

Canon and Continuing Innovation: Indian Approaches to the Classics.

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1943年生まれ、テュービンゲン大学助教授、ライデン大学教授を経て、1987年よりハーバード大学教授。1989～1990年京都大学客員教授。ヴェーダ研究の第一人者、儀礼から印欧語族に関する歴史的研究まで、幅広い分野で優れた業績を上げている。1972～1977年ドイツ・ネパール写本保存プロジェクト責任者（74～77年ネパール研究センター所長）としてカトマンドゥに滞在したこともあってネパール研究の業績も多い。

Introduction

To begin a discussion on the approaches of a certain civilization to its canonical texts, a few definitions are in order. For a general definition of culture we may use that of the Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development, Stockholm (1998) : “... in its widest sense, culture [is] the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs.” Proceeding from here to that of the “canon” within a given culture we may posit it as : the agreed body of texts (and other forms) that embody and express the spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of a given society at a certain point in time. Stress must be laid, in my opinion, on the foundational texts and their elaborations in the art of a given culture, as many of these features persist for a long time within that culture. Now, as for the “texts” themselves, they include traditional oral or written forms of compositions in prose or verse that deal with various cultural topics from religion to love, and from philosophy to early texts on medicine or warfare. The study of such texts within a given culture entails more than traditional philology as culture includes all expressions of human activity, from texts to art, esthetics and philosophy.

1. Spiritual and individual approaches

Such an approach also transgresses the more practical, civilizational aspects of any culture and the many more or less “secular” approaches now seen in the West and, increasingly, also elsewhere.

In brief, in the West, we have seen a focus, ever since the Greeks, on open inquiry and debate, —if interrupted in the Middle Ages by Christian dogmatism — and this has been, in more recent centuries, one of increasing rationalism (Descartes, Britanno-American pragmatism) that has been further strengthened by the success of the sciences and technology in the 19th and 20th centuries and by its spread due to recent globalization.

However, even in the West there has been a constant ebb and tide flow between the more rational and the more emotional or spiritual approaches. This is typically seen in the opposition between the Classicism (say, of Goethe around 1800) and of the often emotional and even religious Romanticism of the following period (though even Goethe of course knew that “zwei Seelen wohnen, ach, in meiner Brust”... as he says in Faustus). There also has been, in the Occident just as everywhere, a constant and sustained reaction to societal forces, such as industrialization and now the Globalization/Computer age. Radical changes in work and life style, such as in the present age, always generate radical movements in thought and in society.

As opposed to the supposed exclusive rationality of the Occident, in India, there “always” has existed a strong insistence and stress on seeking personal “salvation” or “release” from this life and from future rebirths, according to the traditional Indian, ultimate values of a spiritual, higher life. This has never been structured according to a unified system of beliefs. Instead, India always has been a laboratory of culture, not just of languages, social structures, but especially also of spirituality — due to its nature as one particular cul du sac of Asia. This includes India’s own indigenous traditions from the Veda to the Puranas and Tantras, as well as its modern adaptations, but also the imported four “desert religions”: Zoroastrianism (of the Parsis), Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, — and now also modernity (secularism, westernization, globalization).

Foreign imports apart, this laboratory of ideas and world views was based on the link between karma and rebirth, made in the early Upanishads about 500 BCE. It has allowed “100 schools” to develop as to spell out the details of the new theory ... and this has continued until today. In that sense, there is always more of the same, nothing radically new under the Indian sun. (The materialists have been marginalized early on. But even for many of them, nowadays, rebirth is “not a dogma but a fact”, that is, even for atheists). All these discussions started from a pre-existing rebirth belief, connected with the increasing spread of the Karma idea.

Once this link was established, the various religious schools and philosophical “views” (darshana), built on this premise and approached it from various angles. The variety of views is well visible in the array of early views of philosophers and sophists as described in the Buddhist text, Dighanikaya 2; here and in their actual texts, we see the extreme version of the Jaina who believe in an almost absolute abstention from any harm done to living beings, from small invisible ones via insects to humans, and whose monks therefore occasionally prefer to fast to death. Their view of the soul also is extreme: it has the same shape and size as a human body and persists after release from the cycle of rebirth. However, the monks and their lay followers must subsist on vegetables and grain (that one early Upanishad, exceptionally, regards as having a soul as well). Then, there is the Middle Path of the Buddha, which strikes

balance between absolute fasting and a life devoted to householder pursuits (as in Hinduism), as well as in its philosophical underpinnings, with the concept of anatman, the “soul-less” spiritual counterpart of the physical body which has, however, five constituent parts (skandha). This differs widely from classical Hindu monism, starting from the Upanishads and prominently seen in Shankara’s advaita, which picks from the Upanishads and offers a unitary interpretation, featuring an eternal personal soul (atman) that, in reality, is only part of the universal one (brahman). There are many other views; the “Collection of all Philosophies” (Sarvadarshanasangraha) of the 14th century has 14. It is now believed that “in India philosophy and religion have always co-existed in harmony,” which can certainly be debated as there have been strong strands of rationalistic philosophy as well, that all fiercely fought with each other. Examples, of the same 7th century formal encounter, are given by two contemporaries, the account of Hsuan Tsang’s Indian travels and Bana’s Harshacarita.

The set-up of continuous discussion has created a climate of individual “Pick and Choose.” The same is of course also true for some other religions in spite of the fact that they are restricted by dogma. People tend to pick and choose item(s) suitable for the particular mood of the time, within a certain given framework. Indic cultures (or Taoism, Shinto) have the advantage that absolute liberty exists to go against “dogmas”. In all these traditional religions, from Greece to Japan, one will find local traditions that contradict the “official” version found in some foundational classical texts.

Freedom of choice

In addition, we find in India the absolutely free personal choice to select any god or philosophical view (darshana) that a particular person likes or prefers... The dominance of social coherence and various social strictures (such as by castes) are thus counterbalanced by a remarkable personal freedom of mind. To use the phrase we often hear in Nepal: “Are you a Hindu or a Buddhist?” — Answer “yes”.

The opposite is seen in monotheistic religions or restrictive “philosophies” such as traditional Marxism-Leninism: personal thought is prescribed, social condi-

tions can vary, for example in Western civilization ever since Constantine's declaration of Christianity as a state religion in 324 CE.¹

Within this open-minded framework of religions and spirituality in India, new philosophical systems and religions arose from time to time, due to social need, charismatic leadership and a gradual social acceptance (see below). In this climate, "anything goes" with constant discussion of new proposals, sound or not.

As has been mentioned above, Dighanikaya 2 lists many such ideas. The most outrageous among them certainly is the sophistic one of atomism, according to which human beings are constituted of atoms that merely hang together. If one kills somebody, no harm is done, for one just "cuts between the atoms". This is further explained by the "meatball theory": even if one would kill everybody north of the Ganges, and the everybody south of the Ganges, and would make one big meatball of them no harm would be done. Such extreme theories are not entirely unusual. However, all these are just vada 'opinions' or darshana 'views', theoretically of the same value, though the Sarvadarshana-samgraha has its own order, beginning with the rather unsuccessful materialism (Carvaka) and ending — not surprisingly — with Advaita. Nowadays, this Indian attitude towards religion and spirituality is often explained by the Upanishadic motto "lead me from darkness to the light", or in the words of the current president of India, Dr. Abdul Kalam, a Muslim, as the "graduation from religion to spirituality".

There is a belief in the "inborn nature" of Indian civilization (Sri Aurobindo) — as if a civilization or its people possessed something like a "fixed nature" or a predetermined "destiny" — civilization is a human construct, after all. Instead, we should rather speak of the foundational themes of a civilization that remained its basis, though the "superstructure" of its expression through time may change.

However, this kind of generally propagated universal freedom, liberalism or tolerance did not always exist in India either. According to several sources, both Hindu and Jain, the new Tantric Nilambara "blue coat" sect that entered Kashmir in the 9th century did not gain social acceptance. These "ascetics" wore just one piece of clothing, a blue mantle, however, just one for both the yogi and his female companion. The local

people complained to the king about this; he ordered to call a council of all sects. After long deliberation they decided that no sect was to be accepted that was not regarded by the people as 'traditional' (agama), and according to Jaina tradition, the Nilambaras were even killed.² There also are a number of traditions, involving Shankara, the Jains, Buddhists, Shaivas and Vaishnavas, about serious unrest and actual fighting and warfare between various religions in medieval South India. Recent inter-sectarian and inter-religious clashes and even pogroms thus are not something entirely new.

2. Canon vs. constant additions

This open attitude of religious choice is also reflected in the make-up, the very structure of the texts: we find additions, insertions by framing, nesting patterns, or at beginning/end of texts; all of this is seen since the earliest texts the Veda.

The oldest text, the Rgveda, has itself been arranged in this way: the core (RV 2–7) is surrounded by additions, books 1.51–191 and book 8, the addition of book 9, and the later additions of the ultimate frame RV 1.1–51 and book 10. Similar arrangements are seen in other Vedic texts, or the late Upanishads begin in Vedic fashion, only to pursue a sectarian goal in different language. They all use the framework device that is most prominently seen in the arrangement of Panini's grammar and in the Epics (Mahabharata and Ramayana), or in the Puranas. In religion, the Buddha is the 9th Avatara of Vishnu, or Kashmir Shivaism has its own, new revelation in the Vathulanatha Sutras but incorporates Vedic customs and rituals in its practices while regarding them as being of "lower" status. Medieval Jainism incorporated many Hindu and Tantric practices as seen in Hemadri's Yogashastra.³ Brahmanical reaction has often succeeded to encapsulate new religious movements by traditional ritualism (Vaikhanasa Vaishnavism, some forms of Bhakti); other movements such as the Virashaiva, however, have stayed apart in their full rejection of Vedicism.

In short, old ideas or even whole texts are not given up, but simply repositioned inside new frames, and they are re-interpreted. Or, to use currently fashionable terminology: they are read by contextualizing and

privileging them in certain ways, by “intertextuality”, — in short, they are seen through the lens of later texts.

The constant reinterpretation of texts is often based on the framework-like devices mentioned above (to which we will have to return). An old text portion or spiritual position is never given up, it is just repositioned and reinterpreted. We can observe the same of course, in (some sect of) Christian religion in the ‘progression’ from: “Old Testament” (Torah) —> New Testament —> The Book of Mormon, each one of which recognizes the validity of the preceding text but provides a new interpretation of it.

Thus, the Mahabharata is regarded as “the fifth Veda, which opens it to non-Arya listeners such as the Shudras; its Bhagavadgita is regarded as sort of Upanishad. Then, the Puranas look back at the Epic (and indirectly, the Vedas) in a new way: each text is read through the lens of the older, just as in the Christian example already given. For example, the Vishnudharmottara Purana of Kashmir looks back at these texts in that fashion. Later, the Tantras add another layer by their reading of the Puranas, Epics and Vedas as inferior in their respective spiritual quests. Finally, we now have the Advaita philosopher, Pres. S. Radhakrishnan, who regards all religions as inferior to Neo-Vedanta. Or, as already mentioned, we now also have science as enveloping all of the above.

3. Approaches to religious texts

As indicated above, the ancient religious texts were constantly (re)read, i.e., read in a new fashion, and “updated” in various ways. Especially, the second ancient Indian Epic, the Ramayana, supposedly composed by the “first poet”, Valmiki, has been updated time and again:

There is an endless stream of reworkings or adaptations, such as Kampan’s South Indian version in Tamil, various South East Asian versions, the medieval one in early Hindustani by Tulsidas, and the recent TV version, broadcast some ten years ago. It emptied the streets during the weekend for more than one year and was one factor in the current rise of Hindutva nationalism.

This is popular as it represents a simple case of good vs. evil, while some of the inherent moral ambiguities are not cast in a very prominent way (such as the ‘virtuous’ Rama’s sending Sita away, or Rama’s ‘unlawful’ killing, against the rules forbidding *mitradruh*, just as Indra occasionally did in the Veda, long before).

Other cases of ‘rereading’ and reinterpretation include the “constructive theology” of Aurobindo’s very personal, if not idiosyncratic understanding of the Veda; or that of early Hindu renaissance, such as the movement of the Brahmo Samaj that strives “back to the sources”, the Vedas, (while abolishing “idol worship”, etc.), as well as a slightly later, “modern” reinterpretation of the Vedas by Dayanand Sarasvati and his Arya Samaj, which found all sorts of modern technological developments in these texts but also worked against the caste system and for the equality of women.

4. Approaches to poetic texts, esthetics

Turning to literature, we witness constant retelling and reshaping too: A typical case is that of the ancient, unfortunate love story between Pururavas and Urvasi (Rgveda 10.90), that has been taken up and adjusted in the Shatapatha and Vadhula Brahmanas, and then in the Epic (Mahabharata) as well as by Kalidasa’s *Vikramorvasiyam*, with a gradual shift of the general setting (semi-divine nymph to “daughter” of an ascetic), as well as in the details of poetic motivation, etc.

The reason for poetics and esthetics, which have a long tradition in India, is nowadays felt like this: “Aesthetics is the creative and artistic manifestation of the subtle mind, using the tangible mind and intellect. The human beings are not satisfied by ‘bread alone’.”⁴

However, the early traditional poetics were unwritten but inherent in the Vedas and Epics. The Rgveda has many passages referring to poets, poetry and composition of hymns but does not specify the “method” of composition. The second Epic, the Ramayana, too, looks back at its composition by the mythical poet Valmiki and at his “invention of the shloka” meter; both the author’s composition and the shloka tale are mentioned in the Ramayana itself: self-consciousness of poetic composition is felt in all these early texts. Then, since the first “official” text on poet-

ics, drama and dance, the Bharatiya Natyashastra, we find an actual theory of the 8 to 10 rasa 'sentiments' inherent in all poetry, a theory only to be outdone, by the superimposition of the early medieval dhvani 'suggestion' theory, invented by the Kashmiris; interestingly, they also came up, about the same time, with another mega-theory, that of Shivaism as superior to all earlier philosophies including that of the Vedas.

As far as poetical topics are concerned, in classical Indian drama we see the constant re-use of the same old Epic themes, be it by Bhasa, Kalidasa, or by later poets. This continues until today: some 2000 such Sanskrit dramas have been written in the short twenty year period between independence (1947) and 1967 alone. The question to be asked here is: written by whom and for whom? One may compare this unchanged, antiquarian attitude with that of Japanese writers who dropped the use of the classical language in 1870, at the time of the Meiji restoration.

The persistence of the old poetic concepts is well reflected by an episode, witnessed by this writer, of a traditional Indian pandit and professor, who insisted, at an American scholarly conference held a few years ago, that he had composed in his head (and so far not written down) a new poetic handbook (shastra) that covered all previous poetry as well as all future, as yet unwritten poetry... This extraordinary feat can of course only be established if Indian poetry were to follow the well beaten path of previous works. Completely new approaches, such as those taken by Japanese poets after 1870, or by those of other nations, whether traditional or not, are automatically excluded. One wonders at the insularity of such thinking, witnessed even at the beginning of the third millennium...

In short, what we see in traditional poetic composition is not innovation in topics but innovation in interpretation and the reshaping of traditional themes. In a way, this is typical for much of Indian (and Asian) art, say, in music: the scales/melodies (Ragas) are given (as are the rhythms: Tala), but the "composition" and interpretation is absolutely free, and it is, in fact, in almost all cases ad hoc and improvised.

In other words: the frame is given, the filling in is free. This is not dissimilar to the religious and philosophical situation in India: thought is free, but behavior and society are strictly regulated. All of this is, to some

extent, the opposite of the situation found in occidental civilizations. In Europe, one revolution or uprising after another occurred in order to abolish an older frame (such as the various peasants uprisings, the French revolution against the ancient regime, the rise of the bourgeoisie, the proletariat, etc.). In the spiritual world, there were "revolutions" (that were felt as such), such as that from the "Classical" style to the Romantic, Impressionism, Expressionism, etc. styles. The general "frame" for this 'modern' European art could only be described as "painting with colors/monochrome", there was and is no Canon anymore of values and forms. Instead, we have seen experiments for the last 100 years, with no new style in sight and we may ask: will there be one, and what will it be? In other words, we still live in the "postmodern" self service society, governed by individual choice, but manipulated by the forces of world wide "standard" products, services and information — forces that are governed by global marketing, advertisement and the brainwashing of global TV. The big screen with Hollywood films between the World Wars, with its messages of unlimited consumerism, has been replaced by the small screen with its CNN, MTV, soap operas, etc. In other words, the occidental liberalism of spiritual approaches is now debased by the current American stress on a purely economic "rationale", extended to culture and to the life of the mind: "does it sell or not"?

Or to quote, from an Indian point of view, Sharada Ramanathan again. She writes, more elaborately, in carefully chosen words: "where industrialization and marketing determine the legitimacy of the human being; where the common theme between even religion and industry is entrepreneurship and merchandising; where power, hegemony and global dynamics are determined by the hypocritical presence of, and relationship between, economics and politics and their trivialisation of culture in development; and where co-option, standardisation and sameness take precedence over creativity, individuality and basic human dignity."

In this situation, New Classics or a new Classicism may provide a solution. This would require a new, general agreement (at least one per civilization, better a universal one) on general human values, such as pursuit of happiness, personal freedom, cultural expression, right for food, clothing, shelter, and an agreement on

the preferable, general structure of society. Such an agreement should be based on, and also further result, in pride of local expression and the preservation of the diversity of cultures around the globe, with different ways of doing the “same thing”; but this should also include global exchange and global interaction of cultures. This will preserve the curiosity for the “Other” and learning from the various civilizations.

(The members of some cultures, such as the Japanese or German ones, which I know a little better, always have loved to learn what others think about them, as to adapt what is compatible and to “improve” their own ways; the Indians of today, however, do not want to be told anything by “foreigners” as this would be “(neo-colonial”).)

In other words, such proposals go diametrically against the current trend of globalization, aim at the restoration of human dignity for all people in the world, not just for (some in) the rich nations. Whether any large scale movement along these lines can succeed is impossible to predict, and for various reasons: the pressures of population explosion around the globe will stress satisfying the very basic needs of people, a need opposed by the current perpetuation of the economic imbalance between North and South; we may see future large scale migrations “northwards”, with political repercussions. Such outcomes may hamper the cultural movements delineated here.

5. Use of classical texts in shaping society

With the last few points we have entered the contentious field of the use of classical texts in shaping or reshaping society. In India, stress has always been on the “Law” (dharma) texts as the Manusmṛti or its successor texts (Yajñavalkya, etc.). A close study of medieval texts of this nature reveals that there was constant “updating”. This was facilitated by the very nature of texts like Manu which were misunderstood as normative by the early British administration. However, the texts did not order and prescribe but suggest (a number of) possibilities and courses of action. Even here, the “principle”, outlined above, of “pick and choose” is seen in action; but all such deliberation is based on the unitary interpretation of one particular

“darshana”, the method of interpretation crystallized and taught by Mimamsaka-philology in the first few centuries of our era.

The four classes (varna) and the endless number of castes (jati) are obvious parts of the Indian society: the traditional inscriptions and chronicles stress the duty as well as factual behavior of a new dynasty, that is to return to Dharma norm. If they do not, the Indian version of the “mandate of heaven” will vanish, as seen many times in the “waves” of Kings (rajataranga) described by Kalhana in his *Rajatarangini* (1150/1 CE). Historically, many variations and shifts in castes exist (ed), but the system as such is given. Again, what actually happens is constant reshaping.

Early examples include the Brahmanical reaction against the general openness of the period “between the realms” (230 BCE – 320 CE). The strong reaction is visible in the works of Patanjali, Manu and certain sections of the Mahabharata, all of which rail against the foreign influences of the Greeks and others, and strive at classification of castes. In that sense, Manu maybe regarded as the first Dharmanibandha (maybe of King Pushyamitra?), combining many diverse sources in cumulative fashion. Nibandhas⁵ were prominently composed all through the Middle Ages, typically under new dynasties, such as Lakshmidhara’s *Kṛtyakalpataru* at Kanauj of 1150 CE, Hemadri’s *Caturvargacintamani* in Maharashtra, down to the Dogra kings of Kashmir after 1856, and to the reformation of traditional law in Nepal by the Ranas at the same time, in the very strict *Muluki Ain*. In addition, inscriptions mention the new kings’ doing away with the “confusion of classes” (varna), perhaps first seen in the inscriptions of the Shatavahanas in the first few centuries CE, or by King Jayasthiti of Nepal with his legendary establishment “36 castes” at c. 1400 CE. Finally,⁶ there are the very detailed British classifications in the Census volumes, with up to 5000 castes.

Especially important in this context are the many upscale movements (“Sanskritization”) by various castes. A recent example is that of the goldsmiths, however, limited to smiths in Karnataka. They use Upanishadic quotations about the demiurge deity Vishvakarma to underline their high class, ultimately divine origins and as to cement the process of their Sanskritization.

The Vedic and Classical law texts have also been given new interpretations by the reform movements of the 19th century: the Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Aurobindo, etc. The Arya Samaj, for example, modernizes by allowing all classes and women to offer in rituals and offers education to them.

Today's mood and societal movements are directed against the castes that have persisted, though they were abolished by the Indian Constitution and the Nepalese one of 1960. These movements play out on a political level, and are furthered by the strong Indian women's movements that want to replace the Manu Smriti by a new "Madhu Smriti", called after Madhu Kishwar. Further, there is a purely political move underway by the currently governing party and its allies. The motto now is "we are all Indians" ("One country, one people, one culture"!)

But this is starkly contrasted by the social reality of inequality and even of killing low caste people in the villages of Bihar and elsewhere. The new movement, laudable as far as it is finally getting rid of caste distinctions, however, aims at Gleichschaltung of all Indians, unifying them as "general, common citizens" — while excluding the perceived Others, "foreigners" such as the local Muslims or Indian Christians. Methods such as the breaking up of the "class system", even in the very traditionally minded army, have also been used by the Nazis: the less of groups and ranks, the easier to "govern" the people.

However, the underlying "spirit" of the classification of society into four classes and many castes is visible everywhere even today, whether it was the Oxford professor and President of India, the late Neo-Vedantist Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, with his classification of all religions into "primitive" animist, more "advanced" ones with a personal god (Krishna worship, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, etc.), and finally the "highest" version, the monism of Advaita Vedanta — which, of course, he himself followed. Or, it may be seen in today's newspapers writing about organized religion: "the aid of forms, ceremonies, creeds or systems... [is needed] because the lower members [of society] have to be exalted and raised before they can be fully spiritualized, before they can directly feel the spirit..."

The current president of India, a Muslim, A. Kalam, has voiced a similar sentiment when he spoke of "graduation from religion to spirituality" (see above).

The present mood is: Hinduism is the best religion (and even has the best social structure!) of all, due to its tolerance and inclusivism. This is presented with a thinly veiled, hidden chauvinism, as seen in a speech by Pres. Kalam, on August 4, 2002, a speech that precisely echoes that of an Indian king of the Maurya dynasty more than 2000 years ago:

"In 3000 years of our history people from all over the world have come and invaded us, captured our lands, conquered our minds. From Alexander onwards, the Greeks, the Turks, the Moguls, the Portuguese, the British, the French, the Dutch, all of them came and looted us, took over what was ours. Yet we have not done this to any other nation. We have not conquered anyone. We have not grabbed their land, their culture, and their history and tried to enforce our way of life on them."

This is of course not exactly true (note the Cola invasion of S. E. Asia, Kashmir's of Central Asia/Xinjiang, Nepal, etc.). Such statements also overlook the important feature, not mentioned by any such apologeticists, of internal colonialization which has been almost imperceptible but not less aggressive. "Indian" civilization, radiating in all directions from the small center of the Kuru in Northern India (Delhi and surroundings) at about 1000 BCE, has gradually incorporated, subdued and "domesticated" all the Others of the rest of the subcontinent. Most of them were classified on the lowest ranks of society (Shudra and below) and have been exploited ever since.

The present mood is also strongly opposed to the — so far current and dominating — trend of secularism in India. One may now read:

"The Indian temperament is radically different from the Western temperament ... the religious power and instinct is too strong and powerful here ... it has been the central motive force behind all Indian development. It will be therefore impossible to separate religion from life and all its activities. If ... secularism means that all religions have an equal place that is nothing new ... this concept has been the very essence of all Indian religious thought right from the Vedic times till today." (Kittu Reddy)

This statement again is very much debatable; typically, it is, in its last section, construed on a few sentences in the Vedas. When some, therefore, look for a new religious "awakening" it is because they believe that

“even in its period of decline, the religious spirit saved it. And this was proved vividly in the 14th century and later in the 19th century when it seemed that Indian civilization was going down under the onslaught of the Muslim and British rule respectively. We can therefore say that all great awakenings in India, all her periods of mightiest and most varied vigour, have drawn their vitality from the fountainheads of some deep religious awakening.” (Kittu Reddy).

Again, we could discuss these claims on a historical basis. The classical age of India, the Gupta period (300–500 CE), was also one of restoration, of restriction of the open-mindedness of the preceding 500 years following the Mauryas. It was a Hindu integration era that followed the localization era of the post-Mauryan kingdoms. The new religion that did emerge was Puranic Hinduism with its strict classifications of society and a stress of “traditional” behavior. (The Gupta period was followed by a new localization era, lasting well into the Muslim period, when the Moghuls began a new integration, followed up by the British one. We are now in the period of adjusting this “foreign” integration into the “traditional” mold.) The question is whether indeed “all great awakenings in India, all her periods of mightiest and most varied vigour, have drawn their vitality from the fountainheads of some deep religious awakening. Wherever the religious awakening has been complete and grand, the national energy it has created has been gigantic and puissant. (Kittu Reddy).

We should not forget that other ancient cultures, such as the Chinese one, have gone through the same or similar tribulations. Periods of foreign invasion, occupation and strong cultural impact were followed by those of a new integration and of cultural innovation. I do not see “religion” at work here — as Indian authors typically see in the shaping of their own civilization. The case is similar for Europe. After Rome, the barbarians, and a certain amount of integration during the High Middle Ages, regionalization set in again, and we see a new integration only now. But what about Islam? After the integration under the early Caliphs, and after a long period of regionalization, a full, new integration was not established even under the Turkish empire, and instead, new thought and development has been stifled for centuries; a new integration has not developed, until today; all of which is certainly part of the current anger

and unrest.

In India, current sentiment is only now reacting against the colonialism that was terminated already 50 years ago, and it has begun to react now also against industrialization, westernization, globalization. It is in this context that it is felt that “Hindus are in danger.” Of course, they constitute 80% of the population of the Indian Union, but nevertheless, an enemy to express that “danger” is sought and is easily found in the internal Other, the Muslims (some 12%) and the few Christians (some 3%) of the population. They are perceived, just as in Nazi times the Jews, or in Bismarck’s times the Catholics, as the ones who are either closely linked to “outside interests” or are “Outsiders” themselves, even “foreigners” — though the ancestors of present Indian Muslims or Christians have lived in India for centuries, some for almost 2000 years. An important point is the political background for this sentiment: the Nehruvian protection of minorities, intended to stabilize the new Indian Republic, is discarded along with most other facets of Gandhian and Nehruvian politics.

How can one build a new culture and classicism under the current local (Indian) and general, (world wide) circumstances of clashes of cultures and of globalization? Is culture a general “human right”? And how it is to be enacted within a given culture? Many detailed questions remain: in India, is cow slaughter to be allowed? Should we accept the ritual killing of a sheep in our home(!) at the Muslim festival of Id? Should women wear scarves in non-Islamic societies (as was forbidden by law in French schools)? Must there be separate civil law systems for Hindus and Muslim as in India, or for Muslims and non-Muslims as in the various regions of Nigeria or Sudan?

However, let us return from questions of (cultural) politics and from some mega-views of history to the current cultural situation. In the past, we have seen that the usual process in India of developing new forms of belief and religion, of texts and other forms, was one of

6. Superimposition of new frames and inclusivism

This is still the case. Just as in old times, any new development in thought or in religion has been superimposed on the older. In this process, the older one

included the more recent one, such as all of Buddhism was neatly folded into Vishnu's 9th incarnation. So also now: "western" science is superimposed, but by inclusion into Hinduism; it is just another frame added to older thinking while the core thoughts and values remain the same. We can now find a "scientific" tax form, or certain traditional beliefs are constantly "proved" by scientific experiment or discoveries.

There are many examples of this kind. The recent 'discovery' on NASA satellite photos of an apparent land bridge between S. India and Sri Lanka (actually just the edge of the continental shelf) proves the historicity of the Ramayana, even if that land bridge is million years old; similarly the satellite photos of the dry Sarasvati (Ghaggar-Hakra) river bed, made after 1984, "prove" the existence of a mighty river in the Rgveda, though nobody knows from exactly which geological period that river bed dates. The efficacy of sacrificial ash as fertilizer was tested at a University laboratory in the Eighties by comparing the yield of two fields, one sown with sacrificial ash, one without it(!); the recent patent for cow urine is hailed as "proving" the efficacy of Pancagavya while suppressing the efficacy, mentioned in the same report, of sheep urine. In a particularly interesting case, a Newar Brahmin friend "tested" the size of the traditional Agnihotra fire at Patan, when the large Government Palace (Singha Durbar) was burnt down in 1973; he reported that, indeed, the fire burned low that day "as it had gone out", proving this old concept; unconsciously he repeated the idea already found in Rgveda 1.1.8. Or, the recently proposed new scientific theory of an expanding and retracting universe, going back even to a time before the "big bang", is now compared to Hindu mythology. S. Kak even finds the speed of light in the 14th century Rgveda commentary of Sayana. In short, we do not only see the new and prestigious scientific frame enveloping older concepts but also the traditional attitude of picking and choosing scientific evidence(!) in forming one's beliefs.

The two, science and religion, therefore do not clash in India, as they do in the common opposition between science and Christian religion in Occidental thought. As pointed out above, the western system was a one of oppositions (visible in the development of new cultural moods and fashions, such as the abrupt shift

from the Classics to Romanticism).

However, the Indian predilection for framework-like inclusion is thoroughly pre-modern: the layering of interpretations, executed as to weed out any emerging contradictions, has been a standard procedure in, e.g., Chinese, Indian, Near Eastern and European thought (up to the late Middle Ages).⁷ It ultimately aims at producing maps of complex correlations of ideas, and ultimately maps of maps.

Such processes can be followed from fairly early on. We have Shakalya's development of an analytic word by word text of the Rgveda (Padapatha); this was expanded by further grammatical analysis as formulated by Panini in his c. 4000, extremely short, algebra-like rules, employing his technical, superimposed metalanguage that makes use of artificial words to describe complex grammatical concepts. His complex layering scheme is: actual spoken text, word analysis, grammatical analysis, structuring such analysis in the multilayer framework of his grammar, explaining it by his mostly monosyllabic technical terms, all of which is encapsulated by his metalanguage (e.g., special use of the grammatical cases of Sanskrit). Or, on a lower level, there are medieval texts that list peculiarities in the Rgveda, such as the occurrence of certain sounds, especially for the analysis of the Rgveda.⁸ Another simple case is that of or the list of nakshatras in the Vedanga Jyotisha, established by extracting their initial syllables and similar mnemotechnical schemes (for example, for listing the Puranas).

However, there also is the more complex Samaveda system of Hitavakyas, short strings of syllables ($a = 1$ or 5 , $i = 3$ or 7 , etc.) indicating the number of words in the Padapatha of each verse, and especially the Chalaksharas, complex monosyllabic code words (such as $v+e$) that also are based on the Padapatha analysis of the text, and indicate text divisions, number of verses, accents, meter, etc.

Another even more interesting complex system in the Chandahsutra Vedanga and later metrical texts⁹ is that of analyzing the traditional meters as being constituted by several three syllable units (feet), such as the dactylus (long-short-short) which is designated by bha, while other feet are by ta, ja, pa, ma, etc., a short syllable by ga, and a long one by ga. The sequence ta ta ja ga (tau jagau) therefore describes the Indravajra va-

riety of the common 11 syllable Trishtubh meter. However, the binary difference between long and short syllables was then further exploited by the invention of binary numbers. The complete sequence for a certain meter could simply be summarized by adding up all the long and short syllables, compiling the ones and zeros just as we do in modern computer use. Any sum clearly identifies the meter in question. We see more abstract layers of analysis piled up; in short, maps of maps emerge.

Such higher, multilayered versions of these systems, including the metrical one just mentioned or the Samaveda Chalakshara, and especially Panini's grammar, are similar to the layering that we now witness in computer software: e.g., a list of computer programs applicable to a problem — the individual program with its Paninean-like frame structure — various sublayers (such as strings of words, the words themselves), the letters represented by actual bytes — and the machine language of ones and zeros.

In a less formal field, that of early philosophy, we have taken note of the correlations, mentioned above, such as that of the human eye with the sun (Rgveda 10.90), followed by the increasing number of such correlations in the Brahmanas, then the extension of this scheme to all other vital human functions, and their final summing up in the Upanishads in the atman = brahman correlation.

In such cases, the procedure is used in order to reach a super-theory that explains "all", just as the one now sought in physics. In the past, however, people have taken various shortcuts, such as reduction to one god, brahman, the Way, nature = the deity, etc. Now, we look for detailed layers of explanations and (physics/mathematical) formulas that are suited to our current scientific taste and common sense. These formulas are superimposed (or framed around) our persisting, common, traditional understanding. For, it makes no sense in everyday life to think of the fact that the sun does not rise but that the turning of the earth lets it only appear so, or that the moon is a cold airless rock and not the object of Romantic imagination or the place of Kaguyahime; or that the table in front of me is just a mass of swirling atoms; or that we cannot even observe it consistently at sub-atomic level, depending on the observer and the method of observation. For our daily un-

derstanding, Newtonian physics is quite sufficient. (Indeed, according to very recent news, 50% of Americans still do not even know about the earth moving around the sun, but think in pre-Copernican ways).

The same kind of two (or more) level thinking persist, of course, in India as well. To quote a recent Marathi author who criticized, in a drama, the credulity of people following a guru, by first letting the husband expound, in Advaita fashion, about the illusionary feature of Maya that obscures our understanding of the identify of Brahman and Atman, and then lets his wife hit him on the cheek. The resulting pain is humorously explained by the wife as "just being an illusion". A similar story is reported about Dayanand Sarasvati, the founder of the Arya Samaj. In such cases, the "official" Indian philosophical view clashes with the everyday, practical view. Buddhism and Hinduism have of course made use of such two level explanations in their philosophical systems (see S. Farmer et al, 2002).

All such theories, however, make little or no difference in our daily lives, and hardly in our understanding of ourselves, of relations with our fellow human beings, and of understanding and relating to other cultures. Instead, all the nitty-gritty physical details remain the interest of and are largely restricted to our own Brahmins, the theoreticians.

These superimpositions of frames and layers, according to which we carry on our daily lives, may even be a common feature of human mind... (see Farmer et al., 2003). However, I do not want to end on this rather abstract level. For, we also live by poetry, and not by theories or by bread alone... Returning, therefore, to creativity and canons.

7. Creativity and Canon

We must now focus on creativity, innovation in a new global culture, based on equality and mutual recognition of the Other, and on a fruitful exchange of ideas between existing cultures. This is, after all, the lure and the seduction of the Other. It is the recognition that things can be done and are done differently in the various parts of the world. As we can see described by anthropology or ... by science fiction.

The process of creative innovation must tran-

scend the present, still dominant Occidental pattern of stress on rationality (Descartes and others) and it must balance it with a new stress on mind and “soul”, even if we should or would want to avoid the realm “religion” proper.

The renewed move towards a new Classicism must, finally, transgress the current debasement of Occidental and other cultures by the McDonald and Coca-Cola “civilization”. It is not exactly a sign of freedom, and certainly not a basic “human right” to have one’s pizza in Kabul or Baghdad.

In proceeding with this program we must overcome the regionalism and the local patriotism of traditional cultures (not to speak of a clash of civilizations and of culture wars) by an openness towards the Others. We must get away from the monomaniac rule and the authoritarian or even totalitarian hold on our mind by the four Near Eastern religions and of similar dictatorial philosophical and social constructs, whether they be based on national interest or grand theories of human nature, so typical for the 20th century.

But, how to actually go about it? As so often in the past, technology has already helped us out. Just as the universal spread of printing after Gutenberg and the increasingly quick increase of book and pamphlet(!) production helped the Renaissance movement in the 15th, and the Reformation of the Christian church in the early 16th century and thus prepared the ground for Enlightenment, so now the global reach of the internet. It represents today’s version of pamphlet culture perfectly, with serious and simply crazy content next to each other. Just as in the Reformation period, this unfortunately comes with a lot of sectarian and cultural hatred as well. But just like printed books were not to be stopped, neither is the electronic medium, not even by repressive governments. Just as books and pamphlets were smuggled then, in the garb of traditional ones, so now some forbidden internet content; global radio and television also help, especially when broadcast by non-government, non-commercial and non-religious public bodies. Just as printing opened a window to the non-Christian occidental mind, so does now electronic technology to that of the whole world, at any location and instantly. We may inform ourselves about the inside views of traditional Maori, perceived European pagan, Qumran Jewish or early Gandhara Buddhist thought,

just as we may access the great traditional, foundational Classical texts in the original or in translation.

The present climate of global access, the broadcast, in whatever form, of OTHER perspectives than purely materialistic and economic ones (or of locally dominant/prescribed content) are extremely helpful in this regard. This prominently includes the Indian stress on spiritualism, even if we may not want to go as far as saying, with some Indians, that it is only India that “can save the world”. Too much of spiritualism does not feed, clothe and house people (just as little as raw capitalism does). As a counterweight against the present global dominance of pure “rationalizing” materialism and a civilization based on economy only, and even if such blind consumerism is rapidly spreading now, notably in the two largest countries, in China and India, it is helpful to see that there are “other” people who do not pay that much attention to material belongings alone.

In this process, the various other greater and smaller civilizations must not be forgotten, from the Chinese to the Mayan one, or from the West African to the aboriginal Australian one. They all come with their various, individual approaches to the reality surrounding us. We all can learn from each other, as offspring of the same small group of early humans in Africa just 150,000 years ago.

Recalling the recurrent pattern discussed above, that of constant intrusions of people or of new ideas, of a subsequent period of reaction and of working things out, and of the emergence of a new synthesis — a new Classicism — we must not forget today to embrace the Indian contribution, whether in the form of Hinduism, Buddhism, westernized Yoga, or simply, its obvious stress on the spiritual side of humankind.

1 The irony is that early Christianity has, in turn, been strongly influenced by Zoroastrian – influenced Judaism and by Augustinus’ background in Manichaeism, both strongly Iranian and thus, ultimately, Indo – Iranian. To this, we may add Augustinus’ background, via Manichaeism, even of some Buddhist ideas; the extreme “Christian” dichotomy between good/evil, body/spirit, etc., owes much of this insistence to Manichaeism.

- 2 See Jayata Bhatta's *Agamadambara*, A. Wezler, *Saeculum* 27, 1976, pp. 329–347; Phyllis Granoff, *Adyar Library Bulletin*. – – Some of them also traveled to Tibet, see H. Scharfe, *Education in Ancient India*, Leiden 2002, p. 107, n. 121, quoting A. Chattopadhyaya: "...There were Red Acharyas and Acharyas with blue robes and others in India who had entered Tibet and taught false doctrine."
- 3 *The Yogashastra of Hemacandra*, transl. by O. Qvarnstrom, HOS 60, Cambridge 2002.
- 4 Sharada Ramanathan in *The Hindu*, Magazine, Sunday, July 14, 2002.
- 5 One of the earliest Nibandhas is an unnamed one mentioned in a Nepali MS of 1040 CE, see M. Witzel, *Medieval Veda Tradition as Reflected in Nepalese Manuscripts*. *Journal of the Nepal Research Centre*, 12, 2001, 255–299.
- 6 As for the "classification" of Muslims, cf. now the detailed quotations in a book by B. Chattopadhyaya, "Representing the Other?" Delhi 1998.
- 7 See S. Farmer, J. Henderson, M. Witzel, *Neurobiology, Layered Texts, and Correlative Cosmologies: A Cross – Cultural Framework for Premodern History*. *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities (BMFEA)* 72, 2002, 48–90
- 8 Aithal, P. K. *Veda – Laksana : Vedic ancillary literature : a descriptive bibliography / compiled by K. Parameswara Aithal*. Stuttgart : F. Steiner, 1991
- 9 See Takao Hayashi. *Indo.ni okeru junretsu, kumiawase, rekkyo*. *Kagakusi Kenkyu, Journal of History of Science in Japan, Series II, Vol. 18 (No. 130) Summer 1979*, 158–171, esp. pp. 163–7.