictly distinguished. This leads me to an examination of the claim of God's incomparability (or non-comparability?) and to a variety of ways how - in spite of that claim - God can be compared.

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## **“Who” is Allah? Comparative Remarks on Islam as a Religious Phenomenon**

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MARCO LAURI

Allah, literally “The [One] God” is an Arabic word that is widely employed in other languages to refer to the Muslim God. In Arabic, it is also employed by Christians and Jews; the vast majority of Muslims, which does not speak Arabic in everyday life, uses it alongside the word for “God” in their language to indicate the God of Islam. It is apparently clear from the Qur’an and most of the early Muslim religious sources that Muslims always considered “Allah” to be the God of the Old and New Testaments, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. However, the concepts of God in Islam tend to differ in many respects from the ones usual in Christianity and, to a lesser extent, Judaism. Even today, many people of Christian background feel, partly because of misinformation, that “Allah” is a “different” divine figure.

The paper will discuss some comparative aspects of notion of “God” in Islam, with regard to some Medieval philosophical and theological sources. The medieval theological debate in Islam centered around the discussion about God’s attributes and the relationship between God’s omnipotence and the creatures’ free will. The consensus emerging among religious scholars from the eleventh century AD onwards tended to emphasise God’s will and God’s word, and to minimize the role of free will of creatures; God was seen as a “person”. There were, however, dissenting voices, primarily among “heterodox” Shii sects and among philosophical circles (not without cross-influences between the two). Philosophers focused on the rational necessity of God’s existence, on his ontological nature rather than His relationship with His creatures. My paper will describe the tension between the philosophical and the mainstream Sunni views of God, focusing on its epistemological aspects and suggesting some socio-political implications of the debate.

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## Beyond Compare? The Image of God in the Śaraṇāgatigadyam

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HALINA MARLEWICZ

The prose-poem Śaraṇāgatigadyam written by a South Indian theologian Rāmānuja (traditionally dated 1075-1140) contains a description of the process of taking refuge in God (śaraṇāgati) in a series of consecutive steps to be taken by the Vaishnava devotee. The spiritual practice of śaraṇāgati culminates in an experience which has a potentially transformative power for the spirit of the believer. One of important elements of the practice is an incessant and passionate prayer to Vishnu, in which the devotee surrenders completely to God in/through love (paramabhakti), with a wish to remain eternally His servant. In the prayer the devotee addresses Vishnu in a series of litany-like invocations, in which His attributes are enumerated. The words of the prayer, which are pronounced in a specific order and sequence, unveil the Vaishnava concept of personal God. Firstly, He is characterized with two primary distinguishing features: absolute perfection (kalyāṇaikatāna) and a complete distinction from all that is not such perfection (akhilāheyapratyanīka). Secondly, there are given characteristics of His nature proper (svarūpa) and further there are specified attributes of His divine form (divyarūpa) of a compassionate and merciful God.

On the example of the prayer found in the Śaraṇāgatigadyam I would like to bring up to discussion some general questions regarding prayer. Is prayer a God modelling tool? Does it represent a systematic and theologically rigid image of God? Can a prayer be interpreted along the lines of theopoetics concerned with evoking experience of God and not postulating His particular model? If that be true, can one open up to the experience of God without any pre-conception of His nature? If the prayer is meant to be the tool to a spiritual transformation of the believer, where does its transformative power lie? How does personal God become 'known' to the believer through the prayer? Is the religious experience of personal God in the prayer comparable?

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## **Sacrament: the Name for a Universal Religious Category?**

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FRANCESCO VALERIO TOMMASI

The term “sacrament” was developed inside the Christian tradition. In the discussion of the so-called “Church Fathers”, who established the official doctrine in first centuries after Christ, Latin authors translated with this term the Greek *mysterion* that in its turn renders the Hebrew *sod* and the Aramaic *raz*, found in the Hebrew Bible. In the Latin juridical tradition, “sacrament” designed the pledge allegiance of soldiers. “Sacraments” were defined all the mysteries of the faith that established a direct link with God, who is supposed to be directly involved in the performed action (by removing the original sin or forgiving actual sins, for example, or by being really present and coming in His own body and blood in the Eucharist). Sacraments were therefore defined as “efficient signs”, that means, signs that really perform what they try to symbolize.

Sacraments therefore design a very particular logic: identity and difference act at the same time. The sacrament directly and really grasps the divinity, establishing therefore an identity with Him/Her; but the sacrament still remains a sign, the divinity is not perceived as present, and faith is necessarily needed. Those acts are meant to be not merely symbolic, but they can only be performed by means of symbols. A sacrament is neither magic, nor a mere metaphor. A very long and well-known debate goes through the whole Christian tradition, with no few difficulties in trying to manage this paradox.

This difficulty is in some way proper of all religious traditions: they all try to affirm a direct link with the transcendence (or the “difference”), but, at the same time, they have to preserve transcendence as such. A religion cannot affirm a real grasping of the divinity, that otherwise would lose exactly its superiority or at least its different status from creation or the visible world. But at the same each religious tradition claims to affirm something real on the divinity and to establish a comprehensible communication with it. All religious traditions as mediums have therefore to use this logic of the “et-et”: identity and difference at the same time.

Can therefore the sacrament – as an efficient and real sign – be understood and used as a universal religious category in order to describe this problem? Can the discussion within Christian doctrine – especially regarding the semiotic nature of the sacraments – serve as a paradigm for other religious contexts? How far all that here described can suit only for the Christian tradition? Can these terms be debated outside western and Indo-European languages? How much do they depend on the Biblical texts? Are they comprehensible outside the so-called “Monotheistic” frame?

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## “The Poetry of Thought” in the Theology of the Tripurārahasya

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SILVIA SCHWARZ LINDER

The Tripurārahasya (TR) (“The Mystery of [the Goddess] Tripurā”) is a Sanskrit work of South Indian origin, associated with the Śrīvidyā. This latter is a śākta (i.e. related to the worship of the Goddess) tantric religious tradition, which has flourished since the X–XI century CE to the present day and which originated in Kashmir, subsequently spreading to other regions of India, especially the South. The two extant sections of the TR – the māhātmyakhaṇḍa (“Section of the Majesty [of the Goddess]”) and the jñānakhaṇḍa (“Section of Knowledge”) – are devoted to the celebration of the deeds of Tripurā (known also as Tripurāsundarī or Lalitā, the Supreme Goddess according to this tradition) and to the revelation of the Goddess’ secret doctrine, respectively. The theological and philosophical teachings expounded in the text are influenced by the Kashmirian school of thought of the Pratyabhijñā (“The Recognition [of the Lord]”), which is marked by a non-dualistic approach according to which the devotee eventually recognizes the essential identity of his individual soul with the Supreme Soul, i.e. the Lord.

The aim of this paper is to highlight the stylistic devices adopted by the author(s) of the work and to show how, by relating philosophical tales, mythical narratives and hymns of praise, he/they chose to deal with doctrinal issues through the medium of a literary and poetic language. Thus – to quote two examples – in the poetical theology/theological poetry of the TR, the Śrīyantra (a geometric diagram representing the aniconic form of the Goddess and which provides a support for meditation) is concretely and vividly depicted as the magical stronghold of the Goddess, while her mantra-s (the powerful phonic forms of the Goddess, which can be mastered by initiated devotees) become weapons of seduction employed to conquer demons.

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# Suffering and Well-Being in Buddhist Ethics

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STEPHEN HARRIS

## Introduction and Overview

The philosophical study of well-being investigates what makes a life go well for an individual at the deepest level. The basic question these theories ask is not what I owe to others, but what makes me flourish. The central aim of this article is to investigate the importance of Indian Buddhist accounts of suffering for the philosophical investigation of well-being. I do so by framing my study against three prominent questions explored in contemporary theory. First, theories of well-being articulate the nature of well-being, that is, what elements, at the deepest level, make a life go well. I will argue that insights from Buddhist texts about human dissatisfaction should make us deeply rethink what elements such an account should contain. Second, contemporary theories ask whether an individual can be in error about how well her own life is going. Here, I consider how Buddhist critiques of pleasure suggest how deeply mistaken we can be about what will bring lasting satisfaction. Finally, contemporary theories consider what reasons can be given to challenge or justify a given account of well-being. Here, I explore the way certain Buddhist texts systematically undermine our intuitions about what has well-being value, through a series of images and exercises in first person observation. In developing these responses, I focus upon the threefold division of dissatisfaction found in many Buddhist texts into explicit suffering (*duḥkha-duḥkhata*), the suffering of change (*viparināma-duḥkhata*) and conditioned suffering (*saṃskāra-duḥkhata*). I use a reconstructed account of the two latter kinds of suffering in investigating connections between Buddhist texts and the three questions framed above. I suggest that the suffering of change groups together a series of closely related frustrations having to do with the dangers of pleasure. In partial contrast, conditioned suffering seems to be holistic, drawing attention to the embedded nature of even neutral experience in an impoverished cognitive system under the influence of ignorance and craving. I draw upon examples and descriptions from the early Pali canon, as well as later Buddhist authors including Vasubandhu and Śāntideva, in developing aspects of dissatisfaction that plausibly fall under these categories.

## Brief Introduction to the Philosophical Study of Well-Being

Philosophical theories of well-being identify the conceptually deepest elements constituting a good life for the individual. Hedonism, for instance, claims this about pleasure and the absence of pain, and holds that items like friendship and wealth are valuable only insofar as they increase pleasure or decrease pain. Desire-satisfaction theorists, by contrast, claim that satisfying our goals and desires is what increases well-being. These two prominent theories disagree about which element is deeper: hedonists claim satisfying desires increases well-being because it brings us pleasure, while desire-theorists claim

pleasure increases well-being because we desire it. Other theories claim different items, such as friendship or overall life-satisfaction, of themselves make a life go better. The philosophical study of well-being is distinct from investigations into well-being found in other disciplines, including empirical psychological studies that focus on participants' self-reports on positive and negative feelings and overall life satisfaction. As introduced in my overview, philosophical theories must address the question of the underlying nature of well-being, and consider whether persons can be in error about how well their life is going. Desire-theorists, for instance, argue that if a person is deluded about important aspects of his life, such as spousal fidelity, his assessment about his well-being will likely be wrong (Griffin, 1986). Philosophers cannot merely assume that well-being consists only in factors accessible to introspection tracked by psychological studies, nor that subjects accurately assess their well-being levels. One benefit of such philosophical study is that it can help clarify the concept of well-being, and thereby the implications of these empirical studies (Sumner, 1996).

### **Brief Introduction to the Three Kinds of Suffering**

It is well known that Buddhist authors describe their project as the elimination of suffering, including rebirth in samsara and all forms of psychological pain. As already hinted at above probably the most influential categorization scheme used by Indian Buddhist authors to classify various aspects of dissatisfaction is the three kinds of unsatisfactoriness: the suffering of suffering (*duḥkha-duḥkhata*) the suffering of transformation (*vipariṇāma-duḥkhata*) and conditioned suffering (*saṃskāra-duḥkhata*). This threefold classification appears in the *nikāyas* attributed to the Buddha himself (for instance S.IV.259, v.56), but with no explanation of what they mean. Prominent texts like Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośabhaṣya* identify the first of these with painful sensation, the second with pleasant sensation and the suffering of being conditioned with neutral sensation. At least at first approximation, then, we can identify the first as being simply physical and mental pain. The suffering of transformation seems to indicate the unsatisfactory aspects of pleasure, while conditioned suffering indicates the unsatisfactory aspects of being causally conditioned, in particular in relation to the fragility and instability of what is so constructed. Buddhist texts do not provide uniform responses on how precisely to distinguish these aspects of dissatisfaction. In this paper, my interest is in the philosophical value of Buddhist reflections on suffering, rather than a historical study of particular understandings. Furthermore, many Buddhist texts develop insights about suffering that are not explicitly categorized under the three aspects of dissatisfaction. Therefore, for this paper I adopt the method of philosophical reconstruction. I use the category of the suffering of change to group together a variety of dissatisfactions raised by various Buddhist texts that apply to pleasure. I then distinguish what I take to be a distinct aspect of dissatisfaction marked out by certain Buddhist texts as conditioned suffering. My strategy is not to study any particular account of suffering developed by a single Buddhist author, but rather to group together significant insights from a number of authors under the overall conceptual framework of the three forms of suffering. These will be used to mark out points of contact with contemporary philosophical work on well-being, in particular in relation to the three fundamental questions described above.

## Summary of the Suffering of Change and Related Forms of Suffering

Buddhist texts clearly link the suffering of change with dissatisfaction arising from the impermanent nature of pleasure (Vasubandhu 1988, p. 899, Asanga 2001, p. 85). However, many Buddhist texts, like the the nikāyas and Śāntideva's Bodhicaryāvatāra draw attention to drawbacks of pleasure without invoking the classification of the three kinds of suffering. In this paper, I group all these drawbacks together. In brief, these drawbacks can be divided into two categories. One set of frustrations focus on external conditions, such as the impermanence and fragility of the objects we desire, as well as the hostility of a world in which pleasures are difficult to attain and protect. Objects of desire like beautiful persons lose their attractiveness (Aśvaghoṣa 1995), various physical hardships accompany the pursuit of pleasure (M I 86-88), and one experiences anxiety when possessing wealth (Ud 18). A second layer of descriptions emphasize the insidious nature of craving itself. Here Buddhist texts give us images like the leper scratching his sores or a famished dog gnawing a meatless bone, that illustrate how no real satisfaction can be gained by the pleasure achieved through sensual pursuits (M I 507-508; M I 364). Additionally, Buddhist texts claim that enjoying sensual pleasures simply increases craving in the future, binding one to a cycle of addiction compared to wood fanning the flames of a fire (Aśvaghoṣa 2008, pp. 304–305).

## Conditioned Suffering (*saṃskāra duḥkhatā*)

Etymologically, conditioned suffering refers to the dissatisfaction of being dependent on causes and conditions. Further, prominent commentators like Buddhaghosa insist the root problem with conditioned suffering is the fragility of what is causally conditioned (Buddhaghosa 2003, 505.) This makes the distinction between the suffering of change and conditioned suffering somewhat mysterious, since the suffering of change also refers largely to frustration arising as a result of the impermanence. It is not clear to me that major Buddhist commentators, such as Vasubandhu and Buddhaghosa, resolve this issue. Nevertheless, in Harris 2014 I suggest there is conceptual room to distinguish these forms of dissatisfaction based upon two factors. First, Vasubandhu explicitly identifies conditioned suffering as applying to neutral sensations. Second, authors including Asaṅga identify it as referring to the entire collection of aggregates afflicted by clinging (*upādāna-skandhas*), that is the physical and mental events constituting the conventional person. Taken together, this suggests that conditioned suffering is holistic, in that it marks the fact that a particular mental event takes place within an impoverished cognitive system afflicted by ignorance and craving in which the other two kinds of suffering continually arise. In contrast, the suffering of change and the suffering of suffering are atomic, in that they mark off a particular sensation as being in some sense unsatisfactory.

## Provisional Conclusions

In the overview, I framed this paper as investigating what contributions Buddhist accounts of suffering make to answering three central questions that have informed the contemporary philosophical study of well-being. First, theories of well-being articulate the nature of well-being, that is, what elements, at the deepest level, make a life go well. Second, contemporary theories ask whether an individual can be in error about how well

her own life is going. Finally, contemporary theories consider what reasons can be given to challenge or justify a given account of well-being. It is not clear to me that Buddhist texts directly address the underlying nature of well-being. Nevertheless, the aspects of suffering sketched in the above section relate to responses contemporary theories have given to this question in that they narrow the sources of well-being at a higher conceptual level. For instance, an ordinary hedonism accepts as sources of well-being whatever brings about hedonic sensations of pleasure. Buddhist concerns about the drawbacks of pleasure, as sketched above, suggest that many kinds of sense pleasure should be excluded as pervaded by subtle kinds of dissatisfaction, at least for a mind afflicted with craving. Likewise, drawbacks grouped under the holistic aspect of conditioned suffering exclude many of the items ordinary accepted by an objective list theory as having intrinsic value. Artistic creation, time spent with friends and learning for its own sake may not be objectionable of themselves, but such experiences are to be rejected as long as they occur within impoverished cognitive systems afflicted with craving and ignorance in which various forms of suffering will continually arise. The above considerations also illustrate Buddhist contributions to the question of justification. Through their deconstruction of items of value Buddhist texts do philosophical argumentative work by undermining elements of contemporary theories with which they are conceptually in conflict. One purpose of my paper, therefore, is to illustrate the philosophical argumentative work done by Buddhist texts alongside their explicitly stated soteriological purpose. Finally, in regard to the question of error, Buddhist texts clearly side with contemporary authors like Nozick in claiming that humans can be deeply deluded about how well their life is going. Each of the two deeper forms of suffering claims that items ordinarily identified as positive, like sense pleasures, pursuit of ordinary knowledge and friendships and so forth, are deeply impoverished in ways we do not realize. In this sense, Buddhist conceptions of well-being are objective, in rejecting the position that individuals are the final arbitrator over how well their life is going.

Research Questions: The following research questions both guided the development of my initial findings above, as well as inform my continued thinking on this topic.

- What is the relevance of Indian Buddhist accounts of suffering to the philosophical study of well-being?
- What are the various aspects of dissatisfaction found in Buddhist texts?
- To what extent can the three-fold classification of suffering provide a useful guide in systematizing Buddhist insights about dissatisfaction?
- What are the drawbacks of a philosophically reconstructive methodology, such as I have employed above, in drawing from numerous texts to reconstruct what I take to be certain insights of Buddhist conceptions of suffering?
- What kind of philosophical support do Indian Buddhist texts give to their positions about well-being?
- Do contemporary distinctions, like those between attitudinal and sensory pleasure, or between objective and subjective conceptions of well-being, help us understand the philosophical work Buddhist texts do?

## Methodology and Development

I believe sketching out my argument, as I have done above, would be the most helpful clarification of the method I am employing in this project. In brief, I do the following:

- I develop the three questions of the underlying nature, possibility of error and philosophical justification of a given account of well-being based upon my reading of select contemporary texts. I take these to represent central concerns of contemporary theorizing about well-being.
- I employ a philosophical reconstructive methodology, in which I abstract particular insights from a variety of Indian Buddhist texts on various aspects of subtle dissatisfaction. I group these insights under the traditional Buddhist headings of the suffering of transformation and conditioned suffering, although this is not intended to imply the tradition presents one unified understanding of these terms.
- Based upon these accounts of suffering, I argue that Buddhist conceptions of suffering intersect in philosophically significant ways with all three of the questions taken from contemporary ethical theory.

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# Knowing the Unknown: Extra-Ordinary Cognitions in Brahmanical Philosophies

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chair:  
Marco Ferrante

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## Hemacandra's Response to the Mīmāṃsā Critique of Omniscience: Analysis of Pramāṇamīmāṃsāsvopajñavṛtti 1.1.48–62

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ANA BAJZELJ

It is since their early texts that Jains have been pronounced sarvajñavādins, their whole tradition being based on the doctrine conveyed by omniscient teachers. What is more, omniscience (sarvajñatā) has never been reserved for the chosen few. Although attainable only in the human form, it has been understood as an innate potential of consciousness (cetana), the defining and essential quality of every jīva. Jain texts explain the reason behind the limited ordinary cognition to be the fact that consciousness is clouded by destructive (ghātiyā) karman that inhibits its functioning. When this type of karman is completely removed, consciousness starts to function uninhibitedly, knowing “all.” Although Jain authors differ in their understanding of what exactly the “all” means, the attainment of omniscience is generally recognized as a necessary step towards mokṣa. The person who attains it is guaranteed to reach mokṣa at the completion of the particular life in which the attainment takes place. Omniscience being such a significant notion, it is not surprising that the Jain tradition, much like the Buddhist, generated a series of great thinkers that promoted and defended the notion as a possible human attainment against its critics as well as outlined the particular features that distinguish the Jain definition of omniscience from those of other schools of thought. Since some of the most formidable objections to the concept of human omniscience were posed by the mīmāṃsakas, Jains developed their own line of argumentation against them to refute the attacks that threatened to undermine the authority of their doctrine. This paper will focus on the defense of the extra-ordinary cognition of omniscients against the mīmāṃsā critique by Hemacandra, the great systematizer of the Śvetāmbara Jain doctrine. It will analyze the auto-commentary to his Pramāṇamīmāṃsā 1.1.48–62.

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## Maṇḍana Miśra's Two Concepts of Omniscience: A Dissident View within the Mīmāṃsā

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HUGO DAVID

Maṇḍana Miśra (660–720) occupies a peculiar position in the early history of the debate on omniscience (sarvajñatva) in Brahmanism. His magistral refutation of omniscience (both human and divine) in the *Vidhiviveka* (k. 15 onwards) is, first of all, the most direct continuation of Kumāriḷa's attacks against the Buddhist views on sarvajñatva in the *Ślokavārttika* (1.1.2). However, if Maṇḍana was often seen by later authors as the second great "voice" of Mīmāṃsā in this debate, his attitude towards omniscience is actually far more complex than that of his illustrious predecessor. Thus in the *Brahmasiddhi* – presumably his last work – Maṇḍana displays a very different position, and accepts omniscience as a fundamental characteristic of Brahman, the main topic of the treatise. Although this difference in views may easily be interpreted in terms of a move from Mīmāṃsā to Vedānta, a number of clues indicate that this is not the case, and that the two works should rather be read in the framework of a single system. The demonstration of this point will be the occasion to consider a few wider issues, including the chronology of Maṇḍana's works and the relationship between Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta in the late 7th/early 8th centuries.

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# The Metaphysics and Epistemology of Supernormal Perception in Early and Late Nyāya

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MICHAEL WILLIAMS

Perhaps more than any of the ancient orthodox traditions of Indian thought, the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika schools favoured the use of mundane sources of knowledge and rational-debate techniques over scripture and supermundane insight as the means of obtaining release from transmigratory existence. Modern writers on Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, particularly Matilal and his followers, have often tended to downplay or reinterpret the importance of supermundane perception to the schools' philosophers. However, as I show in this paper, the possibility of various kinds of "supernormal" perception was essential to several early Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theories of knowledge, metaphysics and soteriology. These modes of perception included, of course, the superior perceptual facilities acquired by yogic practitioners, but also distinctive modes of cognition which explain the possibility of perceptual illusions in a realist ontology and the cognition of universals. In many cases, the possibility of yogic perception was used to justify the metaphysical theories of the Vaiśeṣika-s.

My paper will focus particularly on a relatively little-known text called the *Nyāyabhūṣaṇa* which has been attributed to the tenth-century Naiyāyika, Bhāsarvajña. More than any of the earlier Naiyāyikas, Bhāsarvajña placed the theory of yogic perception at the heart of his epistemology and metaphysics and involved it extensively in debates about the soteriology. He also gave perhaps the most extensive critique of an alternative Buddhist theory of yogic perception in early Nyāya. As a foil to Bhāsarvajña's ideas, I will also discuss the writings of two much later Naiyāyikas. The first is Raghunātha Śīromaṇi (fl. 16th century) who, in his *Padārthatattvanirūpaṇa*, took a much more critical stance on yogic perception and its relevance in determining the contents of the Vaiśeṣika metaphysical system. The second is Vaṃśadhara Śarman (fl. 18th century) who, in his yet unpublished commentary on the *Nyāyasūtra*-s, the *Nyāyatattvaparikṣā*, wrote extensively on yogic perception in the context of the Nyāya theory of self-hood.

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# Extra-Ordinary Language: On Grammar, Linguistic Yoga, and Levels of Speech in Bhartṛhari's Vākyapadīya

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MA'AYAN NIDBACH

The Vākyapadīya (VP) of Bhartṛhari is a unique text in the history of Indian thought. On the one hand, it is a grammatical treatise, which follows the steps of the ancient grammarians and is recognized as a text of the vyākāraṇa-āgama. On the other hand, it is full of philosophical arguments and debates, including metaphysical statements on the nature of the word. The first part of this text emphasizes the role of grammar in reaching Brahman and attaining liberation (apavarga). At the same time, also aspects of language and cognition that are beyond grammar, or for that matter any āgama, are referred to. One of the most famous concepts associated with Bhartṛhari is the division of three types or levels of speech – Vaikhari, Madhyamā and Paśyantī. Paśyantī, the third and highest level, is considered to be an ultimate, undivided form of language beyond human speech. I will examine the status of extra-ordinary cognitions in the VP, mostly from the Brahma-kāṇḍa. My main focus will be on how extra-ordinary knowledge of sages is contrasted with other means of knowledge, as scripture and perception, and on the definition of Paśyantī, the highest level of speech, as an extra-ordinary mode of language. While reading relevant passages, I will try and answer how Bhartṛhari's stress on the need of grammar as a method to reach Brahman coincides with his recognition of desirable states that go beyond grammar and correctness of language.

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# The Trans-Cultural Reshaping of Psychoanalysis, or the Perks of Comparative Psychodynamics

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chair:  
Daniele Cuneo

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**Introduction to the Panel:  
Perks and Risks  
of Comparative Psychodynamics**

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DANIELE CUNEO

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## **The Split Mother: Material Ambiguity, Hindu Mythology and Object Relations Theory**

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ROMINA ROSSI

Ambivalence towards women and their procreative ability is a recurring theme in Hindu myths: whether glorified as a devoted mother or feared as a terrifying and fierce goddess, the feminine pole is made object of an enduring anxiety on the part of the male voice articulated by the sacred texts and the Hindu lore. As a possible hermeneutical tool for symbol formation and, consequently, for an understanding of the various myths concerning ambiguous portrayals of the “maternal”, psychoanalysis and particularly (Kleinian) object relation theory offers an interesting point of view on the conflicts that originate the fantasized splitting of the loved object par excellence: the mother.

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## The Creation of Desire: Pages from Heinrich Zimmer

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OMAR ABU DBEI

This presentation is meant as a brief survey of how psychoanalytic approaches have influenced studies in Indian mythology. It is thanks to Jung's contributions that psychoanalytic concerns have entered the domain of mythological studies, whose first field was that of Greek mythology. Although Freud had already stressed the paradigmatic value of myths in defining behavioural patterns and their psychological implications, it is with Jung and his formulation of the concept of 'archetype' that a more systematic enquiry of mythology on a psychoanalytic ground is attempted. The myth realises a fundamental psychological structure that lies in the collective unconscious. This axiom turns out to be necessary to extend psychoanalysis from individual therapy to the analysis of cultural representations. From this point of view, particularly significant is the collaboration between Jung and Kerényi, which lead to the book entitled *Einführung in das Wesen der Mythologie*, but already other scholars, in the end of the 19th century, had described Greek gods in terms of paradigmatic models, almost personifications of ideas: it is the case of Walter Otto, whose activity is more or less contemporary to Freud's (though Otto prefers stressing the rational and "luminous" aspects of Greek religion), and Nietzsche's *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, where the philosopher recognises two main tendencies in Greek culture in more or less archetypal terms, the Apollonian and the Dionysian (not to tell of the evident psychological implications in all the works of the so called *Cambridge School of Myth and Ritual*, starting with Frazer's *The Golden Bough* up to Jane E. Harrison's books). As a general trend, methods and new orientations experimented in the field of Greek mythology were afterwards extended to other cultures. And so it happened that another of Jung's friend, the Indologist Heinrich Zimmer, tried to lay down the foundations of a psychological interpretation of Indian mythology. His efforts produced the most remarkable results in two works which were published posthumously, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization* and *The King and the Corpse: Tales of the Soul's Conquest of Evil* (both edited by Joseph Campbell, American mythologist and comparatist). It is not by chance that the cover illustration of *The King and the Corpse* shows some of the tarots: Zimmer's reading of myths is indeed as interpreting the synthetic symbols appearing in these cards, like hieroglyphs whose many layers are but reflexions, metaphorical representations mirroring, through their exemplar meaning, the human Soul. Worth considering is the tale of Kāmadeva's birth as it appears in this book. The legend comes from the late Kālikāpurāṇa: the god arises as Brahmā consciously feels for the first time, as the world is being created (or recreated anew), the erotic desire for a woman, Saṃdhyā, who is in turn a product of the god's creative meditation. In Zimmer's account, this event is transformed into the scene of an allegorical drama of the Soul who is not afraid of contemplating itself and calls its impulses, however dangerous they may be, by their name. The allegory as a hermeneutic method is reinforced by the strong emphasis laid on personifications: gods, as they feature in myths, are considered as the embodiment of particular concepts and passions, and such



analysis does not show any need to go beyond the psychological dimension. The chosen myth is especially suitable: if *Kāma* is desire incarnated, appearing from *Brahmā*'s first outburst of longing, its object is not something whose existence is independent from the perceiver, because *Samdhyā* is herself the creation of the desiring mind. There is no question about an external reality and how it could be possible to know it with a reasonable degree of approximation. Knowledge is therefore largely transformed in intuition of inborn truths just waiting to be recognised and acknowledged. The dialogue between the perceiver and the object perceived, no matter how real the object, is thus compressed into the monologue of the Soul discovering itself.

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