Modern Asian Studies **43,** 1 (2009) pp. 175–210. © 2008 Cambridge University Press
doi:10.1017/S0026749X07003368 First published online 8 October 2008

Notes on Political Thought in Medieval and Early Modern South India

VELCHERU NARAYANA RAO

Department of Languages and Cultures of Asia, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI 53706, USA
Email: vnrao@wisc.edu

SANJAY SUBRAHMANYAM

Department of History, University of California, Los Angeles, CA , USA
Email: subrahma@history.ucla.edu

Abstract

This essays deals with a neglected and significant strand of Indian political thought by describing and analysing the corpus known as *nīti* in the context of medieval and early modern South India (in particular with reference to the Telugu-speaking region). Works of *nīti* are presented here within a larger context, as they evolve from the medieval Andhra of the Kakatiyas into the Vijayanagara period, the Nayakas, and beyond. They are also opposed and contrasted to other texts written within the broad category of *dharmashāstra*, which seem to deal with a far more conservative project for the management of society and politics within a caste-based framework. Authors and compilers dealt with include Baddena and Madiki Singana, but also the celebrated emperor-poet Krishnadevaraya (r. 1509–29). An argument is made for the continued relevance of these texts for the conduct of politics in South Asia, into and beyond the colonial period.

This essay is a shorter version of a more extended analysis of *nīti* and *dharma* texts in medieval and early modern South India, which may eventually take a monographic form. Early versions of this essay have been presented at St. Antony's College (Oxford), the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (Berlin), the Centre for the Study of Social Sciences (Kolkata), the University of British Columbia, the EHESS (Paris), the Humanities Institute (Wisconsin-Madison) and the Center for India and South Asia (UCLA). For critical comments and suggestions, we are particularly grateful to Partha Chatterjee, Don Davis, Carlo Ginzburg, Claude Guillot, Roland Lardinois, Patrick Olivelle, Anthony Pagden and S.R. Sarma.

'In these days, when we don't have any kingdoms worth the name, texts on statecraft are of no use for ruling the state, and they are useful only for historians of *shāstra* texts'.

—*Veturi Prabhakara Sastri*

'This country has seen the conflict between ecclesiastical law and secular law long before Europeans sought to challenge the authority of the Pope. Kautilya's *Arthashāstra* lays down the foundation of secular law. In India unfortunately ecclesiastical law triumphed over secular law. In my opinion this was the one of the greatest disasters in the country'.

—*B.R. Ambedkar*

Introduction

Past works on the nature and content of state-building in medieval South India have focused largely on the inscriptional corpus, and a limited set of narrative accounts, in order to support classic formulations of such ideas as the 'segmentary state' and 'ritual kingship'.[1] In this essay, we return to some of the questions raised by our colleagues and predecessors in the field, but with a view to looking at ideological and ideational issues far more than concrete institutional arrangements. We should note at the outset that the specter of a perpetually receding horizon of universal concepts—those that can be used with equal confidence, say, for the analysis of pre-1800 societies in Europe, Asia and Africa—has taken something of a toll in recent decades. Is it at all legitimate to assume that 'money' existed in all or even most of these continents?[2] What of the 'economy' itself, or even 'society'? Is the notion of 'art' applicable everywhere?

[1] Burton Stein, 'All the King's *Mana*: Perspectives on kingship in Medieval South India' in J.F. Richards (ed.), *Kingship and Authority in South Asia* (Delhi, 1998), pp. 133–88 (with a brief mention of some Jaina *nīti* texts on pp. 144–45). For a succinct critique of Stein's formulations on the period under consideration here, see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Agreeing to disagree: Burton Stein on Vijayanagara' in *South Asia Research*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (1997), pp. 127–39.

[2] For anthropological perspectives, see Jonathan Parry and Maurice Bloch (eds.), *Money and the Morality of Exchange* (Cambridge, 1989); C.A. Gregory, *Savage Money: The Anthropology and Politics of Commodity Exchange* (Amsterdam, 1997); Stéphane Breton, 'Social body and icon of the person: A symbolic analysis of shell money among the Wodani, western highlands of Irian Jaya' in *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (1999), pp. 558–82.

Can 'religion' be found in most societies?[3] It is well known by now that many postcolonial theorists wish to claim that 'history' was certainly not present in any more than a tiny fraction of the societies they study, until European colonial rule apparently created the conditions for its worldwide spread as a hegemonic discourse. In other words, it is claimed often enough now that no fit whatsoever existed between these and other '-etic' categories of the humanities and social sciences (with their uniquely Western origins and genealogy) and the highly varied '-emic' notions that may be found in different locales and times in the world of the past, a claim that has become a source of anxiety for some, a source of indifference for others, and a ground for rejoicing for still others who see a positive virtue in 'incommensurability', which they perhaps view as akin to a (necessarily virtuous) claim for species diversity.[4] Related to this is the recurrence of older formulae on the notoriously difficult subject of translation, both from those historians and from those social scientists who claim—on one extreme—that everything is translatable, and those who are eager to sustain equally extreme claims of 'malostension' or 'radical mistranslation' as a perpetual condition, rather than a contingent (and even potentially reversible) consequence of specific procedures and circumstances.[5]

It is of interest that even in this welter of relativistic claims, one category that few have sought to challenge in its universal applicability is that of 'politics'. Why has this been so, we may ask? Perhaps the reasons lie not only in an embarrassment with the charged, and patronizing, largely Marxist category of the 'pre-political', but also in the fact that to deny the existence of 'politics' would be tantamount to denying the existence somewhere in collective human existence of 'power', a move that few if any in the academy today would wish to risk.[6] To be sure, we could follow Benedict Anderson in relativising power, and argue that the 'idea of power' in, say, Java was not the same

[3] On the problem of religion, see Talal Asad, 'The construction of religion as an anthropological category' in Asad (ed.), *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, 1993), pp. 27–54; drawing on the earlier work by Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion: A New Approach to the Religious Traditions of Mankind* (New York, 1964).

[4] Thomas N. Headland, Kenneth L. Pike, Marvin Harris (eds.), *Emics and Etics: The Insider/Outsider Debate* (Newbury Park, 1990).

[5] See the useful discussion in Ian Hacking, *Historical Ontology* (Cambridge, MA, 2002), pp. 152–58.

[6] The category of the 'pre-political' appears most famously in Eric Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in archaic forms of social movement in the 19th and 20th centuries* (Manchester, 1959).

as that in the West; but this would be quite different to denying its very existence or utility as a concept for analysis.[7] In the case of India, almost any universal concept that one can mention has recently been challenged in its applicability to the present or past situation of that area, with the notable exception of 'politics'. Indeed, it is instructive in this regard to turn to an essay produced by a leading relativist amongst Indian social theorists, Ashis Nandy, who would argue that 'politics' is practically the only category that one can use as a constant to speak of the past 2000 years in India.[8] Yet, this argument, first defended by him over three decades ago, came paired with an important caveat. For Nandy wished to argue that politics in twentieth-century India was in fact a split field. If on the one hand there were those who practiced politics in the 'Western' mode, drawing upon concepts and notions that were all-too-familiar to western political scientists and theorists, others continued to understand and practice politics through a deeply 'emic' set of lenses, which is to say while using concepts that had no familiar equivalents in the western political vocabulary. To understand these concepts, and the working of this other field, Nandy went on to argue, it was necessary to return to a series of texts produced in the Sanskrit language in ancient India, which alone could explicate this deep-rooted and culturally specific vocabulary, involving (usually substantive and untranslatable) terms such as *dharma*, *karma*, *kāma*, *artha*, *sanyāsa* and the like.

In making this argument, Nandy was paradoxically drawing above all upon a claim that was first set out in colonial India, namely that the only source of 'authentically indigenous' concepts could be found in ancient texts in Sanskrit. To his credit, however, it must be stated that he at least posed the problem of whether a possible field of political thought or political theory might have existed in India before colonial rule. Later writers, even those who were comfortable with the notion that concepts of 'politics' could be applied to study moments in the pre-colonial Indian past, have rarely returned to this problem.[9] Those who

[7] Benedict R.O'G. Anderson, 'The idea of power in Javanese culture' in Claire Holt, Benedict R. Anderson and James T. Siegel (eds.), *Culture and Politics in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY, 1972), pp. 1–69; also the earlier essay by Anderson, 'The languages of Indonesian politics' in *Indonesia*, No. 1 (April 1966), pp. 89–116.

[8] Ashis Nandy, 'The culture of Indian Politics: A stock taking' in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (1970), pp. 57–79. Also see Nandy, 'The political culture of the Indian State' in *Dædalus*, Vol. 118, No. 4 (1989), pp. 1–26.

[9] For example, see V. R. Mehta and Thomas Pantham (eds.), *Political ideas in modern India: Thematic explorations* (New Delhi, 2006).

have done so have usually drawn upon Persian-language materials, and a learned tradition that has consistently maintained that in Islamic societies at least, the idea of 'politics' had long existed under such heads as *siyāsat*.[10] This view is lent credence by a genealogical claim, wherein the common Hellenic roots of western and Islamic thinking on the issue can be pointed to; the problem then would arise with that part of India where Arabic and Persian did not ever come to dominate as the languages of intellectual discourse.[11]

This is the heart of the issue that this essay seeks to address. We wish to argue that in reality a quite substantial and varied body of material can be found in South India between the fourteenth and the late-eighteenth centuries that attempts to theorize politics, while doing so neither in Persian nor in Sanskrit, even if it may bear traces of contact with bodies of material in these two 'classical' languages.[12] These materials may be found instead in the Indian vernacular languages, of which we shall focus on a particular body, that in Telugu (though a similar exercise could easily be attempted with materials in Kannada or Marathi).[13] Secondly, we suggest that most writers who have looked into the matter (and they are a mere handful, as noted above) have usually misidentified the location of such materials, by seeking it solely in the corpus known as *dharmashāstra*. Thirdly, we will attempt to show how the materials that we are fundamentally concerned with, and which usually term themselves texts on *nīti* rather than *dharma* (although there is some overlap in the two usages), changed over the centuries with which we are concerned. *Nīti* may be glossed here by

[10] Patricia Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought, c. 650–1250* (Edinburgh, 2004). The most important recent exercise on Indo-Islamic polities, and exploring the genre termed *akhlāq*, is that of Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam: India 1200–1800* (Chicago, 2004).

[11] Our problem thus parallels in some measure that faced by historians of political thought in China. For some examples, see Roger T. Ames, *The Art of Rulership: A Study in Ancient Chinese Political Thought* (Honolulu, 1983), and Hsiao Kung-chüan, *A History of Chinese Political Thought. Volume 1, From the Beginnings to the Sixth Century A.D.*, tr. F.W. Mote (Princeton, 1979).

[12] By focusing on the vernacular traditions, we seek to distinguish ourselves from a few earlier attempts which remain focused on Sanskrit; see, for example, Upendra Nath Ghoshal, *A History of Indian Political Ideas: The Ancient Period and the Period of Transition to the Middle Ages* (Bombay, 1959); and more recently the disappointing essay (again deriving from a secondary literature, but referring to Sanskrit materials) by Bhikhu Parekh, 'Some reflections on the Hindu tradition of political thought', in Thomas Pantham and Kenneth L. Deutsch (eds.), *Political Thought in Modern India* (New Delhi, 1986).

[13] See, for example, Ramacandra Pant Amatya, *Ajñapatra*, ed. Vilas Khole (Pune, 1988).

such terms as 'pragmatics', 'politics' or 'statecraft'.[14] Finally, we shall briefly rehearse an argument on how the status of these materials was transformed in the nineteenth century, when British colonial rule reclassified them in ways that were at odds with their place in the universe of knowledge in India in earlier times.

We should begin perhaps with a rapid and schematic survey of the political history of the region with which we are concerned, namely the southeastern part of peninsular India, in which Telugu had emerged already by 1300 CE as a major literary language. A series of kingdoms can be found here, some of modest size and pretensions, others that can be classified as veritable imperial structures. To summarize, the early-fourteenth century sees the demise of the rule of a fairly substantial regional polity, that of the Kakatiyas of Warrangal, and the emergence of a set of far smaller kingdoms.[15] After a hiatus, the fifteenth century then sees the emergence of the great empire of Vijayanagara, which dominates the region (as indeed much of peninsular India) until the late-sixteenth century.[16] The collapse of Vijayanagara power means in turn that the two centuries from 1600 to 1800 are marked by a complex period of contestation, without a single stable and hegemonic polity. The Mughals eventually come to play a substantial role in the region, but indirectly rather than as a centralized political structure.[17] In short, we can see an alternation, with two cycles of fragmented political formations sandwiching an extended central moment of a century and a half of imperial consolidation that is associated with Vijayanagara.

Although it was famously termed a 'forgotten empire' by Robert Sewell in 1900, it is clear that the memory of Vijayanagara remained very alive in South India as late as the beginning of the nineteenth century.[18] However, the lack of adequate lines of communication

[14] We should note in passing that the word *nīti* is etymologically related to *netā*, the most common North Indian word in use today for 'politician'.

[15] For a recent examination of this period, see Cynthia Talbot, *Precolonial India in Practice: Society, Region, and Identity in Medieval Andhra* (Delhi, 2001).

[16] For Vijayanagara's relationship to (and memory of) earlier polities in the region, see Hermann Kulke, 'Maharajas, Mahants and Historians: Reflections on the historiography of early Vijayanagara and Sringeri' in A.L. Dallapiccola and S. Zingel-Avé Lallemant (eds.), *Vijayanagara—City and Empire: New Currents of Research*, 2 Vols. (Stuttgart, 1985), Vol. I, pp. 120–143.

[17] On Mughal involvement in the region, see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Penumbral Visions: Making Polities in Early Modern South India* (Delhi/Ann Arbor, 2001).

[18] Robert Sewell, *A Forgotten Empire—Vijayanagar: A Contribution to the History of India* (London, 1900; reprint, Delhi, 1962).

between a society that already possessed a centuries' long set of continuous intellectual traditions, and a new political power that had assumed the role of 'civilizing' a group of ostensibly uncivilized or partially civilized nations, was never more striking than at this early juncture of colonial Indian history. For the traditionally educated Indian intellectual of the early-nineteenth century whom the East India Company might have consulted, India certainly had a sophisticated discipline termed *nīti*, beginning from early texts such as the *Arthashāstra* and continuing until their time. There was a whole range of texts on *dharma*, beginning with Manu's *Dharmashāstra* (and dating perhaps from the early centuries CE), and also continuing through the medieval period both in terms of a manuscript tradition and by way of extensive commentaries.[19] But the British administrators and their native assistants in early colonial South India were primarily looking for 'moral instruction'.[20] Of the two concepts in the Indian tradition that come close to the idea of morals—*dharma* and *nīti*—*dharma* was seen as somewhat unsuitable for moral instruction because it was too close to the religious world. Manu's celebrated *Dharmashāstra* was also deeply embedded in the *varna* and *jāti* order, and discussed legal matters relating to marriages, property rights and so on. Law courts needed these texts, to administer justice to Indians according to their indigenous laws. The story of Sir William Jones's efforts in this direction and Henry Thomas Colebrooke's translation of legal digests for use in the British courts is too well known to be repeated here.[21]

At the same time, it was also easy enough to argue that there was a direct line of ascent between the medieval regional language *nīti* texts and the *Arthashāstra* of Kautilya, and thus to conclude that the regional language texts were derivative and, if anything, bad copies of an original (however elusive that original was in purely philological terms) and therefore not particularly interesting. Another problem

[19] Patrick Olivelle, *The Law Code of Manu* (Oxford, 2004), p. xxiii: 'the composition of the *MDh* may be placed closer to the second century CE'.

[20] On this early interaction, also see the essay by Phillip Wagoner, 'Precolonial intellectuals and the production of colonial knowledge' in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (2003), pp.783–814, which however appears to us far too influenced by the model of 'dialogic interaction' put forward in Eugene F. Irschick, *Dialogue and History: Constructing South India, 1795–1895* (Berkeley, 1994).

[21] The classic study remains J.D.M. Derrett, *Religion, Law and the State in India* (New York, 1968). Also see, more recently, Richard W. Lariviere, 'Dharmaśāstra, Custom, 'Real Law' and 'Apocryphal' Smrtis' in B. Koelver, ed., *Recht, Staat und Verwaltung in klassischen Indien* (Wiesbaden, 1997), pp. 97–110.

was that since the authors of *nīti* texts invariably claimed to be poets, literary scholars of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, influenced by notions deriving from Western literary models, began by rejecting any formal literary merit in their texts and then showed no interest in analysing them seriously for their content. Doubly neglected, the regional language *nīti* texts were relegated to a sort of intellectual no-man's land. Yet, as noted above, native schools still needed moral instruction, and in the absence of an Indian equivalent of the Ten Commandments, or similar codes of virtue, teachers often turned to *nīti* texts to fill the need.

The principal focus of this essay is the transformation and development of *nīti* discourse from classical Sanskrit texts to early modern Telugu texts and their later use in the colonial period. Our interest is to show, first, that these texts demonstrate a lively change with time and context as guides to practical wisdom, and strategies of success; and second, that they are not concerned with religion and are therefore mostly 'this-worldly' (*laukika*) or 'secular' in character. A third point that is developed in the analysis is of how the late-nineteenth-century colonial interest in teaching morals in schools gave selective, and one might say, distorted attention, to some *nīti* texts while ignoring the bulk of the others. The sources of the discussion are mainly from Telugu with a few examples from Sanskrit, and Persian.

Some Ur-Texts

No Indian text from ancient times has arguably been as used and misused in the context of the twentieth century as the *Arthashāstra* of Kautilya.[22] The first edition of this text, from 1909, was produced in Mysore by R. Shama Sastri from a single manuscript (with a commentary by a certain Bhattasvamin) originating in the Tanjavur region. It had already been preceded by a first translation (in the pages of the *Indian Antiquary*) from 1905 by the same scholar. The text quickly attracted massive attention, and a number of other manuscripts came to light, mostly in southern India (in Grantha and Malayalam characters), with one of the rare northern Indian manuscripts being from Patan, from a Jain collection. The confident initial assertion that the text's author was 'the famous Brahman

[22] The standard work is R.P. Kangle, ed. and trans., *Kautilya's Arthaśāstra*, 3 Vols. (Bombay, 1965–72), but there is a vast secondary literature.

Kautilya, also named Vishnugupta, and known from other sources by the patronymic Chanakya', and that the text was written at the time of the foundation of the Maurya dynasty, has of course been considerably eroded over the course of the twentieth century. Despite the relative rarity of manuscripts, it is clear that the text was known to the medieval tradition in various forms, and that its author was considered to be one of a series of important ancient authors of *nīti* texts. The Vijayanagara-period work, *Rāyavācakamu*, tells us that the king Vira Narasimha Raya in the early-sixteenth century was accustomed to hearing recitations from various texts including Canura's *Nīti*, with 'Canura' being a distortion of Canakya.[23]

The text of the *Arthashāstra* in its modern critical edition, which was not necessarily the received version in the medieval tradition, is of course quite astonishing in its ambition and coverage.[24] It is a highly detailed text, and not one that simply contents itself to enunciate vague general principles. The text also quotes earlier authors, often pointing to the difference between its author's own opinions (in the third person, as 'Kautilya') and those of others. A striking and oft-remarked aspect of the work is that a great deal of its content is markedly 'secular'. To be sure, in the initial part, the text invokes Sukra and Brahaspati, and then the Vedas; but thereafter, such location devices or references seem to disappear from the text. The first chapter discusses the overall contents, and Chapter 2 (*adhyakshapracārah*) then begins by noting that there are normally four *vidyas*: philosophy; the three Vedas; agriculture, cattle rearing and trade (collectively *vārtā*) and law-and-order (*daṇḍa-nīti*). According to Kautilya, there are however those who follow the Brahaspati's line of thinking, believing that there are only three disciplines (*vidyas*) and the Vedas are really a mere façade. We then get a version of the *āshrama* system of social ordering followed by a description of material life, with no reference thereafter in this extensive chapter to anything that might be understood as 'religion'. This is once again the case in later chapters on judicial and legal matters, criminals and how to deal with them, secret matters (*yogavrittam*), and the manner of dealing with other kings and kingdoms in (the themes of Chapters 6 and 7,

[23] Phillip B. Wagoner, *Tidings of the King: A Translation and Ethnohistorical Analysis of the 'Rāyavācakamu'* (Honolulu, 1993), pp. 182, 197. This Telugu text bears a close and interesting resemblance to a Kannada text of the same period, *Shrīkrishnadevarāya dinacari*, ed. V.S. Sampatkumara Acarya (Bangalore, 1983).

[24] We have used Kautilya, *Arthashāstram*, ed. Pullela Sriramacandrudu (Hyderabad, 2004) with Balanandini commentary, in Telugu script.

respectively, *maṇḍalayonih* and *shāḍguṇyam*). The highly circumscribed place of *dharma* in the text has recently been summed up as follows by Charles Malamoud:

'The originality of the *Arthashāstra* is that the science of government, the doctrine of royal conduct, is set out there in a perspective where *artha* appears in a highly limited form and not, as in the Epics or the Laws of Manu for example, where it is assimilated to the perspective of 'duty' (*dharma*). The question in the *Arthashāstra*, is not that of knowing how, while obeying his 'duty of state', the king contributes to order in the world and in society, or even how he guarantees it, but rather of what he should do to attain his ends: conquer territory and hold on to it. To be sure the two perspectives are not wholly incompatible, and many of the 'Machiavellian' precepts of the *Arthashāstra* also appear in texts that lay out the norms of *dharma*; and there are even some passages in the *Arthashāstra* that recall some principles regarding the final ends which are *dharmic* in nature. But all in all, the *Arthashāstra* does not justify the means by the ends: the means and the ends appear at the same level, and each means is a provisional end. The treatise sets itself the task of laying out in detail the modalities of royal action and to evaluate them in relation to its sole objective: to succeed'.[25]

Unfortunately, we do not know a great deal about the history of the book's subsequent use until far later. The speculation of the past few decades is that it may date from the fourth-century CE, but it is really quite difficult to make a definitive pronouncement on the matter. Buddhist sources seem to have been quite negatively disposed both to the text—on account of its alleged amorality—and to its author as a personage.[26] We may note that the *Kāmandaka* or *Nītisāra* also comes from broadly the same period, but slightly later, and that its author Kamanda states that he knows the *Arthashāstra*, specifying that the text's author was Kautilya, also known as Vishnugupta. Kamanda also appears to be the source for the confusing claim that Kautilya was the one who broke the power of the Nandas. In a similar vein, the author of the *Mudrārākshasa*, the Sanskrit play of Vishakhadatta from about 600 CE, seems to have known and used the *Arthashāstra*.

[25] Charles Malamoud, 'Croyance, crédulité, calcul politique: Présentation et traduction commentée de l'Arthaçâstra de Kautilya, livre XIII, chapitres I et III' in *Multitudes*, 1997 (http://multitudes.samizdat.net/Croyance-credulite-calcul.html).

[26] Thomas Trautmann has in particular attempted to date the text from linguistic evidence. See Thomas R. Trautmann, *Kautilya and the Arthaśāstra: A statistical Investigation of the Authorship and Evolution of the Text* (Leiden, 1971). Also see K.J. Shah, 'Of Artha and the *Arthaśāstra*' in *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, N.S., 15 (1982), pp. 55–73, and H. Scharfe, *Investigations in Kautilya's Manual of Political Science* (Wiesbaden, 1993).

Unlike later medieval texts that we will discuss below, the *Arthashāstra* is not aphoristic in nature. Its literary quality is in fact rather interesting, being written mostly in short prose sentences with some occasional *shlokas* in the middle, and one or sometimes more than one *shloka* at the end of each chapter, and yet it is composed in a way that does not lend itself to easy oral transmission in this form. It seems largely meant for readers of a written book, and once more demarcates itself from later texts in the fact that 'Kautilya' himself, whoever he is, still poses and is regarded as an authoritative author. We shall have occasion to contrast this with the strategy of later texts, which seek legitimacy from their acceptability rather than invoking and using a notion of authority.

A second text from the early period that merits some mention, and seems to slightly postdate the *Arthashāstra*, is Kamanda's *Nitisāra*, briefly noted above. This work is shorter and also far less detailed than that of Kautilya, but follows it largely in terms of tone and general content, being partly advisory and partly authoritative.[27] Again, this text is written in the form of Sanskrit *shlokas*, not particularly easy for memorization or oral transmission, but perhaps intended more for reading. This text survived far more clearly into the medieval tradition, appearing in a Telugu version in the later sixteenth century (about 1584) as the *Āndhra Kāmandaka*, with some additional material that the Sanskrit 'original' does not contain.

Nīti and its Opponents During the Medieval Period

A very active interest in creating *nīti* texts is found in Telugu from the Kakatiya period in Andhra, which is to say the period from about the twelfth to the mid-fourteenth centuries.[28] The emergence of a powerful dynasty of major rulers from the great centre of Warrangal and the conditions that existed for a general upward mobility among many communities in the Deccan apparently motivated many writers to produce such works in Telugu. Some of the authors of *nīti* books of this period were themselves kings or their ministers, and many were associated with people of power in some manner or the other. The *Sakala-nīti-sammatamu* (hereafter *SNS*), a major anthology of selections

[27] Kamanda, *Nīti-sāra*, ed. with a Telugu translation by Tadakamalla Venkata Krishna Rao (Madras, 1860).

[28] See Talbot, *Precolonial India in Practice*.

from a number of *nīti* texts in Telugu, is of particular interest to us because it demonstrates the popularity of *nīti* as a subject in medieval Andhra.[29] The compiler of this anthology, Madiki Singana, was a poet in his own right. In his preface to the book, he declares that *nīti* should have equal circulation everywhere like a coin with the stamp of the Sultan (*suratāṇi*), and appropriately enough he calls his book '*Nīti* acceptable to everyone'.

Singana lived in a period when a number of *nīti* texts were already popular, perhaps each one in a different subregion or community. In his preface to the anthology, he hence expresses a desire to produce a digest of *nīti*, and lists the names of books from which he has collected his selections. He thus notes that his compilation is of some 982 selections from 17 distinct *nīti* texts by known authors (we may note in passing that many of the texts that were available to Singana are now lost), several verses from oral tradition, some verses by unknown authors, and his own verses as well. Among the known authors from whom Singana quotes, some are either kings themselves or ministers closely associated with kings. Rudradeva I (1150–1195), who wrote *Nītisāramu,* was a king of the Kakatiya dynasty; Sivadevayya (1250–1300), who wrote *Purushârthasāramu,* was the adviser and minister of Kakatiya king, Ganapatideva, and Baddena, also known as Bhadrabhupala, who wrote a particularly celebrated book called *Nīti-shāstra-muktāvaḷi*—better known as *Baddenīti*—is considered by modern Telugu scholarship to have been a king, from the Telugu Cola family.[30] Not much is known about this last poet-savant who addresses himself in his verses with royal epithets, except that he lived sometime before Singana (who himself flourished in about 1420), and that by the early-fifteenth century, his book had acquired considerable popularity, as is indicated by the short title which Singana uses when he quotes from it. The other *nīti* writers whom Singana quotes are mostly unknown, with the exception of Appappamantri who wrote a Telugu version of Bhoja's *Cārucarya,* a book of advice about healthy habits for wealthy people to follow.

Singana classifies his selections under 47 categories covering a range of topics related to kings as well as commoners—courtiers, physicians, pundits, and of course accountants and scribes (*karaṇams*).

[29] Madiki Singana, *Sakala-nīti-sammatamu* (eds.), Nidudavolu Venkataravu and P.S.R. Apparao (Hyderabad, 1970) (this includes a facsimile of the 1923 edition by M. Ramakrishna Kavi).

[30] Baddena, *Nīti-shāstra-muktāvaḷi*, ed. M. Ramakrishna Kavi (Tanuku, 1962).

Two things stand out from Singana's anthology. In the first place, it does not invoke an other-worldly authority in any place. The goal is mundane, this-worldly, and the only thing that counts is success in any profession. However, it is not an 'amoral' text, as the desire for success is considered acceptable as part of a good human life, and it is implicit that success should be achieved within the framework of ethical conduct. The only concept that might suggest a Hindu 'world-view' of some sort is that a certain number of the verses refer to the scheme of the four goals of life, the *caturvidha purushârthas* (that is *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *moksha*) of which *artha* and *kāma*, profit and pleasure, are the most significant areas upon which *nīti* texts focus. Even this reference, from the tone of its use, does not seem to be particularly religious in the context. While we do not have access to Sivadevayya's text in its entirety to see if it deals with the other two *purushârthas,* i.e. *dharma* and *moksha*, we know that no other extant *nīti* text deals with them, and in the use of later texts, for instance, the *Sumati-shatakamu*, the phrase *purushârtha-paruḍu* simply means a successful person.

It should also be noted that *SNS* for its part does not include even a single verse from the thirteenth-century *dharmashāstra* work, Ketana's *Vijñāneshvaramu*, a Telugu work based on the Sanskrit *mitâkshara* commentary of Vijnanesvara to the *Yajñavalkyasmriti*. This, we suggest, emphasizes the conceptual separation that already operated in these authors' minds of *nīti* from *dharma*.[31] For Ketana's work, we should note, followed in the standard, rather Brahmanic, *dharmashāstra* tradition of normative texts. Its author was a close relative (probably the nephew) of the celebrated Tikkana, who seems to have instructed him and guided him in writing this text.[32] Ketana was also the author of two other texts, one a *Dashakumāracaritramu*, an entertaining book of stories, and a grammar of Telugu, *Āndhrabhāshābhūshaṇamu*. He, like Tikkana, seems to have been creating an intellectual culture of a conservative and 'revivalist' kind, as we see from a close reading of the huge *Mahābhārata* that Tikkana produced at much the same time in Telugu.

[31] Ketana, *Vijñāneshvaramu*, ed. C.V. Ramachandra Rao (Nellore, 1977). Ramachandra Rao in his preface to the work already notes that Singana does not include Ketana's work in his anthology, but assumes that this is be due to the lack of 'popularity' of the latter during his time. Also see Ketana, *Vijñāneshvaramu*, ed. C. Vasundhara (Nellore, 1989).

[32] On Tikkana, see V. Narayana Rao and David Shulman, *Classical Telugu Poetry: An Anthology* (Delhi, 2002).

To gain a sense of Ketana's *Vijñāneshvaramu* it may be useful to turn to the *vyavahārakānda* section of his text, which—though a relatively short section of the whole—starkly brings out the contrast we wish to develop between *dharma* and *nīti* texts. Here is a passage where he sets out his conception of rulership:

A king, without becoming greedy or angry,
with *dharma* in his own heart,
should decide issues of *dharma*,
in the company of competent, well-known and scholarly Brahmins.
In that group, he should have those
learned in Veda, truthful,
versed in the *dharmashāstras*,
and not given to love or hatred.
Such Brahmins should be members of his council.
In number, they should be seven,
or five, or three,
and if the king cannot attend,
he should send a scholar of the *dharmashāstra*,
who is a good judge.
And if the king does something unjust,
and is supported by his council,
they will be drowned in sin (*pāpambuna munuguduru*).[33]

So we see here the clear evocation of the idea of *pāpa* (sin) as the ultimate punishment for incorrect action even in the context of statecraft. At times however, as noted by Malamoud in the classical context, the texts of *nīti* and *dharma* do converge, as when certain procedures are discussed (for example, on how to collect evidence in the context of a trial, or some other practical affairs). However, often enough, even the flavour of judicial considerations matters considerably, since texts like that of Ketana imply a strong caste variation in trials and punishments, and even seem directly to echo ideas from the Manu *Dharmashāstra*. Thus, we have the following example:

If a Brahmin commits a crime
deserving capital punishment,
this is what should be done:
Shave his head,
Mark his forehead with the sign of a dog's paw,
Confiscate his money,
sit him on a donkey,

[33] Ketana, *Vijñāneshvaramu*, ed. Ramachandra Rao, p. 25, Verses 1–3.

and drive him out of town.
This is as good as killing him.
But if a lower-caste person commits a crime
that deserves capital punishment,
taking his life
is quite appropriate.[34]

Where then, may we ask, do *dharma* and *nīti* texts in fact overlap without a great deal of tension? This is on those rare occasions when *dharma* texts deal with rather concrete commercial matters, such as the passage in Ketana dealing with how to write a promissory note (*patra*).

Mark the year, month, the fortnight,
the number and name of the day,
and the place.
Write the name of the lender,
Along with his father's name,
Then that of the borrower,
with his father's name too.
Then write the sum of the loan,
And the rate of interest,
And the witnesses must then write:
That they know and certify the facts.
The borrower should sign his name,
Saying that he has received the money,
and agrees to the conditions.
At last, the executor of the note must sign
to make what civilized people (*nāgarika*) call a trustworthy note.[35]

In general, however, Ketana's text is everywhere marked by a manner of thinking that reflects the *dharmashāstras*, and is consequently anxious above all to protect and defend the caste hierarchy as the most important aspect of the functioning of the polity. Nowhere is this clearer than in the passages where he gives ways of testing the four *varṇas*, to see if they are telling the truth or not.

If it is a Brahmin,
first weigh him in scales
with a certain number of bricks.
Save the bricks,
and on the day of the test,
bring them back,
worship the scales,

[34] Ketana, *Vijñāneshvaramu*, ed. Ramachandra Rao, Verse 42, p. 27.
[35] Ketana, *Vijñāneshvaramu*, ed. Ramachandra Rao, Verse 109, p. 32.

invoke the lords (*dikpālas*) of the eight directions,
and have him sit facing east.
Put the same bricks back,
and call upon the gods (*daivambulāra*) saying:
If he speaks the truth, lift him up,
and if he lies, pull him down.
And when the judge says this, if the pan rises,
he does not lie.

In contrast to this somewhat soft treatment, Kshatriyas on the other hand are to be tested by fire, Vaishyas by water and Sudras by poison. Thus, for Kshatriyas:

An iron ball of a certain weight
should be properly worshipped.
The person to be tested
and should stand facing east.
In his palms, seven *pīpal* leaves should be placed,
and tied with seven twists.
The red hot iron ball should be brought with tongs,
and placed in his hands by a judge,
who all the while chants *mantras*.
If on account of the leaves,
his hands are not burnt,
the man is truthful.[36]

It is hence clear that different tests are to be administered to different castes, a feature that markedly does not appear in *nīti* texts. The division of property among children finds extensive mention in Ketana, as well as the circumstances in which it goes to other kin.

If someone wishes to dig a well,
or build a tank,
on someone else's land,
for the welfare of the people,
he still must ask the owner's permission.
and if the owner refuses,
he is obliged to stop.[37]

Thus, the difference between the *vyavahārakāṇḍa* of a *dharma* text like that of Ketana, and sections dealing with similar matters in a typical *nīti* text are rather clear. Divine intervention (*daivas*) is constantly invoked in the former, the notion of sin (*pāpa*) is brought in, and punishments are explicitly hierarchized by caste. Even judgement is a

[36] Ketana, *Vijñāneshvaramu*, ed. Ramachandra Rao, pp. 33–4, Verses 113–20.
[37] Ketana, *Vijñāneshvaramu*, ed. Ramachandra Rao, p. 36, Verse 149.

ritual, requiring the chanting of *mantras*. In general, we may note that in this vision of things, punishments suggested with regards to castes lower down in the hierarchy (including scribal groups) are very heavy, and most of the discussions, including even those on how murders should be investigated, wind up having a strongly *dhārmic* flavour about them. The example below demonstrates this amply:

If a person of a low caste
forces himself on the wife
of a man of higher caste
he should be killed for it.
that is the *dharma* of a king.
If a man forces himself
on a housewife of his own caste
fine him a thousand *paṇas*.
But if a man of high caste
makes love to a woman of lower caste
fine him five hundred *paṇas*.
If a lower caste man
makes love to a higher caste virgin
he should be killed.
But if he is a higher-caste man
and the virgin loves him,
the two should be married.[38]

The role of the king is hence clear enough; he is, in large measure, the guarantor of the caste hierarchy and the protector of upper-caste males, but also the defender of their virtue—even against themselves. The examples below make this perfectly clear, and reinforce our notion that we are dealing with a socially conservative text.

If a Brahmin makes love to an untouchable (*caṇḍāla*) woman,
the drawing of a vagina should be inscribed on his body,
he should be fined,
and driven out the country.
That's appropriate for a king to do.[39]

The text does occasionally adopt a mildly humorous—or if one prefers, 'realistic'—tone, but this is far more exception than the rule. One example of this appears in the same section.

If a woman is found with an illegitimate lover,
and tries to claim that he is a burglar,

[38] Ketana, *Vijñāneshvaramu*, ed. Ramachandra Rao, pp. 21–22, Verses 107, 108 and 110.

[39] Ketana, *Vijñāneshvaramu*, ed. Ramachandra Rao, p. 23, Verse 126.

he should still be fined five hundred
as an illegitimate lover.[40]

At the same time, Ketana is a strong defender of royal authority, which he sees as requiring defence with an iron hand and the most severe of deterrent punishments. Hence:

If someone insults the king,
Or reveals the royal secrets,
His tongue should be cut out
And he should be driven out of town.[41]

All in all, then, this is a text that is remarkable for its censorious tone, and marked desire to regulate the moral life of society, rather than the harmonious combination of its parts in some form of social equilibrium. Virtue, for Ketana, must be produced, and if that production requires pain—whether physical or financial—so be it. Even gossips and malicious speech are seen by him as requiring regulation in some form, and that too by the king.

If a person lacks one limb,
or if he has a deformed limb,
or if one limb is badly diseased,
one should not talk ill of them.
And those who ridicule them by saying:
'How well formed he is',
'No one compares to him',
should pay a fine of three *rūkas*.[42]

In a similar vein, ethnic slurs, or insults based on caste, are not to be allowed, in this most 'politically correct' of utopias.

If someone says that people from Murikinadu are stupid,
that the Arava [Tamil] people are quarrelsome (*penaparulu*,)
or that Brahmins are greedy,
and abuses people by country, language or caste,
such a person should be fined a hundred *paṇas*.[43]

In other sections, notably the *ācāra-kāṇḍa*, many passages seem to bear a close resemblance to Manu's *Dharmashāstra*, at times literally and at other times in spirit. A great preoccupation of the author, Ketana, is with the mixing of castes and the potentially negative

[40] Ketana, *Vijñāneshvaramu*, ed. Ramachandra Rao, p. 23, Verse 129.
[41] Ketana, *Vijñāneshvaramu*, ed. Ramachandra Rao, p. 23, Verse 134.
[42] Ketana, *Vijñāneshvaramu*, ed. Ramachandra Rao, p. 17, Verse 42.
[43] Ketana, *Vijñāneshvaramu*, ed. Ramachandra Rao, p. 17, Verse 56.

effects of this phenomenon. Further, the gender roles are distinctly asymmetrical in this vision of things, all the more so in the context of intercaste relations. Thus:

If a high caste woman
Makes love to a *shūdra* man,
She may become pure again
by ritual punishment (*prāyascitta*).
But if she becomes pregnant,
her husband should leave her.

Further, unlike what would find in *nīti* texts, it is understood that the rights of women are far more limited, and that they can be unilaterally disciplined for a number of faults, often merely on the basis of accusation. A last verse from Ketana below demonstrates how thorough-going and consistent a vision he embodies.

If a woman drinks,
and has a sharp tongue,
if she wastes all the money,
if she hates men,
or if she is barren,
or if she only has female children,
if she is sick,
if she is a termagant,
then the man can leave her, and marry again.
there is nothing wrong in that.[44]

To develop the contrast, and the opposed visions that we have been suggesting inhere in the different genres, we should now turn to the *nīti* tradition of roughly the same period. In the *nīti* texts that were written during the Kakatiya period, by such writers as Sivadevayya and Rudradeva, the localized nature of the king and his kingship is quite evident. Even though the king they address is portrayed as a strong monarch, he is not an emperor ruling over multiple regions or extensive domains. The advice given relating to the protection of *durgas* (fortresses), for dealing with spies, and for invading the enemy's territory, the conduct of battle and so on, is not on a scale anywhere suggesting a large empire. Yet, the advice is practical and clearly derived from real experience of the administration of a kingdom. We

[44] Ketana, *Vijñāneshvaramu*, ed. Ramachandra Rao, p. 10, Verse 113.

may take for instance, the following excerpts from Singana:

- A king who does not command, is like a king in a painting, (good only for looks). If a king doesn't punish anyone who defies his command—even if the wrongdoer is his own son—he does not rule long.
- To allow merchants to take as much as they want is to ruin your people.
- If you don't make scales and measures uniform, it means you effectively permit thieves to go scot-free.
- If a king increases taxes, that effectively prevents (foreign) goods from entering his country.
- Wherever a letter might come from, a king should never disregard it. It is only through letters that a king knows everything—from alliances to enmities.
- Not killing a criminal amounts to killing a host of gentle people. All that you need to do in order to kill cows is to spare a tiger.

Some of the quotations in the *SNS* are clearly influenced by a traditional Sanskrit model of kingship, for example when the king is equated with god, quoting Manu's *Dharmashāstra*:

- The king is godly, and that is what Manu says, and he should be treated as such, and wise people should not treat him otherwise.
- Even if he is a boy, a king should not be treated like an ordinary mortal. He is god, and that's how he should be treated.
- The king may be bad, but the servant should serve his interests.
- If he [the servant] should leave his master for another to make a better living, the new master will never respect him for his loyalty.

However, in the same anthology we find some advice regarding bad kings. It is interesting to note that this advice comes from writers who perhaps served kings themselves in various capacities such as scribes (*karaṇams*), or soldiers.

- If anyone has caused you harm, go and complain to the king.
  But if the king himself harms you, who can you complain to?
- If serving a ruler causes incessant pain to the servant, the servant should leave such a master right away.
- He may be rich, born in a good caste, a strong warrior beyond comparison, but if a king is an ignoramus, his servants will no doubt leave him.

- If a king does not distinguish between the right hand and the left, a precious diamond and a piece of glass, it is humiliating to serve such a king—no matter how great a warrior you are.
- A bad king surrounded by good people turns out to be good. But even a good king is difficult to serve if his advisers are bad.
- A king who enjoys hearing stories of others' faults, who enjoys putting people through trouble, and steals other men's wives, brings calamity to his people.

The authoritative figure of Baddena is generously quoted in the *SNS*, and has some fascinating instructions to a king in his *Nītishāstramuktāvaḷi*. Contrary to the later importance *karaṇams* acquired in managing the affairs of the kingdom as ministers and scribes, Baddena strikes a note of caution against too much dependence on the minister. In his words:

- A king should not direct his people and his servants to his minister for all their needs. The king should be his own minister and treat the minister as an assistant.

The major writers on *nīti* whom Singana quotes in his *SNS* are already aware of the whole *nīti* tradition before them, including the Sanskrit *Arthashāstra* text. Besides, closer to hand, we find medieval texts from the Deccan, such as the *Mānasollāsa* of the twelfth-century Calukya king, Someshvara III.[45] Such works as these can certainly be seen to participate in a culture of political realism, and thus give the lie to those who have argued that pre-colonial politics in India was conceived along purely idealist lines. At the same time, the genre of the 'Mirror for Princes' is well known in the Indo-Islamic context, where a number of such texts exist both from the time of the Sultanate of Delhi, under the later Mughals, and from the regional Sultanates such as those of the Deccan.[46] Such texts, often written in Persian, are themselves at times influenced by Indic models such as the *Pañcatantra*,

[45] See Someshvara, *Mānasollāsa*, 3 Vols., ed. Gajanan K. Shrigondekar (Baroda, 1925–61).

[46] Linda T. Darling, "Do Justice, Do Justice, for That is Paradise': Middle Eastern Advice for Indian Muslim Rulers' in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, Vol. XXIII, Nos. 1–2 (2002), pp. 3–19. Also see Wagoner, *Tidings of the King*, pp. 182, 197; and especially his 'Iqta and Nayankara: Military service tenures and political theory from Saljuq Iran to Vijayanagara South India', unpublished paper presented at the 25th Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison, WI, October 18–20, 1996. In this latter essay, Wagoner presents convincing evidence for the influence of Persian-Islamic political thought on Baddena.

known in the Islamic world through its translation as the *Kalila wa Dimna*. Yet, they also bear the clear imprint of the non-theological perspective on kingship that had emerged in the Islamic lands in the aftermath of the Mongol conquests, when Muslim advisers and *wazīrs* struggled with the problem of how to advise *kāfir* rulers and princes on the matter of government, without taking them into murky and controversial theological waters.[47] The 'Mirror for Princes' genre ranges wide, and attempts to do everything from forming the prince's musical tastes, to refining his table manners, but the core of the matter is usually politics, both in the sense of diplomatic relations between states, and relations between a prince and his companions, or between different elements in a courtly setting.[48]

The authors included in the *SNS* appear to be aware of these different traditions, and even draw upon them quite explicitly.[49] Yet, in contrast to the typical 'Mirrors for Princes', these authors offer a top-down, hands-on vision, partly rooted in pragmatic experience, partly creatively adapting the existing literature of *nīti*-statecraft. This is no armchair pontificating but a largely practical synthesis reflecting the political, economic and institutional changes of the fifteenth century. Still, highly individualized statements that can be attributed directly to the book's author Singana, do alternate with verses that seem to be lifted from standard *nīti*-texts about politics and kingship. Nonetheless, we are left with a total impression of a unique concoction of pragmatic wisdom, specific constraints, an inherited normative politics.

An Imperial Interlude: Krishnadevaraya

Singana wrote in the fifteenth century, and the immediate textual heritage he had available to him came from the period of the

[47] On this thorny issue, see Jean Aubin, *Émirs mongols et vizirs persans dans les remous de l'acculturation* (Paris, 1995).

[48] For a recent, and stimulating, reconsideration of the genre, see Jocelyne Dakhlia, 'Les Miroirs des princes islamiques: Une modernité sourde?' in *Annales HSS*, Vol. 57, No. 5 (2002), pp. 1191–1206.

[49] For an earlier translation, see A. Rangasvami Sarasvati, 'Political Maxims of the Emperor-Poet Krishnadeva Raya' in *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. IV, No. 3 (1926), pp. 61–88; also the later rendition (with the Telugu text of the *rāja-nīti* section) in K.A. Nilakantha Sastri and N. Venkataramanayya (eds.), *Further Sources of Vijayanagara History*, 3 Vols. (Madras, 1946). We have already dealt at length with this text in V. Narayana Rao, David Shulman and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'A new imperial idiom in the sixteenth century: Krishnadeva Raya and his political theory of Vijayanagara,' in Jean-Luc Chevillard and Eva Wilden (eds.), *South Indian Horizons: Felicitation Volume for François Gros on the Occasion of his 70th birthday* (Pondicherry, 2004), pp. 597–625.

Kakatiyas. These were rulers who had dominated a relatively well-defined regional space in the eastern Deccan, and their preoccupations were very much reflective of that fact. In the case of Singana, we may suspect that the political landscape had fragmented even further, and that the kings he referred to were ruling over domains that would qualify a few centuries later as no more than *zamīndārīs*. But this was certainly not the case by the latter half of the fifteenth century, when a new, diverse and complex polity had emerged to control much of peninsular India south of the Tunghabhadra river, namely the state that is normally known as Vijayanagara (from the name of its capital city).

Normative texts on kingship, or statecraft, are hard to come by for fifteenth-century Vijayanagara. But we are far better served for the sixteenth century, and the times of the Third (Tuluva) and Fourth (Aravidu) Dynasties that ruled over Vijayanagara. A particular high point in terms of literary production, including that within the *nīti* genre, is the reign of the Tuluva monarch Krishnadevaraya (d. 1529).[50] When Krishnadevaraya ascended the throne in 1509 it is clear that a number of crucial problems regarding political management still remained to be resolved.[51] One major concern in the mind of the king was to make himself generally acceptable, and secure an area that encompassed more than one region, one language and one religion. The king's self-perception given to us eloquently in his major work, *Āmuktamālyada,* suggests that he sees himself as a Kannada Raya, a Kannada king, while the god to whom he had dedicated his book was a Telugu Raya, a Telugu king. Without anachronistically invoking regional nationalisms and language loyalties in the context of the sixteenth-century Deccan, we can still see local polities conflicting with each other and wary of dominance by someone from the outside.

Another way to formulate the dilemma that this king confronted is in terms of an enduring tension between local and trans-local forces. There is a consistent effort to conceptualize some basis for a trans-local polity that could extricate the state from its constant resubmergence in diffuse local contexts. A striking element in this conceptual effort lies in the king's own dynastic origins in one of the most marginal, and

[50] There is, unfortunately, no recent biography of this monarch. See, however, the works of Oruganti Ramachandraiya, *Studies on Krsnadevaraya of Vijayanagara* (Waltair, 1953), and N. Venkataramanayya, *Krishṇadevarāyalu* (Hyderabad, 1972).

[51] For the succession dates of Krishnadevaraya and his coronation, see P. Sree Rama Sarma, *A History of Vijayanagar Empire* (Hyderabad, 1992), p. 133.

recently conquered localities—the western coastal plain of Tulunad. A kind of upstart, whose own family inheritance dictated that he prove himself outside the family context, finds himself articulating, at times somewhat inchoately, a vision of trans-regional, highly personalized loyalties.

Once a trans-regional state system is conceivable, its ruler runs up against its external boundaries. The *manyam* forest regions (especially the northern and northeastern frontiers but also implicitly to the south-west in Kodagu, or Coorg, and the Western Ghats) thus figure prominently in the *Āmuktamālyada*'s section on *rāja-nīti* and require special treatment. External boundaries, however, coexist with the internal wilderness, as we see in a verse about a farmer marking off his field and then slowly making it free of stones and other impediments. But the text is also marked by a consistent suspicion, at times bordering on hostility or even contempt, for peoples like the Boyas and the Bhils, who could be found both at the border regions of the empire (in the north-east) and at the internal frontier. A prose passage within the *nīti* section thus advises the listener: 'Allay the fears of the hill-folk, and bring them into your army. Since they are a small people, their loyalty or faithlessness, their enmity or friendship, their favour or disfavour, can all easily be managed'. Another passage, this one in verse, runs as follows:

> Trying to clean up the forest folk
> is like trying to wash a mud wall.
> There's no end to it. No point in getting angry.
> Make promises that you can keep and win them over.
> They'll be useful for invasions, or plundering an enemy land.
> It's irrational for a ruler to punish a thousand
> When a hundred are at fault.

This then is *rāja-nīti* for building an empire, composed by a rather introspective, yet by now quite experienced king, who has been on the throne for perhaps a decade. In certain key respects, the author departs from conventional wisdom. For example, he recommends posting Brahmins as commanders of forts, *durga*, and the fact that this was practical advice is shown by studies of the prosopography of the notables of the empire in that time.[52]

[52] Cynthia Talbot, 'The Nayakas of Vijayanagara Andhra: A preliminary prosopography', in Kenneth R. Hall (ed.), *Structure and Society in Early South India: Essays in Honour of Noboru Karashima* (Delhi, 2001), pp. 251–75.

Make trustworthy Brahmins
The commanders of your forts
And give them just enough troops,
to protect these strongholds,
lest they become too threatening.

Brahmins, in this view, have certain clear advantages over non-Brahmins, even though this caste is theoretically at least not to be associated with warrior functions (though numerous exceptions, both in the epics and earlier historical instances could be found):

The king will often benefit by putting a Brahmin in charge,
for he knows both the laws of Manu and his own *dharma*.
And from fear of being mocked
by Kshatriyas and Sudras,
he will stand up to all difficulties.

Beyond this, however, lies the Brahmin's relative freedom from local attachments. At the same time, these Brahmins are clearly trained by now in military ways and engaged in worldly activities.

The potential for conflict between kings and ministers, that would be a staple of the histories and treatises produced by the *karaṇams*, the class from which the ministers themselves came, is also ever-present here, though its resolution is rather more to the king's advantage. The following extended passage makes this clear enough:

Employ Brahmins who are learned in statecraft,
who fear the unethical, and accept the king's authority,
who are between fifty and seventy,
from healthy families,
not too proud, willing to be ministers,
capable of discharging their duties well.
A king with such Brahmins for just a day
can strengthen the kingdom in all its departments.
If such ministers are not available,
a king must act on his own,
and do whatever he can.
If not, a bad minister can become
like a pearl as large as a pumpkin—
an ornament impossible to wear.
The minister will be out of control,
and the king will live under his thumb.

Early Modern Variations

The post-Krishnadevaraya period in Vijayanagara changes the context of such writings, in particular once we enter the period of the dominance of the Aravidu family. The growing role of Aravidu ('Aliya') Ramaraya's relatives and his extended family spread out in smaller kingdoms all over the Deccan already marks a significant shift in this respect. The *nīti* of the empire, articulated by Krishnadevaraya, again gives way to the *nīti* of small kingdoms, most of which survive with the help of kinship relations and support from the extended family. While this also creates the usual family intrigues, rivalries and battles, the new political conditions also give rise to opportunities for upward mobility. The emergence of the Nayakas from the flexible and uncertain political conditions in the post-Krishnadevaraya period is reflected in the *nīti* texts of this time.[53]

The *Āndhra Kāmandakamu* by Jakkaraju Venkatakavi was written in 1584, and is of crucial interest to us in this context. Venkatakavi was employed in the court of Kondaraju Venkataraju, himself a small king from the Aravidu family. The personal history of this Venkataraju is interesting, especially because he is reputed to have renovated the Ahobilam temple, when it had been ruined by the Turks (*turakalu*). Even so, the *nīti* book Venkataraju has authored does not have any mention of Muslims, either disapproving or approving. What is instead noteworthy for us now is the regional and 'secular' (in the sense of non-sectarian) nature of *nīti* in the *Āndhra Kāmandakamu*. Even though the author states that his work is a translation of the earlier Sanskrit *Kāmandakiya* or *Nītisāra*, the later work in fact includes a number of *nīti* statements that are not to be found in the original, making it more an early modern *nīti* text rather than a simple restatement of a classical *nīti* vision. For instance here is a passage concerning the treatment of relatives and other political allies.

> Sons of your maternal uncle and aunt, and your nephews and your maternal uncle himself, sons of your mother's sister's sons—these people are allies by blood (*aurasa-mitrulu*).

[53] On the emergence of the Nayaka polities, see Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance: Court and State in Nayaka-Period Tamilnadu* (Delhi, 1992); and for a study based on the inscriptional record, Noboru Karashima, *A Concordance of Nayakas: The Vijayanagar Inscriptions in South India* (Delhi, 2002).

Your sons-in-law, brothers-in-law, your wife's brothers and sisters, are allies by marriage (*sambandha-mitrulu*).

Kings of the lands on the other side of the country with which you share a border are allies from a related foreign land (*deshakramāgatulu*).

Kings who seek your protection in time of need are protected allies (*rakshita-mitrulu*).

A king should take note of these four kinds of allies and nurture their friendship.[54]

We have already noted that the relationship between kings and their ministers had been a matter of concern for both Baddena and Krishnadevaraya, both of whom have some words of caution to the king regarding the choice of his ministers. Venkatakavi goes a step further and describes the corrupt practices that bad ministers could adopt in order to enrich themselves. The verse below gives several kinds of bribes a minister could take:

If the minister comes to a festival, what he gets is called *kānuka*. What he receives by way of things he appropriates from people is called *porabaḍi*.

If he gets kickback in cash it is called *paṭṭubaḍi*. The money he gets privately in return for taking care of their business is called *lañcam*.

A king should make sure that his minister does not take any of the above, and such a person should work for the king and receive his livelihood only from the king.[55]

Nīti and Karaṇam Culture

The political landscape we have described changes again from the seventeenth century onwards. A new group of people who made writing their profession emerged as a politically and culturally important group. In Andhra, Karnataka and Orissa, these people were often called *karaṇams*, and they were considered to be the counterparts of the *munshīs* in northern India.[56] Often seeing themselves as *mantris* or ministers of kings, the *karaṇams* perceive themselves broadly as managers of public affairs. Most members of this group were not connected with major empires or powerful kings, but they nevertheless had an enormous influence in running small kingdoms, *zamīndārīs* and

[54] Jakkaraju Venkatakavi, *Āndhra Kāmandakamu*, ed. Veturi Prabhakara Sastri (Tanjore, 1950), Verse 2.112.

[55] *Ibid.*, Verse 2.82.

[56] We return here to a set of themes treated in Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India, 1600–1800* (New York, 2003).

petty principalities. They were also successful managers of properties, accountants, poets and historians. They prided themselves in their multiple language skills, their ability to read scripts of many languages and above all their skill at calligraphy. They were also at the same time accomplished at writing a highly unintelligible cursive script, which could be read only by other *karaṇams*. They came mostly from Brahmin castes, and in Andhra they were mostly Niyogi Brahmins—as opposed to the Vaidikis.[57] The former managed public affairs while the latter specialized in ritual texts and ritual performances, even though both wrote poetry. *Karaṇams* used the pen for their power and prestige. They were writers in the true sense of the word as we understand it today.

The self-image of the *karaṇams* is fascinating. They have left behind a large body of writings about themselves, their code of conduct and training, in addition to a number of historical texts. Here is what some of the verses tell us about a *karaṇam*:

By good fortune a person become intelligent.
By his intelligence, he receives the king's respect.
When the king respect him, he becomes his adviser,
and begins to manage public affairs.
And when he becomes his chief adviser, he runs the kingdom.

He writes, reads and speaks intelligently.
He listens to what people say.
He interprets foreign languages to the king, and
calms the assembly when it is out of control.
He says the right words at the right time, and brings people together,
and sees, right away, honesty from trickery.
He is capable of bringing people together and separating them too.
Or favouring enemies and offering them the throne.
He is humble, dignified, skilled and giving.
That's what a good *mantri* should be.

When the king is against you,
You need to make friends with the scribe.
When the god of death, Yama was angry and declared a person dead, *gatāyu*, didn't Citragupta, his scribe make him live a hundred years, a *shatāyu,* by changing *ga* to *sha*?

[57] Komarraju Venkata Lakshmana Rao, 'Āndhra brāhmaṇulaloni niyogi-vaidika-bheda-kāla-nirṇayamu', in *Lakshmaṇarāya vyāsāvaḷi*, 2nd edition (Vijayawada, 1965), pp. 1–17.

Included in a list of 32 legendary ministers is a certain Rayani Bhaskarudu, who appears most frequently in manuscript sources. Here are a few poems about him from tradition.[58]

There should be twelve *bhāskaras* (suns) in the sky, Why do I see only eleven?
One of them is now serving as a minister on earth.
You mean the famous minister Bhaskara? I don't see a thousand hands (rays) on him.
You see them when he gives to people, when he kills enemies, and when he writes.

When Rayani Bhacadu writes,
sitting in front of his king Kataya Vema,
the sound of his pen gives
chills to his enemies
and shivers of joy to the poets.

Even when he was learning his alphabet,
Rayani Bhacadu did not join *la* and its e-curve
or write *da* and make a loop on its side.
The letters together would make, *ledu*, which means 'no'.
That was how generous he was to those who asked him for help.[59]

We also find a verse concerning a minister inscribed on the front gate of the Gopinathasvami temple in Kondavidu.

He built the town of Gopinathapuram
with incomparable walls on all sides.
Compelling in gentle power, he conquered
the Yavanas and all their armies.
He installed the deity, Gopika-vallabha and
organized his worship in a regular order.
He ruled over the Andhra *maṇḍala* area
with a name for law and justice.
He is the one who is praised among
the best of *mantris* of the best of kings,
who worked for the honor and good of Acyutadevaraya
He is Ramayabhaskara, brilliant as the mid-day sun.

We can see that a number of developments led to the growing importance of *karaṇams* in the affairs of the state. The increased use of

[58] Veturi Prabhakara Sastri, ed., *Cāṭu-padya-maṇi-mañjari*, Vol. II (Hyderabad, 1988) (including the 1913 edition), section entitled *mantrulu*, pp. 251–308. Also see the section on *Sabhāpati-vacanamu*, in *Cāṭu-padya-maṇi-mañjari*, Vol. I, pp. 283–89.

[59] Prabhakara Sastri, ed. *Cāṭu-padya-maṇi-mañjari*, Vol. II, p. 257. The combinations of vowels and consonants are now described in their graphic terms such as *ĕtvamu, kŏmmu,* rather than as phonological terms such as *ĕkāra,* and *ukāra*.

Persian as a language of administration, and the presence of multiple languages in which smaller kings had to correspond with their political allies and neighbours, the availability of pen and paper, and the elaborate new accounting responsibilities made the position of scribes far more important in society than what it had been before. Now scribes were employed in jobs of higher status and power than simply serving as persons who could take down dictation or copy manuscripts. Reality is now what was written down, and not as earlier, what was uttered. We can see a corresponding change even in the popular mythology and Hindu iconography. The goddess of language and arts, Sarasvati was now endowed with a book in one of her hands, in addition to a *vīṇa*, the stringed musical instrument. Yama, the god of death, acquires an assistant Citragupta, who keeps accounts of living beings in separate files, and as in the poem that was quoted earlier, can even become more powerful than Yama himself.

The people who called themselves ministers (*mantris*) were not always ministers of a ruling king. *Mantri* was in a sense more an honorific caste title rather than a fixed position or office. Often these 'ministers' were themselves independent chiefs of a locality or even a village. However, in keeping with the convention that a king should be a warrior, the minister who has taken independent control of an area, also describes himself in military terms. But by seventeenth century there was a significant shift in the values of peninsular Indian society. Greater importance was given to *dāna,* charity, rather than *vīra*, valour in battle. The possibility of acquiring wealth in the form of cash created conditions of upward mobility, that were different from those created by simple military conquest. The emergence of the left-hand caste Balijas as trader–warrior–kings as evidenced in the Nayaka period is a consequence of such conditions of new wealth. This produces a collapsing of two *varṇas*, Kshatriya and Vaishya, into one. Acquired wealth, rather than status by birth in a family now leads to an entirely new value system where money talks. The *Sumati shatakamu* records this change rather cynically:

> Never mind if he is born in a low caste,
> never mind if he is timid,
> never mind if he is son of a whore.
> If he has money, he is king.

The presence of cash also generates charity. Members of the nobility are now constantly advised to excel in charity. In keeping with the

changes in the social values, *nīti* is no longer regarded as a matter that simply concerns kings and courtiers. It is for everyone, and in particular for anyone who desires status and social recognition. *Nīti* is now told in the form of stories rather than aphorisms and *shāstric* statements. Kuciraju Errana's *Sakala-nīti-kathā-nidhānam,* a book of stories that teaches *nīti*, indicates an early recognition of this change.[60] Errana adopts a number of stories from *Betāla-pañca-vimshati* and other *kathā* sources, both from Sanskrit and from Telugu. The main thrust of the stories is to teach the individual wise and tactful ways of handling oneself, and thus maximizing one's chances for success.

One book that codifies the conduct of *karaṇams* is the *Sumati shatakamu*.[61] Written by an unknown author probably in the eighteenth century, this book is variously attributed to Baddena and to an even more ancient Bhimana. Perhaps both authorships were ascribed by *karaṇams* to make the text serve two different purpose. Baddena's authorship serves the interests of the *karaṇams* in claiming political legitimacy among kings and other aspirants to rule an area, and the Bhimana authorship makes the text speak with a voice of the authority of an ancient, god-like poet to serve the interests of the same community when they desire legitimacy among the people in general. The *Sumati shatakamu* elevates the role of the minister (*karaṇamu*) and treats it is more crucial for the maintenance of the order of the kingdom than that of the king himself.

A kingdom with a minister runs smoothly with its strategy intact.
And a kingdom without a minister breaks down like a machine with a critical part missing.
A king without a minister is like an elephant without a trunk.

[60] Errayya, *Sakala-nīti-kathā-nidhānamu*, ed. T. Chandrasekharan (Madras, 1951). The exact date of Errayya (or Errana) is not known and the suggestion by the editor Chandrasekharan that he belongs to late-fifteenth century seems to be too early.

[61] The text of the *Sumati shatakamu* has been printed many times with a number of variations, some of them indicating that the text itself changed with time, including a bowdlerized edition by Vavilla Ramasvami Shastrulu & Sons (Madras), and reprinted it many times. The edition we have used is dated 1962. But also see Macca Haridasu, *Tathyamu Sumati* (Hyderabad, 1984). In the nineteenth century, C.P. Brown collated a number of verses from manuscripts and translated them, for which see C.P. Brown, *Sumati shatakam*, ed. C.R. Sarma (Hyderabad, 1973).

It also gives practical wisdom for ordinary people such as the following:

> Don't live in a village where you don't have a moneylender, a doctor, and a river that does not dry up.
>
> If you don't spend the money you earn for your pleasures,
> part of it goes to the king and the other part is lost into the earth.
> That's very much like the honey that bees gather in the forest—
> part of it goes to people who collect honey and part of it falls to earth.
>
> The lord of the wealth Kubera is his friend, but Siva still begs for his living.
> What you have is your wealth, not what your friends or relatives have.
>
> Don't ever trust the tax-collector, the gambler,
> the goldsmith or the whore. Don't trust a merchant
> or a left-handed person, that is not good for you.
>
> Listen to everyone, but wait to think through what they say.
> Only one who accepts things after ascertaining truth or falsehood, is a wise man.
>
> A wise man is stronger than a man who is only physically strong.
> A slim rider controls an elephant big as a mountain.
>
> A snake has poison in its head.
> A scorpion has poison in its tail.
> An evil person has poison all over his body, head to toe.

Despite such practical advice, the *Sumati shatakamu* is at bottom a cynical (rather than simply an amoral) text, which believes women are not trustworthy, that kings never keep their word, and friends last only as long as you have money. In the hard world it depicts, you have to take care of yourself—no one else helps.

Conclusion

When the British government and its native employees wanted 'morals' to be taught in the early-nineteenth century, the Telugu equivalent that their pundit informants could find was *nīti*. This was based on a rather curious misunderstanding: for even if there are some ethical teachings and moral statements in these texts, they are not exactly the kind of moral code that one would apply to all people. Vennelakanti Subbarao (1784–1839), translator for the *Sadr 'adālat* of the Madras Presidency, a Telugu Niyogi Brahmin who rose to the highest post a native could aspire to in the East India Company administration at the time, and who commanded competence in about

half a dozen Indian languages in addition to English, was one of the more prominent of the Company's interlocutors already from an early time. When he was appointed member of the Madras School Book Society, he submitted a report in 1820 on the state of teaching in schools, in which he wrote that children in schools were taught neither adequate grammar nor morals. So they came out of their schools with no real ability in using the language and they were not trained to become upright members of their society either. Therefore, he recommended—addressing the need for teaching morals—that 'tales extracted from different books composed chiefly of morals written in modern languages' be prescribed for study.[62]

In this context, Ravipati Gurumurti Sastri also put the *Pañcatantra* stories into Telugu prose and taught them at the College of Fort St. George in Madras. This was soon followed by another translation of *Pañcatantra* by the very influential Paravastu Cinnaya Suri.[63] Now the *Pañcatantra* was not in fact a 'Book of Morals'; rather, it was statecraft taught by means of animal fables. When the first generation of colonial schoolboys needed a textbook, Puduri Sitarama Sastri, a pundit in Madras wrote a text called *Pĕdda Bāla Siksha* (The Big Book of Lessons for Children), which was published in 1847. This work contains a number of items such as basic arithmetic, the names of the weekdays, months, and years according to the traditional lunar calendar, and many items of conventional wisdom, a few stories, and aphorisms modelled after the statements from *nīti* texts, to teach '*nīti*' (now translated in an unproblematized way as 'morals') to schoolboys. To be sure, in every *nīti* text, there were occasional statements that looked like teachings of virtue, which were carefully selected and included in school textbooks. Verses from Bhartrahari, which were translated into Telugu by several poets during the medieval period, came in handy. Even the *Sumati shatakamu*, which, as we have seen, is actually a handbook for *karaṇams*, yielded some nice and acceptable moral statements.[64] Because of the simple language in which the *Sumati*

[62] Vennelakanti Subbarao, *The Life of Vennelacunty Soobarow (Native of Ongole) As Written by himself* (Madras, 1873), pp. 65–75.

[63] On Cinnaya Suri, see Velcheru Narayana Rao, 'Print and prose: Pandits, *Karanams*, and the East India Company in the making of modern Telugu', in Stuart Blackburn and Vasudha Dalmia (eds.), *India's Literary History: Essays on the Nineteenth Century* (New Delhi, 2004), pp. 146–66.

[64] For instance, the following verse:

A good deed in return for another—
That's nothing special.

shatakamu was written, it came to be particularly popular in school moral curricula. Soon enough, lines from these verses came to adorn classroom walls and copybooks. Thus, in the end, books on statecraft and worldly wisdom could serve as acceptable substitutes for the Ten Commandments.

Our central purpose in this essay has been to widen the rather narrow conception within which 'political thought' has hitherto been studied in an Indian context. We would only caricature very slightly if we were to say that the usual strategies espoused by analysts are two: either they assume that modern politics in India was a pure product of the interaction with colonialism and colonial modernity, or at best, they leap over the intervening centuries to classical India and its materials. In this context, we welcome the development of interest in recent times in the Indo-Persian corpus, and what it might tell us about both institutional arrangements and political thought at the time of the Sultanate and the Mughals. The problem does remain however of that part of India where Persian was not the principal language in which such thought was expressed. The example of the Maratha polity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries brings this home, even though the Marathi used by them was heavily inflected by Persian. It is clear from the researches of Hiroyuki Kotani and Narendra Wagle, however, that the eighteenth-century Maratha Deccan continued to witness a struggle between precisely the forces we have set out in this essay, that is between the proponents of *nīti* on the one hand (who no doubt drew on the Indo-Persian corpus as well) and those who remained fiercely attached to the highly *dharmashāstra*-oriented vision of social ordering and political functioning. The continued presence of terms such as *dosha* and *prāyascitta* in the vocabulary of the Maratha polity possibly testify to the waning influence of the *nīti* tradition in that system.[65]

Doing good in return for harm—
Think about it: that's really good strategy.

This verse, actually stated as a form of political strategy, is now interpreted as an altruistic moral statement.

[65] Hiroyuki Kotani, '*Doṣa* (sin)-*Prāyascitta* (penance): The predominating ideology in the later medieval Deccan' in Kotani (ed.), *Western India in Historical Transition: Seventeenth to Early Twentieth Centuries* (New Delhi, 2002); N.K. Wagle, 'The government, the jāti, and the individual: Rights, discipline and control in the Pune Kotwal Papers, 1766—94' in *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, N.S., Vol. 34 (2000), pp. 321–60. Cf. the earlier pioneering work of V.T. Gune, *The Judicial System of the Marathas* (Pune, 1953). Also of interest to this discussion is Sumit Guha, 'An Indian

A celebrated reflection on the 'history of concepts' written some 35 years ago proposed to historians of Europe that they needed to go beyond their preoccupation with social (and political) history to look at both individual concepts, and groups of concepts, to clarify that which underlay the functioning of the political and social systems in the societies they studied. In that context, Reinhart Koselleck wrote:

'The relationship between the history of concepts (*Begriffsgeschichte*) and social history (*Sozialgeschichte*) appears at first sight to be very loose, or at least difficult to determine, because the first of these disciplines primarily uses texts and words whereas the latter only uses texts to deduce facts and movements which are not contained in the texts themselves. It is thus that social history analyses social movements and constitutional structures, the relations between groups, social strata and classes; beyond the complex of events, it tries to come to terms with medium or long-term structures and their changes (...). The methods of the history of concepts are very different'.[66]

We would hardly wish to be so immodest as to claim to be introducing the history of concepts (*Begriffsgeschichte*) into the study of the Indian past. However, in this collaboration between a historian and analyst of literature, and a social and economic historian, we hope to have opened a window into a neglected, and yet highly significant, corpus.

We began this essay with two quotations, one by a scholar and editor of forgotten texts, lamenting the loss of importance suffered by the *nīti* tradition, the other by one of the most important political figures in twentieth-century India. B.R. Ambedkar was, we are aware, a keen student of the Indian past, and had even studied with R.P. Kangle, an authority on the *Arthashāstra*. The remark by him that we quote refers precisely to the tension between the *nīti*- and *dharma*-oriented traditions that have lain at the heart of this essay. He glossed these respectively as 'secular law' and 'ecclesiastical law', and there are many—especially among the growing number of 'anti-secularist' intellectuals in India—who would immediately object to these translations.[67] But perhaps Ambedkar was not so wrong after

Penal Régime: Maharashtra in the eighteenth century' in *Past and Present*, No. 147 (1995), pp. 101–126.

[66] 'Begriffsgeschichte und Sozialgeschichte' in *Kölner Zeitschrift für Sociologie*, No. 16 (1972), translated in Reinhart Koselleck, *Le Futur Passé: Contribution à la sémantique des temps historiques*, tr. Jochen Hoock and Marie-Claire Hoock (Paris, 1990), p. 99.

[67] Most notable amongst these are Ashis Nandy, 'An Anti-Secularist manifesto' in *Seminar*, No. 314 (1985), pp. 14–24; T.N. Madan, 'Secularism in its place' in *Journal of*

all in his use of the term 'secular' (however problematic the word 'ecclesiastical' might be). Not as cavalier in his disregard of the Indian past—or dismissive of history—as writers such as T.N. Madan and Ashis Nandy have usually been, it may well be that his view of a struggle between different conceptions of political and social arrangements in pre-colonial India might shed light on the deeper roots and more profound purchase that 'Indian secularism' has, than that of a mere transplant from distant climes. To explore that line of inquiry would take us, however, beyond the confines of this essay.

Asian Studies, Vol. 46, No. 4 (1987), pp. 747–59. The debate is summed up in Rajeev Bhargava, ed., *Secularism and its critics* (Delhi, 1998).