



Embracing the City: A Modernising Influence in Eighteenth Century India

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MODERNITY, here, is taken as something new – a disjunction from the past; and the city as a place of worldly transactions, a place where disparate forces naturally operate together; as distinct from ‘the forest’, a place of renunciation – the goal of Indian ascetics. This paper examines the modernising influence presented in *Bodhasāra*, a Sanskrit text written by Narahari in eighteenth century India. In particular, it presents an extended metaphor that clarifies the spiritual relationship between masculine and feminine, representing head and heart, or knowledge and emotion.

Over the last decade scholars have awoken to the treasury of pre-colonial Indian Sanskrit texts that had lain unnoticed and were in danger of being lost. They are treasures in their own right, and vital to any serious study of the impact of colonialism, which has been assumed to be the bringer of modernity to India. Sheldon Pollock asks, how can we know what changes colonialism effected in the intellectual realm if we don't know what was there beforehand? Many early Sanskrit works have been thoroughly translated, studied and retranslated but, until recently, later Sanskrit works have been largely overlooked, primarily because they were considered inferior. Pollock notes that the late pre-colonial period has been particularly devalued as an object of study “by the colonial-era narrative of an Indian decline and fall before 1800”.² He stresses the newness of the social history of Indian intellectuals as a field of enquiry, and the need for more research³. Few eighteenth century Sanskrit texts, a prime source of the intellectual climate immediately before colonialism,



have been translated into English and fewer and fewer scholars are now able to read these materials.

Bodhasāra was written by Narahari in the eighteenth century, on the very eve of colonialism. The worth of *Bodhasāra* is attested by the number of manuscripts found in various parts of India, by the commentary added by Divākara in 1816, by its selection for publication as part of the Benares Sanskrit Series in 1905, and by its translations into Bengali and Hindi in the early twentieth century. *Bodhasāra* has been quoted by several Sanskrit authors⁴, and the printed edition of *Bodhasāra* is widely distributed throughout the world. Dasgupta describes *Bodhasāra* as “one of the important products of the late eighteenth century”.⁵

The translation and study of *Bodhasāra* is an important supplement to the collaborative project “Sanskrit Knowledge Systems on the Eve of Colonialism (SKSEC)” initiated in 2001 to investigate the substance and social context of Sanskrit science and scholarship from about 1550 to 1750.⁶ The SKSEC project, along with Sheldon Pollock’s own work, has reinvigorated interest in a vital period of Indian history and is still providing invaluable insights. *Bodhasāra* actually extends this study because it was written at the end of the eighteenth century and is a work on *moksa* (liberation). Sudipta Kaviraj connects papers in the SKSEC project with a larger argument about a ‘proto-modernity’ in India during the Mughal rule. It appears that from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, authors in a wide range of intellectual disciplines start to place a new value on innovation – on doing something new, or in a distinctly new way.⁷ This can be seen as the beginning of an indigenous Indian modernity, that is, an undermining of traditional intellectual systems and practices, before and without the force of colonial culture. (Kaviraj 138) Thus, there could have been two separate ‘ends’ to the Indian traditional-medieval world. Colonialism as a second wave of modernity possibly destroyed or redirected the earlier, as yet immature, wave. (Kaviraj 138-9) These findings suggest the possibility of a missed opportunity for a modern Sanskrit culture, and *Bodhasāra* becomes a valuable example of what that modernity could have been like.

Answering the question 'What is *Bodhasāra*?' is not a simple undertaking. *Bodhasāra* does not fit into a clear genre and Narahari's *sampradāya* (lineage) and personal background is well hidden. At first, *Bodhasāra* reads like a Vedānta encyclopaedia: the range of topics covered is amazing. There are sections on praise of *guru*, *viveka* (discernment), *vairāgya* (detachment), *dharma*, many types of *yoga* (*patañjali*, *hatha*, *mantra*, *laya*, *bhakti*, *rāja*), the daily rituals of the sages, *anubhava* (understanding), *nirvāna*, *brahman*, bathing in the Ganges, greatness of mind, *jīvanmukti* (liberation while living), worship of Śiva – to name a few. But there is an elegant simplicity and clarity, and something running beneath the surface of the text. It gradually becomes clear that *Bodhasāra* is about the proper attitude to life. All the systems, *Nyāya*, *Vaiśeṣika*, *Mīmāṃsā*, *Sāṃkhya*, *Vedānta* and the variety of *Yogas* are validated and liberation is said to be available for everyone, even those not qualified to study the Veda – provided there is right knowledge and understanding. However to attain liberation, one's own will must be in accord with the knowledge acquired. Narahari understood that the accord comes from a mature union of knowledge and emotion, of head and heart, and involves every aspect of one's being. He has used his skills as a poet and, when his work is read in depth, one is struck by the emotional flavour that permeates it.

In Indian poetics, nine aesthetic flavours known as *rasas* are traditionally accepted. These *rasas* are *śrngāra*, *karuna*, *śānta*, *raudra*, *vīra*, *adbhuta*, *hāsyā*, *bhayānaka* and *bībhatsa* (erotic, pathetic, peaceful, furious, heroic, wonderful, comic, terrifying and disgusting).⁸ Some dispute *śānta* (peaceful) as a valid *rasa*. *Rasas* are linked with the permanent emotional moods: *rati*, *śoka*, *nirveda*, *krodha*, *utsāha*, *vismaya*, *hāsa*, *bhaya* and *jugupsā* (love, sorrow, detachment, anger, energy, wonder, laughter, fear and disquiet). (Bhanja 76) In poetic works these permanent moods are generated through characters, situations and catalysts such as rain-clouds, moonlight, bees, and so on, and the audience receives the corresponding flavour, the *rasa*.⁹ Usually one *rasa* is dominant throughout, and only certain ancillary *rasas* can be included to avoid disrupting the overall effect. (Bhanja 111-9) Two well-respected Indian scholars, Anandavardhana, in the ninth century, and Abhinavagupta, in the late tenth to early eleventh century,

redefined *rasa* as not only an emotional response, but also a conscious response as knowledge. For them, as soon as the *rasa* is recognized, the reader becomes *sahrdaya*, the same-hearted one, equal to the poet.¹⁰ Natalie Isayeva explains this as an ontological communion between the poet and the listener. She writes:

The vibrating joy which accompanies aesthetical pleasure, is essentially not an emotional reaction but rather a moment of epiphany, the joyful amazement which comes with the successful solution of a complicated word-riddle. (173)

Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta considered the *śānta rasa* (peaceful) to be the basis of all the other *rasas*. Anandavardhana declared:

The goal of men, defined as liberation, is (regarded) as the only higher (goal) in the śāstras (sacred texts), while in poetry it is the rasa of peace (śānta-rasa), defined as the blossoming of happiness brought about by the quenching of thirst... Since it is the main essence, its meaning can only be conveyed by suggestion and not by literal means. And indeed, the meaning of the main essence shines forth much more beautifully when it is not conveyed literally, in (ordinary) words.¹¹

Abhinavagupta likened this peace *rasa* (*śānta rasa*) to the higher Self (*ātman*) and explained that it assumes the shapes of all moods superimposed on it, like erotic love etc., but still flashes through them as soon as the knowledge shines. (Isayeva 178) Like the higher self, the peace *rasa* cannot be directly described but can only be suggested.

A commonly held view is that works such as *Bodhasāra* are merely *bhakti*, religious devotion. *Bodhasāra*, however, fits well with Anandavardhana and Abinavagupta's understanding of *rasa*. In *Bodhasāra*, the *śānta-rasa* (peaceful) is predominant, the *śrngāra-rasa* (erotic love) is also present, and it is possible for discerning readers to become the same-hearted one (*sahrdaya*). Panditarāja Jaganatha, considered by many scholars to be the last of the great writers on Indian poetics, dismisses religious devotion (*bhakti*) as a *rasa*. (Bhanja 109-11, 289) He says that the permanent mood *rati* (love) gives rise to the *śrngāra-rasa* (erotic love) only when there is reciprocal love between a man (lover) and a woman (beloved). But when the beloved is a teacher, son or God, the *rati* becomes a transitory mood.



(Bhanja 79) Thus, *bhakti*, love of God, is also a transitory mood. Jaganatha further says that the *śānta-rasa* (peaceful) arises from the permanent mood *nirveda* (detachment) when worldly objects are renounced due to discernment between eternal and non-eternal objects. (Bhanja 295) But *nirveda* (detachment) becomes the transitory mood of despondency when worldly objects are renounced because of abuse, contempt, disease, beating, poverty, loss of desired objects or seeing the prosperity of others. (Bhanja 213) Jaganatha goes on to describe *śānta* and *śrngāra* as conflicting *rasas*,¹² but Narahari, in the same way as Abhinavagupta,¹³ utilises *śrngāra-rasa* obliquely for the sake of indicating and awakening *śānta-rasa*. All this seems to indicate that *Bodhasāra* is a poetic work rather than a *bhakti* work, and that Narahari understood poetic theory and Abhinavagupta's definition of *rasa* and *sahridaya*. By comparison, *bhakti* works usually openly and ardently speak of and describe the love of God.

Bodhasāra is a simple but striking synopsis of the whole Vedānta philosophical order. It has a personal air, as though addressed to people well known. It is not a mere regurgitation of traditional sources, but a creative piece of literature springing from these sources. Stories from the *Purānas* come through, as do concepts from the Upanisads, Bhagavad-Gīta and many other sources. It is reminiscent of a performance, a play. This work, or parts of it, may well have been presented at a gathering such as a *kavisammelana* (gathering of poets). The embedded wit and wisdom that give rise to multiple meanings are reminiscent of Shakespeare's plays. Like Shakespeare's plays, *Bodhasāra* is interlaced with characters and situations to entertain the masses at a superficial level, while delighting the wise with profound insights.

We may never know who Narahari was, and where and when he wrote *Bodhasāra*. The only mention of his name is in the last section of *Bodhasāra*, and there is no other trace of biographical information. It is as though Narahari has deliberately left out his personal identity. In his commentary, Divākara brings out in great detail the point that there is no substantial difference between himself, the author of the commentary, and Narahari, the author of the root text, because they are writing with the same intention.¹⁴ This indicates an established tradition of dissolving



individual identity. Divākara also makes the point that, when Narahari says that *Bodhasāra* is presented “to please the wise”, he includes himself among them. That is, he is not separating himself from ‘other wise ones’. His work, *Bodhasāra*, is for himself as well as others, because of the oneness of himself and other wise ones in *brahman*. (Narahari 2-3) Jan Houben clarifies our understanding of this remarkable lack of historical referentiality by investigating the ritual system adhered to by the majority of Sanskrit authors. Houben brings out Rappaport’s point that participation in ritual has the capacity to create eternity as an experiential and communal reality. Participation in history, on the other hand, has the capacity to undo eternity by replacing eternity with linear time. He quotes Rappaport:

Whereas other conceptions of eternity enlarge lives by offering relief from time’s undoing through respites in intervals during which a sense of immortality may be fleetingly grasped, the numbering of years, stretching backward and forward relentlessly and forever emphasises the transience and insignificance of human’s ephemeral spans...¹⁵

These very different perspectives – that of a ritual system and a historical system – do not mix well. Each works well as a single perspective, but when they interact, those who live in a world of history bemoan the lack of historical documentation of the others, and those who live in ritual time resist the loss of eternity.

One of the final verses of *Bodhasāra* tells that, having examined the fragrant-smelling flowers of the blooming mantra-trees in the Upanisad¹⁶ forest, Narahari has presented fresh flowers made of words. (Narahari 969-70) *Bodhasāra* is a retelling of traditional sources rather than a repetition. It could be described as Narahari’s memoir, although the style and content is very different from what is usually known as ‘memoir’. *Bodhasāra* is a presentation and celebration of Narahari’s life experiences of the Hindu spiritual realm. It celebrates liberation while living as the ultimate human experience, where liberation is understood to be release from bondage through a continuing experience of wholeness, rather than release from the world. There is no need to become an ascetic, or to die, to attain liberation. Narahari even says that if liberation is not attained



whilst one is alive, there is no possibility of it being attained after death. *Bodhasāra* personifies grammatically feminine words, such as *buddhi* (the discerning faculty), *vidyā* (knowledge) and *avidyā* (ignorance) as women, and grammatically masculine words, such as *ahamkāra* (ego) and *purusa* (supreme spirit) as men. At times, it even addresses the mind and desires as though they are people. *Bodhasāra* turns traditional stories and concepts into personal practices. It is rather like a series of post-cards, where each post-card is an entity in itself as well as contributing to the overall story. The term post-card is used because each section relays a particular succinct message, often with visual overtones, and with a personal air, as though addressed to those the writer knows. Vocatives are used, such as, O dear one, O friend, O son, O sage, O blessed one, O intelligent one¹⁷. Clearly, the audience knows the source stories and philosophical concepts very well.

The metaphors in *Bodhasāra*, featuring secular scenarios, are many and varied. They enable the mind to steadily hold the abstract concepts and contemplate them fully. There is an underlying theme throughout of union of the individual and universal. This spiritual union is evoked through metaphors with a double meaning, of both worldly and spiritual love. Women are the stars and there is at times an erotic flavour. One extended metaphor personifies *buddhi* as a housewife, and *ahamkāra* as her husband. *Catura*, personifying intellect (*buddhi*), separates from her husband, ego (*ahamkāra*), to indulge herself with another husband, the universal self. But ego is needed to live in the world, so free living is the way forward. This section was written to dispel the doubt that a non-dual disposition is impossible while the ego remains.

Four verses on Free Living:¹⁸

*Now, to be heard by the worthy, with focused attention, O sage.
four verses showing free living, the totality of the truth,*

*Leaving her natural husband,¹⁹ the householder²⁰ is unrestrained
As a roamer called *Catura*, with another husband²¹ she goes.²²*



*Separating from her Ego, daily discerning the fourth state,²³
A man-chaser, fanatical, with another husband she goes.²⁴*

*Finally, unable to act, he is defeated by his wife.
At the time of her enjoyment,²⁵ abandoning his home, he goes.²⁶*

*But with this kind of behaviour, what kind of marriage could it be!
With the elapsing of some days, free living comes about.²⁷
The meaning is that for those with self-knowledge, even in the presence of
the annulled ego, there is no shattering of a higher union.²⁸*

These verses are full of Sanskrit word-puns, and the whole section has a double meaning. Despite sounding like a television soap-opera, when properly understood, a deep spiritual meaning unfolds. This translation, the first into English, has been rendered into verse imitating the Sanskrit meter and culminating in a final prose sentence, to create a particular atmosphere. The verse form alerts the reader to the possibility of various levels of meaning. The footnotes, although a distraction, are necessary: including the two meanings given in the commentary makes it a rich, full translation. This situation, viewed in real life, could be distressing or even shocking. But here, viewed aesthetically, it can be understood objectively and, for those interested, can provide valuable insights for living as a *jīvanmukta* (one liberated while living).

The name of the section, *svecchacāra*, literally “behaving as one likes” or “loose-living”, is commonly used as a derogatory term to refer to those who don’t follow the prescribed conventions. Narahari has used this word to describe enlightened living, living in the present, living in the presence of *brahman*, literally that which is infinitely large. The use of the vocative in Sanskrit tells us whom Narahari was addressing. In these verses, when Narahari says “O sage”, he is addressing someone mature in this knowledge. Narahari is clarifying in these four verses how, by irreverence for the ego and love for one’s own true self, it is possible to maintain a spiritual disposition while the ego remains.

The key is that these verses are to be appreciated by those with *śrī* and *ekāgracetā*, the auspicious or prosperous ones who have one-pointed



attention; possibly the wealthy, even kings, and/or yogis firm in *samādhi*. For others, they can be totally misleading. Narahari is not advocating perverse morals, but is offering a spiritual solution for those who desire liberation while living.

Narahari has personified various Sanskrit words, grammatically feminine and masculine, as women and men respectively. Ego, *ahamkāra*, is personified as the husband. The female householder, personifying *buddhi*, the intellect, is named *Catura*. *Catura* means shrewd, but also the number four. She is in fact shrewd because she is able to discern *turīya*, the fourth state, which is the awareness that pervades and transcends the three states of waking, dreaming and sleep. When recognised, *turīya* brings a wholeness that dissolves differences. She is described as the one who moves about because she moves freely with this awareness and is not attached in turn to the three states of waking, dream and sleep. (*Abhīcārīnī* usually means an adulteress.) She is described as a man-chaser and devoted to another because she is turning away from her responsibilities. (*Pumscalī* means a courtesan or unchaste woman.) The other husband she sports with is the non-dual *brahman* beyond words and mind. There is a play on the word '*para*' as meaning both 'other' and 'supreme'. She is able to sport with *brahman* by becoming one with her inner Self.

An interesting aspect of this illustration is the roles given to the masculine and feminine players. The female is the star, at once deceptive and despicable, but also intelligent. She definitely has the upper hand in the relationship with her husband, ego. She is the one who leads and initiates a liaison, which renders the masculine ego useless. Most Sanskrit Vedantin works are renowned for their disparagement of women, so Narahari's favouring of the wife is a welcome surprise, a modernising influence. Usually the female is tied to worldly activities, but here the male, the ego, represents worldly responsibilities. On the other hand she needs direction – she has gone astray. She has taken another lover, which is punishable by death in some cultures. This metaphor is pragmatic, designed to shock those who will recognise its implications. It has an urban, sophisticated feel; a sense of free will and individualism.

In Vedānta the ego and the *buddhi* (intellect or discerning faculty) are



both part of the *antahkarana* – the inner organ, or mind. Usually, the ego rises up and controls the discerning faculty, binding it to the body and world. Seekers of liberation try to eliminate ego, but Narahari saw that understanding both the inner and the outer world is essential for grasping reality. In these verses Narahari is showing how to spiritually embrace the ego and the city of worldly transactions. This metaphor introduces a modernity that is still modern for most traditional Hindu religions even today. The ego becomes a subordinate, a brother, rather than a master, a husband. Divākara, in his commentary, portrays the ego here as the conventions of family, lineage, caste, stage-of-life etc. In the following section, Narahari takes the liberation of the ego further and likens the ego to a painted snake. (577-9) When the fear that the snake is harmful dissipates, it can be played with. In the same way when the fear that the ego is harmful dissipates, it can be played with.

Bodhasāra depicts Narahari's world-view. The state of liberation while living (*jīvanmukti*) is for Narahari the great festival of both duality and non-duality (manifestation and transcendence) – the 'play' of life. (723-4) There is no distaste for the ego or for the world. For Narahari, *yogic-samādhi* is not the final state; one needs to see the world as it really is. Narahari presents his vision of the whole world as nothing but consciousness. Particular examples are the river Yamunā (503-9) and the stone cow (509-13). Subject-object consciousness, he says, is the magic of consciousness. (520-1)

Why did Narahari write *Bodhasāra*? The opening verse says that *Bodhasāra* is presented "only because of some wonder, with a desire to please the wise". (2) Clearly, Narahari has experienced something extraordinary. The constant clarification of the understanding behind Hindu practices and the necessary attitude for liberation may indicate that this was lacking in his audience. His validation of all methodologies for liberation may indicate rivalry between different groups. *Bodhasāra* reflects two purposes: a spontaneous revelation of spiritual wonder and understanding, and a sharing of this with the learned Vedāntins. Narahari is celebrating his experience of liberation while living, and in so doing is confirming to the Vedāntins that it is possible. However, since this was



written in the period between the end of Mughal rule and the full force of British rule, he may also have been encouraging the wise Vedāntins to pass on their knowledge in a new way, possibly for their expansion or survival.

Bodhasāra, although different in style, is reminiscent of earlier Sanskrit works, the Bhagavad-Gīta and Yoga-Vāsistha, in that it encourages the learned to embrace the world and make their knowledge real in the world. The Bhagavad-Gīta encourages Arjuna, a warrior, to continue his responsibilities and the Yoga-Vāsistha encourages Rāma to rule his kingdom. For all three, liberation is a natural unshakeable composure, rather than a yogic contemplation. Liberation means a detachment while working as usual amidst worldly things, rather than physical isolation from worldly affairs. Narahari sees worldly life as inherently pure and whole: no release from worldly life is necessary. *Bodhasāra* embodies Narahari's celebration of the wholeness that he has experienced through the recognition of the fourth part (*turīya*) that completes the totality. This fourth part is not a separate part, being already present in all the activities of daily life, and when recognised, divisions are extinguished and there is completeness. The world with its well-known three parts of waking, dream and sleep does not disappear, but is no longer separate. Narahari goes even further and points out that when this wholeness is recognised, religious rules are no longer binding because an innate discernment operates.

Who were the wise to be pleased, as told in the first verse? The content of *Bodhasāra* shows that they are a learned audience and the vocatives used indicate familiarity. They already know the concepts and stories from the traditional texts such as the Upanisads, Purānas and so on. Either *Bodhasāra* was divided into different sections for presentation to different audiences, or the audience was well-versed in multiple disciplines, such as Advaita Vedānta, a variety of Yogas, study of the sacred texts, rituals, contemplation etc. The metaphor examined in this paper particularly addresses Yogins attached to *samādhi*. Narahari is showing how to spiritually live in the city, a place of worldly transactions, rather than the 'forest', a place of renunciation. Learned scholars and Yogins are shown to be active at the end of the eighteenth century, and *Bodhasāra* is a refreshing change from



the previous millennium when Indian scholars became increasingly embroiled in epistemological arguments.

The earliest available manuscript of *Bodhasāra* was completed at noon on Monday 23 December 1789 CE – the end of the eighteenth century.²⁹ The commentary was completed by Divākara, Narahari's student, on Wednesday 13 March 1816 CE.³⁰ From these dates it can be inferred that *Bodhasāra* was written in, or not long before, 1789. Divākara identifies Narahari as his teacher, and wrote his commentary in 1816, so the root text could not have been written much earlier than 1789. Although Narahari is clearly compassionate about his culture, *Bodhasāra* presents religion as something relevant in the present, rather than something to be unconditionally preserved. There is a taste of modernity, a moving away from entrenched traditional beliefs to an empowerment of the individual living in the present moment. Narahari advocates that liberation while living is simply living a spiritually whole life in the world. In earlier times, Sanskrit exerted power through the belief in its intrinsic powers: it was seen as 'the language of the Gods'. As the language of the Veda, it was believed to be the language closest to reality, and hence the words and sentences of the Sanskrit language were seen to have an inherent connection with the world.³¹ Ashok Aklujkar contends that it is this belief that maintained Sanskrit's position as the commanding language of culture.³² The question is: were Indian intellectuals in eighteenth century India moving on from this belief, or were they supplementing it with a new modernism, a new embracing of the world? Although not without critics³³, Sheldon Pollock declares the 'death of Sanskrit', by the eighteenth century.³⁴ Certainly something drastic happened. Earlier, Hindu scholars, poets and artists gained recognition from Mughal rulers for significant cultural achievements.³⁵ In post-independent India, Sanskrit works have been written in modern forms such as the novel, drama, scientific writing etc.,³⁶ and spoken Sanskrit is taught and practiced. Strong spiritual traditions teaching Sanskrit works are alive and well in twenty-first century India. A plausible explanation of what happened in-between is that Sanskrit paused while Pandits absorbed English and modernity, and then changed to embrace a new sense of individuality. Madhav Deshpande

adds a vital clue from the *Viśvagunādarśacampū* of Venkatādhvarin, about the Maharashtra Brahmins under the rule of the Peshwas. Although the Brahmins protected and preserved the Hindu religious traditions under very difficult circumstances, they abandoned the study of the Vedas and flocked to study Persian in order to serve the Muslim rulers of the region.³⁷ It makes sense that when the British took control, Pandits flocked to study English. Narahari has chosen to write his work in Sanskrit, but he is presenting a way of liberation that does not depend on Sanskrit. If others were thinking like Narahari, maybe they did embrace the new world and leave behind the old Sanskrit one – at least for a time. Although the value of Sanskrit as a language did not diminish, the binding dependence on Sanskrit for liberation was left behind.

Narahari doesn't write about poetics, as did earlier Indian scholars. Narahari uses poetry to present liberation while living. *Bodhasāra* rests in the peace-*rasa* (*śānta-rasa*) as understood by Abhinavagupta. Sublimity comes across in Narahari's enlightened-living: the householder throws off the bondage of all normal conventions and connects with the vastness of the universal presence, but then discovers she can remain connected to it while living in the world. The erotic taste (*rasa*) of the verses allows the sympathetic reader to resonate with the emotion of divine love. A mature union is preferable to separation, both in daily life and in transcendental unity. *Bodhasāra* is Narahari's independent work – the direct account of his life experience and spiritual understanding. It contains the essence of Vedānta, Yoga and Tantra, intertwined and presented as a 'play of the *jīvanmukta* (the one liberated while living)'. There is a sense of free will and individualism, focused by a well-disciplined intellect, embodying Pollock's description of the freedom of the early-modern Sanskrit intellectuals:

*No dogma enforced by institutional religious power, no censorship by an absolutist state, no threats of excommunication for heretical belief, no conflict with theological authority ever affected them.*³⁸

The traditional Indian social order is made up of four goals of human endeavour. Care needs to be taken so that these goals are not mistaken for something they are not. *Artha* is concerned with all material interests. The

word itself means a goal or object aimed at, and includes all emotional, economical and social security, such as wealth, power, and the means of maintaining them. *Kāma* is concerned with desire, especially related to love and pleasure. It includes all sensory, intellectual and aesthetic interests. *Dharma* is concerned with the socio-cosmic order needed to maintain the harmonious existence of the cosmos and goes beyond morality, goodness, law and justice. *Moksa* is liberation from worldly bondage and, as such, provides perspective for the cosmic order by defining that which lies beyond it.²⁹ These four goals, rather than forming a linear sequence, operate simultaneously: each, individually, addresses a different sphere. Morals are usually thought of as values that impose a check on our individual desires, but in the Indian Advaita system, not even *dharma* should be pursued to the detriment of the other goals. All four goals, together, form a holistic whole. All are equally vital.

Although *Bodhasāra* does not particularly address *artha* (material wealth), the goal usually associated with modernism and brought to the fore by colonialism, it does make relevant in a worldly life the other three goals of human endeavour – *kāma*, *dharma* and *moksa*. These goals were vital to the intended Hindu audience, comprised of scholars, *samnyāsins* (renunciates) and yogins. Colonialism primarily addressed an audience of politicians, businessmen and scientists and failed to support this extra component of Hindu society not found in the British culture. The immature Indian modernity already underway, as suggested by current research, had the potential to cohabit with the modernity brought by Colonialism, but Kaviraj suggests that the novelty of colonial knowledge was different to the Indian novelty. He divides Indian novelty into two types: the novelty implicit in the conception of tradition itself, and the novelty found in the intellectual cultures of the sixteenth to eighteenth century Indian society. (124) A good description of the first comes from Abhinavagupta, who suggests that a tradition cannot be a tradition without plurality, originality, newness and criticism,³⁰ but claims that he has not refuted earlier ideas, only refined them.³¹ He says, “They say that in bringing coherence to the views established earlier, the result is similar to the establishment of entirely new truths/foundations.” (Kaviraj 127)

The novelty of sixteenth to eighteenth century India was different in that it placed a new value on innovativeness. It was as though old problems were thought through again, from the beginning. (Kaviraj 130) Very different was Colonialism, which established itself not by employing rational arguments, but by disqualifying and stigmatising the earlier knowledge systems in a strangely comprehensive manner. (Kaviraj 131-2)

Bodhasāra, an eighteenth century Sanskrit text written by Narahari, expresses a move into modernity in an Indian context. As an aesthetic expression of the unity of the universal and individual in all aspects of life, it encourages an embracing of mature free living, an embracing of the 'city' as a place of worldly transactions, rather than an embracing of the 'forest', a place of worldly renunciation. *Bodhasāra* is an example of what Indian modernity could have been like if Colonialism had not happened.

Notes

- 1 Sheldon Pollock, "Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern South Asia: Introduction", in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 24: 2 (2004), pp. 19-21, (p. 19).
- 2 Pollock, "Forms of Knowledge", (p. 20).
- 3 Sheldon Pollock, *The Ends of Man at the End of Premodernity* (Amsterdam, Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2005), p. 81.
- 4 *Srimad Bhagavad Gita with the Gloss of Sridhara Swami*, trans. Swami Vireswarananda (Madras, Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1948), p. xxiv; *Kīrnecandanacampakaprabhrtiślokarītha*, (Pune, India, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute Collection of Manuscripts, No. 756 of 1891-95), p. 14..
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- 16 Upanisad here means a variety of traditional works.

- 17 *tāta, sakhi, putra, sādhu, bhadre, dhīma.*
- 18 Living in the present, in the presence of the universal.
- 19 Ego
- 20 Personifying the intellect
- 21 The universal self
- 22 Commentary meaning 1: Having given up her natural husband, even while staying in his house, she practices deceit. Called *Catura*, she is a shrewd, wanton, unchaste woman. She sports with another lover.
Commentary meaning 2: Having given up her natural husband, even while staying in the body, she deceives. Called *Catura*, the fourth, she goes everywhere with the discernment of a *jīvanmukta* (one liberated while living). She sports with another protector, the undivided brahman, the universal beyond means and end, by becoming one with her inner self.
- 23 *Turiya* – Literally the fourth, the awareness that pervades the three states of waking, dream and sleep. Although not in itself a state but the substratum of all the states, it is called the fourth from the perspective of counting the three well recognised states.
- 24 Commentary meaning 1: Without pride in her family and lineage, she moves among men and enjoys intimacy with other men. Having separated from ego, from pride in her father, mother, family, lineage, every day she sports with another lover.
Commentary meaning 2: Having experienced ego as pride in body, caste, stage-of-life, family and lineage, the intellect called *turiya*, with a disposition turned towards the universal and away from the individual, who is united with the undivided *brahman* beyond cause and effect, continually sports with the universal self, her protector.
- 25 Her enquiry into self-knowledge
- 26 Commentary meaning 1: Then ego, overcome by his wife, unable to oppose her when she is united with another man, leaving behind his dwelling place, retires.
Commentary meaning 2: At last the Ego, defeated by intellect, unable to oppose her at the time of her enjoyment of self-examination, having completely given up the body, is dissolved.
- 27 Commentary meaning 1: But in such a situation in ordinary life, living in one's own house as if with a sister, what kind of marriage would it be? That union would always be mixed with sorrow. After some days a quite new, enlightened living arises. There is connection with the present.
Commentary meaning 2: But in such a situation, in the world, both intellect and ego, join in marriage. Tell how it would be! With the passing of some days and with the nature within contemplating ātman, a quite new, enlightened will arises in worldly dealings. The intellect ensures the ego goes beyond precept and prohibition and the intellect is restrained by the ego.
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