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Resisting and justifying changes II

Testifying and legitimizing innovation in
Indian and Ancient Greek Culture

ed. by
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KILLING RITUALLY AND BEYOND

Abstract

The problem of killing in general and Vedic ritual killing in particular has been highly debated in ancient India. The main stakeholders in this debate are the Sāṃkhya-Yoga philosophers on one hand, who hold that the virtue following from Vedic ritual killing is adulterated by some amount of demerit; on the other hand, it is the Mīmāṃsā philosophers, who while generally agreeing about the genesis of malefic result from such Vedic bewitchment rituals as the Śyena sacrifice and trying to justify Vedic ritual killings like the Agnīṣomīya animal sacrifice, differ significantly with regard to the method of such justification. In this paper, an attempt has been made to show the changing face of such defence of Vedic ritual-killing as attempted by Kumārilabhaṭṭa and also by the Prābhākara sub-school of Mīmāṃsā as reported in Bhaṭṭa Jayanta's *Nyāyamañjarī*. I will also refer to the points made in this regard by the Advaita Vedānta philosopher, Appayya Dīkṣita, in his *Parimala* commentary, the Viśiṣṭādvaita philosopher, Rāmānuja, in his *Śrībhāṣya* and *Gītābhāṣya* and also the grammarian-philosopher, Kaundabhaṭṭa, in his *Bṛhadvaikyākaraṇabhūṣaṇa* and try to show how the staunch rational defence of Vedic ritual killing originally attempted by the Mīmāṃsā philosophers has slowly been made secondary to, if not totally replaced by, an external defence based almost exclusively on citation of Vedic, Smṛti and Purāṇa texts. Although Houben (1999) has noted some of the defence patterns described in this paper, and quite rightly concluded that the Brahminical defence became more and more 'traditionalized' than 'rationalized', and also how even within the traditionalization approach there are many sub-varieties, yet he does not analyse how these are related to each other and also their relative advantages and disadvantages in the manner in which this paper does. More specifically it does not deal with the views of Appayya Dīkṣita and Kaundabhaṭṭa at length, but mentions them in passing. Further, Houben does not discuss Appayya's view in relation to the two Mīmāṃsā critiques of Kumārila and Jayanta's Prābhākara and Kaundabhaṭṭa's view in relation to Rāmānuja's. It will also be shown by a brief reference to a specific historical lecture delivered in 1935 by Gurupada Hāldāra, a famous scholar of Sanskrit philosophy and one of the greatest votaries of Tāntrika religious practices of Bengal, how such defences provided the common meeting point of Vaiṣṇavism and Tāntrism and attempts at gaining socio-religious acceptability in the undivided Bengal of the third decade of twentieth century at least at the ideological level.

1. Introduction

In this paper, I would like to discuss the various ways of justifying the killing of animals in Vedic ritual sacrifices. But I do not attempt at a historical treatment of the subject since this is not possible within the limited space of this paper. However, my choice of the philosophers discussed here – Kumārilabhaṭṭa, the Prābhākara philosopher found in Bhaṭṭa Jayanta's *Nyāyamañjarī*, Appayyadīkṣita, Rāmānujācārya, Kaṇḍabhaṭṭa – has been guided by the fact that one or more of the different solutions offered by these philosophers have been repeated by other writers not only in the ancient period but by also by medieval and modern scholars of Sanskrit philosophy and Hindu law. Again, the list of solution paradigms furnished here is by no means exhaustive. I must also mention that there are various aspects of this problem, which cannot be dealt with here.

2. Background

The most cited of such instances of killing is the animal sacrifice called Agniṣomīya Paśuyāga dedicated to the deities Agni and Soma within the larger context of the main sacrifice called Jyotiṣṭoma. The ultimate result of the Jyotiṣṭoma sacrifice is mentioned to be *svarga*¹ or happiness unadulterated by suffering.

The Jyotiṣṭoma sacrifice within which this animal killing dedicated to the deities Agni and Soma occur as an auxiliary action is a Vedic ritual of the elective type, which unlike the Vedic rituals of the fixed or occasional type, can be done by someone who has a desire for the promised result and has the means for executing it precisely as prescribed; in other words, if the entire ritual is not done perfectly, i.e. precisely as it is prescribed, it would lead to *kratuvaigunya* or a failure of the

¹ *Svarga* is glossed as 'niratiśayā prīti' by Mīmāṃsā philosophers like Śābara under Mī.Sū. 6.1.1; this is in contradistinction to the view of pre-Jaimini philosophers like Bādari who held *svarga* to be a pleasurable substance (*prītimaddravya*) and not pleasure itself. Śābara, and following him Kumāṛila and Prabhākara also denied *svarga* to be a particular of kind pleasurable place (*deśaviśeṣa*) where one does not experience hunger, thirst, hot, cold, etc. This view of *svarga* as unsurpassed pleasure has also been encapsulated in the following oft-quoted verse, traditionally attributed to Kumāṛila – *yan na duḥkhena sambhinnaṃ na ca grastam anantaram | abhilāṣopanītaṃ ca tat sukhaṃ svaḥpadāspadam ||* 'That pleasure which is [ever] unmixed with suffering; which is not engulfed by [suffering] later; which is obtained through [one's] desire is the meaning of the word "svaḥ"'. Although I have not been able to trace this verse in Kumāṛila's extant works, yet I have found the earliest reference to it in Vācaspatimiśra's *Sāṃkhyatattvakaumudī* (STK) on *Sāṃkhyakārika* no. 2. See Bhattacharya 2010:13.

sacrifice. It may also be mentioned herein that auxiliary actions like the said Agniṣomīya animal sacrifice are generally accepted to serve no other purpose than rendering assistance to the main sacrifice for bringing about the completion of the latter.

3. *The Problem*

The problem with Vedic ritual killing is raised, as noted by Kei Kataoka², by the Sāṃkhya-Yoga philosophers and Buddhist philosophers. These philosophers think that Vedic ritual killing is as bad as any other act which is prohibited by the Vedas like drinking alcohol, having sexual intercourse with one's teacher's wife, killing a brāhmaṇa, etc. This is because just like the prohibited acts mentioned above, Vedic ritual killing too leads to sin and hence the prescription of such Vedic ritual killings is in direct contradiction with the general prohibition, 'One should not kill living beings' (*na hiṃsyāt sarvā bhūtāni*)³. Thus it remains for those philosophers who accept Vedic ritual killing, to explain how and on what grounds these acts do not entail any amount of sin and prescriptions for them lie outside the purview of the general prohibition.

4. *Kumārilabhaṭṭa's solution*

The Mīmāṃsā philosopher, Kumārilabhaṭṭa (c. 7th century A.D.), in his sub-commentary, *Śloka-vārttika*, on Śabarasvāmin's commentary ad *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* I.1.2 squarely meets and replies to four types of objections – three based on inferential reasoning and one based on the interpretation of the general Vedic prohibition, "One should not kill living beings"⁴. Here, I will only discuss Kumānila's reply to the fourth objection based on the Vedic prohibition.

The opponent says that the Vedic prohibition, "One should not kill living beings" prohibits killing generally since it is the cause of sin and Vedic ritual killing is no exception to it. This is because it is ultimately the same act of killing which is prohibited by the said Vedic prohibition.

The main drift of Kumānila's answer to this objection is the following: based on eligibility, the same act might have different effects on different people. An example of this is to be found in the drinking of *surā*, a specific kind of alcohol, which is not prohibited for the persons

² Kataoka 2011: 481-482.

³ Although this is generally cited as a prohibition of Vedic origin, yet it cannot be traced to the extant Vedic corpus. However, it occurs as the first quarter of the first half of verse no. 5 of the 269th chapter from the Vanaparvan of *Mahābhārata*.

⁴ See Kataoka 2011: 164-168.

belonging to the *śūdra* caste, while it is prohibited for persons born in the *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya* and *vaiśya* castes⁵. Similarly, although the Vedic prohibition communicates that the act of killing leads to sin, it does not apply to killing prescribed as a means or procedure in a Vedic ritual action. This is because such a killing within a Vedic ritual as the Agnīṣomīya animal sacrifice is explicitly enjoined by a Vedic prescription⁶⁻⁷. Just as the same act of eating impacts a healthy and a sick man differently, so does the same act of killing have different consequences depending on whether it is prescribed within a Vedic ritual or not⁸. Moreover, a direct or indirect result, communicated by a Vedic prescription is generally considered as something beneficial and not maleficent for human beings. In the same vein, the result of the

⁵ *evam ye nipuṇaṃ prāhustairapyetatparīkṣyatām | surāpānādibhiḥ śūdraḥ kiṃ na yāti naraṇaṃ kṛtaiḥ* | – verses 252cd-253ab in KuTOK. Kataoka (2011: 56).

⁶ *himsā cāmśadvayādanyā yā tasyāḥ pratiśedhajam || pratyavāyarthatājñānaṃ vidhinānyatra vāryate* | – verses 255cd-256ab in KuTOK. Kataoka (2011: 56).

⁷ Kataoka (2011:501fn.717) says: “Drinking *surā* is prohibited for brahmins, kṣatriyas and vaiśyas, but not for śūdras. *Manusmṛti* 11.93 cd: *tasmād brāhmaṇarājanyau vaiśyaś ca na suraṃ pibet*. Therefore the same action of drinking *surā* has different capacities (i.e., different results in the next life) depending on the difference in *varṇas*. Only the three upper classes go to hell by drinking *surā*. The opponent should take into account consider who is the proper *adhikārin* of a particular action.” It is to be noted that *adhikāra* or eligibility for a particular act is known only from the Vedic injunction about eligibility (*adhikāraavidhi*). As it holds true for prescriptions, so also for prohibitions. Consistent with its basic nature of being the communicator of such information as are unknowable from other instruments of knowledge (*ajñātajñāpaka*), the prohibitory injunction only communicates that the act of drinking *surā* for brahmins, kṣatriyas and vaiśyas are prohibited, and it cannot do so without making known the maleficent nature of the prohibited act. The function of the injunction ends with such communication, but it never produces or destroys the capacity of the prescribed or prohibited act or article to lead to *svarga* or *naraka* respectively. Thus, it is not the case that the power of the act of drinking to lead the three upper classes to extreme suffering goes away in case of *śūdras*, but it simply seems to remain suspended in case of *śūdra* because of his remaining outside the scope of application of the prohibition. Moreover, in case of the Agnīṣomīya animal sacrifice, it is to be remembered that it is a procedural action prescribed for completing the Jyotiṣṭoma ritual, and as Kataoka (2011: 504 fn. 726), in accordance with Umbekabhaṭṭa’s *Śloka-vārtikā* on verse 255cd, points out: “[...] Agnīṣomīyapaśu, an animal sacrifice for Agni and Soma, which is one of the three animal sacrifices in the Jyotiṣṭoma sacrifice, is enjoined by an injunction. This injunction overcomes the general prohibition of killing, because it specifically enjoins an *itikartavyatā* of the Jyotiṣṭoma sacrifice. The prohibition of killing does not apply to the act of killing in these two portions, i.e. *sadhana* and *itikartavyatā*.”

⁸ *vyavasthāḥ śaktibhedānāṃ dr̥ṣṭārtheṣvapi karmasu || abhinnatve’pi dr̥śyante bhujeh svasthātūreṣviva* | – verses 257cd-258ab in KuTOK. Kataoka (2011: 56-57).

Agnīṣomīya animal sacrifice prescribed within the Jyotiṣtoma sacrifice, is neither communicated nor postulated to be something maleficent⁹.

Kumārila further says that the similarity between Vedic and non-Vedic killings based on the reasoning that both are acts of killing is blocked by the sacred texts¹⁰. If the opponent is to resort solely to such a reasoning at the cost of the authority of the sacred texts then he would have to admit that Vedic sacrifices cannot accomplish *svarga* since, like the act of eating, which does not produce *svarga*, the Vedic sacrifice is a mere action!¹¹

5. The Prābhākara Solution

The following Prābhākara¹² solution is found in the second half of the fifth chapter from Bhaṭṭa Jayanta's *Nyāyamañjarī*: according to the Prābhākara view discussed there, there is a difference between killing which is *kratvartha* or for the sake of the ritual (e.g. Agnīṣomīya animal sacrifice) and the killing which is *puruṣārtha* or for the sake of the man (e.g. killing one's enemy solely out of hatred, with a motive of revenge, etc.). In case of the latter, it is human desire, and not any prescription which prompts one to undertake the act of killing and it is this killing which is prohibited by the Vedic prohibition. By contrast, in case of the Agnīṣomīya animal sacrifice which counts among the procedural actions needed for completing the main sacrifice, viz. Jyotiṣtoma, it is not human desire which prompts one to undertake the said animal sacrifice, but rather the explicit Vedic prescription, *agnīṣomīyaṃ paśum ālabhate* (*Taittirīyasaṃhitā* VI.1.11 / *Aitareyabrāhmaṇa* 26) "one should kill¹³ the

⁹ *vidhīnām cāpi sarveṣāṃ sāṅśādvyaavahito'pi vā || puruṣārthaḥ phalaṃ, tena nānartha'ṭaḥ pratīyate | na caiṣu śrūyate'nartha, niṣedhānna ca kalpyate ||* – verses 260cd-261cd in KuTOK. Kataoka (2011: 57).

¹⁰ *yastu hīṃsātvasādharmyādbāhyavaccoditāsvapi || vadedanarthaheturvaṃ, tasyāpyāgamabādhanaṃ |* – verses 273cd-274ab in KuTOK. Kataoka (2011: 59).

¹¹ *tamanādrtya yo brūyād, yāgādāvapyasau vadet ||*.

¹² I have proved elsewhere that the Prābhākara opponent's view found in Jayanta's NM 5.2 is for the most part based on Umbekabhāṭṭa's *Ślokavārttikatātparyāṭīkā* on MiSū 1.1.2 and 1.1.5. Since Umbeka is the earliest of the extant commentators not only of Kumārila's *Ślokavārttika*, but also of Maṇḍana Miśra's *Bhāvanāviveka*, he may be tentatively placed around the first half of the 8th century A.D. The Prābhākara view discussed in both these texts represent the post-Prābhākara but pre-Śālikanātha stage of development of the Prābhākara sub-school of Mīmāṃsā.

¹³ As Dr. Ramshankar Bhattacharya points out in his editorial note to this Vedic injunction cited in STK, this passage occurs in the *Taittirīyasaṃhitā* 6.1.11 and *Aitareyabrāhmaṇa* 26, and the reading there is *ālabhate*. He says that it is the form of the verbal root, *labh*, prefixed by *ā*, and conjugated in the Vedic indicative (*leṭ*), which conveys the sense of prescription. He cites similar instances of the use of *ālabhate* as in "*vasantāya kapiñjalān ālabhate*" (*Yajurveda* Mādhyandin 24/20), "*brahmaṇe*

animal meant for Agni and Soma¹⁴”. This is because any action which is for the sake of the ritual is understood to be so only from the sacred text, i.e., from the explicit prescription enjoining it¹⁵. The prohibition, “One should not kill living beings”, is general in scope and a general injunction operates only after it has set aside the content of a specific injunction. Thus since there is an explicit and hence specific prescription enjoining the Agnīśomīya animal sacrifice, the general prohibition cannot block it by communicating the maleficent nature of it¹⁶.

6. Appayyadīkṣita’s solution

The Prābhākara solution based on the distinction between killing for the sake of the sacrifice (*kratvartha hiṃsā*) and killing for the sake of man (*puruṣārtha hiṃsā*), which is also subscribed to by Vācaspatimiśra in the *Bhāmatī* ad *Brahmasūtra* (3.1.25), is challenged by Appayyadīkṣita in his *Parimala* sub-commentary on Śaṅkarācārya’s commentary ad *Brahmasūtra* 1.3.25. According to Appayya, such a distinction is inappropriate because even killing for the sake of the sacrifice is ultimately dependent upon the desire for the result of the main sacrifice and thus in an extended sense such a ritual killing is obtained through one’s desire¹⁷. Thus it is not proper to qualify killing as being either for the sake of the sacrifice or for the sake of man, but it is killing *qua* killing

brāhmaṇam ālabhate” (*Taittirīyabrāhmaṇa* 3.4.1-18), etc. Bhattacharya attributes the printing of *ālabheta* in the sense of prescription to the ignorance of editors of Vedic texts of the similarity of the conjugated form of a verbal root in the 3rd personal singular number in *leṭ* and *loṭ*. He also mentions that this very injunction is cited with the *ālabhate* reading in *Śābarabhāṣya* on Mī.Sū. 4.1.11. Bhattacharya cites the following line from *Jāminīyanyāyamālavistāra* (2/2 Adhikaraṇa 4) which understands *yajati* occurring Vedic injunctions as an instance of *leṭ* and warns against a misunderstanding of it as *laṭ* - “*na cātra yajati vartamānāpadeśaḥ śaṅkanīyaḥ pañcamalakārasyāśrayaṇā*”. See Bhattacharya 2010: 17, 389.

¹⁴ *ata eva na tatra [kāmādhikāre S.M.] vaidhī pravṛttiḥ lipsayā eva pravṛttatvāt [...]* *kāmādhikāreṣu hi itikartavyatāmśe śāstrīyā pravṛttiḥ*. (NM: 112)

¹⁵ *kratvartho hi śāstrād avagamyate*. (NM: 112)

¹⁶ *na hiṃsyāt sarvā bhūtāni iti niṣedhaḥ sāmānyaśāstram. sāmānyaśāstram ca vi śeśaśāstrakroḍīkṛtaviṣayaparihāreṇa pravartata ity agnīśomīyahimsāyāḥ śāstrīyatvāt na niṣedhavidhir anarthatām bodhayed iti*. (NM: 113)

¹⁷ *kratvarthahiṃsāyā api rāgādhīnapravṛttiviṣayatvāt phalarāgaṃ vinā adyāpi [em. atrāpi?] pravṛttyasambhavāt kāmādhikāre karaṇāmśe rāgataḥ pravṛttiḥ aṅgeṣu vaidhī pravṛttir iti nirālambanāyāḥ prābhākaraparibhāṣāyāḥ Siddhāntānabhimatatvāt tad ayuktam*. *Kalpataruparimala*, (BSŚB: 683-684)

which is generally meant by the prohibition¹⁸. Hence this makes room for the operation of the prohibition. But, as Dr. R. Mani Dravid Śāstrī observes: “even if the prohibition is taken to be about killing for the sake of man, then also some prescriptions about killing for the sake of man unhinderedly form exception to that¹⁹”. Thus, if all killing for the sake of man were to be accepted as coming under the purview of the prohibitive injunction, then the following instances of killing for the sake of man, as prescribed by the sacred texts, could not be justified –

- i The pouring of hot liquor into the mouth of a brāhmaṇa who has drunk liquor, on account of which he dies and is purified as a result of such a death²⁰.
- ii Killing by a kṣatriya of someone in battle²¹.
- iii Award of punishment by a king to someone who deserves to be punished²².

Appayya’s solution for the problem is that the prohibition does not apply to such acts of killing for the sake of man, for which no expiation is prescribed²³. Thus, following Appayyadīkṣita it may be argued that although the Agnīśomīya animal sacrifice may be considered as an instance of killing for the sake of man, it, yet, due to the fact that there is absence of any prescription for expiation for such killing, it may ultimately be taken as an exception to the prohibition, “One should not kill living beings.” This suggests that Appayya’s solution for ascertaining the ground for exception is necessitated by his defence of the *Gautamadharmasūtra* and *Manusmṛti* statements quoted above.

¹⁸ *hiṃsā eva vaidham api saṃjñāpanam na hiṃsyād ity atra rāgakṛtatā puruṣārthatā vā. ādau na hiṃsanaviśeṣaṇam asti [...] Kalpataruparimāla* (BSSB: 686).

¹⁹ *tathāhi – hiṃsāniśedhaśāstraṃ puruṣārthahiṃsāviśayakam iti svikāre’pi keṣāñcit puruṣārthahiṃsāvidhīnām tadapavādatvam anapavādam*. UPP. Dravid (*sine data*: 224).

²⁰ This prescription is found in *Gautamadharmasūtra* (23.1): *surāpasya brāhmaṇasya uṣṇām āsiñceyuḥ surām āsye mṛtaḥ śudhyet*. (DhS: 176). “They should pour hot liquor into the mouth of a Brahmin who has drunk liquor. He is purified after he dies”. (tr. Olivelle 2000: 177)

²¹ This is found in *Gautamadharmasūtra* (10.17): *na doṣo hiṃsāyām āhave*. (DhS: 142). “He commits no sin if he kills someone in battle”. (tr. Olivelle 2000: 143)

²² This is found prescribed in *Manusmṛti* (8.128) as follows: *adaṇḍān daṇḍāyan rājā daṇḍāṃścaivāpyadaṇḍāyan | ayaśo mahad āpnoti narakam caiva gacchati ||* (MS: 684). ‘When a king punishes those who do not deserve to be punished and neglects to punish those who deserve, he brings great infamy upon himself and he will also go to hell’. (tr. Olivelle, Olivelle 2005: 174).

²³ *tathā ca puruṣārthahiṃsāniśedhapakṣe’py anupadiṣṭaprāyaścittavihitahiṃsātiriktahiṃsāviśayatvam avaśyam vaktavyam*. *Kalpataruparimāla* (BSSB 1938: 685).

7. *Rāmānujācārya's solution*

While justifying the Mahābhārata war in his commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā* (II.31), Rāmānujācārya likens it to the Agnīśomīya animal sacrifice, in which there is no killing of the animal because there is a Vedic statement according to which the sacrificed animal, a billy goat, would ascend to the abode of *svarga* with a beautiful body after giving up an inferior frame. This solution is also found in the *Śrībhāṣya* on *Brahmasūtra* I.3.25, where Rāmānujācārya quotes the following Vedic statement in support of his contention:

hiraṇyaśarīra urdhvaḥ svargaṃ lokam eti

‘Endowed with a golden body and (turned) upwards, he (i.e. the sacrificed animal) attains the abode of *svarga*’²⁴.

He further says that even if the act which is the means for accomplishing a very large amount of pleasure, accords a little suffering, it is not killing, but rather protection²⁵. He quotes the following Vedic sacred formula (*mantra*)²⁶ to substantiate his claim:

na vā u etan mriyase na riṣyasi devān ideṣi pathibhiḥ sugebhiḥ. yatra yanti sukrto nāpi duṣkṛtas tatra tvā devaḥ savitā dadhātu

‘(O animal!) by this you do not die, nor are you killed. You are attaining the abode of gods through the happy path, where only the virtuous reaches and not the sinner. May the deity, Savitā, lead you there’.

On Rāmānujācārya’s view Vedic ritual killing is comparable to a medical surgery, the pain unavoidably caused by which is not meant

²⁴ This idea of the sacrificial goat reaching *svarga* with a new body all full of light is at the core of the *Atharvaveda* Śaunakīya (AVŚ) recension IX.5. For an analysis of this (AVŚ) and kindred passages, see Pontillo 2019: 13-14.

²⁵ *atiśayitābhyudayasādhanabhūto vyāpāro 'lpaduḥkhado'pi na hiṃsā pratyuta rakṣaṇam eva.* (Karmarakara 1964: 798) Also: *ataḥ cikitsakakarma āturyasya iva asya rakṣaṇam eva agnīśomīyādiṣu saṃjñāpanam.* (Ādidevānanda 2005: 82)

²⁶ This *mantra* with the given reading could not be precisely traced to its source. Its nearest approximation can be found in *Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā* 1.2.15.6, although it reads *śivebhiḥ* instead of *sugebhiḥ* and does not have the *u* after *vā* and has *uta* before *riṣyasi*. The first half of this hymn with *u* after *vā* and without *uta* before *riṣyasi*, and also with *sugebhiḥ* can be found in *Rgveda* I.162.21 and *Vājasaneyī-Samhitā* 25.44, although the second half in both these sources is totally different and reads as follows: *harī te yuñjā prṣatī abhūtām upāsthād vājī dhuri rāsabhasya.*

for inflicting misery on the patient but remedying his ailment. Thus, just as a medical surgery is meant for protecting a patient, so is the Agnīṣomīya animal sacrifice and the like have to be understood²⁷. In his commentary on the *Gītā* (II.31), he says it is in the same vein that it has been declared by the *Gītā* verse (II.22), “just as a person taken on new clothes after abandoning those that are worn out”, that those who die in the war attain a more beautiful body.

Thus here we see a tendency to defend the performance of ritual killing not primarily on the basis of any reasoning, but on the sole authority of Vedic statements bearing upon it.

8. *Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa's solution*

In the chapter, *Laḍādyarthanirṇaya*, of his *Bṛhadvaikyākaraṇabhūṣaṇa* or *Vaiyākaraṇasiddhāntabhūṣaṇa*, Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa faces the objection that just as in case of eating a food mixed with honey and poison there is both benefit in the form of satiation of hunger and harm in the form of death, similarly in the Agnīṣomīya animal sacrifice, one understands that the killing of the animal is a means to a desired end in the form of the completion of the ritual; however, from the prohibition applying to it, one understands that it is the cause of sin. Therefore, according to this opponent, it is not the case that – because of being explicitly enjoined by the Vedic sacred texts, the general prohibition cannot apply to the case of Agnīṣomīya; hence the Agnīṣomīya too should be *adharma* or contrary-to-religious duty. Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa answers this by saying that the verb *ālabh-* in *agnīṣomīyaṃ paśum ālabhate* does not mean killing but it is used to qualify the nature of the sacrifice²⁸.

The *Nirañjanī* commentary of Mahāmahopādhyāya Rāmayatna Śukla explains this as expressing a sacrifice related to an animal. Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa further says that the verb *ālabh-* has to be understood as expressing a sacrifice and not killing because it is qualified by the deity (viz. Agni and Soma) to whom the sacrifice is to be made and the substance (viz. the animal) which is to be sacrificed²⁹. Now since a sacrifice consists of ritually offering substances to deities, the injunction does not prescribe killing but it is only the case that a sacrifice with its deity and substance is stipulated.

²⁷ *ataś cikitsakakarma āturya iva asya rakṣaṇam eva agnīṣomīyādiṣu saṃjñāpanam.* (Ādidevānanda 2005: 82)

²⁸ *vastutas tu paśum ālabheta ity atra ālabhatir yāgalakṣaṇārthaḥ.* (BVBh: 169)

²⁹ *aprāptasya eva tasya atra dravyadevatāsambandhaviśiṣṭasya vidheyatvāt.* (BVBh: 169)

Alternatively, Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa says, consistent with the view expressed in MīSū 2.3.6.16 that *ālambh-* in *vatsam ālabheta* (*Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā* 1.5.9) would mean ritually touching the calf and since such use of the word *ālambhana* is frequently found in the Vedas, so in case of the Agnīṣomīya animal sacrifice too, it is not the killing of the animal but the ritual touching of it that is prescribed. As Jayashree Gune explains:

“The grounds for this decision are as follows: - *ālambh-* is often seen to be used in contexts where the meaning ‘kill’ is not possible. Once this is decided, the *trivṛccarvadhikaraṇanyāya* is brought to be bear by which if there is a conflict between a usual meaning and a Vedic meaning, only that meaning which is specifically Vedic should be taken in every Vedic instance. Thus since it has been shown in one place that *ālambh-* cannot mean ‘kill’ but has to be taken to mean ‘touch’ and as such usages are frequent, *ālambh-* should be taken to mean ‘touch’ in every Vedic sentence. This effectively gets rid of the difficulty of contradiction with the prohibition ‘*na hiṃsyāt*’”³⁰.

Hence in no way can the Agnīṣomīya animal sacrifice come under the scope of the general prohibition, ‘One should not kill living beings’. Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa also shows how on this ground of *ālambhana* meaning mere ritual touching, the statement from the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* (XI.5.3), ‘for it is the smelling of the wine [in a sacrifice] which is prescribed and the *ālambhana* of an animal is not killing’, stands justified³¹.

Arguing against Madhva’s commentary on *Brahmasūtra* 3.1.25, where the opponent is claimed to find fault with Vedic ritual killing on the ground of its being an act of killing, Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa says that the Mādhva understanding of the opponent’s position is incorrect. This is because the opponent in the *Brahmasūtra*, according to Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa, does not claim that killing leads to sin because it is killing, but because killing is prohibited³². Moreover, if an act of killing led to sin simply because it was an act of killing, then all such prescriptions as prescribe ritual suicide like by entering the confluence of three rivers in Prayāga, by mounting on the funeral pyre of one’s deceased husband, etc. would be uprooted³³. And this would also make the incurrence of sin unavoidable on account of drinking liquor in the Vājapeya sacrifice³⁴.

³⁰ Gune (1993: 161).

³¹ *ata eva yad ghrāṇabhakṣo vihitah surāyās tathā paśor ālambhanaṃ na hiṃsā iti bhāgavatam saṃgacchate.* (BVBh: 170)

³² *pūrvapakṣyāśayānavabodhanibandhanatvāt. na hi pūrvapakṣiṇo hiṃsātvena pāpam āpādayanti. kintu niśiddhatvena.* (BVBh: 178)

³³ *evaṃ ca veṇīpraveśanasahagamanādisarvavilopāpattiḥ.* (BVBh: 179)

³⁴ *evaṃ vājapeye ‘pi surāgrahajanyapāpāpattir durvārā eva.* (BVBh: 179)

Now Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa quotes the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* verse (XI.5.3) once again, along with additional passages from the *Yogavāsiṣṭha Rāmāyaṇa* (III.82.46³⁵), *Skandapurāṇa* (III.11.25³⁶) and *Manusmṛti* (V.39³⁷, 44³⁸) to show that even if the meaning of killing is admitted in case of the verbal root *ālabh-*, how still on account of not being prohibited, the ritual killing of animals in Vedic sacrifices, and other acts like ritual suicide, etc. do not amount to killing and hence should not be considered as the cause of sin at all³⁹. Thus, since for Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa, there occurs no killing at all in Vedic rituals, according to the scriptural authorities, in the sense that it is not prohibited, the prohibition finds no scope of application.

On this view, Vedic ritual killing is not bad neither on account of being enjoined by the Vedas, nor because it is killing for the sake of the ritual, nor even because it is such an instance of killing for the sake of man, for which there exists no declamatory statement or prescription for expiation. It is rather because such apparent acts of killing are proved to be no killing at all based on the authority of the Smṛti and Purāṇic passages relied upon and cited by Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa. It is if and only if such apparent acts of killing were also deemed actually to be so by authoritative sacred texts, that they could have been claimed as causing sin. In this sense, Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa's solution has a considerable amount of affinity with Rāmānuja's solution, though a naïve identification of the two approaches will be incorrect.

Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa also brings up for discussion the Sāṃkhya teacher, Pāṇcaśikha's claim, quoted in Vyāsa's commentary on Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* (II.13) that in case of Vedic animal sacrifices too "Let there be very little mixture (of sin), which can be easily gotten rid of, and pardonable, and that it is not capable of destructing the virtue (of the

³⁵ *neṣyasyanyānvadhyajanān himsā naiṣām ca dharmataḥ | svadharmeṇa ca himsaiva mahākaruṇayā samā ||* (BVBh: 179)

³⁶ *kṣatradharmarato'pi tvam vṛthā himsām parityaja.* (BVBh: 179) '[...] even while following the duty of a *kṣatriya*, avoid purposeless harm to life'. (tr. Gune 1978: 180)

³⁷ *yajñārthaṃ paśavaḥ sṛṣṭāḥ svayameva svayambhuvā | yajño'sya bhutyai sarvasya tasmādyajñe vadhov'vadhah ||* (BVBh: 179) 'the creator himself created the animals for the sake of sacrifice. Sacrifice is for everyone's prosperity. Therefore the killing in sacrifice is not killing'. (tr. Gune 1978: 180).

³⁸ *yā vedavihitā himsā niyatāsmīn carācare | ahimsāmeva tāṃ vidyādvēdāddharmo hi nirbabhau ||* (BVBh: 179)

³⁹ *pāpābhāvasiddher na doṣaḥ.* (BVBh: 179) Also the following observation of Gune on this passage is worth quoting – "All these statements go to establish that killing of sacrificial animals by the Veda is not to be counted as harm to life, and thus cannot be the cause of demerit and the resulting suffering". (BVBh: 180)

sacrifice), because of the abundance of virtues⁴⁰. Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa replies by observing that such a claim about Vedic sacrifices as leading to small amount of sin is untenable since it is in contradiction with the statements of the *Manusmṛti* (V. 39, 44) which deny the sacrifice's connection with any amount of sin whatsoever⁴¹. And even if a little amount of sin were to be generated by the Vedic animal sacrifices, then it would be useless to restrict the scope of the prohibition to mitigate the amount of sin⁴². This is explained by Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa with the help of a principle based on day to day life: if a woman goes out in public unveiled once, then there is no use of her covering herself the next time she goes out. Similarly once it is to be admitted that Vedic ritual killings lead to sins, it would not be different from sins generated by killings non-ritually. Under such circumstances, the prohibition would not find any scope of restricting its application to non-ritual killings and it would ultimately fail to distinguish between ritual and non-ritual killings⁴³. And it would be superfluous to use this prohibition just for mitigating the amount of sin generated by Vedic ritual killings, because even such a small amount would ultimately keep eligible people from performing such sacrifices. Thus, as the *Nirāñjanī* commentary observes, it is on the strength of the prescription for Vedic ritual killing alone that the restriction of the scope of application of the prohibition is to be ascertained.

⁴⁰ The full statement of Pañcaśikha as found quoted in *Vyāsabhāṣya* reads as follows: *syāt svalpaḥ saṅkaraḥ suparihāraḥ sapratyavamarśaḥ kuśalasya na apakarṣāya alam. kasmāt. kuśalam hi me bahvanyad asti yatra ayam āvāpam gataḥ svarge 'py apakarṣam alpam kariṣyati iti. Vyāsabhāṣya* (YSBV: 247). 'A little mixture (of bad action) can be removed (by expiation) or can be borne; it is not capable of reducing the (*karmāśaya*) of good deeds. Why is this so? Because I have a lot of merit in which this (small) evil has been merged; so it will only cause a slight reduction of merit in heaven as well'. (tr. Rukmani 2010: 247)

⁴¹ *uktavacanabhyo niṣedhāpravrṭter uktatvāt. (BVBh: 191)*

⁴² *na ca tataḥ pāpasya svalpatvakalpanam yuktam. (BVBh: 191)*

⁴³ *sakṛt pravṛttāyāḥ kim avagunṭhanena iti nyāyena niṣedhakalpyapāpasya sāmānyāḥ ekasaṅkocadvāsambhavāt. saṅkocasya apy ekadeśabādhatvāt. (BVBh: 191)* '[Once one accepts that], by virtue of the prohibition [such as *na himṣyāt*], sacrificial killing does [result in] sin, [so that such killing can be like any other], it is impossible to restrict [the prohibition] in respect to that [sin which is] the same [for any killing]. This by the principle that, once a woman has gone out unveiled, it is useless for her to wear a veil later. For, [now] the restriction [on the prohibitions serves only to mitigate the sin which results from killing, not to eliminate it, so that the restriction is itself] partly [subject to] being invalid'. (tr. Gune 1978: 192)

9. *Defending ritual killing in 20th century Bengal: Gurupada Hāldāra*

In the context of a welcome speech organized by the Vaṅgīya Brāhmaṇa Sabhā on 6th Āśvina, 1342 B.S. on a visit of the Kāñcī Śaṅkarācārya, Svāmī Candraśekharendra Sarasvatī, Gurupada Hāldāra, a very well-known scholar of Sanskrit philosophy and the Tantras, very renowned author of a thick-volume history of Sanskrit grammar in Bengali, and also one of the trustees of the Kālīghāṭa Temple of Calcutta, spoke at length on the non-maleficent nature of the Vedic animal sacrifices. This lecture was presided over by Pañcana Tarkaratna, a Sanskrit scholar of national repute, who wrote original Sanskrit commentaries on *Sāṃkhyatattvakaumudī*, *Vaiśeṣikasūtropaskāra*, and most notably the Śaktibhāṣyas on the *Brahmasūtra*, *Śrīmadbhagavadgīta*, *Īsopaniṣad*, *Devīsaptāśatī*, etc. Hāldāra's choice of this subject was triggered, as mentioned by him⁴⁴ by the apparent sensation caused by the public vow taken by a certain Rāmacandra Śarmā to fast until ritual animal killing were to be discontinued in the Kālīghāṭa temple⁴⁵. It is to be noted that discussion on the non-maleficent nature of animal sacrifice offered to deities is not new to the Bengali intellectual and cultural scenario. In the context of justifying animal sacrifice dedicated to Goddess Durgā on the 9th day of Durgāpūjā, the principal religious festival of the Bengalis, Raghunandana Bhaṭṭācārya, also known as Smārta Raghunandana, the famous law-digest writer of medieval Bengal, discussed in the *Durgāpūjātattva* sub-section of his Smṛti digest, *Tithitattva*, the Bhāṭṭa and Prābhākara responses to the Sāṃkhya charge of Vedic ritual killing being adulterated by small amount of sin. Also, finding the Bhāṭṭa and Prābhākara solutions to be inadequate, he offered the solution offered by his own teacher, who is most probably Śrīnāthācāryacūḍāmaṇi. In course of his speech, which is printed as an appendix to Hāldāra's Bengali book, *Vaidyaka-vṛttānta*, Hāldāra, with a view to making a case for Vedic ritual killing, referred to the anti-killing views of the Sāṃkhya philosophers, and their critiques by Kumārila, Rāmānuja, the Bhāgavata and Manusmṛti passages referred to by Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa. He also referred to the defence of Vedic ritual killing expressed by Nimbārka, Madhva, Vallabha, Baladeva Vidyabhūṣaṇa in their respective commentaries on *Brahmasūtra* 3.1.25, all of which agree on the point of Vedic ritual kill-

⁴⁴ Hāldāra 1954: 631.

⁴⁵ No further details are available of him except for the mention by Hāldāra (p. 631) that Śarmā was motivated by a certain group which campaigned for abandoning animal sacrifice dedicated to deities and advocated the execution of animal slaughter 'in slaughter houses'.

ing being not maleficent on account of being explicitly prescribed by the Vedas. They also agree that non-ritual killing is maleficent because it is not explicitly prescribed by the sacred texts and hence contradicted by the general prohibition, “One should not kill living beings”. However, Hāldāra uncritically extends these defences to the sphere of ritual killing prescribed in the Tāntrika rituals and seeks to establish the validity of Tāntrika ritual texts based on passages quoted from the *Bṛhaddharmapurāṇa*, etc. Hāldāra further lapses into a discussion of how Vaiṣṇavism is not opposed to Vedic and Tāntrika ritual killing and for that reason to Tāntrism. A couple of extracts from Hāldāra’s speech will illustrate his approach –

“Given the views of these principal teachers (*ācārya*) the Vaiṣṇava society never objected to the sacrifice of animals. Despite they themselves do not eat meat, yet the Vaiṣṇavas performed animal killing in Vedic rituals, because there is no scope for substitute (*vikalpa*) or secondary substitutes (*anukalpa*) in Vedic ritual actions unlike Tāntrika rituals. Although some among them opted for sacrifice of sugarcane, pumpkin gourd, etc. in Tāntrika rituals, yet they do not object to the animal sacrifices performed by the Śāktas, because Vaiṣṇavas are not opposed to the Tantras.”⁴⁶

“The difference between the Vedas and Tantras regarding ritual animal sacrifice is this that, animal sacrifices have to be performed in those Vedic rituals in regard to which animal sacrifice has been prescribed; but with regard to those Tāntrika rituals in regard to which animal sacrifice has been prescribed, secondary substitutes (*anukalpa*) for specific eligible performers (*adhikāriviśeṣa*) can be used. For this reason, Vaiṣṇavas or virtuous people opt for one of the secondary substitutes in the context of Tāntrika rituals. However, this suggests sheer feebleness of the mind. For, even if animal sacrifice is performed in accordance with prescription and without any desire, the Vaiṣṇava religion of the Vaiṣṇava or the virtuousness of virtuous people is not impeded.”⁴⁷

⁴⁶ *śāstrotkahi sāsambandhe ei sakal pradhān pradhān ācāryagaṇer matāmat dekhiyā vaiṣṇavasamāj kakhano paśvāmbhane āpatti karen nāi. vaiṣṇavagaṇ svaya nivṛttamā sa haileo vedotktakarmasamūhe tāhāra paśubali diten, kāraṇ tantrer nyāy vedokta karme vikalpa anukalpa nāi. tāntrik anuṣṭhāne tāhāder madhye keha keha iṣṭkuṣmāṇḍādi bali dileo śaktaṅgaṇer paśubalite tāhāra kakhano bādḥā dibār ceṣṭā karen nā, kāraṇa vaiṣṇavagaṇ tantravirodhī nahan.* (Hāldāra 1954: 642)

⁴⁷ *paśubali sambandhe veda o tantrer pāṛthakya ei ye, ye sakal vedokta karme paśvāmbhane vihitā haiyāche sei sakal karme paśvāmbhane arthāt paśubali ditei haibe, kintu ye sakal tantrokta karme paśubali vihitā haiyāche sei sakal karme adhikāriviśeṣe anukalpao calite pare. ihā abaśya hṛdayadaurbalyera paricayamātra. kāraṇa vidhipūrvaka niṣkāmbhāve paśubalī dileo vaiṣṇaver vaiṣṇavadharma bā sāttvikabhāvapanna vyaktir sāttvikabhāva vyāhata hay nā.* (Hāldāra 1954: 646)

In the first citation, it is also to be noted that Hāldāra implicitly develops a connection between Vedic ritual killing of animals and the consumption of non-vegetarian food. This connection makes special sense in the Bengali context because of the continuing disrepute of Bengalis for consuming non-vegetarian food in general and fish and sometimes meat in particular, among the allegedly non-vegetarian populations of the northern part of India⁴⁸. This comment makes further sense if the desperate efforts made by the late medieval Bengali Smṛti monograph writer, Viśvanātha Nyāyapañcana to defend in *Māṃsātattvaviveka* (MTV) the consumption of goat meat as a non-discordant custom prevalent in the whole of India, by appealing almost exclusively to the authority of Smṛti and Purāṇa passages, are kept in mind⁴⁹. Thus, the defence of Vedic ritual killing seems to be have been upheld not only as a common point of convergence of the allegedly hostile Vaiṣṇava and

⁴⁸ Cf. “In Bengal, with the multitude of rivers and streams and canals and a Polynesian culture with proto-Australoid origins, it is not at all surprising that fish should be another staple, although Aryan civilization never looked at all favourably on this fondness of the Bengali people for fish. The Bengalis never had any particular aversion for towards meat either, whereas Aryan India did; from the seventh and sixth centuries BC in particular, especially in Brāhmaṇism and more so in Buddhism and Jainism, a moral objection to the killing of life for food gradually restricted acceptable foods, and Aryan Brāhmaṇical India came to develop a preference for a vegetarian diet. There can be no doubt that this influence extended into Bengal too, although Bhavadēva Bhaṭṭa, one of Bengal’s most eminent Sanskrit scholars, had little alternative to supporting, in a lengthy argument, the very popular and deep-rooted custom of eating meat and fish by the people of Bengal. Another of Bengal’s Smṛti scholars, Śrīnāthācārya, did the same; quoting two verses from the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* he tried to show that, except for a few holy days, on no day was the consumption of fish or meat an abomination.” (Ray 1994: 363-364)

⁴⁹ Cf.– *brahmāvartabrahmarśideśamadyadeśā”ryāvarteṣu mā sabhakṣaṇācāra ājāniko’vigītaḥ pratīyata eva. ye tu kalivarjyatayā mā saśrāddhe vivadante steyānyamahāpātakaniṣkṛtir iti kalivarjyatayā uktam api brahmahatyātatsa sargaprāyaścitta dhanalobhād upadiśanti mātrsapīṇḍānayane ca na vivadante rāgadoṣadūṣitacetaso devānā priyās te kena śikṣaṇīyā ity ala mā sa vidvaṣḍbhiḥ saugatamatānusāribhiḥ saha śrameṇa iti.* ‘The custom of eating goat meat in Brahmāvarta, Brahmarśideśa, Madhyadeśa and Āryavarta is understood to be without any discord. Those who dispute [the performance of] post-funeral rituals [of deceased relatives] involving meat on account of it being prohibited in the Kali Age [by citing the following passage] “escape from great religious demerits except that of theft”, [they] teach out of greed for wealth the expiation for killing a Brāhmaṇa and association with it, although it (i.e., the said expiation) has been mentioned as something prohibited in the Kali Age; [but] they do not dispute the bringing of (i.e., the marrying of) [one’s] mother’s relative. Who should educate them – the favourite of gods (i.e., ignorant ones) – whose minds are polluted by the defect of passion? Hence enough of efforts [made] with the followers of Saugata (i.e., the Buddhists), who hate meat’. (MTV. Nyāyapañcāna 1927: 28-29)

Tāntrika religions at least at the ideological level, but also as a device of accomplishing socio-religious acceptability by the Bengalis to the rest of India.

10. *Summary-cum-Conclusion*

Referring to the aforesaid discussion it may be observed that the Bhāṭṭa and Prābhākara views on the topic are based on a strong rational defence backgrounded by the supreme authority of the Vedas in matters concerning religious duty (*dharma*) and contrary-to-religious duty (*adharma*). By contrast, Rāmānuja's defence is based solely on the authority of eulogistic Vedic statements, where the role of reason is minimal. Appayyadiṣita's upholding of the specificity principle while defending Vedic ritual killing is also necessitated by his passages from specific sacred texts (e.g. *Manusmṛti*) which prescribe such killing as cannot be brought into the orbit of killing for the sake of ritual (*kratvartha hiṃsā*). Moreover, while on the Kumārila and Prābhākara views, Vedic ritual killings are kept outside the scope of the prohibition on account of their being explicitly enjoined by the Vedas, for Kaṇḍabhaṭṭa it is so because these acts do not lead to any sin on the authority of Smṛti and Purāṇa passages stating that they are to be excepted from the scope of the prohibition. By denying the Sāṃkhya proposal for mitigation of sin, Kaṇḍabhaṭṭa seems to adopt an avowedly extremist position in the form of no-sin-at all vs. sin in fullest measure. Rāmānuja's defence strategy, in contrast, is mainly based on showing the pleasurable and more desirable outcome of the ritual killing for the sacrificed animal and not by considering whether or not it is explicitly enjoined by Vedic injunctions or the possibility of it leading to any sin is explicitly denied by Vedic statements. Further, while Kaṇḍabhaṭṭa relies on the authority of sacred texts to show that apparent acts of killing are in reality not deemed to be so by such sacred texts and hence do not cause sin, Rāmānuja, resorting to the analogy of medical surgery, shows how sacred texts show a little and apparent suffering caused by Vedic ritual ultimately leads to an incomparably higher good. This also helps Rāmānuja explain killing in the Mahābhārata war. Appayyadiṣita seems to have trodden a middle path in the sense that he has not denied that there are Vedic rituals which despite being prescribed cause sin, but he distinguished them from those which do not cause sin on the ground that no expiation is mentioned for the latter.

What is also to be noted is that although there is an apparent similarity between the views of Kumārila and the Prābhākara philosopher (discussed in *Nyāyamañjarī* 5.2) because both accept killing enjoined by a Vedic prescription (e.g. Agnīśomīya paśuyāga), yet the Prābhākara

classification of killing into *puruṣārtha* and *kratvartha* has the disadvantage of ultimately boiling down to, as shown by Appayyadīkṣita in *Parimala*, *puruṣārtha* killing which one commits out of hatred, i.e., independently of being prompted by the injunction of any sacred text; and hence no more being able to remain outside the purview of the prohibition. It has an additional disadvantage of not being able to justify the qualifications, *puruṣārtha* and *kratvartha*, because the prohibition concerns killing in general and does not mention any such distinction. By contrast, Kumāṛila's stress on the fact of the Agnīśomīya animal sacrifice being enjoined by the Vedic prescription serves the same purpose of exclusion of ritual killing from the purview of the prohibition as the Prābhākara classification of it as *kratvartha* does without having to face the challenge of becoming *puruṣārtha* in an extended sense. Also, while for the Prābhākara, the conflict takes place between *puruṣārtha hiṃsā* and *kratvartha hiṃsā*, where *kratvartha hiṃsā* is enjoined, for Kumāṛila, the conflict is between an injunction (about ritual killing), which is specific in scope and a prohibition which is general in scope.

The aforesaid discussion about the various patterns of justifying the non-maleficent nature of Vedic ritual killing implicitly shows how on two very basic and related points of Vedic and Veda-based religion – the authority of sacred texts and the unimpugnable character of religious practices, including sacrifices – a good number of philosophers and theologians, whose philosophical oppositions are otherwise too broad and too well-known to be separately mentioned, unite. It also implies an apparent popular unity among different kinds of religious texts like Vedas, Purāṇas, etc. which are generally hierarchically related in traditional philosophico-religious discourses. This apparent unity was appropriated even in twentieth century undivided Bengal to provide a meeting point for followers of Vaiṣṇavism and Tāntrism, which are otherwise popularly thought to be mutually hostile. Such defences in their questionable bearings on the question of the non-vegetarianism may also be seen as attempts made by Bengalis at becoming socio-religiously acceptable to the allegedly vegetarian populations of North and South India.

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