Religious Pluralism in Pre- Medieval India (600 A.D. – 900 A.D)

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Introduction

'Pandit' Jawaharlal Nehru was among the first to use the phrase 'Unity in Diversity'[1] to symbolize India's variegated cultural fabric. He opined that 'India is a country with a basic unity, but of great variety in religion, in cultural traditions and in ways of living.'[2] This facet of the Indian diaspora, as recognized by the late Prime Minister of India, is symbolized by the great variety of religious beliefs that took birth and found their hold in the sub-continent. It has been a long-standing belief among scholars that this tolerant attitude towards religious diversity has always been a hallmark of the Indian religious milieu. Scholars argue that an inherent tolerance existed in the subcontinent from the period in which divergent sects come to be established (i.e., from the 5th century CE onwards), accounting for diversity in religious beliefs that range from Veda-oriented religions (Brahmanism[3]) to the increasingly diversified worship of Viṣṇu, Śiva, Śakti and other associated sects.[4] This claim of universal tolerance merits further examination.

Sanderson notes that scholars often extend 'this complex unity'[5] to include Buddhism and Jainism within in its fold, such that it is believed that Indian religions were inherently tolerant. He cites Verardi for a full list of 'of the major proponents of this doctrine of the essentially eirenic and tolerant nature of Hinduism'[6]. However, as Sanderson opines, this tolerance was not 'innate to the individual traditions'[7] but more of a socio-cultural adjustment. It was not politically viable for any pre-medieval government to be especially supportive towards a particular religious community nor was any such community 'in a position of such strength that it could rid society of its rivals'[8] Some other mechanism, then, had to be devised to explain the exact nature of tolerance in pre-medieval India that did not arise from an inherent tendency of acceptance.

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[1] This slogan was the title of the Presidential Address delivered by Jawaharlal Nehru at the 58th Session of the Indian National Congress, Hyderabad, January 15-18, 1953.
[2] Taken from the speech itself. [https://www.inc.in/en/media/speech/unity-in-diversity]
[3] Through this paper, I am using the terms 'Brahmanism' and 'Vaidika' as synonyms to depict the traditions that are closely associated with the Veda and Veda-oriented ritual practices, in order to differentiate them from other sects that purport to have Vedic roots but, in practice, deviate from orthopraxy (in this context, Vedic ritual).
[4] Sanderson, Alexis, '*Tolerance, Exclusivity, Inclusivity, and Persecution in Indian Religion During the Early Mediaeval Period*.' In Honoris Causa: Essays in Honour of Aveek Sarkar, edited with a foreword by John Makinson (Allen Lane, 2015), page 155.
[5] Ibid, page 155
[6] Ibid, page 155. Note 1.
[7] Ibid, page 207
[8] Ibid, page 159.

Paul Hacker was among the first to point out that the form of tolerance in India, which he termed 'inclusivism', consisted 'in claiming for, and thus including in, one's own religion what really belongs to an alien sect.'[9] Halbfass points out that, according to Hacker, this inclusivism was '"a peculiar mixture of doctrinal tolerance and intolerance"'[10] Further, Hacker suggested the use of the term 'inclusivism' as opposed to 'tolerance' in the Indian context since, according to him, Indians 'could not have had both'[11]. He even goes so far as to suggest that the 'powerful tradition of Vedantic non-dualism was essentially inclusivistic' and not tolerant.[12]

However, some problems with the application of 'inclusivism' as the Indian alternative to tolerance become immediately apparent. 'Inclusivism' implies a doctrinal subordination that does not always bear out reality in the Indian context. In many cases, it is not inclusivism but outright intolerance that is apparent in the religious life of pre-medieval India. For instance, Śaṃkara rejects Buddhism outright, not even making a space for them in his hierarchical model.[13] Kumārila also does not accept any sects outside the Vaidika fold including those that argued on their basis in Vedic gods (Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and their respective denominations). As will be demonstrated, the literature of the period also demonstrates sectarian tendencies that do not typically allow even for hierarchical subordination. At other instances, sources demonstrate the striking capacity of various religious groups to harmonise relations with opposing groups for their mutual benefit. For instance, as will be seen, records of royal patronage depict the coexistence of Brahmins and Buddhist monks, presumably operating within the same social paradigm.

The nature of tolerance in India, then, is more nuanced than simple tolerance, a principle that plainly did not originate in the religious sects themselves, and it cannot be explained even through Hacker's 'inclusivism'. Halbfass opines that tolerance in India 'can obviously have different implications. It can refer to peaceful coexistence and mutual toleration of various forms of religious life as a factual, social phenomenon; or it can refer to an "ideological" phenomenon'[14]. As Thapar points out: - 'The coexistence of religious sects should not

[9] As given in Wilhelm Halbfass *'"Inclusivism" and "Tolerance" in the Encounter Between India and the West'* in '*India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding'* Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd. Delhi 1988 State University of New York, page
[10] Ibid, page 404
[11] Ibid, page 409
12 Ibid, page 404
[13] Ibid, page 412
[14] Ibid, page 409

be mistaken for the absorption of all sects into an ultimately unified entity.'[15] Also, there exists no Indian word for 'tolerance' as understood in the European contexts. The closest possible term would be '*Sahiṣnuti'* as utilised by Gandhi[16] in the context of religious tolerance. However, as Halbfass explains, even in the absence of a representational term, 'there can be "lived tolerance" ("gelebte Toleranz")'[17]

Thus, throughout this paper, I use the term pluralism in the sense of "practical tolerance" – a form of neutral acceptance of the existence of multiple sects such that a relative harmony is achieved in public life, without significant persecutions and wide-spread hostilities. I do not mean to imply, here, that Indian religions and the composite of all religions referred to with that term, are inherently tolerant. My attempt is not to paint a picturesque picture of Indian society, much less to assert that the people of pre-medieval India were tolerant. It is to be expected that, in a sectarian background, hostilities regularly emerged; there are many references to persecutions and violence amongst the various sects. My aim is to study the social conditions in order to understand whether, even though they were purported to be hostile towards one another, various groups cohabited and thrived in an increasingly diversified cultural sphere and to examine how hostilities were managed and what mechanisms were used to manage any religious antagonism while conducting the daily business of life. My effort has only been to understand how outright hostility has somehow been contained through various methods and a general multiplicity somehow been maintained.

For this purpose I will attempt to examine the nature of religious pluralism in pre-medieval India through both textual and historical sources, as they are available to me. My approach to this question will be to contrast the 'orthodox' textual evidence (Brahmanical and other sectarian literature) with that of popular literature, taking the *Mattavilāsa Prahāsana* of Mahendravarman and *Āgamaḍambara* of Jayanta Bhatta as case studies. To highlight historical factors, I have supplemented the two plays with archaeological and inscriptional evidence of pluralism, *i.e.*, evidence of simultaneous patronage of opposing sects. I have also added a section on the

[15] Thapar Romila, *'Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity'* in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 2 Cambridge University Press (1989), page 215.
[16] J. Jordens, *'Gandhi's Religion: A Homespun Shawl'* Palgrave Macmillan UK 1998 Chapter: Religious Pluralism, Page 154
[17] Wilhelm Halbfass in '"*Inclusivism" and "Tolerance" in the Encounter Between India and the West'* in '*India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding*' Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd. Delhi 1988 State University of New York. Page 410

possible adjustments made by various traditions to accommodate each other within the vibrant religious fabric of the time period.

I have chosen this period in order to compare the parallel growth of heterodox sects along with the development of a 'revised'[18] Brahmanism. Textual sources authored during this period bear evidence to highly sectarian views and, thus, at this time, various sects were simultaneously at their peak form of development. Consequently, this is also the time period in which, arguably, society also ought to be at its most intolerant stage. Thus, it is useful to examine, first, whether the intolerance was really in existence, and second, what methods were devised by the religious groups themselves in order to allow for it.

I hope, through this thesis, to be able to understand the mechanisms by which harmony was maintained in the past, and perhaps learn from it for the social harmony of present and future India. As Pandit Nehru visualized, if India does indeed have an age-old tradition of allowing for a diversity of voices, it would be a testament to true democracy if the country is able to utilize that tradition, for its upliftment from the present quagmire of religious foment.

[18] Bronkhorst, Johannes. '*Buddhism in the Shadow of Brahmanism*', Published by Brill, 2011. Page 105

Rise of Divergent Religious Groups: Sectarian Literature and Views on Heresy

The period immediately following the Gupta age marks the emergence of sectarian tendencies.[19] It is difficult to explain this emerging trend between religious sects, which, until the decline of the Guptas, appear to have been reasonably and equally tolerated[20]. According to Eltschinger, there is 'surprisingly little evidence for philosophical polemics between Buddhists and non-Buddhists before the (end of the) fifth century'[21] and there is clear evidence of a 'dramatic increase of hostility'[22] that can be traced from that period onwards. Whether this change was due to the rising power of guilds and merchant communities or due to the overall diversification of urban life, necessitating patronage as the primary means of survival for the major sects, is debated. According to Bronkhorst, Brahmanism's antagonism against new-formed sects is closely related to their having to contend with these sects for royal patronage[23]. The emergence of devotion to one deity, necessitating the exclusion of others also partly explains the hostility between groups determined to preserve 'whole-hearted devotion'[24] to their own deity, leaving no room for multiplicity. According to Fisher, 'Boundaries between' various 'devotional communities' were 'deliberately circumscribed through the efforts of public theologians' who were determined to defend the 'authenticity' and authority of their own sect as the orthodox path.[25] However, any antagonism between sects was primarily maintained through philosophical argumentation in texts- either by asserting the superiority of one's own sect or by denouncing the other sects. As Yagyendra Singh states, the sects had 'their mutual jealousies and differences which are reflected in their philosophical literature[26].

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[19] Singh, Yagyendra Bahadur. '*Social Life in Ancient India'* New Delhi: Light & Life, 1981. Page 225-226

[20] Eltschinger, Vincent. "*Apocalypticism, Heresy and Philosophy*" in '*World View and Theory in Indian Philosophy'* (2012), Page 61: 'a dramatic increase of hostility towards Buddhism as the Gupta dynasty, until then tolerant and maintaining the status quo, starts to crumble.'

[21] Ibid, page 31. C.f., Ibid, page 60, note 143.

[22] Ibid, page 61

[23] Bronkhorst, Johannes. '*Buddhism in the Shadow of Brahmanism',* Published by Brill, 2011. Page 105

[24] BROCKINGTON, J. L. '*The Sacred Thread: Hinduism in its Continuity and Diversity*.' 2nd ed. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1996. Page 133

[25] Fisher, Elaine M. '*Hindu Pluralism: Religion and the Public Sphere in Early Modern South India'* Oakland, California, 2017. South Asia across the Disciplines. Introduction, Page 4.

[26] Singh, Yagyendra Bahadur. '*Social Life in Ancient India'* New Delhi: Light & Life, 1981. Chapter 9, '*Religious Beliefs and Practices'* Page 223 -224.

Already by this this period Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism, Jainism and Buddhism had chipped away at the Brahmanical[27] stronghold. These sects had exerted a significant amount of influence on Vaidika orthodoxy, forcing it to mould into a new kind of Brahmanism[28]. That the classical schools of philosophy and subjects associated with Brahmins came into being this time, prove that ritual had lost its efficacy and the Brahmins themselves had to turn to better methods of maintaining their hierarchical status within society.[29] This adjustment was also accompanied by sustained rhetoric against what the Brahmanical sects deemed 'heretical' (*Pāṣaṇḍa*[30]) sects. This is clearly evidenced from the primary Brahmanical texts of the period.

Through the *Dharma* texts (and the commentaries on them), a trend may be traced in places where the non-brahmanical[31] sects are dealt with. It must be borne in mind that the Brahmanical sources largely ignore the non-Brahmanical sects, who are simply vilified as *pāṣaṇḍas*[32] and ignored to a large extent. As Bronkhorst explains, 'Brahmanism has both an inward-looking and an outward-looking side, and of these two the inward-looking aspect is primary, both historically and formally'[33] For the Brahmanical writers, the heterodox sects constituted a section of society not governed by the Veda. Consequently, the texts mostly ignore their

[27] C.f. Bronkhorst, Johannes *'How the Brahmins Won: From Alexander to the Guptas'* in *Handbook of Oriental Studies Section Two South Asia (Volume 30)* Edited by Johannes Bronkhorst. Brill. Leiden | Boston. 2016 Page 3 '*Brahmanism—here defined as the culture carried by and embodied in the Brahmins, a group of people who emphasize the purity of their descent from both father's and mother's side—descended from a priestly religion with heavy emphasis on elaborate sacrifices.*'

[28] Ibid, page 3 'Brahmanism had not abandoned its elaborate sacrificial heritage, to be sure, but now came to include different (and sometimes totally unconnected) forms of religious practice'

[29] Ibid, page 3-4 'Brahmanism had no missionaries in the religious sense of the term.'

[30] According to Wendy Doniger, '*The Sanskrit term most closely corresponding in negative tone as well as in denotation to the English "heretic" is pāṣaṇḍas.'* She cites the *Śabdakalpadruma,* which defines *pāṣaṇḍas* as those who '*perform various rites opposed to the Vedas, wear several types of clothing and bear the marks of all castes; they are Buddhists, Jains etc*.' (O'Flaherty, Wendy Doniger. *"The Origin of Heresy in Hindu Mythology." History of Religions, vol. 10, no. 4,* 1971, page 272) That, during the period in question, even Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas were included in this group is evidenced by the description of *pāṣaṇḍas* as those who conduct rituals outside of the Veda (śaiva rituals are markedly different from the traditional Vedic ones) and as bearing marks – the Śaivas marked themselves in various ways (*liṅga*) and the Vaiṣṇavas frequently marked themselves with an *urdhwa puṇḍara*- differentiating them from the Vaidika orthodoxy.

[31] The Brahmanical 'orthodoxy' did not include Śaivas or Vaiṣṇavas within their fold even though both insisted on their being based on the Veda. C.f. Sanderson, Alexis, '*Tolerance, Exclusivity, Inclusivity, and Persecution in Indian Religion During the Early Mediaeval Period*.' In Honoris Causa: Essays in Honour of Aveek Sarkar, edited with a foreword by John Makinson (Allen Lane, 2015) Page 157 '*Conservative authorities continued to rail against this soft-focus 'Hinduism', with its blurring of the boundaries between the Vaidika and the non-Vaidika, well into the second millennium of the Christian era, the Vaidikas insisting that the prescriptions of the Vaiṣṇava (Pāñcarātrika) and Śaiva scriptures are invalid in their entirety, being based on scriptures that are not part of the Veda or rooted therein (vedamūla-*).'

[32] Thapar Romila, *'Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity'* in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (1989), pp. 209-231. Cambridge University Press. Page 220: '*pāṣaṇḍa quite clearly referred to sects in opposition to Brahmanism and carried with it the clear connotation of contempt'*

[33] Bronkhorst, Johannes *'How the Brahmins Won: From Alexander to the Guptas'* in *Handbook of Oriental Studies Section Two South Asia (Volume 30)* Edited by Johannes Bronkhorst. Brill. Leiden | Boston. 2016. Page 109

existence, deeming them not worthy of even passing attention. The texts that do mention them only do so in injunctions against any association with them.

In the Mānava-Dharmaśāstra[34] *(MDh),* heretics are identified by those who do not know the Veda or disdain it. The text places those who do not recite the Veda next to gamblers; *MDh* III.151: 'Men who have matted hair, who do not recite the Veda, who are bald-headed,* who are gamblers, and who officiate at sacrifices offered by groups of people— these also must not be fed at an ancestral offering.'[35]. That the Veda is the sole authority on law is made clear and evident; II.6 'The root of the Law is the entire Veda; the tradition and practice of those who know the Veda; the conduct of good people; and what is pleasing to oneself*'[36] and again in II.10 '"Scripture"* should be recognized as "Veda," and "tradition" as "Law Treatise." These two should never be called into question in any matter,* for it is from them that the Law has shined forth.'[37] Olivelle considers that, to some extent, even the use of the term 'Śūdras' in the Mānava-Dharmaśāstra might be a 'code word' to describe those who posed a threat to the Brahmanical orthodoxy, including those who had 'rival religious establishments' i.e. Buddhists, Jains, etc.*[38]* The use of 'the science of logic' *[*II.11*]* against Brahmanical knowledge is associated with heresy*[39]*. The MDh also classes 'studying fallacious treatises'

[34] According to Olivelle, the *Mānava Dharmaśāstra* was already regarded as authoritative by 5th Century A.D. on matters of *dharma.* C.f. Olivelle, Patrick, and Suman Olivelle *' Manu's Code of Law: A Critical Edition and Translation of the M-Anava-Dharmaś-astra',* Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2004. Introduction, Page 3.

[35] Translation as given in Olivelle, Patrick, and Suman Olivelle *' Manu's Code of Law: A Critical Edition and Translation of the M-Anava-Dharmaś-astra',* Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2004. Chapter 3, Page 116. Olivelle makes a note on the verse: '"*Bald-headed" here may refer to kinds of ascetics, just like "matted hair."' It might be a reference to Buddhist monks and the matted hair might perhaps have also included certain Śaiva denominations who are known to have matted hair in imitation of Śiva*.

[36] Ibid, Chapter 2, page 94. In a note on the verse, Olivelle glosses 'what is pleasing to oneself' as 'rites that give a sense of satisfaction' (page 244). C.f., Ibid, XII.35

[37] Ibid, page 94. It is noteworthy that scripture had to be clearly defined, perhaps in opposition to the different kinds of scripture that were already being promulgated.

[38] Ibid, Introduction, page 40, Olivelle notes - *'"Sudra" for Manu, I think, is often a code word; it identifies the enemy and it encompasses a wide cross-section of society, both past and present. It evoked the memories of bad old days; it heightened the anxiety that what happened under the Mauryas could be repeated. I also think that there was a contemporary threat to Brahmanical supremacy not so much from political power but from rival religious establishments, especially the Buddhist and the Jain monks. I think Manu includes these within his code "Sudra." The connection between Sudras and non-Brahmanical ascetic sects is drawn by Manu himself. In his advice regarding a Brahmin's residence, Manu (4.61) says: na śūdrarājye nivasen nādhārmikajanāvṛte│ na pāṣaṇḍijanākrānte nopasṛṣṭe 'ntyajair nṛbhiḥ│ │He should not live in a kingdom ruled by a Sudra, teeming with unrighteous people, overrun by people belonging to heretical ascetic sects, or swamped by lowest-born people.'*

[39] Ibid, page 94, *Mānava Dharmaśāstra* II.11 "If a twice-born disparages these two* by relying on the science of logic, he ought to be ostracized by good people as an infidel'

[XI.66][40] as a cause of secondary sin which causes 'loss of caste'[41], while 'abandoning the Veda' and 'reviling the Veda' [XI.57][42] are highest ranking sins, equivalent to the consumption of alcohol.

Accordingly, the Mānava-Dharmaśāstra prohibits *c*ontact and even conversation with such persons as described above, implying that such behaviour was common enough to alarm Brahmanical sensibilities; the text prescribes that one 'should not give honour, even with mere words, to heretics' [IV.30] [43] nor should one 'live in a kingdom ruled by a servant … or overrun by gangs of heretics.' [IV.61][44] Medhātithi[45] in his commentary on IV.30, states that 'There is certainly no question of respectfully giving them a seat and so forth. Nor may one even speak to them, saying, for example, "Welcome. Please be seated here". One is allowed to give them food [but only] as one would to untouchables and the like (*śvapacādivat*)."'[*Manubhāśya*] [46]Also, accepting gifts from a king 'who deviates from the provisions of the authoritative texts,*' leads to 'twenty hells'[IV.87][47]. The MDh exhorts kings to 'banish from his capital… men belonging to heretical sects' [IX.225][48] likening them to 'clandestine thieves' who 'constantly harass his decent subjects with their illicit activities.' [IX.226][49] *Yājñavalkya Smṛti*[50], another treatise on law, explicitly mentions heretics in its

[40]Ibid, Chapter 11, page 218
[41] Ibid, page 218
[42] Ibid, Chapter 11, page 218
[43] Translation as given in Eltschinger, Vincent. "*Apocalypticism, Heresy and Philosophy*" in '*World View and Theory in Indian Philosophy'* (2012) Page 52. C.f. Olivelle, Patrick, and Suman Olivelle*' Manu's Code of Law: A Critical Edition and Translation of the M-Anava-Dharmaś-astra',* Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2004. Chapter 4, *Reception of Guests,* 4.30 'He must never honor the following even with a word of welcome: ascetics of heretical sects; individuals engaging in improper activities, observing the 'cat vow', or following the way of the herons (4.195); hypocrites; and sophists.'
[44] Ibid, page 52. C.f. *Manu's Code of Law: A Critical Edition and Translation of the M-Anava-Dharmaś-astra',* Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2004. Chapter 4, Verse 60- 61, under 'Rules of Conduct II', page 127 '*He must never… live in a kingdom ruled by a Śūdra, teeming with unrighteous people, overrun by people belonging to heretical ascetic sects, or swamped by lowest-born people'*
[45] Kane dates Medhātithi's Manubhāsya to 900 A.D. (P.V. Kane*, 'History of Dharmaśāstra Volume 2, part 1',* Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1962-75. Chronological table, Page xii.)
[46] Sanderson, Alexis, '*Tolerance, Exclusivity, Inclusivity, and Persecution in Indian Religion During the Early Mediaeval Period*.' In Honoris Causa: Essays in Honour of Aveek Sarkar, edited with a foreword by John Makinson (Allen Lane, 2015), page 163, note 16.
[47] Translation as given in Olivelle, Patrick, and Suman Olivelle *'Manu's Code of Law: A Critical Edition and Translation of the M-Anava-Dharmaś-astra',* Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2004. Chapter 4, under '*People from Whom Gifts May Not Be Accepted', Verse 87,* page 128. Olivelle notes that the 'The term ucchāstra parallels utkula ("cast out of the family") and may mean someone who has left the śāstras. Or it may parallel utpatha or unmārga ("bad or wrong road") and may mean a man who follows a wrong śāstra, for example, Jain or Buddhist scripture' (Ibid, page 271)
[48] Ibid, Chapter 9, Verse 225-226, Page 201. C.f. Sanderson, Alexis, '*Tolerance, Exclusivity, Inclusivity, and Persecution in Indian Religion During the Early Mediaeval Period*.' In Honoris Causa: Essays in Honour of Aveek Sarkar, edited with a foreword by John Makinson (Allen Lane, 2015), page 165.
[49] Ibid, page 201. C.f. Sanderson, Alexis, '*Tolerance, Exclusivity, Inclusivity, and Persecution in Indian Religion During the Early Mediaeval Period*.' In Honoris Causa: Essays in Honour of Aveek Sarkar, edited with a foreword by John Makinson (Allen Lane, 2015), page 165.
[50] Kane dates the *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* between 100 A.D. and 300 A.D.

injunctions, leaving no doubt as to whom the rules are directed. According to *Yājñavalkya Smṛti,* 'one should avoid hypocrites, skeptics, heretics, and those who act like cranes' [1.130][51][52] The same text also prohibits their use as witnesses.[53] Similarly, the *Smṛtyarthasāra*[54] includes heretics in a long list of people to whom no respect should be paid.[55]

The *Arthaśāstra*[56], a treatise on statecraft, also deals with heretics. According to McClish, the text directly mentions 'temples to various deities, sects, hermitages, monasteries, Brāhmaṇical villages, and other religious institutions without shedding much light on them.'[57] The text predominantly seems to take the view that 'political necessity always trumps philosophical, economic, or religious objections.'[58] However, according to McClish, religious disputes are brought under state control in the text by including them under matters to be brought before the court for adjudication; vis. 'he should try the cases—those relating to gods, hermitages, members of religious orders, Vedic scholars, farm animals, and holy places; those relating to children, the elderly, the sick, those in distress, and the helpless; and those relating to women—in that order, or according

[51] As given in O'Flaherty, Wendy Doniger. *"The Origin of Heresy in Hindu Mythology." History of Religions, vol. 10, no. 4,* 1971, page 278. C.f. Raj Bahadur Srisa Chandra Vidyarnava in '*The Sacred Books of the Hindus Volume XXI – Yajnavalkya Smriti. Mitaksara and Balambhatta. Book I – Acarya Adhyaya' (1918):* 'CXXX - …. He should avoid hypocrites, sceptics, heretics, and those who act like a heron.'

[52] Ibid, page 286

[53] Ibid, page 286

[54] Dated to 1150 A. D.-1200 A. D. by Kane.

[55] P.V. Kane, 'History of Dharmaśāstra Volume 2, part 1', Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1962-75. Chapter VII, page 339

[56] The *Arthaśāstra* is one of the primary sources on statecraft. It is a normative text that nevertheless provides some useful information as to how states were expected to function. It authorship is legendarily associated with Cāṇakya, the Brahmin minister of Candragupta of the Mauryan dynasty, who, angered by the previously ruling Nanda king, sided with Candragupta, and won him his kingdom through his cunning and political skills. However, recent scholarship has disputed this singular authorship. According to McClish, the *Arthaśāstra* never mentions 'Cāṇakya' except in a final verse towards the end. The text itself names its composer 'Kauṭilya'. The Cāṇakya of the Mauryan age seems to have been associated with the text only some '400–600 years after the time in which Cāṇakya is said to have lived', placing the text at around 200 CE. This is further evidenced through the text itself, many aspects of which do not agree well with the conditions at the time of the Mauryas. (See, Kauṭilya, McClish, Mark and Olivelle, Patrick *'The Arthaśāstra: Selections from the Classic Indian Work on Statecraft'* Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. Indianapolis, Ind. (2012). Introduction, Page xiii – xiv, xix - xxi) Based on evidence from the text, McClish dates the 'original' text to between 100BCE – 100 CE. Kane also places the text at between 300 BC and 100 CE (P.V. Kane, *'History of Dharmaśāstra Volume 2, part 1',* Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1962-75. Chronological Table, page xi) However, according to Bronkhorst, the text shows that 'several authors have contributed to the Arthaśāstra as we now know it.' The text was redacted several times by various authors and 'in its present shape is much more recent than the time of Candragupta. Some scholars date it between the middle of the second century CE and the fourth century CE' (See Bronkhorst, Johannes. '*Buddhism in the Shadow of Brahmanism',* Published by Brill, 2011. Page 74 – 75). It is relevant for our purpose as it provides some guidelines on statecraft immediately preceding the period under review, which must have retained some importance even during the centuries following its composition. This is evidenced by the commentaries that were subsequently written on it and citations drawn from it in later works.

[57] McClish, Mark and Olivelle, Patrick *'The Arthaśāstra: Selections from the Classic Indian Work on Statecraft'* Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. Indianapolis, Ind. (2012). Introduction, page lxx.

[58] Ibid, 1.1 Training of a King, page 3

to the gravity of the case or its urgency.' [1.19.26–29][59] Kautilya also prescribes the use of heretics as spies in the kingdom[60], indicating that their presence was common enough to escape closer attention.

Despite this general accommodation, in other places the *Arthaśāstra* suggests 'Brāhmaṇical or Hindu religiosity as its norm— including the honouring of Brāhmaṇas and use of Brāhmaṇical religious concepts— as opposed to the contemporary Buddhist or Jain practices.'[61] The text designates cremation grounds and other unseemly locations for the residence of such heretics (II.4.23; III.20.16 - *pāṣaṇḍcandālānām śmasānānte vāsaḥ*) and prescribes the imposition of a fine for offering them hospitality.[62] From these texts it is evident that there is no question of accommodating heterodox sects or accepting them within the status quo as far as the authoritative law books of the Brahmanical orthodoxy are concerned.

Religious groups deemed to be outside the Vaidika tradition (i.e. Śaivas, Vaiśṇavās etc.)[63] in turn competed with the Brahmanical 'orthodoxy' and there appears to have been a 'healthy rivalry among the principle ones'[64]; each group presented itself as the best and the deity favoured by it as supreme. These sectarian tendencies are most evident in cases where mutually opposed sects used 'theory to outlaw'[65] the prominence of other sects over and above their own. The *Purāṇas*[66] of the period are indicative of this process. As Wilson

[59] Ibid, 1.3 Daily Routine, page 12

[60] Kauṭilya *Arthaśāstra* [4.4.3-5] *'The Collector should post in the countryside agents acting undercover as thaumaturgic ascetics, renouncers, traveling holy men, wandering troubadours, charlatans, entertainers, diviners, soothsayers, astrologers, physicians, madmen, mutes, deaf persons, idiots, blind persons, traders, artisans, craftsmen, performers, brothel-keepers, tavern-keepers, and venders of flat bread, cooked meat, and boiled rice. They should find out the honesty and dishonesty of village officials and Superintendents.*]' As given in McClish, Mark and Olivelle, Patrick *'The Arthaśāstra: Selections from the Classic Indian Work on Statecraft'* Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. Indianapolis, Ind. (2012). 3.1 Appointments to the Central Administration, Page 47

[61] Ibid, Introduction page lxvii

[62] Jha, Dwijendra Narayan (2006): "*Looking for a Hindu Identity*." (Public Domain) (People's Publishing House (Pvt.) Limited, 2017.) Page 31

[63] Adding to an already variegated religious fabric, a variety of other sects emerge at this time. In this period, along with Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism, whose antiquity is by this time well established, three other sects emerge which are associated with the worship of Devī (the consort of Viṣṇu or Śiva, sometimes believed to be the main source of the respective deity's power), Sūrya (the sun god, also known as *Aditya*) and Ganeṣa (the elephant-headed son of Śiva) . These were known as *dakṣinamārga* sects, and did not include the Tantric *vāmamārga* beliefs, adherents of which formed separate offshoot systems of their own, associating themselves with the major sects. For instance, Tantric forms of Śaivism, which include the likes of Kaulas, Kapālika etc., come to exert their influence on social life especially in Northern India. [See Singh, Yagyendra Bahadur. '*Social Life in Ancient India'* New Delhi: Light & Life, 1981. Page 223 – 226]

[64] Singh, Yagyendra Bahadur. '*Social Life in Ancient India'* New Delhi: Light & Life, 1981. Page 224

[65] Sanderson, Alexis, '*Tolerance, Exclusivity, Inclusivity, and Persecution in Indian Religion During the Early Mediaeval Period*.' In Honoris Causa: Essays in Honour of Aveek Sarkar, edited with a foreword by John Makinson (Allen Lane, 2015), page 183

[66] The principal extant puranas (*Bhagavata, Viṣṇu, Mārkandeya, Matsya* etc.) were completed during the Gupta age (approximately from the late 3rd century to mid-6th century C.E.) [see D. N. Jha *'Ancient India in Historical Outline.'* Manohar, Delhi (2002), page 170] Their influence must have roughly extended over much longer than that time frame as evidenced by the fact they were cited as authorities on dharma as late as mid-13th century [see Rocher, Ludo '*A History*

remarks, during this period the *Purāṇas* 'are no longer authorities for Hindu belief as a whole: they are special guides for separate and sometimes conflicting branches of it, compiled for the evident purpose of promoting the preferential, or in some cases the sole, worship of Vishnu or Śiva.'[67] Susil Gupta agrees with this and states, '... probably the principal [object] of the Puranas, was to establish as the case might be, the supremacy of Vishnu or Śiva; and it may be likewise assumed of the female energy of Śiva, though the worship of the latter belongs more exclusively to the class of works known as Tantras'[68] According to Rocher, 'the sectarian character of the puranas seems to be supported by a number of — sometimes strong — sectarian statements in the texts themselves'[69] Some puranic texts that favour a particular sect also considers that sect to be 'orthodox' and, therefore, by default, consider all other sects to be heretical. For instance, the *Kūrma Purāṇa*[70] describes 'the merits of the Pāśupata vow'[71] while simultaneously refuting other vows, including but not exclusive to, the Tantric Pāśupatas, referring to them as 'wicked heretics'[72]. For the *Kūrma Purāṇa*, heretics also include Śaiva sects that 'perform evil rites, and the left-hand Pāñcarātras and Pāśupatas'[73]

Such 'heresies' and 'heretics' are also summarily dismissed in other *Purāṇas* and any contact with them is strongly disapproved. For instance, the *Viṣṇu purāṇa*[74] describes heretics as those '. . . by whom the three Vedas have been abandoned, evil ones who dispute the doctrine of the Vedas, . . . those who perform evil

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of Indian Literature: *The Puranas'* Edited by Jan Gonda Volume II *Fasc. 3,* 1986 Otto Harrassowitz • Wiesbaden. Page 85 '*Gautama (11.19) requires the king to administer justice in accordance with the Veda, the Dharmaśāstra, the Arigas, the Upavedas, and "the Purāṇa."* Also, Ibid, Page 86 – '*... from Lakṣmīdhara's Kṛtyakalpataru onward we find puranas cited, along with the sutras and sastras, on every aspect of dharma.*']

[67] Wilson, Horace Hayman 'A *Sketch of the Religious Sects of the Hindus*', As.Res. 16, 1-136; 17, 169-313 [Reprints Calcutta: Bishop's College, 1846; Select Works, ed. Reinhold Rost, vol. 1, London: Triibner, 1861; Delhi: Asian Publication Services, 1976], 1828-32. AS GIVEN IN: Ludo Rocher '*A History of Indian Literature*: *The Puranas'* Edited by Jan Gonda Volume II *Fasc. 3,* 1986 Otto Harrassowitz • Wiesbaden. Page 18

[68] Susil Gupta, Sanskrit and Culture, Calcutta: 1955, p. 96 [written in 1862]. As Given In: Ludo Rocher '*A History of Indian Literature*: *The Puranas'* Edited by Jan Gonda Volume II *Fasc. 3,* 1986 Otto Harrassowitz • Wiesbaden. Page 19

[69] Ludo Rocher '*A History of Indian Literature*: *The Puranas'* Edited by Jan Gonda Volume II *Fasc. 3,* 1986 Otto Harrassowitz • Wiesbaden. Page 20

[70] Kane dates the *Kūrma Purāṇa* to between 300 A.D. and 600 A.D. (P.V. Kane, *'History of Dharmaśāstra Volume 2, part 1',* Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1962-75. Chronological Table, page xi). Rocher dates it to the 'beginning of the eighth century A.D.' (Ludo Rocher '*A History of Indian Literature*: *The Puranas'* Edited by Jan Gonda Volume II *Fasc. 3,* 1986 Otto Harrassowitz • Wiesbaden. Page 186)

[71] O'Flaherty, Wendy Doniger. *"The Origin of Heresy in Hindu Mythology." History of Religions, vol. 10, no. 4,* 1971, page 274.

[72] Ibid, page 274

[73] Ibid, page 278

[74] Kane dates the *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* to between 300 A.D. and 600 A.D. (P.V. Kane, *'History of Dharmaśāstra Volume 2, part 1',* Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1962-75. Chronological Table, page xi). However, this date is disputed. (see, Rocher, Ludo '*A History of Indian Literature*: *The Puranas'* Edited by Jan Gonda Volume II *Fasc. 3,* 1986 Otto Harrassowitz • Wiesbaden. Page 249)

rituals, hypocritical 'cat' ascetics, sceptical 'crane' ascetics. These are the evil heretics, men who falsely wear matted locks or shave their heads."[75] The text emphasises that 'one should avoid conversation and contact with the sinful heretics'[76]

These sectarian tendencies are also often expressed through mythological stories. For instance, in the *Skanda purāṇa*[77], Durvāsas asks Brahmins for land to build a Śiva temple and, angered at being disregarded by them due to their preoccupation in their Vedic studies, curses them. One of the Brahmins then tries to appease him, is dubbed 'Duḥśīla', "of wicked conduct'[78] and then shunned by the other Brahmins. While the text makes no reference to Jainism or Buddhism, it appears to take a strong stance against Vaiṣṇavism. This is most clearly emphasised through the story of Kṣupa and Dadhīca[79], who are devotees of Viṣṇu and Śiva, respectively. During an argument between the two, Dadhīca comes to be attacked by Viṣṇu himself and yet emerges triumphant since he is protected by Śiva.[80]

In some mythological stories, the deity directly intervenes to countermand heresies. According to the *Liṅga purāṇa*[81], heresy is punished by 'Alakshmi' or 'evil fortune'[82], created by Nārāyaṇa, who is permitted to 'enter wherever husband and wife quarrel, wherever there are people who delight in heretical practices and are beyond the pale of the Vedas, wherever there are atheists and hypocrites, Buddhists or Jains.'[83] In the *Varāha Purāṇa*[84], the gods complain that hells are empty, and creation cannot take place because people are virtuous

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[75] Ibid, page 277

[76] Visnu purana 3.18.79a and 96ab 'pāṣaṇḍinâlāpa-jāto *'yaṁ doṣaḥ ... tasmāt pāṣaṇḍibhiḥ pāpair ālāpa-sparśanaṁ tyajet'*, translation by Eltschinger, Vincent. "*Apocalypticism, Heresy and Philosophy"* in '*World View and Theory in Indian Philosophy'* (2012) page 52, note 121

[77] Rocher cites Mohapatra in dating the *Skanda Purāṇa* as an eighth century text. (Rocher, Ludo '*A History of Indian Literature*: *The Puranas'* Edited by Jan Gonda Volume II *Fasc. 3,* 1986 Otto Harrassowitz • Wiesbaden. Page 231)

[78] Bronkhorst, Johannes *'How the Brahmins Won: From Alexander to the Guptas'* in *Handbook of Oriental Studies Section Two South Asia (Volume 30)* Edited by Johannes Bronkhorst. Brill. Leiden | Boston. 2016. Page 136

[79] Peter Bisschop, '*Inclusivism revisited: The worship of other gods in the Śivadharmaśāstra, the Skandapurāṇa, and the Niśvāsamukha'* in '*Tantric Communities in Context*', ed. by Nina Mirnig, Marion Rastelli and Vincent Eltschinger' Vienna: ÖAW, 2019. Page 534.

[80] Ibid, Page 524.

[81] Dating the *Liṅga purāṇa* has proved problematic. However, scholars agree that it must have been composed sometime after the fifth century A.D. (see Ludo Rocher '*A History of Indian Literature*: *The Puranas'* Edited by Jan Gonda Volume II *Fasc. 3,* 1986 Otto Harrassowitz • Wiesbaden. Page 187)

[82] O'Flaherty, Wendy Doniger. *"The Origin of Heresy in Hindu Mythology." History of Religions, vol. 10, no. 4,* 1971, page 301

[83] Ibid, page 301

[84] Sections of the *Varāha Purāṇa* have been dated by Hazra as belonging to different time periods. However, scholars agree that, in its entirety, it cannot have been composed 'later than the tenth century A.D.' (Ludo Rocher '*A History of Indian Literature*: *The Puranas'* Edited by Jan Gonda Volume II *Fasc. 3,* 1986 Otto Harrassowitz • Wiesbaden. Page 242)

and are attaining *mukti*. Viṣṇu responds that he will create 'delusion' and cause Śiva to teach heresies, which no doubt include the Pāśupata, Naya Siddhānta etc.[85] This theme is further developed in the *Padma Tantra* by including Jainism and Buddhism. Accordingly, Viṣṇu 'with the help of Brahman, Kapila and Śiva' creates 'five more systems (Yoga, Sāṅkhya, Bauddha, Jaina and Śaiva), conflicting with each other and the Pāñcarātra, for the bewilderment of men.'[86] Similarly, in the *Kalki upapurāṇā,* a late text, Viṣṇu fights off the 'heretics' in his Kalki form, defeating the 'barbarians' who 'assisted the Buddhists'. The text goes on to state that 'he defeated and killed the Jina' and also other unchaste groups.[87] The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* declares Śiva, 'the lowest of gods'[88], a heretic who has no share in portions of sacrifices and no place next to Viṣṇu and Indra. The followers of Siva are also referred to as 'heretics, opponents of the true sastras, following the heresy whose god is the king of ghosts.'[89]

The Buddhist and Jain sources also depict their own respective traditions and practices as superior to those of the other sects. The Buddhists reject the whole concept of theism and insist that beings come into existence through their own *karma;* no being is responsible for creating them.[90] Thus, for the Buddhists, sects that were based on the existence of a superhuman deity or supernatural being are automatically heretical. The Buddhist *Śaṃvaratantra*[91] relates that 'its deity in its commitment to purify all beings has violently overpowered Śiva, Viṣṇu, Brahmā, and Kāmadeva, and taken their consorts by force for his own enjoyment.'[92] Buddhist shrines often depict 'Tantric deities, who tread triumphant on the prostrate bodies of their Śaiva rivals, and wear their flayed skin as garments and their bones as Kāpālika ornaments.'[93] Jain theory asserts that in a previous age

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[85] O'Flaherty, Wendy Doniger. *"The Origin of Heresy in Hindu Mythology." History of Religions, vol. 10, no. 4,* 1971, page 304

[86] Ibid, page 305. C.f. Ibid, page 314: '*Brhaspati, disguised as Sukra, said to Sukra, "You are Brhaspati, author of the heresy of materialism; you have taken my form to come here and delude the demons." Furious, Sukra departed; Brhaspati then taught the demons to despise the Vedas and the gods; he made the demons Jains and Buddhists. Brhaspati departed and Indra approached the demons, who told him that they had renounced the world to become monks, and that he might have the rule of the universe. Indra agreed, and the demons, thus deluded, dwelled on the banks of the Narmada until, awakened from their vow by Sukra, they again resolved to steal the triple world*.'

[87] Doniger, Wendy. '*The Origin of Heresy in Hindu Mythology*.' [Thesis] University of Oxford, 1973.

[88] O'Flaherty, Wendy Doniger. *"The Origin of Heresy in Hindu Mythology." History of Religions, vol. 10, no. 4,* 1971, page 319

[89] Ibid, page 319-320

[90] Page 320

[91] Dated to circa. Eighth century CE [David B Gray, '*The Cakrasamvara Tantra (The Discourse of Srî Heruka): A Study and Annotated Translation*.' Treasury of the Buddhist Sciences Series. New York: American Institute of Buddhist Studies and Columbia University Press, 2007.]

[92] Sanderson, Alexis. 'The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period.' In 'Genesis and Development of Tantrism', edited by Shingo Einoo. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009. Institute of Oriental Culture Special Series, 23. Page 155

[93] Ibid, page 214

Jainism was the predominant religion. According to the theory, 'certain groups fell into false ways and became Brahmins who formulated a cult sanctioning the slaughter of animals.'[94] Clearly, this polemic is directed against the Brahmanical ritual tradition.

The emergence of heterodox traditions was also explained away as the approach of a '*Kali-yuga,* an age prophesised to mark the end of the world before a calamity destroys it and creation begins anew. That this was a gradual accommodation is evident from the fact that the *Mānava-Dharmaśāstra* does not associate heretics with *kali-yuga*. By the Vāyu purāṇa (circa fourth century CE[95]), however, there is a clear association of heretics (*Pāṣaṇḍa)* with Kali-yuga, perhaps an attempt to explain away their presence in large numbers in society. These *pāṣaṇḍas* are further qualified and described, proving that there must have been a great number of them around this time.[96] According to the *Viṣṇu purāṇa*, it is stated that the Kali age will dawn with the emergence of people 'given to the vow of living on arms and bearing the marks of homelessness' and 'the vilest Sudras, [duly] honoured, will betake themselves to a livelihood based on heresy'. Further, it is predicted that 'the Vedic path having disappeared, people will have a short life due to the increase of Adharma.' [6.1.37 and 39][97]

Buddhist sources also narrate their own version of history in which their decline is prophesized; it is asserted that after a long succession of kings who are favourable towards Buddhism (Mauryas, Nandas, Guptas etc.), a line of invasions by non-Buddhists will cause the demise of Buddhism.[98] According to the *Kāraṇḍa-vyūha-sūtra*, this is associated with the 'Śaiva threat'.[99] As Eltschinger points out, 'late Gupta and early post-Gupta Buddhist apocalypticism seems to reflect, though rather sparsely, a Buddhist awareness of otherwise clearly identifiable threats: a loss of political footing (if not political hostility) and the enmity of non-Buddhist orthodox and sectarian milieux.' According to the Pali Canon, there are several causes for the decline of Buddhism, including 'excessive association with secular society'. Presumably, then, the Buddhist Saṅgha was

[94] O'Flaherty, Wendy Doniger. *"The Origin of Heresy in Hindu Mythology." History of Religions, vol. 10, no. 4,* 1971, page 283
[95] Eltschinger, Vincent. "Apocalypticism, Heresy and Philosophy." In '*World View and Theory in Indian Philosophy'* (2012): 29–85, page 45. Note that Eltschinger takes into consideration the fact that these 'apocalyptic prophecies' form a part of the ancient '"classical" vāyuprokta Brahmāṇḍapurāna', thus, forming a part of the 'most ancient layer of extant Purāṇic literature'. The passages quoted were clearly part of the earlier text from which the extant *Vāyu Purāṇa* is derived. (C.f. Ibid, page 44)
[96] Ibid, page 45
[97] Ibid, page 49
[98] Ibid, page 76
[99] Ibid, page 76

also determined, like their Brahmanical counterparts, to close off sectarian boundaries and prevent intermingling.

Scholars of the period also criticised heretical sects (from their point of view) through philosophical treatises. Kumārila Bhaṭṭa (circa sixth century), one of the more influential Vaidika proponents, railed against almost all 'heretical' religions. According to him, since the Veda is authorless, it does not forward the interests of any one person and, therefore, is authoritative. In his view, only the 'Veda and Veda-based smritis' are authoritative as normative guidance, both in the ethical and religious fields (*vedamūlatva).* Duquette cites Halbfass: '*For Kumārila, indeed, even smṛti texts and vedāngas cannot be accepted as fully authoritative to the extent that they are not part of the 'superhuman' and 'authorless' Vedic revelation (Halbfass 1983: 96)'*[100] He further enjoins that those who are 'learned in the three Vedas', i.e. *āstika* according to Mīmāṃsā, 'do not accept the scriptures of the Sāṃkhyas, followers of the Yoga school, Pāñcarātrika Vaiṣṇavas, Pāśupatas, Buddhists, and Jains, for they contradict the Veda'[101] According to Vincent Eltschinger, Kumārila Bhaṭṭa 'turned the ritualistic Mimāṃsā into the most uncompromising anti-Buddhist philosophical system ever created in ancient India'[102] Kumārila's 'abhorrence and hostility towards Buddhism'[103] is evident in his efforts to 'neutralise ethical and religious relativism'[104]. Prabhākara and Maṇḍanamiśra emphasised the importance of Vedic texts in establishing *dharma.*[105] . As Duquette points out, Śaṁkara considered 'the Veda (including Upaniṣads) as the unique criterion and measure of legitimacy and orthodoxy on religious matters.'[106] Therefore, Śaṁkara did not accept 'the authority of Buddhist, Jaina, Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Pāśupata and Pāñcarātra traditions in the second *adhyāya* of his Brahmasūtrabhāṣya'[107]

[100] Duquette, Jonathan '*Tradition, Identity and Scriptural Authority: Religious Inclusivism in the Writings of an Early Modern Sanskrit Intellectual'* in '*Religions of South Asia 9.3'* (2015) Page 269
[101] Jonathan Duquette, "*Tradition, Identity and Scriptural Authority: Religious Inclusivism in the Writings of an Early Modern Sanskrit Intellectual*" in *Religions of South Asia 9.3* (2015), pp 269. See also, Tantravārtika 1.1.3
[102] Eltschinger, Vincent. "*Apocalypticism, Heresy and Philosophy*" in '*World View and Theory in Indian Philosophy'.* Warsaw (2012). page 30
[103] Ibid, page 56
[104] Ibid, page 56
[105] Jha, Dwijendra Narayan (2006): "*Looking for a Hindu Identity*." (Public Domain) (People's Publishing House (Pvt.) Limited, 2017.) page 22
[106] Jonathan Duquette, "*Tradition, Identity and Scriptural Authority: Religious Inclusivism in the Writings of an Early Modern Sanskrit Intellectual*" in *Religions of South Asia 9.3* (2015), Page 267
[107] Ibid, page 268

While Buddhist polemics are effectively directed towards the 'philosophical expressions of orthodox Brahmanism (Mimāṃsā, Nyāya)'[108], some influential Buddhist scholars criticized other sectarian groups as well. Dharmakīrti, in particular, openly criticised Śaivism. The seventh century Jain scholar 'describes Maheśvara (Śiva) as "the son of a nun who had been magically impregnated by a wizard seeking a suitable repository for his powers."'[109]

From the above analysis, it would seem that the post-Gupta religious landscape was wrought with tensions and animosity. However, it may well be that popular religion of the time was neither as intolerant as the polemical texts indicate, nor was it completely inclusivistic; while the various sects maintained their own separate identities and traditions, some degree of cooperation and coexistence is apparent through other sources such as courtly literature composed during the period.

[108] Eltschinger, Vincent. "*Apocalypticism, Heresy and Philosophy*" in '*World View and Theory in Indian Philosophy'*. Warsaw (2012, page 77

[109] Jha, Dwijendra Narayan (2006): "*Looking for a Hindu Identity*." (Public Domain) (People's Publishing House (Pvt.) Limited, 2017.) page 33

Pluralism in Popular Culture and Religion as Evidenced from Courtly Literature: Case study: *Mattavilāsa Prahāsana* and *Āgamaḍambara*

Courtly literature (i.e., literature produced either by the ruling King or in court) provides some insight into the actual nature of pluralism during this period. A closer look at two particular examples, one from the beginning (*Mattavilāsa Prahāsana* of Mahendravarman) and one towards the end (*Āgamaḍambara* of Jayanta Bhatta, minister of Śivavarman) of the period under review, largely unconsciously, depicts the interactions between followers of various religious groups. Both *Mattavilāsa Prahāsana* and *Āgamaḍambara* are satirical plays and have comic interludes that reflect on the social climate relative to their particular locality and time period. While the *Mattavilāsa* reflects only the earliest phase of sectarian formation, by Jayanta's time period, the sectarian divide is acute and, paradoxically, religious pluralism comes to be acceptable.

Mahendravikramavarman (more commonly known as Mahendravarman) (580- 630 A.D.) author of *Mattavilāsa Prahāsana,* descended from the Pallava King Simhaviṣṇu[110]and belonged to a dynasty who 'held sway over a major part of South India'[111] during the early first millennium. His kingdom extended to the lands between the Krishna and Kaveri rivers, with the capital at Kāñci. He also reigned during the time period in which sectarian debate was a live one and in which new sects were asserting their presence in the public sphere[112]. Mahendravarman himself is said to have converted to Saivism from Jainism.[113]

[110]Gopalan, R., and Sakkottai Krishnaswami Aiyangar. History of the Pallavas of Kanchi by R. Gopalan (1928). Print. [Madras]: The University of Madras

[111]Unni, N. P. edition of Mahendra Vikrama Varma's *Mattavilāsa Prahāsana*. Print. Dillī: Nāga Prakāśaka (1998) Introduction, Page 9

[112] While the Shramanic sects (Jainism and Buddhism) originated sometime between 900 – 500 B.C.E., it was only after the impetus received under Mauryan rule that these sects began to organize along strict monastic lines. The period after the Gupta reign had faded away witnessed, in growing numbers, the prolific rise of varying sects, most (if not all) of which vied for patronage and support. Kumārila and Dharmakīrti were active during the 6th and 7th centuries, and we see more evidence for sectarian debate. According to R. Gopalan, evidence from Mahendravarman's reign bears out that 'Buddhism flourished there till at least the seventh century A.D.' (Gopalan, R., and Sakkottai Krishnaswami Aiyangar. *History of the Pallavas of Kanchi* (1928). Print. [Madras]: The University of Madras, page 95) and that it was also 'the period of the Vaishṇava saint Tirumaliśai and therefore also that of the first three Āḻvārs' (Gopalan, R., and Sakkottai Krishnaswami Aiyangar. *History of the Pallavas of Kanchi* (1928). Print. [Madras]: The University of Madras, page 96). Besides these factors, it is important to consider that the king himself was said to be a Jain converted to Saivism. Thus, Mahendravarman's rule is poised at the very outset of sectarian promiscuity and useful for our purposes to gauge popular religion at the very time when sectarianism was on the increase.

[113] This legend, narrated in the chronicle *Periyapurāṇam*, that Mahendravarman was converted to Saivism by Appar, who was also a convert, is traditionally accepted. Whether the conversion was as dramatic as narrated is open to question, but there is little doubt that Mahendravarman was a devoted Śaiva; Mahendravarman caused the excavation of many cave-temples dedicated to Śiva and there is evidence from the Trichinopoly rock inscription to the effect that the king 'turned back from hostile conduct to the worship of the *linga'* (Gopalan, R., and Sakkottai Krishnaswami Aiyangar. *History of the Pallavas of Kanchi* (1928). Print. [Madras]: The University of Madras, page 90)

In *Mattavilāsa Prahāsana,* the author-king records the popular religion of his day. As king, he was in the unique position of both understanding the nature of religion (at least within his own kingdom, perhaps even in neighbouring lands) and, he was in a position to dictate policy with regards to religion practiced in his kingdom. He must also have listened to various disputes that were brought to court, indeed, within the play itself, the Kapālin and the Buddhist are ready to go to the royal court to settle their dispute[114]. It is evident then that he had some knowledge of the state of his kingdom in terms of religious pluralism and, more especially, he was aware of the various sects predominant in his own capital city, Kāñci. It is noteworthy that, as a Śaiva king, Mahendravarman constructed '*āyatana(s)'* for Brahma, Īśvara (Śiva) and Viṣṇu.[115] He is referred to as 'Caityakāri' – 'one who made temples'[116] He is also titled '*abhimukha' (*the one who looks forward)[117], perhaps an indication of his anticipation of the future. Through his play, he appears to be critiquing the immoral and depraved nature of the followers of many religious sects with whom, perhaps, he did not agree. As a Śaiva, he naturally degrades the Buddhist but even the śaiva Kapālin does not come across in a favourable light he is depicted as a drunk prankster rather than a man of God. Other instances suggest the nature of religious pluralism in his reign.

Mattavilāsa Prahāsana (MVP) is a satirical play, literally meaning 'the wild pranks of a drunkard' or 'the drunken sport', set in the city of Kāñci (modern day Kanchipuram). The lead character is a Kapālin, a member of the Śaivite sect advocating carrying bowls made of human skulls (*kapāla*). Accompanying him is his lover, the maiden Devasoma. The play centres around the Kapālin who, having misplaced his skull-bowl, accuses a passing Buddhist of having stolen it. This dispute is a purely material one; the Kapālin only wants his bowl back and, under the false impression that the Buddhist has stolen it, extends the dispute to a doctrinal one, deriding the Buddhist with extensive use of polemic and philosophical reasoning. This has a satirical effect; the Kapālin himself cannot be held as an epitome of virtue as he has been drinking. He is hardly in his senses

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[115]Unni, N. P. edition of Mahendra Vikrama Varma's *Mattavilāsa Prahāsana*. Print. Dillī: Nāga Prakāśaka (1998) Page 12. C.f. Gopalan, R., and Sakkottai Krishnaswami Aiyangar. *History of the Pallavas of Kanchi* (1928). Print. [Madras]: The University of Madras, page 91: 'Though he may have professed his devotion to Śiva he caused to be cut out in rock a Vishṇu temple called *Mahendravishṇugṛha* on the banks of Mahendra-Taṭāka in Mahendravāḍi.'

[116] Ibid

[117]

and is quick to argue with the Buddhist on doctrinal grounds which hardly have any bearing on the matter at hand.

The Buddhist, caught unawares, attempts to hide his own bowl which, under the doctrines taught by his sect, is to remain hidden in his cloth except when it is time to collect alms. On his refusal to allow the Kapālin to see the bowl, the Kapālin becomes enraged and attempts to snatch it by force, whereupon he is pushed, and he falls to the ground. His lover takes up the fight but, unable to gain a hold on the Buddhist monk's hair, also falls. The Buddhist pities her and turns to help her but the Kapālin, now fully enraged, accuses him of trying to steal away his woman as well.[118]

At this stage, the matter is at an impasse. While the Kapālin verbally abuses the monk and calls for Maheśvara himself to witness this injustice, a passing Pāśupata approaches them and attempts to arbitrate the dispute. A brief debate then ensues between the Kapālin and the monk where the Kapālin attempts to argue that, on the basis of Buddhist doctrine and logic, the Buddhist has definitely stolen his bowl. Even with the Pāśupata as arbiter, they are unable to resolve the dispute and decide to seek justice in the royal court. At this time, a madman comes up the street and, through his dialogue, it becomes evident that he has snatched a bowl full of meat from a dog. It becomes apparent that this was the very bowl that the Kapālin had misplaced. The play ends when, after a brief dialogue and many entreaties with the madman, the three men manage to snatch the bowl and it is returned to the Kapālin who gratefully thanks the two and apologising to the Buddhist, goes on his merry way, accompanied by his mistress.

The play was possibly intended as a satirical comment on the Buddhists; Mahendravarman subtly introduces some biting criticism of Buddhism in the words of the lead character, the Kapālin Satyasoma. The Kapālin asserts that the Buddhists 'contradict their doctrines' when they assume 'pleasure as an effect of pain'. The doctrine referred to here is the *Pratītyasamutpāda* (The Doctrine of dependant Origination), according to which there is no difference between cause and effect. At another point, the Kapalin, while arguing with the Buddhist monk, refuses to accept that the bowl is not his, even after it is apparent that it is of a different colour because,

[118] Holding a maiden by her wrist was traditionally a way of claiming a woman as one's own.

according to the Kapalin, the Buddha was borne of magic of the deceitful kind (a pun on the meaning of *māyā* as magic and the fact that Māyā was the name of buddha's mother).

The Buddhist also comes across as morally depraved; it is revealed that he would have taken the alcohol proffered to him by the Kapālin had they not been in public. He is also exceedingly courteous to the lady and takes great notice of her, a trait that in the ordinary course of things should not be allowed to a Buddhist monk.

On the other hand, the Kapālin does not come across as a very respectable figure either. Some of his habits, like excessive drinking, and the fact that he is absent-minded, quick to seek quarrels etc., ironically, countermands any truly brilliant philosophical argument he is capable of making. He does not accept that the Buddhist's bowl cannot be his even after seeing that it is different in colour and, evidently, not of the same material. He is bent on defeating the Buddhist through seemingly philosophical debate which on the whole is completely meaningless and is frankly absurd.

While the plot of the play itself has little to do with religion except in an oblique way, in certain places it does indicate some acceptance of pluralism. In the play, it becomes evident that Kāñci is a city where various sects roam about with relative impunity. They are free to beg for alms in the city and do not appear to be persecuted. The play introduces the Kapālin and his lover walking around the streets of Kāñci, obtaining liquor as alms. At the same time, even a Buddhist monk is able to go up to a shop (unspecified) to seek alms. It appears, at least through the play, that the people of Kāñci did not discriminate while giving alms.

The characters also address each other politely. It is noteworthy that the Buddhist addresses the Kapalin as 'Brother' and also knows where he resides. In fact, it appears that the Buddhist is well aware of the Kapālin and his 'pranks'[119], which he is determined to avoid. The Kapālin offers his liquor even to the Buddhist, who is forced to refuse on account of his vows. At the close of the play, the Buddhist claims that he is 'delighted at the gain'[120] of his 'opponent'[121]. The Kapālin also apologises profusely to the Buddhist who graciously accepts it.[122] These small gestures go a long way to prove that the sectarian persecutions were not as widespread as

[119] Unni, N. P. translated edition of Mahendra Vikrama Varma's *Mattavilāsa Prahāsana*. Print. Dillī: Nāga Prakāśaka (1998), page 79
[120] Ibid, page 88
[121] Ibid, page 88
[122] Ibid, page 89

theorised by the theologians of various schools. In the beginning of the play, the Kapālin claims that he should not even talk about the Buddhists[123] but towards the end he is helped by the Buddhist and the Pāśupata, is polite to both of them and is genial in offering his liquor as well. It is also suggestive that, in his attempts to demean the Buddhist, he exhibits at least a cursory knowledge of Buddhist theology and philosophy. This, and the fact that the Buddhist knows the Kapālin well enough to place him, is suggestive.

Throughout the play, the Kapālin also makes use of a form of dialectic that, as mentioned above, was already in use in the debating tradition. He attempts to reason with the monk in the presence of an arbiter. Another point to be notes, here, is the fact that, at a point where the two disputants could not resolve their conflict, the practice was to resort to the King's court for resolution. Devasoma points out, however, that the monk with his 'abundance of wealth accrued from several monasteries'[124] could bribe the officials. While this point is quickly refuted by the Pāśupata, who claims that the officials 'uphold' justice[125], and that Kapālin, who asserts that an honest man has nothing to fear[126], it is noteworthy that none disputes the wealth of the Buddhist monk. It is left to the reader to guess that the monasteries referred to received patronage, perhaps even from the Śaiva king. This is partially verified in the works of Hieun Tsang who confirms that Kāñci had 'more than hundred Buddhist monasteries'[127] with 'more than ten thousand monks'[128].

As previously noted, towards the 9th and 10th centuries, religious sects had come to be more rigidly organised. As evidenced from the relatively frequent publications of sectarian treatises, formulated to promulgate the particular view of various secs, it is evident that there was a sharp increase in sectarianism. This was the time period in which Jayanta Bhatta, the author of *Āgamaḍambara,* enters the scene.

Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, best described as a 'brahmin logician'[129], is well known for his philosophical treatise, *Nyāyamañjari,* an 'exposition on the Sūtras of Gautama'[130]. According to his son Abhinanda, the family

[123] Ibid, page 75
[124] Ibid, page 85
[125] Ibid, page 85
[126] Ibid, page 86
[127] Unni, N. P. edition of Mahendra Vikrama Varma's *Mattavilāsa Prahāsana*. Print. Dillī: Nāga Prakāśaka (1998), under 'THE RELIGION IN N MATTAVILASA, page 20
[128] Ibid, Page 20
[129] Johnson, W. (2009). Jayanta Bhaṭṭa. In A Dictionary of Hinduism, Oxford University Press.
[130] Jayanta Bhaṭṭa '*Āgamaḍambara'*, edited by V Raghavan And Anantalal Thakur. Sri Sudarsan Press, Darbhanga. 1964. Introduction, under 'His works', page iii

'belonged to the Bhāradvāja gotra'[131]. Both Abhinanda and Jayanta himself attest to their family's 'cultivation of the Vedic tradition'[132] This is further attested to in the *Nyāyamañjari,* in which he fervently defends even the *Atharvaveda* in opposition to Kumārila's hesitance to accept it as Veda. In addition to his Naiyāyika sentiments, Jayanta is also known to be a Śaiva.[133] But despite his personal allegiences, Jayanta appears to be in favour of the authoritativeness of all religious sects (*samāgamapramāṇya);* he is only opposed, in principle, to the non-Veda based sects (i.e. Cārvāka, Buddhist and Jaina). However, in his play, *Āgamaḍambara,* he shows remarkable catholicity in accepting even these,[134] only stopping short of extending this tolerance to blatantly subversive sects such as the Nīlāmbaras. It is interesting note that this catholicity's presented in a popular play.

Whether this catholicity is to be put down to Jayanta's personal proclivities or whether he was a product of his time and his situation as advisor to a King, whose kingdom was replete with various sectarian groups[135], remains to be answered. However, we cannot deny that the play appears to be based on real events and, the fact that, in the play, Jayanta appears to be a minister in King Śaṅkaravarman's court, particularly as an advisor to the king on religious matters,[136] bears out historical conditions to some extent.

The *Āgamaḍambara* is a satirical play depicting the 'religious life in Kashmir during the reign of Śaṅkaravarman (883–902).'[137] The play has been classed as 'a witty and satirical, but ultimately tolerant play'[138] It also provides us with a 'comprehensive picture of the contemporary religious debates as well as the '*Religionspolitik'* of the royal court'[139] The plot of the play is 'based on the playwright's recent past'[140]; both the king and queen mentioned in the play (King Śaṅkaravarman and Queen Sugandhā) were a real royal couple

[131] Ibid, Introduction, (i) The author, page i
[132] Ibid, Introduction, (i) The author, page i
[133] Ibid, introduction. (i) The Author, page iii
[134] *Āgamaḍambara,* Act IV
[135] Jayanta Bhaṭṭa '*Āgamaḍambara'*, edited by V Raghavan And Anantalal Thakur. Sri Sudarsan Press, Darbhanga. 1964. Introduction, under 'His Date', page vii
[136] Ibid, Introduction, (i) The author, page 1. C.f., *Āgamaḍambara,* Act II 11.405fT, towards the end of the act, Saṅkarṣaṇa comments that the king and his trusted advisor Jayanta should know of the depraved activities of the Nīlāmbaras. Also, Act III.111, in the dialogue between the Śaiva Sādhakas, they mention Jayanta as advisor to the king.
[137] Ibid
[138] Johnson, W. (2009). Jayanta Bhaṭṭa. In A Dictionary of Hinduism, Oxford University Press.
[139] Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, '*Āgamaḍambara'* Translated by Dezső, Csaba. '*Much Ado about Religion: A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the Āgamaḍambara, a Satirical Play by the Ninth Century Kashmirian Philosopher Bhaṭṭa Jayanta'* Print. University of Oxford. Humanities Division | University of Oxford. Faculty of Oriental Studies | Balliol College (University of Oxford) | 2004 | Thesis (D.Phil.) University of Oxford, 2004. Page (ii)
[140] Ibid, page xlviii

and this is attested to by other historical sources, including Kalhaṇa's *Rājataraṅgiṇī*[141] and the evidence of the coins issues by the king in the region of Kashmir and northern Punjab.[142] Also, in the *Nyāyamañjari*, Jayanta Bhaṭṭa comments that the Nīlāmbaras[143] were supressed by King Śaṅkaravarman, lending some credibility to the idea that the play is distinctly placed in historical reality. According to him, *'King Śaṅkaravarman, who was conversant with the true nature of Dharma, suppressed this practice* (*nīlāmbaravratam idam*)*, because he knew that it was unprecedented, but he did not [suppress] the religions of Jains and others in the same way.'*[144] This statement is significant in that it proves, firstly, the extent to which religious pluralism was already prevalent in his time[145] and secondly, the idea of 'precedence' or tradition is here introduced. For our purposes, as already mentioned, this is the period in which promulgators of various sects' insistence upon divisions along sectarian lines had become a common feature of public life.

Jayanta Bhatta's arguments for a more tolerant approach are better discussed in his Nyāya treatise, the *Nyāyamañjari*. However, these ideas also enter into the present play, particularly in the final scene. The very fact that Jayanta included these ideas into a play that, by all accounts, was popular enough to have survived to our times, indicates that these ideas were not completely averse to the popular feeling of the period. As Sanderson points out, the play witnesses 'the uncompromising Vaidika camp attempt and fail to impose its Manu-inspired vision of a society free of all but properly Vaidika religion.'[146]

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[141] *Rājataraṅgiṇī,* Book V.179. C.f. Ibid, Book V.141, V.213, V.216 – 222. C.f. Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, '*Āgamaḍambara'* Translated by Dezső, Csaba. '*Much Ado about Religion: A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the Āgamaḍambara, a Satirical Play by the Ninth Century Kashmirian Philosopher Bhaṭṭa Jayanta'* Print. University of Oxford. Humanities Division | University of Oxford. Faculty of Oriental Studies | Balliol College (University of Oxford) | 2004 | Thesis (D.Phil.) University of Oxford, 2004. Introduction, page x - xi

[142]

[143] A particularly divergent sect of the Śaivas that, according to the play itself, consisted of the practice of obscene acts under the cover of a blanket by devout couples. It is this specific sect that invokes the ire of the protagonist in the play, leading to him ultimately causing them to be banished by the order of the kind and moving the plot along.

[144] *'tad apūrvam iti viditvā nivārayām āsa dharmatattvajñaḥ│ rājā śaṅkaravarmā na punar jainādimatam evam ││' Nyāyamañjari* as given in Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, '*Āgamaḍambara'* Translated by Dezső, Csaba. '*Much Ado about Religion: A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the Āgamaḍambara, a Satirical Play by the Ninth Century Kashmirian Philosopher Bhaṭṭa Jayanta'* Print. University of Oxford. Humanities Division | University of Oxford. Faculty of Oriental Studies | Balliol College (University of Oxford) | 2004 | Thesis (D.Phil.) University of Oxford, 2004. Introduction, page ix. Own parenthesis added.

[145] the '*ādi'* extension following the word *Jaina* proves that many sects of the same kind were in existence. The term generally denotes a list beginning with and of the same kind as that which immediately precedes it.

[146] Sanderson, Alexis, '*Tolerance, Exclusivity, Inclusivity, and Persecution in Indian Religion During the Early Mediaeval Period*.' In Honoris Causa: Essays in Honour of Aveek Sarkar, edited with a foreword by John Makinson (Allen Lane, 2015, page 198

The scene of the play is Srinagar[147], as evidenced by references to the Raṇaswāmī temple in the last act and the fact that it takes place in the capital city of the ruling King, Śaṅkaravarman. The play begins in the gardens of a Buddhist Vihāra, with a Buddhist monk explaining the Buddhist doctrine of the nonexistence of the soul and the doctrine of momentariness to his pupil. He is interrupted by the dinner bell and only after consuming an elaborate meal, return to the lesson in the garden. A *snātaka,* the protagonist of the play who has vowed to 'humiliate the enemies of the Veda'[148], who is passing by the vihāra with his pupil (Baṭu) and commenting on the opulence in which the Buddhists live and dine, hears this teaching and seizes his chance to debate with the Buddhist. In the presence of Viśvarūpa[149] and other scholars, deemed 'fit to be observers in a debate'[150] and, after laying down the rules[151], the *snātaka* summarises the Buddhist doctrines which were the subject of the lesson, successfully refuting them. The *snātaka,* introduced later in the play as Saṅkarṣaṇa, leaves the Buddhist monk with the comment that his teachings are completely useless to bring about salvation but that he may use them 'as a means of livelihood'.[152]

The next act continues in the same vein, after a brief comic interlude involving a Jaina monk's amorous attempts towards Saṅkarṣaṇa's servant (*ceṭa),* who has been sent to the Jaina ascetic's cove to find Jinarakṣita, a promulgator of the *Kṣapaṇaka* school of Jainism. Saṅkarṣaṇa, in his quest to find another opponent, comes across the Jaina preceptor in the middle of a lecture to his disciples seated under a tree in the forest. He tries to engage the monk in a debate by summarising Jaina philosophy and enquiring of him which part of the philosophy is being taught. However, the monk, realising the *snātaka's* objective, makes an excuse and rushes

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[147] The Capital city of Śaṅkaravarman is known to be Avantipur, named after Avanti Varma, the father of Śaṅkaravarman. It is situated between the modern towns of Anantnag and Srinagar.

[148] Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, '*Āgamaḍambara'* Translated by Dezső, Csaba. '*Much Ado about Religion: A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the Āgamaḍambara, a Satirical Play by the Ninth Century Kashmirian Philosopher Bhaṭṭa Jayanta'* Print. University of Oxford. Humanities Division | University of Oxford. Faculty of Oriental Studies | Balliol College (University of Oxford) | 2004 | Thesis (D.Phil.) University of Oxford, 2004. Act One, verse 11, Page 113

[149] A name which, according to Dezső, 'might echo that of a commentator of the *Nyāyabhāṣya' (*Ibid, page xix, note 26). This character possibly represents the

[150] Jayanta Bhaṭṭa '*Āgamaḍambara'*, edited by V Raghavan And Anantalal Thakur. Sri Sudarsan Press, Darbhanga. 1964. Introduction, page x.

[151] *Āgamaḍambara* Act 1 Verse 25, translation as given in Dezső, Csaba. '*Much Ado about Religion: A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the Āgamaḍambara, a Satirical Play by the Ninth Century Kashmirian Philosopher Bhaṭṭa Jayanta'* Print. University of Oxford. Humanities Division | University of Oxford. Faculty of Oriental Studies | Balliol College (University of Oxford) | 2004 | Thesis (D.Phil.) University of Oxford, 2004. Page 117, (19):

'If the speech you make is correct, moderate, [and] its source is the established truth; if [that kind of speech] which is full of Quibbles, Futile Rejoinders, and Vulnerable Points, with a noisy mass of [bad types of] disputation, is to be avoided; [if] there is no envy at all in your heart, no roughness in your words, no frowning on your face; [in brief:] if this is a discussion among virtuous persons, then we are always ready to serve as assessors.'

[152] Jayanta Bhaṭṭa '*Āgamaḍambara'*, edited by V Raghavan And Anantalal Thakur. Sri Sudarsan Press, Darbhanga. 1964. Introduction, page xi

off along with his pupils. Soon thereafter, another ascetic appears on the scene denouncing the Veda and Vedanta, while rushing through the scene. On enquiry by Saṅkarṣaṇa, it is revealed that he is headed to a grand feast organised by a lay Jaina devotee. Intrigued, Saṅkarṣaṇa accompanies the ascetic to the scene of the feast and learns that there are various sects even among the Jainas. The ascetic further informs the *snātaka* that the feast will not include anything that is opposed to the Jaina doctrine of avoiding anything that has an animal as its source. Here, as the *snātaka* stands admiring the tranquillity of the forest, Nīlāmbara-pairs come into view and, disgusted by their behaviour, Saṅkarṣaṇa vows to report this to the king and have this heretical sect ousted from the kingdom.

The next act begins with a dialogue between two Saiva practitioners who are planning on escaping the kingdom as they believe that it is no longer safe for them to remain there. It is through them that we are informed of Saṅkarṣaṇa's promotion to the minister of Religion by order of the king and the fact that heretics are being rooted out at his command. Further information points to the fact that all of this was sparked of by Saṅkarṣaṇa witnessing Nīlāmbaras, as seen in the previous act. The two speculate on whether the Vaiṣṇavas will escape persecution on account of the chief Queen herself being a devotee. They conclude that they must move about only at night, seeking the shelter of the forests during day- time to avoid persecution. Just then, Saṅkarṣaṇa arrives on the scene is announced, hearing which the two Śaivas flee. Saṅkarṣaṇa is informed that his actions have caused the reestablishment of the 'Vedic path'[153] and he comments to *Baṭu* that it is a pity even the Śaivas have to be gotten rid of, stating his preference of their reinstatement and reform rather than outright banishment. At this point, he is informed that even the righteous ascetics are leaving out of fear and he hastens to correct the situation, ordering that the 'good ascetics' should be brought back after being duly honoured.[154] With a purpose of allaying the fears of the ascetics and remembering that the king himself is a devout Śaiva, he proceeds to a *Śaivāśrama*. There, he encounters the Śaiva preceptor, Dharmaśiva, and after respectfully greeting him with due honor, assures him that 'only the corrupt Tāpasas had been driven out'[155]. He further reassures the Śaiva leader that no harm would come to him or his disciples and that the king himself will pay them a visit shortly. At this point, the arrival of Vṛdhhāmbi, possibly a scholar of the Cārvaka persuasion.

[153] Jayanta Bhaṭṭa '*Āgamaḍambara'*, edited by V Raghavan And Anantalal Thakur. Sri Sudarsan Press, Darbhanga. 1964. Introduction, page xiv
[154] Ibid, page xiv.
[155] Ibid, page xv

Vṛdhhāmbi immediately makes his view clear that the king will not long survive in this manner if he continues to ignore his material gains while continuing to support the various (theist) ascetics and religious sects. He proceeds to abuse the Śaiva preceptor and enters into a debate with him. His callous attitude and outright rudeness serves to incline the audience's sympathy towards the Śaiva preceptor who promptly defeats him in the debate on the existence of god. He then turns over to Saṅkarṣaṇa who proves the authority of the Veda. Thus defeated, Vṛdhhāmbi departs and Dharmaśiva exhorts Saṅkarṣaṇa to ignore their differences till those opposed to the Veda are driven away. Saṅkarṣaṇa responds that he has great respect for Siva and reassures the śaiva leader that the Śaivas will be protected. He departs as there are sounds of the king approaching the *āśrama* to pay the Śaiva leader a visit.

In the final act, it is the Bhāgavatas who pose a problem for the protagonist as they demand their tenet to be acknowledged as authoritative. The act opens with a dialogue between two Vaidika proponents (a *Ṛtvik* and an *Upādhyāya*) cynically remarking that Saṅkarṣaṇa has wavered from his purpose of ousting non-vaidika sects and has become a mere lackey, parroting the King. They further lament the fact that now even the Bhāgavatas and followers of the Pañcarātra have commenced posing as true Brahmins and 'marry some brahmin woman who has strayed from the path of decorum'[156] They both resolve to go to a 'Vaiṣṇava temple where thousands of Bhāgavatas have congregated on one side and Brahmins have also collected in the place in thousands to have the question of Bhāgavata Āgama thrashed out' and where, reportedly, Saṅkarṣaṇa has gone as well. Saṅkarṣaṇa, apprehensive about this public gathering and debate, agonises over which side to support; his own Vaiṣṇava sect or that of the Vaidikas. The gathering witnesses the full range of divergent sects within the kingdom and includes, among others, Mīmāṃsaka, grammarians, Nyāya proponents as well as scholars well read in *Smṛti* texts and the *Purāṇas*.[157] Saṅkarṣaṇa, viewing this assemblage, comments that the 'the kingdom looks exactly like Brahma's heaven'[158] and, in his apprehension on the matter of which sect he must now throw his support, enters the Vaiṣṇava shrine before taking his place in the assembly.

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[156] *Āgamaḍambara* Act IV Verse 14, translation as given in Dezső, Csaba. '*Much Ado about Religion: A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the Āgamaḍambara, a Satirical Play by the Ninth Century Kashmirian Philosopher Bhaṭṭa Jayanta'* Print. University of Oxford. Humanities Division | University of Oxford. Faculty of Oriental Studies | Balliol College (University of Oxford) | 2004 | Thesis (D.Phil.) University of Oxford, 2004. Page 234

[157] Ibid, Act IV verse 6, page 235 (6)

[158] Ibid, Act IV verse 7, page 235

At this point, an officer announces that, by the Queen's recommendation and by consensus of the disputants themselves, the 'Bhaṭṭa Sāhaṭa, …. (the) great Naiyāyika, also known by the name of Dhairyarāśi'[159] is nominated as the arbitrator, who proceeds to summarise the controversy. Presenting both sides of the argument himself[160], Dhairyarāśi points out that 'the Veda is a source of valid cognition by itself alone because it creates awareness and because neither of the blames [of validity] occurs'[161]. He proceed to prove that the Veda must have been composed by a single 'the Blessed Lord'[162] Further, he points out that if the *Āgamas* are held as non-authoritative on the grounds that they contradict the Veda, it is evident from the Veda that the Vedic statements often contradict themselves and, therefore, the various *Āgamas* may well also be authoritative.[163] He also points out that they agree with each other as far as the *puruṣārthas* are concerned[164] and that 'their difference should be taken as one of diversity of path or approach.'[165] Here, he furnishes the example of a house with many doors, any of which might be used to gain entry. He concludes that the Pañcarātra, as an example, may well be a one of 'particular recensions'[166] of the very same Veda and that all scripture is to be considered authoritative if 'it takes an uninterrupted course acknowledged by all, if the Āryas are not averse to becoming familiar with and discussing it, if its accepted practice is neither antisocial nor dangerous, if its

[159] Ibid, Act IV, verse 17, page 236
[160] Ibid, Act IV verses 15-103
[161] Ibid, Act IV verse 39, page 238
[162] Ibid, Act IV verse (45): '*let the Blessed Lord be the one and only author of all scriptures, for, as it has already been stated, a plurality of authors is not easy to account for'* Page 241
[163] Jayanta Bhaṭṭa '*Āgamaḍambara'*, edited by V Raghavan And Anantalal Thakur. Sri Sudarsan Press, Darbhanga. 1964. Introduction, page xviii: '… it is shown that if apparent contradictions in the Vedas themselves could be explained, they could similarly be explained in the *āgamas* too'. C.f. Dezső, Csaba. '*Much Ado about Religion: A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the Āgamaḍambara, a Satirical Play by the Ninth Century Kashmirian Philosopher Bhaṭṭa Jayanta'* Print. University of Oxford. Humanities Division | University of Oxford. Faculty of Oriental Studies | Balliol College (University of Oxford) | 2004 | Thesis (D.Phil.) University of Oxford, 2004. Page 241, Act IV Verse (48) '*Thus, pro primo, there is no fault in the instructions of other sacred texts, just as in Vedic injunctions, even if they are mutually contradictory.'*
[164] C.f. Dezső, Csaba. '*Much Ado about Religion: A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the Āgamaḍambara, a Satirical Play by the Ninth Century Kashmirian Philosopher Bhaṭṭa Jayanta'* Print. University of Oxford. Humanities Division | University of Oxford. Faculty of Oriental Studies | Balliol College (University of Oxford) | 2004 | Thesis (D.Phil.) University of Oxford, 2004. Page 241, Act IV Verse (49): '*With regard to the highest human goal, there is no contradiction among scriptures, since the very same reward: deliverance is taught by all.'*
[165] Jayanta Bhaṭṭa '*Āgamaḍambara'*, edited by V Raghavan And Anantalal Thakur. Sri Sudarsan Press, Darbhanga. 1964. Introduction, page xviii. C.f. Dezső, Csaba. '*Much Ado about Religion: A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the Āgamaḍambara, a Satirical Play by the Ninth Century Kashmirian Philosopher Bhaṭṭa Jayanta'* Print. University of Oxford. Humanities Division | University of Oxford. Faculty of Oriental Studies | Balliol College (University of Oxford) | 2004 | Thesis (D.Phil.) University of Oxford, 2004. Page 241, Act IV Verse (50) – (51) '*Various kinds of salvific paths are taught, however, which conform to the intellect of the beings to be favoured. This omniscient Lord taught various kinds of approaches when he saw: 'As for these people, they can be helped to reach beatitude in the way they prefer on this path''*
[166] Ibid, page 243, Act IV verse (68)

character does not appear to be newly arisen, if its basis does not seem to be the fact that it was proclaimed by a madman, or that it is unusual, or greed and the like'[167]

Hearing this, a delighted Saṅkarṣaṇa lauds the speech of Dhairyarāśi and enquires whether the disputants themselves are in agreement with him and, upon their acceptance, dismisses the gathering with the cautionary reminders that the sects should not be permitted intermingle and that false pretenders should not be accepted into any sect. The disputants respond with their acceptance of these conditions and remind Saṅkarṣaṇa that these must be protected by the King as well. The play concludes with the statement from the protagonist to the effect that each sect is to follow their own traditional practices.

While the play is remarkable in its progression towards the point the playwright himself is attempting to make, it is also a laudable effort at including almost all sects in the persona of characters who depict their respective allegiances openly. Among the various characters, Dharmottara is the Buddhist, Jinarakṣita the Kṣapaṇaka Jaina, Vṛdhhāmbi is the Cārvāka, Dharmaśiva is the śaiva leader. Raghavan remarks that these characters may have been deliberately named after historical figures of the respective sects.[168] Further, other groups, such as the Nīlāmbaras and the Pāñcarātra, are mentioned even though their leaders are not specially characterised. That this diversity is shown as existing within the kingdom and is indicative both of the increasing sectarianism and the fact that these communities largely coexisted, with minimal interference from the state.

Through the play, the importance of debate occupies centre stage; Saṅkarṣaṇa looks for opponents and either defeats them or forces them to retreat. Even the Saiva preceptor engages in debate to prove that the Cārvāka point of view is incorrect. The final act concludes the argument of authoritativeness through a public debate where all views are aired, presumably with the permission of the king himself. This emphasis on public debate, conducted reasonably with suitable civility of manner and following set rules, repeatedly reinforces the idea that any ill-will harboured towards an opposing sect could be hashed out in this manner rather than through open hostility. Also, it is repeatedly evident that engagement in a debate required that the proponents of either view must know that of their opponent in order to properly engage in a debate; slinging abuse was not the

[167] Ibid, page 246 – 247, Act IV Verse (100 – 101)
[168] Jayanta Bhaṭṭa '*Āgamaḍambara'*, edited by V Raghavan And Anantalal Thakur. Sri Sudarsan Press, Darbhanga. 1964. Introduction, page xxiv, under 'The persons figuring in the play'

normal way to conduct a debate. Even the Saiva preceptor protests against abuse while debating the Cārvāka.[169] Saṅkarṣaṇa, for his part, always makes sure to carefully summarise the opponent's viewpoint and, on receiving acceptance from his opponent, refutes it.

The play is also interesting for the points it raises about the non-Vedic groups. Clearly, the author shows his hand in his open comments on the immoral and frankly depraved activities of the members of the non-Vedic sects. For instance, the Buddhists are shown to be claiming the validity of *Kṣnikatva* but have opulent luxurious Vihāras[170] with youthful maidens who serve them rich foods, including 'intoxicating drink' disguised with an innocent sounding name (*pakva-rasa*[171]). Further, the Buddhist proponent is quite unable to defeat the *snātaka* in debate nor is he able to uphold or explain the doctrines of his own sect. This might be an attempt by the author to indicate that even the leaders of religious groups did not quite know the teachings and followed them blindly.

Act Two depicts the depravity among the Jaina monks, one of whom is caught in obscene acts even while bearing the garb of a mendicant. Whether this was intended as a comic interlude or a satirical comment on the actual behaviour of the Jainas in the time is an open question. Even these monks appear to benefit from luxurious feasts given by lay devotees, who are careful to keep to the Jaina tradition of not serving anything that derives from animals including milk and ghee. However, the *bāṭu* does sympathise with the Jaina monks as he says that they already have nothing and, if the *snātaka* defeats them in debate, it would mean the 'destruction of everything they have', implying that, despite an occasional rogue monk, they generally preserved the sanctity of their penance. this is further evidenced by their description as pulling their hair out by their roots etc. There are further instances within the play to indicate the author's opinion on the non-Vedic systems. The author slyly introduces a philosophical attack on Buddhist philosophy in Act Two through the debate between the Cārvāka and the Saiva *guru*[172]. In the debate between the Mīmāṃsaka Saṅkarṣaṇa and the Cārvāka, the authoritativeness of the Veda is proved through dialectic. The inability of the Cārvāka to win the debate, inadvertently forces the supremacy of the Vedic systems.

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169 Act IV Verse 186

170 Jayanta Bhaṭṭa '*Āgamaḍambara'*, edited by V Raghavan And Anantalal Thakur. Sri Sudarsan Press, Darbhanga. 1964. Introduction, page xxvii – ix.

171 Ibid, Introduction, (v) The Theme, page x

172

This attack on the non-vedic systems, however, is smoothed over in Saṅkarṣaṇa's address in the final act where he asserts that

Further, where the non-vedic proponents were previously defeated in debate, they are reinstated by repeated assurances that they may practice what they wish for the sake of livelihood and that even if heterodox sects are considered the products of greed, for some Vaidikas 'the Veda is also a means of livelihood'[173]

The lead protagonist perhaps represents a part of the playwright himself in that he is adamant in his belief on the authority of the Veda and protects it at every turn as a true Mīmāṃsaka ought to do. In the first act, he debates the Buddhist vigorously and at length. However, he does seem to have another side to him in that, after he dismisses the Buddhist doctrine as 'masses of hypocrisy and humbug'[174], he acrimoniously remarks that, if this is the monk's only method 'to make a living', he may go on with it. This statement is significant as it suggests from the very offset that there is some rule of 'fair play' that governs the debate; Saṅkarṣaṇa's aim is only to debunk his opponent's teachings and not to reject it outright. Nor is it his purpose to 'convert' his opponent to his cause; in effect, he is willing to tolerate the teaching if it is not asserted as a method of attaining '[a better] afterlife'[175]. This is the first indication of the policy of pluralism with certain limits that the playwright is advocating through the protagonist.

Saṅkarṣaṇa, is represented as a Vaiṣṇava, as his name well indicates, as well as the fact that, in a moment of anxiety before the last act, he goes to Viṣṇu temple. Accordingly Saṅkarṣaṇa comments on Śaivas: 'What is not fit to drink for them? Surely that which is not liquid. That thing is not consumable which is bitter, or which cannot be cracked by teeth. If there is any being with breasts at all which is not suitable to have sex with, then it must be unborn or dead. What in the world could be an appropriate place for asceticism? Perhaps a pub.'[176]

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[173] Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, '*Āgamaḍambara'* Translated by Dezső, Csaba. '*Much Ado about Religion: A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the Āgamaḍambara, a Satirical Play by the Ninth Century Kashmirian Philosopher Bhaṭṭa Jayanta'* Print. University of Oxford. Humanities Division | University of Oxford. Faculty of Oriental Studies | Balliol College (University of Oxford) | 2004 | Thesis (D.Phil.) University of Oxford, 2004. Introduction, page xxiii

[174] Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, '*Āgamaḍambara'* Translated by Dezső, Csaba. '*Much Ado about Religion: A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the Āgamaḍambara, a Satirical Play by the Ninth Century Kashmirian Philosopher Bhaṭṭa Jayanta'* Print. University of Oxford. Humanities Division | University of Oxford. Faculty of Oriental Studies | Balliol College (University of Oxford) | 2004 | Thesis (D.Phil.) University of Oxford, 2004 Act 1.34

[175] Ibid, page 121, (I.34)

[176] Ibid, page 179

But again in another place, he comments: 'whom do not enchant these blessed breezes in the Saiva ashram, which loosen the knots in the matted hair of the ascetics, and delight in presenting a slow [graceful] dance of the mendicant-garments?'[177] It appears, then, that the protagonist's previous arguments against Śaivas would fall within the purview of those particular Śaivas who engaged in debased behaviour and were 'depraved ascetics who fool around calling themselves Śaivas'[178] and not against those who practised austerities and, ostensibly, did not cause anyone any harm. It is not a statement made through any particular animosity that he, as a Vaiṣṇava, may have felt towards the Saiva sect. Indeed, this statement is made even before his personal allegiance is known.

In another instance, following the progression of the play, the playwright introduces a concrete statement of tolerance of pluralism through the protagonist. Soon after realising that ascetics of all kinds are fleeing the kingdom for fear of persecution, he announces that 'Those virtuous people who have fallen into the beginningless stream of the world and belong to various religions—they should remain as they are, performing practices prescribed by their own religious discipline. Those criminal false ascetics, however, who devastate the established social and religious order—if they don't leave immediately, the king will strike them like thieves.'[179] This statement effectively forms the crux of both the extent of acceptance towards pluralism of religious beliefs and the state's policy towards the same. Saṅkarṣaṇa is also quick to allay the fears of Śaivas (possibly as a consequence of his realisation that the King himself is a Śaiva and the repercussions of causing the Śaivas to leave the kingdom would be great) He remarks to the Śaiva leader Dharmaśiva:

'We certainly do not hate the god Śiva; the power of whose majesty is incomparable. He alone is the single cause of the upholding, resorbing, and emitting of the worlds. He is Rudra, he is Brahma, he is Hari, or he might be some other Person beyond them. This entire world rests in him. Therefore let these Śaivas, Pāśupatas, Kālamukhas and Mahāvratins remain at ease.'[180]The king himself, moreover, is mentioned as being 'merciful to all religious schools.'[181]

[177] Ibid, page 181
[178] Ibid, page 179
[179] Ibid, page 179
[180] Ibid, page 191, Act III.44
[181] Ibid, Act Three, Verse 1, page 180.

However, this tolerance does not come unconditionally. As the protagonist himself suggests, there is the minor caveat that there should be no mixing between sects, a particular cause of anxiety for the Vaidikas.

Another condition is that the various sects are held as authoritative only if they fit certain parameters. The sects that did not meet these criteria should, according to the protagonist, be summarily suppressed regardless of their following in the populace. This echoes the playwright's arguments in the Nyāyamañjari. For Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, a religious tradition may be held authoritative if they are popular among a 'circle of the great persons'[182], are accepted by a multitude of people of 'good conduct'[183], do not 'instruct such conduct as appears to be unprecedented'[184], do not have greed as their motive[185], and do not preach doctrines that are contrary to societal norms or cause anxiety to others'[186]

Despite the extensive influence of state policy upon which the plot hinges, no member of the ruling administration appears in the play. The King himself is mentioned[187] but does not make an appearance. He acts through his appointed minister for religion in declaring policy. The author himself, in his capacity as the king's advisor, does not make an appearance in the play; he is only referred to anecdotally by the characters[188] and in the introduction to the play by the director.[189] This indicates the extent to which the king exerted his personal religious preferences on his subjects. The policy of the king through the play indicates that he was willing to tolerate all sects, so long as they did not disrupt the social order.

Religion was not expected to be the state's focus; there is no 'Minister of Religion' till Saṅkarṣaṇa is appointed. Also, Saṅkarṣaṇa, on witnessing a state functionary giving opulent feasts to monks, remarks that 'Since he squanders the cream of his wealth for such a cause and shirks the performance of his services [towards the

[182] JAYANTA BHAṬṬA, '*Nyāyamañjari',* translated by V.N.JHA. Selhi Sri Satguru Publications 1996. Page 562, (1)
[183] Ibid, page 562, (2)
[184] Ibid, page 562, (3)
[185] Ibid, page 562, (4)
[186] Ibid, page 562, (5)
[187] He is mentioned as a tolerant and righteous King in Act II.405 and Act III.160-16, 169, 174 and as a Śaiva in Act III.160, Act IV.3 and IV.26.
[188] Jayanta is mentioned as the King's advisor in Act III.9 and III.169.
[189] He is introduced in the prologue by the *sūtradhāra* as '*Vṛttikāra'* and as the author of the present play and is referred to as 'the child genius, who has mastered the essence of all sciences, who knows reality, and who has shaken off error' (Dezső, Csaba. '*Much Ado about Religion: A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the Āgamaḍambara, a Satirical Play by the Ninth Century Kashmirian Philosopher Bhaṭṭa Jayanta'* Print. University of Oxford. Humanities Division | University of Oxford. Faculty of Oriental Studies | Balliol College (University of Oxford) | 2004 | Thesis (D.Phil.) University of Oxford, 2004. Page 242 [53]) in Act IV by Dhairyarāśi in his speech.

king], I'm sure the sovereign will confiscate his property.' [190], indicating that a nobleman's acts of piety were not of particular interest to the king so long as he carried out his other duties to the state. The state does not seem to have interfered with religious practice or belief as long as some social order could be maintained, and services continued uninterrupted. The only situation in which the state might conceivably interfere in the affairs of religion, according to the play, appear to be where the social order itself might be at peril, tangentially affecting a king's ability to maintain the rule of law.

However, this does not imply that royal influence was not exerted on religious communities or that communities to which a royal patron was personally inclined was not protected. This is evidenced from the fact that, in the play, when the situation for the Pāñcarātra sect of the Vaiṣṇavas becomes dire, it is quickly recalled that the chief Queen Sugandhādevī herself, 'who is the mistress of the whole harem' will extend her protection to a *yogeśvari* of the sect,[191] and that perhaps, through her, 'some influence could be brought upon the chief queen'[192]. She also exerts her authority in nominating an arbitrator for the debate, albeit seemingly doing so at the request of the populace. The extent of royal influence on the state's religious affairs is also expressed in Saṅkarṣaṇa's anxiety that he should take care not to offend the Śaivas. As he himself notes in Act III 'King Śaṅkaravarmadeva is supremely devoted to Śiva'[193]and he, therefore, hastens to reassure a Śaiva leader, despite the fact that he himself is a Vaiṣṇava.

Saṅkarṣaṇa himself follows the same pattern in that he is not inclined to face the Bhāgavatas in defence of the Vaidikas.[194] Then, conceivably, the ruling class and administration did not interfere with religious affairs in their regions, so long as the sects they personally favoured were protected or in cases where their rule might be in jeopardy due to the machinations of religious groups. This would amount at best to the maintenance of status quo as far as religion is concerned.

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[190] Dezső, Csaba. '*Much Ado about Religion: A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the Āgamaḍambara, a Satirical Play by the Ninth Century Kashmirian Philosopher Bhaṭṭa Jayanta'* Print. University of Oxford. Humanities Division | University of Oxford. Faculty of Oriental Studies | Balliol College (University of Oxford) | 2004 | Thesis (D.Phil.) University of Oxford, 2004. Page 158, (16)

[191] Ibid, page 178. C.f. Jayanta Bhaṭṭa '*Āgamaḍambara'*, edited by V Raghavan And Anantalal Thakur. Sri Sudarsan Press, Darbhanga. 1964. Introduction, page xiii

[192] Jayanta Bhaṭṭa '*Āgamaḍambara'*, edited by V Raghavan And Anantalal Thakur. Sri Sudarsan Press, Darbhanga. 1964. Introduction, page xiii

[193] Ibid, page 180

[194] *Āgamaḍambara* Act IV, verse 21

Two points are of note here; one, that there were religious groups coexisting peacefully in the realm which, bar occasional debates in controlled settings, did not much interfere with each other. Second, that the king was loathe to interfere in these sects unless required to do so for the maintenance of his own rule by law. As Sanderson points out, the kings' task was to 'promote the peaceful co-existence of the faiths through even-handed patronage.'[195]This pattern will be borne out again through an examination of the available archaeological evidence.

[195] Sanderson, Alexis, '*Tolerance, Exclusivity, Inclusivity, and Persecution in Indian Religion During the Early Mediaeval Period*.' In Honoris Causa: Essays in Honour of Aveek Sarkar, edited with a foreword by John Makinson (Allen Lane, 2015, page 201

Pluralism Through Archaeological Evidence: Epigraphic records, Temple constructions and Records of Donations

The period under consideration was immediately preceded by the Gupta age, considered a 'Golden Age' for Hinduism[196], to the exclusion of other sects. However, this does not prove to be the case. While Gupta kings were upholders of Brahmanical law[197], even they did not insist on religious conformity. An inscription from a cave-temple in Udaygiri notes some surprising evidence of pluralism even among the Guptas. Candragupta II (c. 380 – c. 415 CE), a Bhāgavata, is said to have visited the cave temple dedicated to Lord Śambhu (Śiva), constructed by his chief minister, Vīrasena.[198] This shows that even the Guptas were tolerant at least to a degree; the King humours his chief minister, both in coming to a temple constructed by the latter and in allowing religious freedom to the Chief minister to pursue his devotion to Śiva, in the reign of a Bhāgavata king. On the same hill site (Udaygiri) is a cave of the 'heterodox Jains, which an inscription dates to the reign of Candragupta's son Kumāragupta (GE 106 = AD 436), lending further credibility to the idea of religious tolerance among the Gupta kings[199]. Many such instances of pluralism exist in the Gupta reign[200], and this same pattern is largely followed upon by the rulers of later centuries can be seen from the following examples.

Archaeological records suggest that, 'from the seventh century and probably earlier, there were Pāśupata temples in most of India'[201] and numerous temples of 'Visnu or his incarnations'[202] also appear to have been constructed during the period under review. This would indicate that the worship of many deities occurred simultaneously by various groups. These temples acted as 'a primary node of economic distribution and a focal point for political authority'[203] and, therefore, attracted patronage of various kinds in an almost secular manner. There is also evidence that some patrons even identified themselves with multiple sects at the same time.

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196 This view is refuted by D. N. Jha in *'Ancient India in Historical Outline.' Manohar, Delhi (2002). Page 172 – 173.*
197 C.f., Darshini, Priya. "RELIGION AND POLICY OF TOLERATION IN THE GUPTA PERIOD: NUMISMATIC AND EPIGRAPHICAL FACTS." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 66, 2005, page 167
198 BAKKER, HANS. "Royal Patronage and Religious Tolerance: The Formative Period of Gupta—Vākāṭaka Culture." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 20, no. 4, 2010, Page 461
199 C.f, Ibid, page 463
200 C.f., Darshini, Priya. "RELIGION AND POLICY OF TOLERATION IN THE GUPTA PERIOD: NUMISMATIC AND EPIGRAPHICAL FACTS." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 66, 2005, page 167.
201 Brockington, J. L. The Sacred Thread: Hinduism in Its Continuity and Diversity. 2nd ed. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1996. Print. Page 118
202 Singh, Yagyendra Bahadur. Social Life in Ancient India. New Delhi: Light & Life, 1981. Print. Chapter 9, Page 224.
203 Fisher, Elaine M. Hindu Pluralism: Religion and the Public Sphere in Early Modern South India. Oakland, California, 2017. Print. South Asia across the Disciplines. Page 9

Among the Viṣṇukuṇḍins of Āndhra (early 5th century to the 7th century), there is some evidence of kings patronizing multiple sects simultaneously. As Professor Sanderson observes: 'In the Tummalaguḍem plates (Set I) issued by Mahārāja Govindavarman I he is described as having beautified his kingdom with many temples and Buddhist monasteries, as having given generously to brahmins and Buddhist monks'[204] This is to be contrasted with the fact that the names of the rulers, Madhav Varma and Govinda Varma, hint at their Vaiṣṇavite leanings. Of the same dynasty, a record exists of Vikramendravarman II (descendant of Govindavarman I) having granted a village to a Śaiva temple.[205] While Vikramendravarman II is referred to as '*paramamāheśvaraḥ*'['entirely devoted to Śiva'[206]], he is also known as a patron of Buddhism,[207] thus proving that '*if a king supported Buddhism he did not necessarily cease to support other faiths or abandon his own'*[208]

The Pālas of Kānyakubja (c. middle of the 8th century A.D. – 12th century)[209], otherwise known to be the most 'liberal patrons of Buddhist institutions in early medieval India'[210] and to whom the 'major monasteries, of which the most eminent were those of Nālandā, Vikramaśīla, Somapura, Trikaṭuka, Uddaṇḍapura, and Jagaddala'[211] owe their 'creation and support'[212], did not exclude other sects. For instance, in the ninth century Devapāla is 'praised in a charter of his son Mahendrapāla for having built two temples of outstanding beauty during his rule, one for the Buddha and the other for the consort of Śiva' and Mahendrapāla, who is credited with the establishment of the monastery at Nandadirghika Udranga[213], is also reported to have established a

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[204] Sanderson, Alexis. '*The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period.*' In 'Genesis and Development of Tantrism', edited by Shingo Einoo. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009. Institute of Oriental Culture Special Series, 23, page 70

[205] Sanderson, Alexis. '*The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period.*' In 'Genesis and Development of Tantrism', edited by Shingo Einoo. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009. Institute of Oriental Culture Special Series, 23. Page 71

[206] Ibid, page 44

[207] Ibid, 70. C.f. Ibid, page 71 '*Vikramendravarman II which records his granting a village for the support of the Buddhist community at this monastery'*

[208] Ibid, page 72. C.f. Bronkhorst, Johannes. '*Buddhism in the Shadow of Brahmanism',* Published by Brill, 2011. Page 118

[209] C.f, Basham, A. L. 'The Wonder That Was India: A Survey of the History and Culture of the Indian Sub -continent before the Coming of the Muslims' (First published in 1967) Third Revised Edition, Rupa and Co. (2004). Pr int. New Delhi. Page 70.

[210] Sanderson, Alexis. '*The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period.*' In 'Genesis and Development of Tantrism', edited by Shingo Einoo. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009. Institute of Oriental Culture Special Series, 23, page 108

[211] Ibid, page 88

[212] Ibid, page 89

[213] *Epigraphia Indica, Volume XLII, (*1977 – 1978), edited by Dr. K.V. RAMESH, (M.A., Ph D), DIRECTOR (EPIGRAPHY), Archæological Survey of India, Delhi. 1992. [No. 2] MĀLDĀ DISTRICT MUSEUM COPPER PLATE CHARTER OF MAHENDRAPĀLADEVA, YEAR 77

temple for the emaciated goddess Carcā (Carcikā/Cāmuṇḍā).'[214] Similarly, Nārāyaṇapāla (r. c. 860– 917)[215] who is titled as a paramasaugataḥ (devotee of Buddha), is mentioned in the Bhāgalpur copper-plate inscription as having 'granted from Mudgagiri (Monghyr) a village in Tira-Bhukti (Tirhut) to the shrine of Siva and built one thousand temples in honour of the same deity'[216] and also records that 'the association of Pāsupatācāryas (*pāśupatācāryaparisaṭ*) attached to the foundation'[217]

The evidence from Kashmir is equally suggestive, albeit available only through secondary sources as 'extremely few [inscriptions] have survived the centuries of Islamic rule in Kashmir'[218]. However, the *Rājataraṇgini* of the Kashmiran historian Kālhaṇa, our main source for Kashmir, offers some valuable insight. According to Kālhaṇa 'when a king …. established and enshrined a deity, generally with his own name (*svanāmnā*), it was always a Viṣṇu (-svāmin, -keśava), though sometimes images of the Sun-god or the Buddha were enshrined in addition.'[219] Also, the Kashmiri kings, like most other Kings of the time, 'continued to uphold the brahmanical social order of the castes and disciplines (*varnāśramadharma*)'[220] and evidence from 'inscriptions from the fifth to the eighth centuries'[221] shows that they 'rigorously imposed it on their subjects.'[222] Despite all this, Kalhaṇa reports that Lalitāditya caused to be constructed 'a new stone temple to house the ancient Jyeṣṭheśvara at the site of ´Śiva Bhūteśvara (4.190) in the context of offerings to clear his debt to the latter incurred when he had appropriated the wealth of this temple to finance his military campaigns'

[214] Sanderson, Alexis. '*The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period.*' In 'Genesis and Development of Tantrism', edited by Shingo Einoo. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009. Institute of Oriental Culture Special Series, 23, page 108
[215] Ibid, page 111
[216] V. K. Agnihotri, '*Indian history'* Allied Publications Pvt. LTD. Delhi. Mumbai. Calcutta. 2010, page B-14
[217] Sanderson, Alexis. '*The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period.*' In 'Genesis and Development of Tantrism', edited by Shingo Einoo. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009. Institute of Oriental Culture Special Series, 23, page 111
[218] Ibid, page 60
[219] Ibid, page 60
[220] Sanderson, Alexis. '*The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period.*' In 'Genesis and Development of Tantrism', edited by Shingo Einoo. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009. Institute of Oriental Culture Special Series, 23, page 41
[221] Sanderson, Alexis. '*The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period.*' In 'Genesis and Development of Tantrism', edited by Shingo Einoo. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009. Institute of Oriental Culture Special Series, 23, page 41
[222] Ibid, page 41, c.f. Ibid, page 43

(4.189)[223] This was in addition to numerous Buddhist viharas and stupas, Śaiva shrines, Viṣṇu temples[224] and *Surya* shrines, including the commissioning of the Mārtāṇḍatīrtha sun temple[225] and the surrounding town.

Royal allegiances were also highlighted in inscriptional epithets or 'royal titles'[226] of the particular King. Such allegiances were generally declared through the epithets '*paramamāheśvarah', atyantamāheśvarah'*, or '*paramaśaivah'* when pertaining to Śiva/Maheśvara; '*paramabhāgavatah'*, '*paramavaiṣṇavāh'*, or '*atyantabhagavadbhaktah'* pertaining to Visnu; '*paramādityabhaktah'* or '*paramasaurah'* pertaining to Sun; as '*paramabhagavatībhaktah'* pertaining to Goddess (Bhagavatī); as '*paramasaugatah'* or '*paramatāthāgatah'* pertaining to Buddha; as '*paramārhatah'* or '*paramajainah'* pertaining to Jaina Arhats.[227]

However, despite declared devotion, rulers frequently showed public favour to other sects and religious institutions. As Sanderson observes: 'that a king should give to Buddhism and at the same time be declared a *paramamāheśvaraḥ* in documents issued by the royal chancellery is quite within the bounds of possibility'[228]For instance, the records of land grants from the Maitrakas of Valabhī, refer to them as '*paramamāheśvaraḥ'*[229] However, these records also indicate that a majority of their grants were made out to Brahmins[230] and a minority were also made out to 'Buddhist Institutions'[231] Another example from Nepal is that of king Narendradeva, who, according to Xuanzang in A.D. 643, wore a belt adorned with a Buddha, even though elsewhere he is titled as a '*paramamāheśvaraḥ'.*[232] The Kashmiri Kārkoṭas were Vaiṣṇavas but 'also supported Buddhism and the cult of the Sun.'[233] The Pallava king Mahendravarman I Gunabhara [234] was a

[223] Ibid, page 61
[224] Ibid, page 60
[225] Ibid, page 57
[226] Ibid, page 43
[227] Sanderson, Alexis, '*Tolerance, Exclusivity, Inclusivity, and Persecution in Indian Religion During the Early Mediaeval Period*.' In Honoris Causa: Essays in Honour of Aveek Sarkar, edited with a foreword by John Makinson (Allen Lane, 2015), page 201
[228] Sanderson, Alexis. '*The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period.*' In 'Genesis and Development of Tantrism', edited by Shingo Einoo. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009. Institute of Oriental Culture Special Series, 23, page 86. C.f. Schmiedchen, Annette. "*Patronage of Śaivism and Other Religious Groups in Western India under the Dynasties of the Kaṭaccuris, Gurjaras and Sendrakas from the 5th to the 8th Centuries*." in '*Indo-Iranian Journal'*, vol. 56, no. 3/4, 2013, page 354, 361
[229] Ibid, page 73
[230] Ibid, page 72
[231] Ibid, page 72
[232] Ibid, page 77
[233] Sanderson, Alexis, '*Tolerance, Exclusivity, Inclusivity, and Persecution in Indian Religion During the Early Mediaeval Period*.' In Honoris Causa: Essays in Honour of Aveek Sarkar, edited with a foreword by John Makinson (Allen Lane, 2015), page 202
[234] Ibid, page 202

devoted Śaiva, as borne out from legend[235] and his own inscriptions in cave temples to same deity. However, the temple of Visnu, *Mahendravishṇugṛha*, in Mahendrapura is attributed to him.[236] Of the Gaṅga line, Mahārāja Hastivarman Ranabhīta, who declared himself as a *paramamāheśvaraḥ,* donated land 'for the support of a temple of a Viṣṇu'[237] Some, like the Pallava Narasimhavarman II, declared themselves devoted to both Viṣṇu and Śiva.[238]

Royal allegiances to various sects were also prone to change. For instance, the Cālukyas of Vātāpi were Vaiṣṇava devotees up to around the early seventh century.[239] However, the successors of Pulakeśin II are known to be Śaivas. Similarly, The Pallavas of Kāñci were Vaiṣṇavas up till, and including, the reign of Simhaviṣṇu. However, as borne out from the *Mattavilāsa* and other evidence, Mahendravarman was a Śaiva.[240] Some Ābhīras were, considering the evidence of their names - Īśvarasēna, Śivadatta etc., 'devotees of Śiva'[241] while others are closely associated with the propagation of the Vaiṣṇava sect, particularly the worship of the cowherd god Kṛṣṇa.[242] However, they also tolerated other sects; according to a Nasik cave inscriptional record from Īśvarasēna's reign, 'a perpetual endowment to provide medicines for the sick among the community of Buddhist monks from the four quarters, dwelling in the monastery on the Triraśmi mountain'[243] was made by a Śaka lay devotee named Vishnudattā. It is interesting to note that this devotee of Buddhism bore a name that hints at Vaiṣṇava roots. From the fact that the donor openly mentions the reigning king and donates also goes

[235] According to legend, Mahendravarman was converted from Jainism to Śaivism by Appar.
[236] Ibid, page 203
[237] Ibid, page 203
[238] Ibid, page 203
[239] Sanderson, Alexis. '*The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period.*' In 'Genesis and Development of Tantrism', edited by Shingo Einoo. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009. Institute of Oriental Culture Special Series, 23, page 59
[240] Ibid, page 59. C.f. Sanderson, Alexis, '*Tolerance, Exclusivity, Inclusivity, and Persecution in Indian Religion During the Early Mediaeval Period*.' In Honoris Causa: Essays in Honour of Aveek Sarkar, edited with a foreword by John Makinson (Allen Lane, 2015), page 202
[241] '*Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum Volume IV: Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era (1955) Edited by* Vasudev Vishnu Mirashi (1893-1985) India. Department of Archaeology 1955, Ootacamund: Govt. Epigraphist for India. Religion: Page clxvii.
[242] Mitra, Debala. "THE ĀBHĪRAS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE INDIAN CULTURE." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 14, 1951, page 97-98.
[243] '*Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum Volume IV: Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era (1955) Edited by* Vasudev Vishnu Mirashi (1893-1985) India. Department of Archaeology 1955, Ootacamund: Govt. Epigraphist for India, Inscriptions Of The Abhiras. Page cxiv

to prove that the King himself did not object to such patronage. Similarly, while the early Bhauma-Karas favoured Buddhism, Śubhākaradeva IV (c. 881) declared himself a *paramamāheśvaraḥ.*[244]

Instances of members of the same royal family showing allegiance to divergent sects is also not uncommon. Khaḍgodyama (625-640 CE), according to his great-grandson, Rājarāja (673-707 CE), is depicted as 'having conquered the earth after declaring his intense devotion to the Three Jewels: the Buddha, his teachings, and the Saṇgha'[245]. Rājarāja's father, Devakhaḍga (658-673 CE), and Rājarāja himself donated to the Buddhist cause. However, according to an inscription on the 'pedestal' of 'an image of the ´Śaiva Goddess',[246] his Queen Prabhāvatī was evidently devoted to the śaiva Goddess' sect. Among the 'early Bhauma-Kara kings of Orissa'[247], Śubhākara I (c. 790) is known to have favoured Buddhism and is titled '*paramasaugataḥ* and *paramopāsakaḥ'* in inscriptional evidence. However, his queen, Mahādevi, was a Śaivite and is 'known to have built a temple to Mādhaveśvara Śiva and appointed a Śaiva *ācarya* for conducting the worship'[248] A copper plate inscription of the wife of Śāntikara I (a Buddhist devotee; *paramasaugataḥ)*, Tribhuvanamahādevī, records her as a Vaiṣṇava (paramavaiṣṇavī)[249]. She, however, mentions her fathers-in-law's achievement in building 'a lofty Buddhist monastery'[250] without any appearance of sectarian bias. As Sanderson observes, 'among the Gurjara-Pratīhāras we have successively the Vaiṣṇava Devaśakti, the Śaiva Vatsarāja, the Śākta Nāgabhaṭa (r. c. 816–834), the Saura Rāmabhadra, the Śākta Bhoja (r. c. 840–890), the Saura Vināyakapāla, and the Śaiva Mahendrapāla'[251].

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[244] Smith, Walter. 'The Mukteśvara Temple in Bhubaneswar'. Print. MOTILAL BANARSIDASS PUBLISHERS Pt. Ltd. Delhi (1994), page 22

[245] Sanderson, Alexis. '*The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period.*' In 'Genesis and Development of Tantrism', edited by Shingo Einoo. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009. Institute of Oriental Culture Special Series, 23, page 84

[246] Ibid, page 84

[247] Ibid, page 81

[248] Smith, Walter. 'The Mukteśvara Temple in Bhubaneswar'. Print. MOTILAL BANARSIDASS PUBLISHERS Pt. Ltd. Delhi (1994), page 22

[249] Sanderson, Alexis. '*The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period.*' In 'Genesis and Development of Tantrism', edited by Shingo Einoo. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009. Institute of Oriental Culture Special Series, 23, page 81

[250] Ibid, page 81. C.f. Epigraphia Indica, Volume XXIX Part I, Ed. By B.Ch. Chhabra (Ph.D., F.A.S.). Government of India Press, Calcutta 1953. No. 30 TWO PLATES OF TRIBHUVANAMAHADEVI FROM BAUD, Plate A page 216: *sutottamas tasya samāśraya[ḥ] śriyaḥ praśāsad ūrvīṃ śuśubhe śubhākaraḥ | kaler alaṅghyaṃ sukṛtāśrayāya yo vihāram uccair vidadhe śilāmayam* - His superlative son Śubhākara, the resort of good fortune, [next] excelled ruling the land. To embody his merit he built a lofty monastery of stone which the degenerate age could not enter.' (translation as given by Sanderson [2009])

[251] Sanderson, Alexis, '*Tolerance, Exclusivity, Inclusivity, and Persecution in Indian Religion During the Early Mediaeval Period*.' In Honoris Causa: Essays in Honour of Aveek Sarkar, edited with a foreword by John Makinson (Allen Lane, 2015), page 207

Royal patronage, while it may favour one or the other sect, was also frequently distributed among the established sects in a political unit. Sanderson observes that, while the Kārkoṭas of Kashmir established temples of Viṣṇu, associating their names with these temples in the process, they 'also established several Buddhist foundations'[252]. He lists several examples of this, including: *'Anantabhavanavihāra founded by the queen of Durlabhavardhana (r. c. 626–662); the Prakāśikāvihāra founded by Prakāśadevī, queen of Candrāpīḍa (r. c. 712–720/1); the Rājavihāra 'The King's Monastery' founded and richly endowed by Lalitāditya (r. c. 725–761/2) with a large Caitya and a huge Buddha image at his new capital Parihāsapura; the Kayyavihāra, founded during the rule of the same by Kayya, a king of Lāṭa; a Vihāra, a Stūpa, and golden Buddha images established at Parihāsapura by Lalitāditya's Central Asian chief minister Caṅkuṇa; a Vihāra and a Caitya established by the same in the capital; and a large monastery and three Buddha images established by Jayāpīḍa (r. c. 773/4–804/5) in his new capital Jayapura'*[253]

The *Gopālarājavaṁśāvalī,* a local Nepalese chronicle that consists of 'a list of kings, the lengths of their reigns, in some cases a record of their religious foundations and a few contemporary events such as plagues and famines and rituals undertaken to avert them.', primarily of the Licchavis before the 13th century, and notes that they were primary donors towards Buddhist Caityas and that many Vihāras were established by them.[254] This is corroborated by the evidence of Xuanzang[255] and inscriptional evidence from the various kings themselves.[256] The same chronicle, however, also 'fixes cash allowances from the court (*rājakulam*) to a large number of religious foundations'[257], which are ranked into two distinct groups. It is interesting to note that temples to 'Bhagavat Paśupati'[258], 'Dolāśikharasvāmin (Cāṅgunārāyaṇa), the principal Viṣṇu of Nepal'[259], as well as five listed Buddhist monasteries established by Licchavi kings are to receive an 'allowance' that is twice the amount of that received by a 'lower' group consisting of '"the ordinary monasteries" and the temples of various other deities, most of whom are ´Śivas, including Māneśvara, evidently the temple of a Liṅga installed by Mānadeva with his name'[260] Even the Ṭhākurī kings whose rule followed that of the Licchavis,

[252]Ibid, page 73
[253] Ibid, page 73
[254] Ibid, page 74
[255] Ibid, page 74
[256] See, Ibid, page 75- 76
[257] Ibid, page 76
[258] Ibid, page 76
[259] Ibid, page 76
[260] Ibid, page 76

though predominantly Śaiva, supported Buddhist institutions.[261]This line includes Guṇakāmadeva I (949 to 994 CE), to whom is attributed the Padmacakramahāvihāra[262], and who is also noted for making 'lavish donations to the temple of Paśupati.'[263]

The 'double loyalty of King Harṣavardhana'[264] (circa seventh century C.E.)[265], who unceasingly supported Brahmins, endowing them with gifts and grants, while declaring himself to be a devout Śaiva, is well known.[266] Xuanzang also notes, moreover, that the king was also personally inclined towards Mahāyāna Buddhist; he was particularly attracted to the 'Yogācāra school, as it was taught in the monasteries of Nālandā'[267]His close bond with Xuanzang further evidences his affability to opposing sects.

As for the Candras (c. 380 – 720 A.D.[268]) of Eastern India, an important pillar inscription of Ānandacandra from Mrohaung (date to the first half of the 8th century[269]) depicts him as a 'lay Buddhist and devotes nine verses to detailing his works of Buddhist piety'[270] which includes 'building many monasteries with his own name, establishing precious images of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and such [Mahāyānist] goddesses as Cundā, having hundreds of Buddhist scriptures copied, and giving to many monks from various lands'[271]. However, for the 'the good of all beings[272]' he 'established four Maṭhas for the housing of fifty brahmins, providing them with land and workers'[273] and also two temples, one each to Viṣṇu and Śiva[274]. Mahaśivagupta Bālārjuna (730-

[261] Ibid, page 77
[262] Ibid, page 77
[263] Ibid, page 78
[264] Bronkhorst, Johannes. *'Buddhism in the Shadow of Brahmanism*', Published by Brill, 2011. Page 118
[265] Ibid, page 118
[266] C.f. Sanderson, Alexis, '*Tolerance, Exclusivity, Inclusivity, and Persecution in Indian Religion During the Early Mediaeval Period.*' In Honoris Causa: Essays in Honour of Aveek Sarkar, edited with a foreword by John Makinson (Allen Lane, 2015), page 206
[267] Grousset, 1932: 205-06; cited in Hazra, 1995: 90, Given here as cited in Bronkhorst, Johannes. '*Buddhism in the Shadow of Brahmanism'*, Published by Brill, 2011. Page 118
[268] *Epigraphia Indica, Volume XXX,* D.C. Sircar, No. 11INSCRIPTIONS OF CANDRAS OF ARAKAN, page 107-108.
[269] Johnston, E. H. "Some Sanskrit Inscriptions of Arakan." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, vol. 11, no. 2, 1944, page 365
[270] Sanderson, Alexis. '*The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period.*' In 'Genesis and Development of Tantrism', edited by Shingo Einoo. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009. Institute of Oriental Culture Special Series, 23, page 85
[271] Ibid, page 85
[272] Ibid, page 85
[273] Ibid, page 85
[274] Ibid, page 85

790 CE) of Dakṣiṇa Kosala also 'made grants to Buddhist Vihāras'[275], even though he claimed to be a 'fervent devotee of Śiva'[276]

The above evidence suggests that, even if the personal allegiance of a king was towards one sect or even subsect, he did not generally favour that sect to the disadvantage of the others. The very fact that this practice was widespread, indicates that the popularity of variegated sects was distributed among a large section of the populace such that favouring one over others could be politically disastrous for any king. This is not to say, however, that the kings adopted a tolerant attitude towards all sects. Indeed, in many cases it appears to be more a move of political expediency rather than a conscious effort towards tolerance. Despite these caveats, it is undeniable that the populace was able to practice any religion that they themselves felt inclined towards, and, importantly, these various sects did coexist simultaneously with its own group of devoted followers and sources of patronage.

Grants to Brahmins:

The evidence of land grants and other inscriptional evidence suggests that support for Brahmins was universal. As Sanderson points out, 'there is abundant epigraphical evidence of kings throughout this time bringing Vaidika brahmins into their kingdoms by making them grants of tax-exempt land'[277] However, some exceptions to the rule do occur as seen above, and according to Sanderson, 'while kings continued to accept their role as the guardians of the brahmanical order (*varṇāśramaguruḥ*), their personal religious commitment generally took the form of Buddhism, Jainism, or, more commonly, devotion to Śiva, Viṣṇu, the Sun-God (Sūrya/ Āditya), or the Goddess (Bhagavatī)'[278]

This could be due to the prevailing idea that the social order must be maintained. This is even more striking in the case of the Pālas, Candras, and Bhauma-Karas who are known to be sympathetic to the Buddhist cause.

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[275] 'Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum Volume IV: Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era' (1955) Edited by Vasudev Vishnu Mirashi (1893-1985) India. Department of Archaeology 1955, Ootacamund: Govt. Epigraphist for India. Under '*Religion',* Page clxiv

[276] Ibid, page clxiV

[277] Sanderson, Alexis. '*The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period.*' In 'Genesis and Development of Tantrism', edited by Shingo Einoo. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009. Institute of Oriental Culture Special Series, 23, page 43

[278] Ibid, page 43, C.f. Sanderson, Alexis, '*Tolerance, Exclusivity, Inclusivity, and Persecution in Indian Religion During the Early Mediaeval Period*.' In Honoris Causa: Essays in Honour of Aveek Sarkar, edited with a foreword by John Makinson (Allen Lane, 2015), page 182-183

According to Sanderson, in the 'Neulpur grant of the Bhauma-Kara king Śubhākara I his grandfather Kṣemaṅkara is described both as a Buddhist and as having ensured that the members of the caste-classes and disciplines observed their prescribed roles'[279]. Also, Śubhākara II's Teruṇḍiā copper-plate inscription gives him the epithet '*paramasaugataḥ'* and yet commends him for having 'propagated the system of uncommingled caste-classes and disciplines proper to the [perfect] Kṛta Age following the unexcelled [brahmanical] scriptures'[280]

Of the Pāla kings, Dharmapāla is 'described in a grant of his son Devapāla both as a *paramasaugataḥ* and as taking measures to ensure that castes that erred were made to adhere to their respective duties, thereby discharging his father's debt to his deceased ancestors'[281]and in his Āṃgāchi copperplate, Vigrahapāla III is described as 'the support of the four caste-classes'[282].

In the case of grants, while they may have been intended for Brahmins, they do not clearly indicate support for Brahmanical religions; patrons frequently extended support towards other sects simultaneously. A striking example of this synthesis is the grant of the Candra king Śrīcandra, who, according to his Rāmpāl copper-plate grant, 'made over to its Brahmin recipient after the pouring of water and the performance of a fire-sacrifice'[283] a grant of land, which was granted after the rather unusual adaptation of the ritual by 'dedicating the offerings to the Buddha rather than to Śiva or Viṣṇu'[284] As Bronkhorst observes, 'the king was not required to convert in anything like its usual sense. Indeed, he did not have to accept the whole package of services that the Brahmins had on offer. Donations to Brahmins might therefore come from a king who was also generous to others, including Buddhists.'[285] Even the Jaina King Khāravela of Kaliṅga (first century B.C.)[286], provided Brahmins with land grants (*agrahāras)* and/or tax exemptions. Indeed, he even conducted a 'vedic Rājasūya sacrifice'.[287]

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[279] Ibid, page 115
[280] Ibid, page 115
[281] Sanderson, Alexis. '*The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period.*' In '*Genesis and Development of Tantrism'*, edited by Shingo Einoo. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009. Institute of Oriental Culture Special Series, 23, page 115
[282] Ibid, page 115- 116
[283] Ibid, page 116
[284] Ibid, page 116
[285] Bronkhorst, Johannes. '*Buddhism in the Shadow of Brahmanism'*, Published by Brill, 2011. Page 44
[286] Ibid, page 44
[287] Ibid, page 44

Such donations may be an indication of the fact that they were considered beneficial to the donor and were prescribed, as such, in normative Brahmanical literature of the time; textual sources of the time indicate that there are clear benefits in granting gifts of land to Brahmins.[288][289] Grants of land and other gifts were especially enjoined as the duty of a king for the benefit of his family and for the general prosperity of the kingdom in question[290]. The *Mahābhārata* alone deals with land grants to brahmins (*agrahāra*, *brahmadeyāgrahāra*) in multiple places. For instance, in the *Anuśāsanaparvan* (*Mahābhārata* 13.61) Bhiṣma urges Yudhiṣṭhira to '*make unto Brahmanas gifts of kine and bullocks and food and umbrellas, and robes and sandals or shoes… clarified butter, as also food and cars and vehicles with horses harnessed thereto, and dwelling houses and*

[288] On giving gifts to Brahmins, see Garuḍa Purāṇa [The Garuda Purana, by Ernest Wood and S.V. Subrahmanyam, 1911] CHAPTER VIII. An Account of the Gifts for the Dying, Verse 7 '*He should give presents to Brāhmiṇs, should feed them with the offerings, and should recite the eight and the twelve syllabled mantras*.' Also, Verse 33 *'Sesamum, iron, gold, cotton stuff, salt, the seven grains, a plot of ground, a cow, every one of these is said to purify*.' Verse 49 '*It has been observed by the sages that the gift of a plot of land of the size of a cow's hide, in accordance with the rites, to a proper person, absolves one from Brahmicide'* **Yājñavalkya smṛti** (*Yajnavalkya smriti* with the commentary of Vijnanevara called the Mitaksara and notes from the gloss of Balambhatta. Translated by Rai Bahadur Srisa Chandra Vidyarnava, 1918) IX (on Gifts) CCI '*A cow, land, sesamum, gold &c., should be given to a fit person with honor'*

[289] Bronkhorst, Johannes. '*Buddhism in the Shadow of Brahmanism'*, Published by Brill, 2011. Page 92

[290]**Garuḍa Purāṇa** (The Garuda Purana, by Ernest Wood and S.V. Subrahmanyam, 1911) 53-55. '*He who, having become a king, does not give land to the twice-born, is reborn for many times as a beggar, without even a village hut. The king who, through pride, does not make gifts of land, shall dwell in hell as long as Śeṣa supports the earth. Therefore shall a king especially make gifts of land; though for others, I say, the gift, of a cow is equal to a gift of land.'* **Viṣṇūsmṛti** (Translated by Julius Jolly '*Sacred Books of The East, Vol. 7'* Oxford, The Clarendon Press [1880]) 3.76: Let him constantly show reverence to the gods and to the Brâhmanas. 3.81-84: (81.) Let him bestow landed property upon Brâhmanas. (82.) To those upon whom he has bestowed (land) he must give a document, destined for the information of a future ruler, which must be written upon a piece of (cotton) cloth, or a copper-plate, and must contain the names of his (three) immediate ancestors, a declaration of the extent of the land, and an imprecation against him who should appropriate the donation to himself, and should be signed with his own seal. (83) Let him not appropriate to himself landed property bestowed (upon Brâhmanas) by other (rulers). (84) Let him present the Brâhmanas with gifts of every kind. **Yājñavalkyasmṛti** (Yajnavalkya smriti. With the commentary of Vijnanevara called the Mitaksara and notes from the gloss of Balambhatta. Translated by Rai Bahadur Srisa Chandra Vidyarnava, 1918) XIII.315 '*He should give objects of enjoyment and riches of various kinds to Brāhmaṇas. This is the inexhaustible treasure of the kings that which is bestowed on Brāhmaṇas.'* Also, *XII*.318- 320 '*After having made a gift of land or having made a corrody, the King (literally the lord-of-the-land) should cause a document to be drawn up for the sake of information of good kings (who will come) in future.. On a piece of cloth, or a copper plate marked on top with his seal, having written (the names of) his own ancestors, as well as of himself, the lord of the earth should cause to be recorded a fixed edict containing the extent of the corrody and the description of the gift (of land with its) boundary, bearing his autograph and date'* **Arthaśāstra** 2.1.7*: He should grant [lands] to priests, preceptors, chaplains (purohita)and Brahmins learned in the Vedas [as] gifts to Brahmins (brahmadeya), exempt from fines and taxes, with inheritance passing on to corresponding heirs, [and] to heads of departments, accountants and others, and to gopas, sthānikas, elephanttrainers, physicians, horse-trainers and couriers, [lands] without the right of sale or mortgage'. Ed., tr. Kangle.* **Manusmṛti** *(as given in* Sanderson, Alexis. '*The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period.*' In 'Genesis and Development of Tantrism', edited by Shingo Einoo. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009. Institute of Oriental Culture Special Series, 23, page 43, note 5) *7.133ab: Even though dying [through poverty] a king may not levy a tax from a learned Vaidika'.* Also, 7.32 – 33 83 [translated by George Bühler, *(Sacred Books of the East, Volume 25)]* '*Let him act with justice in his own domain, with rigour chastise his enemies, behave without duplicity towards his friends, and be lenient towards Brahmanas. The fame of a king who behaves thus, even though he subsist by gleaning, is spread in the world, like a drop of oil on water.'; 7.*82-83 [translated by George Bühler, *(Sacred Books of the East, Volume 25)]* 'Let him honour those Brahmanas who have returned from their teacher's house (after studying the Veda); for that (money which is given) to Brahmanas is declared to be an imperishable treasure for kings. Neither thieves nor foes can take it, nor can it be lost; hence an imperishable store must be deposited by kings with Brahmanas.'

mansions and beds.'[291] He further asserts that '" nothing is superior to the giving of land" (v. 4)' That this was widely followed is illustrated by inscriptional evidence. Consider, the example from a copper plate from Gujarat (812 CE)[292] which details that a 'local ruler' has donated a village to a group of Brahmins, "for the increase of the religious merit of my parents and of myself; for the sake of acquiring a reward in this world and in the next; [and] for maintaining the *bali*, the *caru*, the *vaiśvadeva*, the *agnihotra*, the sacrificial rites, etc."'[293]While other inscriptions are not as explicit, the same reward is almost an unwritten expectation. Also, according to Bronkhorst, by making settlements of Brahmins through land grants (*agrahāras),* kings could conceivably 'harness brahmanical power and use it for their own benefit'[294] in the sense that, should a ruler want a Brahmin for any reason (political or religious), they 'might donate settlements (*agrahāras*) to some of them: the Brahmin inhabitants of those *agrahāras* would be able to spend their time performing rites for the benefit of the king and his kingdom'[295], as it was believed that the Vedic rites conducted by Brahmins were 'conduced to the well-being of the state'[296]

There are indications that Brahmins were still considered ritual authorities, especially when concerned with legitimization of rule. This is due to repeated emphasis on the idea that Brahmin alone could conduct ritual activity that would enhance religious merit and sustain the political power of a rules. According to an 8th Century C.E inscription of Mahārāja Mādhavavarman, he is said to have 'washed off the stains of the world by his ablutions after eleven *aśvamedha* sacrifices'[297] and having 'celebrated a hundred thousand *bahusuvarṇa, pauṇḍarīka, puruṣamedha, vājapeya, yūdhya* (?), *ṣoḍaśin, rājasūya, prādhirājya, prājāpatya* and various other large and important excellent [sacrifices]'[298] was said to have 'attained to firmly established supremacy'[299] Another 8th century Telugu inscription attests to the fact that a donation of a village was made to two Brahmins for 'conferring on ourselves victory [in war] and for increasing [our] merit, length of life, and power"[300]. Other

[291] *'The Mahabharata of Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa'* translated by Kisari Mohan Ganguli [published between 1883 and 1896] (open source) Book 13: Anusasana Parva**,** SECTION LXI
292 Ibid, page 85
[293] Ibid, page 85
[294] Bronkhorst, Johannes. 'Buddhism In the Shadow Of Brahmanism', Published by Brill, 2011. Page 99
[295] Ibid, page 44
[296] 'Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum Volume IV: Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era' (1955) Edited by Vasudev Vishnu Mirashi (1893-1985) India. Department of Archaeology 1955, Ootacamund: Govt. Epigraphist for India. Page clxvii.
[297] Bronkhorst, Johannes. 'Buddhism In the Shadow Of Brahmanism', Published by Brill, 2011. Page 88
[298] Ibid, page 88
[299] Ibid, page 88
[300] Ibid, page 88

inscriptional examples[301] also attest to the widely held belief that the benefits of political power, wealth and personal protection through religious means is possible through the granting of gifts, especially of land, to Brahmins. These gifts were, then, considered 'spiritual investments'[302] for the rulers, as well as payments 'for services rendered in the past'[303]

However, for all the favour shown towards Brahmins, they very rarely featured as Purohitas who were able to extend political influence.[304] There is little mention of Brahmins participating at court or any other authoritative position in the period under question. Where the inscriptions indicate the performance of rites such as *Rājasūya* etc., there is no mention of a Brahmin priest in charge of the ceremony[305]. Where such is mentioned, it appears that the Brahmin is only invited for the purpose of the ceremony[306] or is granted a ceremonial role which had extraordinarily little influence on the policies of the ruler. The fact that such land grants, as shown above, were made out to Brahmins even as rulers made similar gifts to other sects which they may have personally favoured, implies that Brahmins often had to compromise and coexist within realms in which other sects had gained prominence.

Brahmins desirous of grants (*grāmakāma*[307]) are well known through literature and, evidently, a ruler desirous of some popularity might conceivably grant a gift of land to a Brahmin or a group of Brahmins for their maintenance and in order to ensure their equanimity. It appears to have been popular on that account and might have been a method of 'keeping the peace' with Brahmins, who still held clout, at least insofar as they were considered to be the carriers of religious merit. Such grants might also be indicators of rulers who were 'keen to emphasize their generosity'[308] Thus, while grants to Brahmins might seem counter-intuitive, the fact that

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[301] C.f. Ibid, Page 88-89
[302] Ibid, page 89
[303] Ibid, page 89. C.f. Ibid, example given on page 85-87
[304] Bronkhorst, Johannes. '*Buddhism In The Shadow Of Brahmanism*', Published by Brill, 2011, page 41 'Brahmins could however perform simpler magical rites for those who needed them, and use their supernatural skills in the service of interpreting signs, predicting the future and other similar things. They also made a point of emphasizing their special aptitude at giving counsel to rulers, at the same time giving up all claims to the royal office. It seems likely that Brahmins had been royal counsellors in the good old days, apart from being ritual advisors and executioners. In the new situation, where the kingly interest in their rites had diminished, they still insisted on their practical skills in matters politic. The legend of Cāṇakya or Kauṭilya illustrates this. … this legend does not report historical truth, as far as we can tell.'
[305] Ibid, page 90
[306] Ibid, Page 90
[307] Ibid, page 93. '*The expression grāmakāma occurs in various Saṃhitās of the Black Yajurveda (TaitS; MaitS; KāṭhS; see VWC I, 2 p. 1266), in a number of Brāhmaṇas (VWC II, 1 p. 613) and Śrautasūtras (VWC IV, 2 p. 1028). Rau (1957: 59) observes that those desirous of a village probably feel entitled that a village be given as a fiefdom to them'*
[308] Bronkhorst, Johannes. '*Buddhism In the Shadow of Brahmanism'*, Published by Brill, 2011, page 90

such donations were regularly made even by ruler and donors who favoured other sect, proves the extent to which pluralism was a lived reality in the period in question.

Royal Marriages also may be considered to depict social relations between opposing sects in general. Evidence suggests that, as far as marital alliances are concerned, religious allegiances were often set aside, even to the extent of adopting the religious beliefs of a partner. For example, The Vākātakas were ardent Śaivas. However, Rudrasena II, successor of Rudrasena I, married the Vaiṣṇava devotee, Prabhāvatīguptā, a princess of the Gupta lineage who were known to favour Viṣṇu.[309] It was possibly 'under her influence' that Rudrasena II 'declared himself a Vaiṣṇava'[310]. The Pālas were 'devout Buddhists', but they 'married amongst the Rashtrakutas and Kalachuris, who were followers of the Brahmanical faiths'[311] As evidenced from the analysis of the play *Āgamaḍambara*, Śaṅkaravarman (883–902) was a Śaiva but his queen, Sugandhā, was of the Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātrika persuasion,[312] and, in her name, many temples to the deity in Śaṅkaravarman's reign. Kṣemagupta (950–958) a Śaiva, married Diddā, the Vaiṣṇava daughter of a Lohara chief.[313]

The above evidence certainly suggests a certain Catholicism practiced by rulers during this time period. It remains to be seen whether this pattern is followed also by the general populace. As evidenced from the two plays, as well as from the evidence of the constructions of temples it may be supposed that a large number of sects did in fact coexist in many locations across India. The fact that ritual texts themselves speak of converts[314] adds credibility to the claim. As Yagyendra Singh opines, 'such a profusion of sectarian tendencies in the principal religions – Brāhmanism, Buddhism and Jainism – was possible only in an atmosphere of extreme liberality of outlook towards religion and religious beliefs'[315] Xuanzang also mentions monasteries as existing

[309] Sanderson, Alexis, '*Tolerance, Exclusivity, Inclusivity, and Persecution in Indian Religion During the Early Mediaeval Period*.' In Honoris Causa: Essays in Honour of Aveek Sarkar, edited with a foreword by John Makinson (Allen Lane, 2015), page 204
[310] Ibid, page 204
[311] Singh, Yagyendra Bahadur '*Social Life in Ancient India'* New Delhi: Light & Life, 1981. Chapter 9, Page 224
[312] C.f. Sanderson, Alexis, '*Tolerance, Exclusivity, Inclusivity, and Persecution in Indian Religion During the Early Mediaeval Period*.' In Honoris Causa: Essays in Honour of Aveek Sarkar, edited with a foreword by John Makinson (Allen Lane, 2015), page 204
[313] Ibid, page 205
[314] C.f. Hienrich Stietencron, '*Religious Configurations in Pre-Muslim India and the Modern Concept of Hinduism*,' in Dalmia and Stietencron '*Representing Hinduism: The Construction of Religious Traditions and National Identity*' (New Delhi; London: Sage, 1995.) Page 55 '*…. individual conversion must have been a rather common occurrence as a natural result of the competitive religious spirit of the time.'* Also, Ibid, page 55, '*… devotional songs aimed at converting the mases to a life of spiritual surrender to the highest god.'*
[315] Singh, Yagyendra Bahadur '*Social Life in Ancient India'* New Delhi: Light & Life, 1981. Chapter 9, Page 223

side by side with various temples. Here, although they have not been fully analysed, the evidence from votive inscriptions of individual donors to religious establishments may be considered.

Due to paucity of resources, votive inscriptions have not been examined to the fullest, and despite best efforts, my attempts to analyse them have been woefully inadequate. These inscriptions certainly require extensive archaeological study and more research needs to be conducted before any proper conclusions may be reached. However, The evidence from Sānchi is suggestive. A majority of the donations were made by individuals with only 10 made by corporations and groups.[316]An analysis of the names of the individual donors to the Stūpa at Sānci, indicate that certain family names, especially Brahmanical and other affiliated names, persist even when the donation is being made to the Buddhist shrine. The brahmanical names seem to follow the rules of the *Gṛhyasūtras* in assigning names according to *Nakshatras*; names such as Rohiṇi, Svatiguta, Pusa, Asāḍa, Mūla, Phaguna, Poṭhaka etc[317]., occur as the names of donors to the Buddhist shrine. Other Brahmanical names included as donors are Aśvadeva[318] Bhadaka (Bhadraka)[319], Also, from names such as Vihnuka (an abbreviated from of Viṣṇudatta or Viṣṇurakṣita) and Balaka/Balamitra (relating to Krishna's brother Balarāma), Vaiṣṇava leanings are evident.[320] Śaiva names such as Nandiguta (*Nandigupta*), Naṁdigiri, Sāmidatta (*Svāmi* -, i.e. *Kumāra-datta*), Samika and Samikā… Sivanadi (*Śivanandi*)'[321] Dharmaśiva[322] etc. also make their appearance. In the case of a particular donor named Dharmarakhitā (*Dharmarakṣitā*) (a Buddhist name), she refers to herself as the mother of Sivanadi (*Śivanandi*), a Śaiva name, even while her donation is towards the Buddhist shrine.[323] It would be an interesting to study to determine whether these donors or any other members of the same families as the donors have made contributions towards other sects at the same time. Regardless, as Yagyendra Singh puts it, 'All this goes to show that though there was rivalry amongst the sects there was no sense of bigotry and that personal religion or belief did not come in the way of social life.'[324]

[316] Ed. Jas. Burgess (C.I.E, L.L.D., F.R.S.E) E. Hultzch (Ph.D.) And A. Fuhrer (Ph.D.) Epigraphia Indica. Volume 2, (New Imperial Series) Volume XIV, Archaeological Survey of India 1888 | Calcutta: Supt. of Govt. Printing, India, VII Votive inscriptions from the Sānchi Stūpa -by G. Bὺhler. Page 92
[317] For full list see, Ibid, page 95
[318] Ibid, Page 100, No. 30 = C. 80
[319] Ibid, Page 101, No. 41 = C. 101
[320] Ibid, page 95
[321] Ibid, page 95
[322] Ibid, page 97, No. 1 = C. 1.
[323] Ibid, page 101, No. 45 = C. 105
[324] Singh, Yagyendra Bahadur '*Social Life in Ancient India'* New Delhi: Light & Life, 1981. Chapter 9, Page 224

Donations are rarely seen to be made out by an entire village at the same time, indicating that even small political units did not fully associate themselves with a particular religious group; individual members and families were free to make their own contributions but the entire village rarely supported any one particular sect for, while they do suggest that the more influential men of the village were favoured the Buddha[325], they did not sway the other inhabitants of the village.

[325] Ibid, page 92

What form did pluralism take?

As seen from the above, while theologians readily defended their own sectarian systems and defined heresies, variegated religious groups existed side by side in the popular sphere, to the extent that boundaries between them were hard to maintain in some cases. 'Sectarian communities', according to Fisher, were 'independent public spheres, cultivating, in other words, a pluralistic religious landscape that mediated conflict through independent coexistence.'[326] Moreover, neither sect appears to have been motivated to attempt an overthrow of all others. As Singh opines, 'scholars, teachers and preachers preferred to remain in hibernation in their universities and Vihāras, rather than take upon themselves the task of social reformation in real earnest'[327] Thus, antagonism between sects was resolved in scholarly debate - written or public and through assimilation - both hierarchical and concurrent.

The debating tradition:

The debating tradition most clearly illustrates the pluralism of the age. Evidence from various sources of the period attest to the wide-ranging debates held between opposing religious communities, often in the presence of a ruling king. The antagonism between sects appears to have largely remained limited to scholarly debates through polemic and rhetoric in written sources. The use of common methods of reason and philosophical apparatus attest to the cross-borrowing of ideas through the debating tradition.[328] This is further verified through the written sources; texts of the period often show clear cross-borrowing. For instance, Praśastapada 'remodelled' Vaisesika theory under the influence of Diganāga's criticism.[329] Also, the final chapter of Gauḍapāda[330]'s commentary on the *Māṇḍūkya Upanisad* 'draws heavily on Buddhist material, to the extent that its author has sometimes been considered a Buddhist'[331] This philosophically charged atmosphere may

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[326] Fisher, Elaine M. Hindu Pluralism: Religion and the Public Sphere in Early Modern South India. Oakland, California, 2017. Print. South Asia across the Disciplines. Page 6

327 Singh, Yagyendra Bahadur. Social Life in Ancient India. New Delhi: Light & Life, 1981. Print. Page (xii)

[328] The use of *nyāya* terminology in philosophical treatises is well known even to Buddhist scholars such as Dharmakīrti. Arguments between scholars, at least as far as extant textual evidence suggest, seem to indicate a common mechanism utilised by various scholars in order to prove their point. As Bronkhorst notes, such argumentation took the form of a courtroom debate and, consequently, a common procedure was required to judge the veracity of a claim. [See, BRONKHORST, JOHANNES: '*Modes of Debate and Refutation of Adversaries in Classical and Medieval India: A Preliminary Investigation'*, Antiquorum Philosophia 1 (2007), page 277. C.f. Tuske, J. '*Indian Epistemology and Metaphysics. London: Bloomsbury Academic'.* (2015).]

[329] Brockington, J. L. '*The Sacred Thread: Hinduism in Its Continuity and Diversity.*' 2nd ed. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1996. Print. Page 98

[330] Circa 6th century CE. [https://www.iep.utm.edu/gau%E1%B8%8Dapad/]

[331] Ibid, page 108

have been one of the main motivations for Dharmakīrti who utilised 'epistemic instruments, perception and inference, that his interlocutors, Buddhist or non-Buddhist, were likely to share'.[332] Some scholars suggest that Dharmakīrti may have deliberately chosen to present his theories by the use of well-known philosophical mechanisms that gave the appearance at least of having some continuity from larger tradition, thereby making his theories easily acceptable.[333] Thus, the tradition of argumentation through rhetoric effectively 'heightened public awareness of sectarian identity that prompted relatively little violence or outright antagonism but greatly accelerated the formation of distinct religious communities across most of the subcontinent.'[334] Such debates often amounted to a readjustment of doctrines and a fine-tuning of philosophical and religious ideals.

While the written tradition had its own merits, debates were often brought into the open in front of the public, generally in front of a King at court[335], although debates were also held in monastaries and *Vihāras*.[336] Even in monastaries, kings were regularly invited and were often expected to be arbitrators. *The Life of Vasubandhu* relates that Vindhyavāsa, a Sāṃkhya scholar, instructed the King Vikramāditya that he should have 'no partial love to either Śramaṇas or Brahmins' in his mind and that he should assess the merits of any existent doctrines[337]. This somewhat echoes the position of Jayanta's *Nyāyamañjari*.

While no extant account of these debates exists, some clues are provided in the textual and commentarial tradition. Many sources cite the Indian 'tradition' of debating as a rite of passage for a new scholar. Bronkhorst cites the 11th century text *The Life and Teaching of Nāropa,* which describes the philosophical debate hosted 'according to the Indian custom' when a new 'head of a department at the university of Nalanda'[338] was appointed. In this debate, both 'Buddhist scholars and those of other philosophical systems'[339] were expected to participate. The same source also mentions King Digvarman as stating that he is the 'impartial patron of both parties'[340], proving that debates were held purely as intellectual battles. Bronkhorst notes the inscriptional

[332] Westerhoff, Jan. '*The Golden Age of Indian Buddhist Philosophy*' Oxford University Press, June 21, 2018. Chapter 4 The School of Diṅnāga and Dharmakīrti. Page 246
[333] Ibid, page 246
[334] Fisher, Elaine M. Hindu Pluralism: Religion and the Public Sphere in Early Modern South India. Oakland, California, 2017. Print. South Asia across the Disciplines. Page 22
[335] Bronkhorst, Johannes '*Modes of Debate and Refutation of Adversaries in Classical and Medieval India: A Preliminary Investigation'*, Antiquorum Philosophia 1 (2007). Page 269
[336] Ibid, page 270.
[337] Ibid, page 275
[338] Ibid, page 270
[339] Ibid, page 270
[340] Ibid, page 270

evidence from Śravana Belgola which testify to several Digāmbara Jains having 'engaged in public debates and to have defeated thinkers belonging to other schools of thought'[341] He estimates that the debating tradition must have been in existence long before the evidence from the inscriptions and 'the testimony of foreign visitors'.[342]

Westerhoff claims that debates were the 'ancient Indian intellectual spectator sport'[343] Chinese pilgrims who visited India (Yijing and Xuanzang) at this time attest to their popularity. As Scharfe summarises, 'Much time was spen[t] in disputations, where eminent men "discuss possible and impossible doctrines", (Yijing) to sharpen their wits, deepen their understanding and demonstrate their sophistication'[344] Another key indication of the popularity of debates is that commentarial texts themselves often take on the question and answer format of debate to refute an opponent's theory while establishing one's own.[345] References to debates were also made in classical texts, attesting to their popularity. According to Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita,* the *āśrama* of the Brahmin Divākara was a place where 'followers of all schools imaginable, from Jainas to Kṛṣṇa devotees, materialists, followers of tantra and Vedic ritualists lived in harmony and scholarly debate'[346].This idyllic *āśrama* was also a place 'where even monkeys, parrots and *maina* birds lectured and debated'[347]

The winner of scholarly debates may hope to attract followers as well as patronage. Kings present at the debate could and often did provide protection to a scholar and such protection often went along with gifts of land or wealth.[348] For instance, Xuanzang notes that the Śīlabhadra, a Buddhist scholar, was rewarded with 'the revenue of an entire city'[349] upon defeating a Brahmin.

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[341] Ibid, page 269
[342] Ibid, page 277
[343]Westerhoff, Jan. "Introduction." The Golden Age of Indian Buddhist Philosophy. Oxford University Press, June 21, 2018, page 3
[344] Scharfe H., *'Education in Ancient India*' in '*Handbook of Oriental Studies, Sect. ii: India'* Leiden etc., Brill, 2002. As given in Bronkhorst, Johannes '*Modes of Debate and Refutation of Adversaries in Classical and Medieval India: A Preliminary Investigation'*, Antiquorum Philosophia 1 (2007). Page 271
[345] Westerhoff, Jan. "Introduction." The Golden Age of Indian Buddhist Philosophy. Oxford University Press, June 21, 2018. Introduction, page 3
[346] Bronkhorst, Johannes '*Modes of Debate and Refutation of Adversaries in Classical and Medieval India: A Preliminary Investigation'*, Antiquorum Philosophia 1 (2007). Page 271
[347] Scharfe H., *'Education in Ancient India*' in '*Handbook of Oriental Studies, Sect. ii: India'* Leiden etc., Brill, 2002. As given in Bronkhorst, Johannes '*Modes of Debate and Refutation of Adversaries in Classical and Medieval India: A Preliminary Investigation'*, Antiquorum Philosophia 1 (2007). Page 271
[348] Bronkhorst, Johannes '*Modes of Debate and Refutation of Adversaries in Classical and Medieval India: A Preliminary Investigation'*, Antiquorum Philosophia 1 (2007). Page 272
[349] Ibid, page 274

Such public debates generally followed the agreed upon rules of engagement as evidenced by the *Caraka Saṃhita's* elaboration on some rules and methods by which an opponent may be defeated. These include citing 'long *sūtras'* and difficult words used to confuse an opponent whose memory is not strong[350], implying that understanding and retaining an opponent's arguments before refuting them were essential components of public debates. In the *Āgamaḍambara,* the mechanism of public debates is fully utilised by the protagonist and there always impartial arbiters at hand to judge a fair debate.

Tolerance to a degree

The extent of pluralism is also evident from the numerous possibilities of conversion. As Jha notes, 'Most … references to conversion, with the exception of *vrātyastoma,* can be assigned to the . . .. period, when the important Purāṇas were composed'[351]. These texts reveal the extent of proselytizing that was taking place at this time. Society was not as rigid as the theologians wished and, consequently, religions had to quickly adapt to the fluidity of their times, allowing for conversion in order to bolster numbers. This expressly indicates not only the presence of heterodox sects, but the fact that they were numerous, and that there was some degree of fluidity between them. Mass conversions also indicate that it was possible to change religious status according to one's personal inclinations. Padmavajra's *Guhyasiddhi* (circa eighth century[352]) shows that 'any initiate in the practice of this Tantra is not only familiar with the Śaiva scriptures but is able to enact their rituals by assuming the role of a Śaiva Guru, implying thereby that such initiates were typically converts from the Mantramārga with experience both of its texts and of its practices.'[353]

Brahmanism proper, even in its revised form, did not encourage conversion; there was no clear method by which one could become a follower of the Veda[354]. It was also not to Vaidika advantage to give way to what it deemed as heterodox beliefs. However, other sects could not be avoided or completely ignored as is

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[350] Prets E., '*Theories of debate, proof and counter-proof in the early Indian dialectical tradition*, *Studia Indologiczne 7'* in '*On the Understanding of Other* Cultures', ed. Piotr Balcerowicz & Marek Mejor (2000), Page 369-371 as given in Bronkhorst, Johannes '*Modes of Debate and Refutation of Adversaries in Classical and Medieval India: A Preliminary Investigation'*, Antiquorum Philosophia 1 (2007), page 277

[351] Jha, Dwijendra Narayan (2006): "*Looking for a Hindu Identity*." (Public Domain) People's Publishing House (Pvt.) Limited, 2017. Page 43

[352] Sanderson, Alexis. '*The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period.*' In 'Genesis and Development of Tantrism', edited by Shingo Einoo. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009. Institute of Oriental Culture Special Series, 23, page 144

[353] Ibid, page 144

[354] C.f. Bronkhorst, Johannes. '*Buddhism in the Shadow of Brahmanism',* Published by Brill, 2011. Page 184

evidenced by repeated injunctions against mixing. Even in places where the *dharma* texts insist on ritual purity as far as heretics are concerned, repeated reference to them reinforces the idea that there *were* many heretics present in society that had to be avoided or otherwise ostracized. However, at a later stage, even textual sources such as the *dharma* texts, had to accept the existence of widely divergent beliefs that could not be simply ignored or otherwise brought under control. Thus, even the Vaidikas had to the accept pluralism in their own way. For instance, according to Baudhāyana, 'non-Vedic local practices may be allowed in their own territory.' The *Arthaśāstra* states that, on conquering an enemy, a king 'should arrange for the veneration of all gods and hermitages and for the donation of land, wealth, and exemptions to men preeminent in knowledge, eloquence, and righteousness….' [13.5.3-14][355] Thapar notes, 'Even in the normative texts of Brahmanism, the *Dharmaśāstras*, it is conceded that there were a variety of communities, determined by location, occupation and caste, none of which were necessarily bound together by a common religious identity.'[356]

As evidenced from the discussion in Āgamaḍambara, Jayanta Bhatta comes across as at least one member of the Brahmanical fold who came to accept other major religious sects and advised the King to do so as well, provided that these heterodox beliefs and practices fell broadly within certain set guidelines. Possibly by Jayanta's time period, the *pāṣaṇḍas* were so numerous that another method had to be devised to keep them within the rule of law as well as allow them certain freedoms to avoid an outright rebellion.

Several *Purāṇas*[357] also mention other gods and sects. For instance, the *Padma Purāṇa* states: - "He who abandons Vāsudeva and worships any other god, is like a fool, who being thirsty, sinks a well in the bank of the Ganges."[358] However, in the same *Padma*, it is stated:- "From even looking at Vishnu, the wrath of Śiva is kindled, and from his wrath, we fall assuredly into a horrible hell; let not, therefore, the name of Vishnu ever

[355] Kauṭilya, McClish, Mark and Olivelle, Patrick *'The Arthaśāstra: Selections from the Classic Indian Work on Statecraft'* Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. Indianapolis, Ind. (2012). Chapter 7.6 Conquering the Earth, Page 155.
[356] Thapar Romila, *'Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity'* in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (1989), page 220. C.f. Ibid, page 213 'that Brahmanism had also to compromise with local cults is evident from the religious articulation of text and temple and from the frequency with which attempts were introduced into Brahmanism to purify the religion in terms of going back to sruti and smrti'
[357] Ludo Rocher '*A History of Indian Literature*: *The Puranas'* Edited by Jan Gonda Volume II *Fasc. 3*, 1986 Otto Harrassowitz • Wiesbaden. Page 21
[358] Ibid, page 22

be pronounced."[359] The *Vāmana*, a Vaiṣṇava text, also mentions several Śaiva myths and legends.[360] The Nepali *Nepalamahātmya* places 'Śiva, Visnu, and even the Buddha, all at the same level.'[361]

As for the Buddhists, living in a society in which Brahmins were accepted as authorities as far as the ritual element of religion was concerned, their influence could not be extended in occupations dominated by Brahmins, such as counsellors to Kings and as astrologers etc. As Bronkhorst notes, 'the Buddhists were ready to concede that there were occupations that were best left to Brahmins. These occupations covered all forms of divination and the interpretation of signs. They also covered certain sciences, most notably mathematics and astronomy'[362]. This potentially left other avenues free for Buddhists to exert influence. In monastic life and conceptions of morality, the contributions of the Buddhists may be witnessed. Thus, Buddhist scholars generally showed respect to Brahmins and appear not to have interfered with the ritual aspect of religion. Their mode of defence appears to have been to simply let Brahmins have a separate field of influence in which Buddhist philosophy as yet provided no insight.

Similarly, in private religious practice, rituals that marked major events in an individual's life were left to personal preference. While this caused intense rivalry among the Śaivas, Vaiṣṇavas and the Brahmanical 'orthodoxy', there is little doubt that the lay devotee was free to choose his (or her) form of ritual and some fluidity between them was therefore to be expected. It is undoubtably the case that the populace 'developed their own modes of Vaidika worship of the deities of the initiated and integrated them into their daily rites, privileging one deity as an expression of personal devotion but generally including the others in a syncretistic approach'[363], a mode of worship that is still popular in Indian households.

The Jaina theory of *Anekāntavāda* demonstrates their efforts towards the acceptance of the multiplicity of religions. The theory of *Anekāntavāda* repudiates the notion of a concrete universe or reality, thus nullifying the notion of an absolute truth or absolute knowledge. According to *Anekāntavāda*, the universe operates

[359] Ibid, page 22
[360] Ibid, page 22. Here, Rocher references the findings of HOHENBERGER, Adam: Die indische Flutsage und das Matsyapurana. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Visnuverehrung, Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1930
[361] Ibid, page 23
[362] Bronkhorst, Johannes. '*Buddhism in the Shadow of Brahmanism'*, Published by Brill, 2011. Page 115
[363] Sanderson, Alexis, '*Tolerance, Exclusivity, Inclusivity, and Persecution in Indian Religion During the Early Mediaeval Period*.' In Honoris Causa: Essays in Honour of Aveek Sarkar, edited with a foreword by John Makinson (Allen Lane, 2015), page 158

distinctly in and of itself, independent from our mental perception therefore, we cannot, on the basis of our perception, conceptualize entire reality in its manifoldness. This multiplicity also extends to viewpoints and, thus, for the Jains, all truth is relative; no single proposition or aspect of truth is complete in and of itself. This core component of Jaina philosophy was no doubt the result of an effort to strike a balance between extreme views by accepting that all are equally valid and, consequently, promoted pluralism.[364]

Hierarchical assimilations

Another mechanism for accommodating pluralism may be witnessed in the Śaiva system of hierarchical assimilation, whereby Śaiva ritual and practices are given highest place and emphatically asserted to be the only method for true liberation. According to the *Sarvajñānottara*, 'the Śaiva should maintain his Vaidika observances after initiation but without believing that they are fully real.'[365] This suggests that there was a degree of hierarchy in the relationship of Vaidika ritual to that of the Śaiva; while maintaining that Śaiva practices originate in Vaidika ritual and, consequently, accepting the performance of the Vaidika practices, Śaiva ritual is nevertheless said to be superior and more beneficial. The Śaiva is expected to perform the Vaidika ritual 'not for his own advantage but so as not to undermine through a pointless non-conformity the Vaidika order within which Śaivism is embedded'[366] This attest to the uneasy relationship both sects found themselves in. Neither was able to wholly disavow the other, possibly due to the prominence of both in the social paradigm. This is further substantiated by the use of the phrase ''the mundane observance' (*laukikācārah*)'[367] in the *Mataṅgapārameśvara* for the maintenance of 'Vedic duties'[368] Thus, the point is well made: - '*antaḥ kaulo bahiḥ śaivo lokācāre tu vaidikaḥ | sāram ādāya tiṣṭheta nārikelaphalaṃ yathā: He should be a Kaula in private (antah kaulo), a Śaiva in outward appearance (bahih śaivo), but a Vaidika in his mundane observances (lokācāre tu vaidikah),keeping the essence [of his religion hidden behind these two outer layers], just as the coconut fruit [keeps its milk within its flesh, which in turn is enclosed by its hard*

[364] C.f. Diwakar Acharya, "The Upaniṣadic Method of *Néti néti* and the Jaina Doctrine of *Anekānta,*" in J. Soni, M. Pahlke and C. Cüppers (ed): Buddhist and Jaina Studies: Proceedings of the Conference in Lumbini, February 2013, Lumbini: Lumbini Intl Research Institute, 2014 Page 302.
[365] Sanderson, Alexis, '*Tolerance, Exclusivity, Inclusivity, and Persecution in Indian Religion During the Early Mediaeval Period*.' In Honoris Causa: Essays in Honour of Aveek Sarkar, edited with a foreword by John Makinson (Allen Lane, 2015), page 175
[366] Ibid, page 176
[367] Ibid, page 176
[368] Ibid, page 176

outer shell][369]*'* cited by 'the Śākta-Śaiva Jayaratha'[370] in *Tantrālokaviveka*. Also, according to the 10th century *Mohacūrottara*, 'Given the plurality of scriptural authorities, whenever there is a question as to which of two [conflicting] statements takes precedence, he should adopt that which has been taught by Śiva'[371] This shows that, through the centuries, some adjustments had to be made to account for the 'plurality of scriptural authority' and that, at least for the Śaivas, this was done through a process of hierarchical assimilation.

Similar instances may be witnessed in the *Śivadharmaśāstra*[372] in which it is repeatedly asserted that other deities gained their respective positions of prominence through an exclusive worship of Śiva. This is explained through the various gods' worship 'of different types of *liṅgas'*[373]. Notably, the Buddha is mentioned as having venerated 'a golden (*jambūnadamaya*) *liṅga*'[374], Viṣṇu the sapphire (*indranīlamaya*) *liṅga'*[375] and the Arhat [to be understood here as Mahavīra] as having venerated the 'flower *liṅga* (*puṣpaliṅga*)'[376], by virtue of which they attained their respective positions. Further, Viṣṇu is depicted in the text as '"endowed with the favour of Śiva" (*śivaprasādasaṃpanna*) and "engaged in contemplation of Śiva" (*śivadhyānaparāyaṇa*)'[377], while the Arhat and the Buddha are described as '"only thinking about the knowledge of Śiva" (*śivajñānaikacintaka*), "intent upon union with Śiva" (*śivayogena bhāvitaḥ*), and "devoted to the knowledge of Śiva" (*śivajñānaparāyaṇa*).'[378]

The *Skanda Purāṇa* attributes Viṣṇu's body to Śiva, forming the 'Hari-Hara or Viṣṇu-Śaṃkara form'[379], a clear indication of the synthesis of both deities. It is also stated in the same text that 'one who worships Śiva-Viṣṇu will reach the highest goal'[380]However, even here, some element of hierarchy is retained *vis.* Śiva is the

[369] Translation by Alexis Sanderson in *Tolerance, Exclusivity, Inclusivity, and Persecution in Indian Religion During the Early Mediaeval Period*.' In Honoris Causa: Essays in Honour of Aveek Sarkar, edited with a foreword by John Makinson (Allen Lane, 2015), page 178
[370] Ibid, page 178
[371] Ibid, page 181
[372] Bisschop places the *Śivadharmaśāstra* from 'the sixth to seventh centuries CE' [See: Peter Bisschop, 'Inclusivism revisited: The worship of other gods in the Śivadharmaśāstra, the Skandapurāṇa, and the Niśvāsamukha' in '*Tantric Communities in Context*', ed. by Nina Mirnig, Marion Rastelli and Vincent Eltschinger' Vienna: ÖAW, 2019. Page 513]
[373] Peter Bisschop, 'Inclusivism revisited: The worship of other gods in the Śivadharmaśāstra, the Skandapurāṇa, and the Niśvāsamukha' in '*Tantric Communities in Context*', ed. by Nina Mirnig, Marion Rastelli and Vincent Eltschinger' Vienna: ÖAW, 2019. Page 514
[374] Ibid, page 516
[375] Ibid, page 515
[376] Ibid, page 516
[377] Ibid, page 521
[378] Ibid, page 523
[379] Ibid, page 524
[380] Ibid, page 524 -525

all-powerful deity who appoints Viṣṇu to the 'task of slaying demons'[381] and who releases Viṣṇu from his animal form'[382] In the *Niśvāsamukha,* Śiva is credited with the creation of differing sects[383], while emphasizing that 'the upper, Īśāna face . . . teaches the ultimate knowledge, that of the Mantramārga.'[384] The *mantramārga* had already, by this time, developed a system 'that ranked other religious systems as stages of an ascent to liberation in ′Saivism''[385]

The absolute claim of superiority is not unique to the Śaiva religion; it can be shown to have been present in other religious sects as well, notably in Vaiṣṇavism. According to the *Padma purāṇa*, Viṣṇu caused Śiva to teach 'heretical dharma' i.e. the Pāśupata and Kapālika heresies to 'delude the enemies of the gods'[386]. Viṣṇu then reassures Śiva that he would be restored to his former power by venerating Viṣṇu.[387] This hierarchisation is also demonstrated in the Bhagavadgīta in which Kṛṣṇa declares that there is 'in reality, no god except Kṛṣṇa, that even the devotees of other gods worship Kṛṣṇa, though not according to proper rules, and that Kṛṣṇa alone is the enjoyer of all sacrifices and the giver of all boons.'[388] However, only the worship of Kṛṣṇa in his own

[381]GRANOFF, Ph. '*Saving the Saviour. Śiva and the Vaiṣṇava Avatāras in the Early Skandapurāṇa'* in '*Origin and Growth of the Purāṇic Text Corpus. With Special Reference to the Skandapurāṇa. Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference'*, Vol. 3.2.: H. Bakker (ed.), Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass 2004, page 124 as given in Peter Bisschop, '*Inclusivism revisited: The worship of other gods in the Śivadharmaśāstra, the Skandapurāṇa, and the Niśvāsamukha'* in '*Tantric Communities in Context*', ed. by Nina Mirnig, Marion Rastelli and Vincent Eltschinger' Vienna: ÖAW, 2019 page 526

[382] GRANOFF, Ph. '*Saving the Saviour. Śiva and the Vaiṣṇava Avatāras in the Early Skandapurāṇa'* in '*Origin and Growth of the Purāṇic Text Corpus. With Special Reference to the Skandapurāṇa. Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference'*, Vol. 3.2.: H. Bakker (ed.), Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass 2004, page 124 as given in Peter Bisschop, '*Inclusivism revisited: The worship of other gods in the Śivadharmaśāstra, the Skandapurāṇa, and the Niśvāsamukha'* in '*Tantric Communities in Context*', ed. by Nina Mirnig, Marion Rastelli and Vincent Eltschinger' Vienna: ÖAW, 2019 page 526

[383] Peter Bisschop, 'Inclusivism revisited: The worship of other gods in the Śivadh armaśāstra, the Skandapurāṇa, and the Niśvāsamukha' in '*Tantric Communities in Context*', ed. by Nina Mirnig, Marion Rastelli and Vincent Eltschinger' Vienna, page 528

[384] Ibid, page 528

[385]Sanderson, Alexis. '*The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period.*' In '*Genesis and Development of Tantrism'*, edited by Shingo Einoo. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009. Institute of Oriental Culture Special Series, 23, Page 301. C.f. Hienrich Stietencron, '*Religious Configurations in Pre-Muslim India and the Modern Concept of Hinduism*,' in '*Representing Hinduism: The Construction of Religious Traditions and National Identity*' ed. Dalmia and Stietencron. New Delhi; London: Sage, 1995. Page 57.

[386] O'Flaherty, Wendy Doniger. *"The Origin of Heresy in Hindu Mythology." History of Religions, vol. 10, no. 4,* 1971, page 322

[387] Ibid, page 322

[388] Hienrich Stietencron, '*Religious Configurations in Pre-Muslim India and the Modern Concept of Hinduism*,' in '*Representing Hinduism: The Construction of Religious Traditions and National Identity*' ed. Dalmia and Stietencron. New Delhi; London: Sage, 1995. Page 67

form results in true liberation from *saṁsāra*. The Buddha also appears to have been accommodated within Vaiṣṇavism as an avatāra sometime 'between the sixth and mid-eighth centuries A.D.'[389]

As for the Buddhists, their own system of hierarchical assimilation granted other soteriologies a lower position as compared to their own. As Sanderson points out, in the *Mañjuśriyamūlakalpa,* Buddha asserts that he has 'taught this Mantra [of Śiva] which together with the trident Mudrā destroys all demons', out of his 'desire to benefit living beings.'[390] He further reiterates that 'Those living on the earth will say that its ancient Kalpa, that I taught in former times, was taught by Śiva. [But] the various excellent extensive [Kalpas] in the Śaiva Tantras are in fact my teachings.'[391] In this way, Buddhism resolves the 'division between the Buddhist and the non-Buddhist'[392] through a textual unity which places Buddha at the head of all teachings. The Jaina *Trisastilaksanamaha*[393] also promotes its own version of hierarchical superiority in the claim that all 'religion and customs are nothing more than a deviation from Jainism'[394] As Verardi notes, Brahmanism could easily assimilate the Jina Mahavira 'as the Universal Spirit who is Śiva, Dhātṛ, Sugata (i.e., the likewise neutralized Buddha), and Viṣṇu'[395]

For the Vaidikas, heterodox sects are explained away as being products of the Kali age or as taught out of benevolence by Śiva or Viṣṇu in order that the doomed (i.e. those afflicted by curses, the low-born etc.) might find some comfort even in heresy.[396] In the Kali age, it is explained, all men fall into the category of being unworthy of the Veda. Hence, heresy is used to bring them back little-by-little into the Vedic fold.

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[389] Rocher, Ludo. The Purāṇas (1986). Print. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. Page 111. Here, Rocher cites Adalbert J. GAIL.

[390] Sanderson, Alexis. 'The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period.' In 'Genesis and Development of Tantrism', edited by Shingo Einoo. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009. Institute of Oriental Culture Special Series, 23, Page 130.

[391] Ibid, Page 130

[392] Ibid, page 131

[393] Rocher dates the text to A.D. 897 based on the *praśasti.* [Rocher, Ludo. The Purāṇas (1986). Print. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. Page 92]

[394] Rocher, Ludo. The Purāṇas (1986). Print. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. Page 92.

[395] Verardi, Giovanni "*Religions, rituals, and the heaviness of Indian history*" Annali 56, 1996, Page 226 as given in - Bronkhorst, Johannes. '*Buddhism in the Shadow of Brahmanism',* Published by Brill, 2011. Page 179

[396] O'Flaherty, Wendy Doniger. *"The Origin of Heresy in Hindu Mythology." History of Religions, vol. 10, no. 4,* 1971, page 329 - 330

Cross Pollination of Mythology and Concepts

Living in close proximity to each other, it was inevitable that the sects would exert influence upon each other. Brahmanical 'obsession with ritual purity'[397] was adopted by the varying sects, especially Buddhism, to which it was diametrically opposed. This is clearly expressed in Udayana's view that "There is no philosophy (*darśana*) in which people, even if they claim that [the world is] illusory, do not perform the vedic rites (*garbhādhāna*) to funeral rite (*antyeṣṭi*), from impregnation or do not agree that there is a distinction between touchable and untouchable [people] and so on; or in which people do not, in the case of a transgression, perform expiations such as sipping water, bathing, etc."[398] This is again evidenced in Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita* in his 'elaborate descriptions of the ideal kingship of the Buddha's father, perhaps even with the conscious purpose of glorifying brahmanical notions'[399] As already mentioned, Kings also upheld the 'caste-based brahmanical social order.'[400] In *Jātakamālā* stories, the stereotypical king 'behaves in accordance with brahmanical principles'[401] and the Buddha himself is depicted as a King on many occasions. Also, Bronkhorst notes that 'tantric Buddhism contains many features that were directly taken from the orthodox brahmanical tradition'[402]. He cites a study undertaken by Shrikant Bahulkar showing that Ṛgvedic practices are known to have influenced tantric Buddhism[403]. He also provides many other examples to show that 'esoteric Buddhism internalized the political models'[404] they saw around them.

Buddhists also went so far as to virtually imitate Śaiva initiation and rituals including the *Maṇḍala*, in order to attract more followers in the 'sincere conviction that its special methods are designed for exceptionally able aspirants within the Buddhist fold, its point of entry, namely initiatory introduction before the Maṇḍala, was

[397] Bronkhorst, Johannes. 'Buddhism In The Shadow Of Brahmanism', Published by Brill, 2011, Page 129.
[398] Ibid, page 119
[399] Ibid, page 166
[400] Sanderson, Alexis. 'The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period.' In 'Genesis and Development of Tantrism', edited by Shingo Einoo. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009. Institute of Oriental Culture Special Series, 23. Page 115
[401] Bronkhorst, Johannes '*Buddhism In The Shadow Of Brahmanism'*, Published by Brill, 2011, page 169
[402] Ibid, page 259
[403] Ibid, page 259
[404] Ibid, page 257-259

designed to facilitate the recruitment of those outside it and to this end access was rendered as easy as possible'[405].

Śaiva Paddhati was in itself adapted to the Brahmanical traditional model.[406] Śaivas were also keen to associate themselves in Brahmanical order by essentially continuing with Brahmanical practices, only adding on Śaiva practices on top of existing Vaidika ones. As Sanderson notes, 'In spite of the Śaivized character of these new rituals the underlying model is still recognizably that of the brahmanical tradition. The ´Śaiva elements are little more than a veneer on what it essentially a brahmanical procedure.'[407]Fluidity between religions in terms of the possibility of conversion has already been mentioned. Even here, the Brahmanical caste distinction was clearly maintained. For example, it is interesting to note that, even though Śaiva rhetoric insisted on the fundamental equality of man[408], Śaiva Paddhati prescribes that 'a brahmin could teach, initiate, and perform ceremonies of installation only for brahmins, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras, a Kṣatriya only for Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras, a Vaiśya only for Vaiśyas and Śūdras, and a Śūdra only for others of his caste-class'[409].

Jains were influenced by Buddhist Abhidhamma philosophy from an early stage.[410] The Svetambara canon shows unmistakable signs of awareness of philosophical developments outside the Jaina community and even adopted some of them'.[411] Jain records re to this day major sources of information about other sects. Another instance of similarity is the fact that Jaina stupas looked so similar that even Kanishka 'venerates by mistake a Jaina Stūpa'[412] The practice of erecting stūpas was subsequently modified, according to Bronkhorst, in order for the Jainas to distinguish themselves from the Buddhists; the Buddhists were left to worship of relics and stupa construction, while Jainas abandoned it altogether.[413]

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[405] Sanderson, Alexis. 'The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period.' In 'Genesis and Development of Tantrism', edited by Shingo Einoo. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009. Institute of Oriental Culture Special Series, 23. Page 233

[406] Sanderson, Alexis. 'The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period.' In 'Genesis and Development of Tantrism', edited by Shingo Einoo. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009. Institute of Oriental Culture Special Series, 23. Page 283.

[407] Ibid, Page 283.

[408] Sanderson, Alexis. '*The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period.*' In 'Genesis and Development of Tantrism', edited by Shingo Einoo. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009. Institute of Oriental Culture Special Series, 23, page 290

[409] Ibid, page 285

[410] Bronkhorst, Johannes '*Buddhism in the Shadow of Brahmanism'*, Published by Brill, 2011, page 139.

[411] Ibid, page 145

[412]Ibid, page 140

[413] Ibid, page 142

Persecutions

This is not to say that pluralism was wholly accepted; there are clear instances of the persecution of religious groups. For instance, according to Giovanni Verardi, Jains underwent 'murderous persecutions'[414] in Southern India. According to Thapar, there is evidence from Tamil Nadu of Śaiva sects attacking Jaina institutions, effectively displacing the latter.[415]Evidence from Karnataka also suggests that 'the Vīraśaiva or Liṅgāyatas acquiring wealth and status in commerce, persecuted Jaina monks and destroyed Jaina images.'[416] It is for this reason, according to Padmanabh Jaini, Jainas had to make some necessary changes to their religious practice, including the introduction of Jaina Brahmins and the incorporation of Brahmanical '*saṃskāras'.*[417] However, according to Thapar, this persecution was related to the Jaina stronghold on 'commercial economy'[418] and the culmination of the Vīraśaiva opposition to the influence of the Jainas over royalty through their positions as 'advisers and administrators'[419]. Thapar notes that this effort towards the persecution of Jains was restricted to only some sects of the śaivas and it was 'not a jehad or a holy war or a crusade in which all Hindu sects saw it as their duty to support the attack or to wage war against the Buddhists or the Jainas.'[420]

The seventh century Chinese traveller, Xuanzang, relates that Mihirakula, a sixth century ruler of Kashmir, 'destroyed many Buddhist foundations in Gandhāra, having resolved to extinguish Buddhism.'[421] This is also supported by Kalhaṇa in his *Rājataraṅgiṇī.*[422] Mihirakula appears to have been a Śaiva; coins issued by him show the image of a Bull and trident with the inscription 'Victory to the Bull! Victory to [Śiva,] who has the Bull as his emblem!'[423], and, according to Kalhaṇa, he established 'a Liṅga of Śiva incorporating his name

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414 As given in Bronkhorst, Johannes '*Buddhism in the Shadow of Brahmanism'*, Published by Brill, 2011, page 178 -179
415 Thapar Romila, *'Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity'* in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (1989), pp. 209-231. Cambridge University Press. Page 219
416 Ibid, page 219
417 As given in Bronkhorst, Johannes '*Buddhism in the Shadow of Brahmanism'*, Published by Brill, 2011, page 179. Here, Bronkhorst cites 'Padmanabh Jaini's *The Jaina Path of Purification* (1979)'
418 Thapar Romila, *'Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity'* in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (1989), pp. 209-231. Cambridge University Press. Page 220
419 Ibid, page 220
420 Ibid, page 220
421 Sanderson, Alexis, '*Tolerance, Exclusivity, Inclusivity, and Persecution in Indian Religion During the Early Mediaeval Period*.' In Honoris Causa: Essays in Honour of Aveek Sarkar, edited with a foreword by John Makinson (Allen Lane, 2015), page 209
422 Sanderson, Alexis. '*The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period.*' In 'Genesis and Development of Tantrism', edited by Shingo Einoo. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009. Institute of Oriental Culture Special Series, 23, page 42, note 3.
423 Sanderson, Alexis, '*Tolerance, Exclusivity, Inclusivity, and Persecution in Indian Religion During the Early Mediaeval Period*.' In Honoris Causa: Essays in Honour of Aveek Sarkar, edited with a foreword by John Makinson (Allen Lane, 2015), page 209

(Mihireśvara) in the capital'. Kalhaṇa does not fully mention the persecution of the Buddhists, but describes Mihirakula as 'a pitiless monster responsible for countless deaths.'[424] According to Thapar, this persecution may well have resulted from the antagonism between Hūnas and Buddhists over trade disruptions between India and Central Asia caused by the latter.[425]

Cases of clear persecution also exist. For instance, according to Xuanzang, Buddhists were persecuted by Śaśāṅka (c. 603–619/20)[426]. Xuanzang records that 'this king attacked the religion of Buddha, dispersed the Saṅgha, cut down the Bodhi tree, damaged the rock nearby that bore the Buddha's footprints, and ordered that a Buddha image there should be replaced by an image of Śiva'[427]. That he was a Śaiva devotee (*paramamāheśvarah*) is shown through coins issued by him which depict 'Śiva reclining on his bull.'[428] The Pallava King Mahendravarman also appears to have persecuted the Śaivas till his own conversion.[429] A Pāṇḍya king is also stated to have attempted to impale a large number of Jainas 'in revenge for an attempt to kill his Śaiva Guru Campantar'[430]. However, the legend also relates that the Jainas 'impaled themselves'[431].

Nevertheless, such blatant persecutions appear to be few and far in between. As Sanderson notes, it was not politique for a ruler to take a stance against any sect as it would cause a widespread retaliation.[432] This is also the case, as we have seen, in Jayanta's Āgamaḍambara where the persecution of one religious group sparks off widespread debate and disturbs the peace of the kingdom. The survival of various sects also evidences the fact that they were not persecuted to a large extent, if at all.

[424]Ibid, page 210
[425] Thapar Romila, *'Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity'* in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (1989), pp. 209-231. Cambridge University Press. Page 219
[426] Sanderson, Alexis, '*Tolerance, Exclusivity, Inclusivity, and Persecution in Indian Religion During the Early Mediaeval Period*.' In Honoris Causa: Essays in Honour of Aveek Sarkar, edited with a foreword by John Makinson (Allen Lane, 2015), page, page 210
[427] Ibid, page 210
[428] Ibid, page 210
[429] Ibid, page 211
[430] Ibid, page 211
[431] Ibid, page 211. Note 148
[432] Ibid, page 208- 209. C.f. Ibid, page 158

Conclusion

From the above evidence, it can be ascertained that the religious landscape of pre-Muslim India was multifaceted and that multiple religious groups coexisted simultaneously. It is also evident that, while the sects themselves were not inherently tolerant towards this pluralistic landscape, they were content to limit this antagonism to scholarly debates. That this pluralism was widely acceptable is proven by an analysis of the material culture of the period. Among the general populace, there seems to have been little animosity on religious grounds and the political situation of the time also did not lend any strength to sectarian tendencies as desired by theologians. As Dubois points out, ' "That these religious dissentions do not set the whole country ablaze, or occasion those crimes of all kinds which were for centuries the result of religious fanaticism in Europe and elsewhere, is due no doubt…… to the fact that the greater number compound with their consciences and pay equal honour to Vishnu and Siva. Being thus free from any bias towards either party, the latter serve as arbitrators in these religious combats, and often check incipient quarrels."'[433]

It is also apparent that this pluralistic landscape was not merely tolerated, but mechanisms were devised for the coexistence of divergent religious groups; where inclusivism was possible, theories were promulgated to include an opposing sects and hostilities were aired in the environs of a general debate. The existence of a pluralistic attitude, then, is a testament not to the religious groups themselves but to the general democratization and public airing of ideas, a situation attained either by the political landscape of the time or through the conscious need to avoid confrontation, a status quo that modern India might learn from.

[433] J. A. DUBOIS: Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies. Tr. Henry K. Beauchamp, OUP 31906, p. 120 cited by Rocher, Ludo. The Purāṇas (1986). Print. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, page 23

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