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## THE MAHANUBHAVAS AND SCRIPTURE

### *Structure, Anti-structure, Counter-structure*

In the past few years, attempts have been made to interpret medieval Indian *bhakti* movements in terms of "structure" and "anti-structure," categories introduced by Victor Turner in *The Ritual Process*.<sup>1</sup> *Bhakti* movements would seem to be ideal candidates for interpretation as anti-structure. In their search for direct experience of God, they assert the equality of all seekers and suspend the rules and hierarchy of orthodox Hinduism.

Two works which pursue this line of thought are A.K. Ramanuja's introduction to his striking translations of Vīraśaiva poetry,<sup>2</sup> and Turner's own "Metaphors of Anti=structure in Religious Culture,"<sup>3</sup> an article which is in part a response to Ramanuja's work. For interpreting *bhakti*, these two works taken together suggest extending Turner's original thesis in at least two ways: first, by adding the category "counter-structure" to the pair "structure" and "anti-structure;" and, second, by extending the meaning of "structure" beyond the sense in which Turner originally intended it.

Ramanuja points out that Vīraśaivas and other *bhakti* groups create new structures to replace the old ones they oppose, and he suggests the term "counter-structure" to refer to these new structures. As he explains:

Anti-structure is anti-'structure', ideological rejection of the idea of structure itself. Yet *bhakti*-communities, while pro-

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1. Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969).
  2. *Speaking of Siva* (Baltimore: Penguin Books Inc. 1973).
  3. Allan W. Eister, ed., *Changing Perspectives in the Scientific Study of Religion* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974).

claiming anti-structure, necessarily develop their own structures for behaviour and belief, often minimal, frequently composed of elements selected from the very structures they deny or reject.<sup>4</sup>

More specifically:

The 'great' and the 'little' traditions...together constitute the 'public religion' of Hinduism, its 'establishment' or structure'...Bhakti as anti-structure begins by denying and defying such an establishment; but in course of time, the heretics are canonized; temples are erected to them, Sanskrit hagiographies are composed about them. Not only local legend and ritual, but an elaborate theology assimilating various 'great tradition' elements may grow around them. They become, in retrospect, founders of a new caste, and are defied in turn by new egalitarian movements.<sup>5</sup>

The notion of counter-structure is not inconsistent with Turner's own ideas. It seems close, for example, to the "normative communities" and "pseudo hierarchies" which Turner discusses in *The Ritual Process*.<sup>6</sup> In "Metaphors of Anti-structure," Turner endorses the concept of counter-structure. He even elaborates further on Ramanuja's idea, suggesting that we can see "the sequence 'structure/anti-structure/counter-structure restructuring' as characterizing in India the fate of protest movements."<sup>7</sup>

Ramanuja's analysis of Viraśaiva literature—and Turner's use of that analysis—also involves a modification of the meaning of "structure." In *The Ritual Process*, "structure" refers almost exclusively to 'social structure.'<sup>8</sup> Ramanuja uses the term in an extended sense, allowing it to refer, for example, to "Text", "Performance" (ritual) and "Mythology", as well as "Social Organi-

4. Ramanuja, p. 34-35.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

6. Turner, *The Ritual Process*, p. 132 f., p. 190 f.

7. Turner, "Metaphors," p. 71.

8. See especially Chapters 3, 4, and 5, and "Metaphors," p. 63-64. A seeming exception to this general rule is found in a statement on p. 127 of *The Ritual Process*: "Structure... has cognitive quality; as Lévi-Strauss has perceived, it is essentially a set of classifications, a model for thinking about culture and nature and ordering one's public life."

zation."<sup>9</sup> As Turner puts it, "For Ramanuja, 'structure' includes cognitive, linguistic, and ideological, as well as physical and social structures."<sup>10</sup> Turner seems to accept this extended meaning of "structure", and the analogously extended meaning of "counter-structure". He thinks it perfectly natural that "Ramanuja, since he is at once a professor of linguistics and a literary critic, saw the Viraśaiva return to structure via counter-structure in terms of the rhetorical structure of their literary output."<sup>11</sup>

The present paper will be concerned with the early "literary output" of another medieval Indian sect, the Mahānubhāvas. The concern will be not with the "rhetorical structure" of early Mahānubhāva literature, but with the statements about verbal authority found in that literature. It will be found that these statements include both an "anti-structural" side—rejection of traditionally authoritative scriptures—and a "counter-structural" side—the creation of a new set of scriptures backed by its own principle of authority, ordered in its own kind of hierarchy, and subject to its own principles of interpretation. Further, the counter-structural side of the Mahānubhāva attitude toward scriptures will be seen to be the complement and support of the anti-structural side.

### *The Mahānubhāvas and Their Literature*

The Mahānubhāvas are a Maharashtrian sect founded in the thirteenth century by Cakradhara (d. 1274?). Cakradhara is believed by his followers to be the latest in a series of incarnations of Parameśvara. The other principal incarnations are: Cakradhara's guru, Govindaprabhu; Govindaprabhu's guru, Cāṅgadeva Rāula; and the Hindu gods Kṛṣṇa and Dattātreyā. Parameśvara is the only God the Mahānubhāvas recognize. That is, in contrast to the many *devatās* (gods), who do exist but who have only limited powers, Parameśvara is the only being capable of giving access to the supreme goal. What the supreme goal is can be conceived in either of two ways: those who follow the path of knowledge conceive the goal as liberation (*mokṣa*); those on the path of devotion understand it as the presence of Parameśvara or union

9. Ramanuja, p. 34.

10. Turner, "Metaphors," p. 75.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

with Parameśvara (*sambandha*). The *Sūtrapāṭha*, the collection of the sayings of Cakradhara remembered by his disciples,<sup>12</sup> gives a slight preference to the way of devotion over that of knowledge.<sup>13</sup> Thus the Mahānubhāvas may be considered a *bhakti* group.<sup>14</sup>

Besides the *Sūtrapāṭha*, Mahānubhāva literature includes a large number of other works, most of them in Marāṭhī. I.M.P. Raeside has made a catalogue of this literature,<sup>15</sup> which he sees as falling into the following categories:

- (1) the original teaching of Cakradhara (the *Sūtrapāṭha*) and a ramification of commentaries thereon; (2) commentaries on the *Gīvā* (3) Kṛṣṇa poems, based mainly on the tenth and eleventh *skandhas* of the *Bhāgavata-purāna*; (4) hagiography, or lives of Cakradhara and their own founding fathers, together with lists of their works and descriptions of the holy places associated with them; (5) innumerable works of commentary, grammatical and lexical interpretation, made in succeeding centuries to aid the better understanding of the earlier works.<sup>16</sup>

It is a large body of literature, and important for the evidence it gives about the social and religious history of Maharashtra as well as the early stages of the Marāṭhī language. But until the beginning of the twentieth century this literature was known only to Mahānubhāvas, who preserved it in manuscripts written in secret codes.<sup>17</sup> In the present century it has begun to be made available outside the sect, but there are still, as far as I know,

12. The edition that will be cited here is my own: p. 125-253 of *The Mahānubhāva Sūtrapāṭha* (Ph.D. dissertation, Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1976).

13. *Sūtra* XI. 32, for example, states that "Love (*prema*) is much better than knowledge (*jnāna*)." See also Chapter VIII.

14. For further information about the history and beliefs of the Mahānubhāvas, see Raeside, "The Mahānubhāvas," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (London), XXXIX (1976), p. 585-600; and my *The Mahānubhāva Sūtrapāṭha*, p. 1-124.

15. "A Bibliographical Index of Mahānubhāva Works in Marathi," *Bulletin of the school of Oriental and African Studies* (London), XXIII (1960), p. 464-507.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 465.

17. See I.M.P. Raeside, "The Mahānubhāva *Sakala līpi*," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (London), XXXIII (1970), p. 328-334, for a description of one of the codes.

no published translations of Mahānubhāva literature in European languages.

In discussing the status of this literature for the Mahānubhāvas, and its relationship to the scriptures of orthodox Hinduism, we will draw primarily on the *Sūtrapāṭha*, though we will also make some use of other early Mahānubhāva texts.

#### *Anti-structure: The Attitude toward the Orthodox Scriptures*

Cakradhara left behind no writings. The *Sūtrapāṭha*, the collection of what his disciples remembered him to have said, is —along with the stories collected in his biography (the *Lilācaritra*) —the closest we can get to Cakradhara's teachings. Moreover, the *Sūtrapāṭha* is not a systematic text. Apart from ten short introductory chapters, it consists for the most part of disconnected sentences ("*sūtras*"). We cannot expect to find in these *sūtras* a systematic or elaborate statement of an early Mahānubhāva position on scriptural authority, much less to be sure we have found Cakradhara's own position.

Nevertheless, there are several *sūtras* of the *Sūtrapāṭha* enunciating an anti-structural attitude which would, on the Turner/Ramanuja hypothesis, be appropriate to the founder of a *bhakti* movement. For example, *sūtra* XII. 141 commands: "Putting away what you yourself say, what the scriptures say, and what the world says, become learned in my learning." The personal authority of Cakradhara himself is to supplant scriptural authority as well as one's own judgment and that of the world.

The anti-intellectualism inherent in this attitude is emphasized elsewhere in the text. A pair of *sūtras* state that "one who is ignorant is better than one who knows" (X. 165), and "To the extent that one is knowledgeable, he is ignorant" (X. 164); while a *sūtra* in the same group with these denounces logic: "Logic is unfounded. Logic conjectures at the meaning, but does not break through to the truth" (X. 167). Another set of *sūtras* elaborates on the desirability of ignorance, and ends by echoing *sūtra* XII. 141: "The immature *jiva* should have no special knowledge [*sāmagri*. The connotation seems to be that of "intellectual baggage."] For the immature *jiva*, special knowledge is a pit. Abandoning all special knowledge, become learned in my learning" (XIII. 3-5).

Anti-structuralism in the abstract is the rejection of structures in general: as Ramanuja put it, the "ideological rejection of the idea of structure itself."<sup>18</sup> In the concrete, anti-structure is the rejection of the particular structures that are currently established. Thus Mahānubhāva anti-structuralism with respect to learning and scriptural authority has as its concrete objects the language of scripture and learning—Sanskrit—as well as particular types of scriptural texts.

### Sanskrit

The *Sūtrapāṭha* makes no direct statements against the use of Sanskrit. Stronger than any statement, though, is the fact that the text is written in Marāṭhī, the language which could be understood by all. Other early Mahānubhāva literature records that Kesobāsa, who is said to be the compiler of the *Sūtrapāṭha*, was adept at Sanskrit; that he composed his first work about Cakra-dhara, the *Ratnamālastotra*, in Sanskrit; and that Nāgadeva, Cakradhara's successor as leader of the community, discouraged Kesobāsa from further Sanskrit composition.<sup>19</sup> A similar incident is reported as follows: "One day Pandita and Kesobāsa asked Bhaṭṭabāsa [Nāgadeva] a question in Sanskrit. Bhaṭṭabāsa replied, 'Pandita, Keśavadeva, I don't understand your *asmāt* and *kasmāt*. Śrī Cakradhara taught me in Marāṭhī. That's how you should ask me questions.'"<sup>20</sup>

This rejection of Sanskrit accompanied a devaluation of Sanskrit scriptures. The *Sūtrapāṭha* mentions a number of texts and kinds of texts which are authoritative in the Hindu tradition. With the exception of the Bhagavad Gītā, all of them are shown to be of limited value, and hence not truly authoritative.

### Veda

The Veda is referred to only once in the *Sūtrapāṭha*, and this reference constitutes an indirect rather than a direct rejection of

18. Ramanuja, p. 35.

19. *Smṛtisthala*, ed. V.N. Deshpande (Poona: Venus Prakāśana, 1939; second ed., 1960), Chap. 15; Kṛṣṇamuni. "Anvayamālikā." (ed. H.N. Nene in "Kṛṣṇamunīcem Anvayasthala." *Bhāvata Itihāsa Samśodhaka Mahādala Traimāsika* XX (1939), p. 63-64.

20. *Smṛtisthala*, Chapter 66.

its authority. For direct statements we must go to the commentarial literature. V.B. Kolte quotes such statements from several unpublished commentaries in his article "Mahānubhāva Pamthāce Avaidikatva."<sup>21</sup> I will reproduce only one example here: Commenting on *sūtra* XII. 56 ("Abandoning *karma*, *dharmā*, prescriptions, and sense pleasure, take refuge in Parameśvara.") The commentary *Ācārasthala* identifies "*Karma*" as "principally the Vedic scriptures, astrology and medicine."<sup>22</sup>

The only statement about the Veda in the *Sūtrapāṭha* itself is found in *sūtra* X. 14: "Some part of the Veda knows (variant: speaks of) the existence of Caitanya." This statement is couched in positive terms, but implicitly it is a denigration of the Vedas. To understand how this is so, we must place the reference to Caitanya in the context of the *devatācakra*.

The *devatācakra* is the hierarchy into which the *Sūtrapāṭha* organizes all the *devatās*, that is, all the deities who are not Parameśvara. The point of the hierarchy seems to be to contrast the *devatās* with Parameśvara. The deities arranged in the hierarchy are of only relative worth, and give only relative rewards, whereas Parameśvara is absolute and gives the ultimate reward. From highest to lowest, the classes of the *devatācakra* are as follows:

1. Caitanya (also called Māyā, Videha, Parā, Sakti).
2. Viśva.
3. The eight Bhairavas.
4. Sesaśayya and other *devatās* of the Sea of Milk.
5. Hari, Hara, Brahmā and other *devatās* of the heavens Kailāsa, Vaikuṅṭha, and Satya.
6. Indra, Candra, Sūrya, and other *devatās* of heaven (Svarga).
7. The Gandharvas in the sky (*antarāla*).
8. The eight "classes of gods" (*devayonis*).
9. The deities of Karmabhūmi.

Besides its use in organizing the deities of Hinduism and showing them to be relative beings, the *devatācakra* is also used in the *Sūtrapāṭha* to show the relativity of other aspects of reality.

21. In *Mahānubhāva Samśodhana*: 1 (Malkāpūr: Arun Prakāśana, 1962), p. 59-76.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 68. *Ācārasthala* is probably part of the "Sthalapothi" which Raeside ("Bibliographical Index", p. 501) dates to the early fifteenth century.

It is this latter sort of use which is involved in the *sūtra* about the Veda. To say that some part of the Veda knows or speaks of the existence of Caitanya is, in the context of the *devatācakra*, to say that even that part does not provide access to Paramēśvara. It is not of absolute value.

As to *which* part of Vedic literature it is that knows or speaks of Caitanya, the *Sūtrapāṭha* does not say. It seems likely, though, that it is the Upanisads which are being referred to. A commentary quoted by Kolte says that the "part" referred to is the last part of the Veda, that is, the Vedānta (the "end of the Veda," i.e., the Upanisads).<sup>23</sup>

Although the only *Sūtrapāṭha sūtra* mentioning Vedic literature connects it with the highest level of the *devatācakra*, the level of Caitanya, there would also seem to be a connection between the Veda and the sixth level of the *devatācakra*, that of Indra, Candra, and Sūrya. Indra and company are Vedic deities, and *svarga* the Vedic heaven. *Svarga* is said in *sūtras* II. 12-14 to be the reward of the type of religious activity proper to the *Dvāpara* age, and this activity is said to be *yāga*, Vedic sacrifice. But the link between the Veda and the sixth level of the *devatācakra* remains implicit: nowhere does the *Sūtrapāṭha* directly connect the deities—Indra, Candra, Sūrya, etc.—or the ritual—*yāga*—with Vedic literature.

### Agama

The Veda is not the only authoritative scripture of Hinduism, nor is it the only scripture whose limitations the *Sūtrapāṭha* points out. *Sūtra* XI. 109 shows the merely relative value of Purānas and Agamas by relating them, respectively, to the fourth and third levels of the *devatācakra*: "The Purānas reach as far as the Sea of Milk; the Agamas reach as far as the eighth Bhairavas." We will consider the Agamas first, and then the class of literature which includes Purānas.

The Agamas mentioned in *sūtra* XI. 109 are listed in *sūtra* X. 22: Svachanda, Lalita, Manthāna, Bhairava, Adi, and Kādi. If these scriptures are hard to identify, *sūtra* X. 95 explains why. Coming in the course of a series of *sūtras* bemoaning the evils of the Kali age, this *sūtra* states that the Agamas are not known (practised?:

23. Kolte, p. 65 and *passim*.

*kaliyugim agama navartati.*) in the present age. The next *sūtra* qualifies this, saying that "In the sects of the North, a part of the doctrine is known" (X. 96). Another pair of *sūtras* (XI. a32-a33) relates the Bhairavas' Agamas to the Nātha sect, a sect of Tantric yogins influential in Maharashtra at the time of Cakradhara.

### Smṛti

The Purānas, mentioned along with Agamas in *sūtra* XI. 109 of the *Sūtrapāṭha*, are generally considered to belong to the category of orthodox literature called Smṛti. Accepted by all orthodox Hindus but held by them to be of lesser authority than the Veda, Smṛti occupies a position between the two extremes of Sruti (the Veda) on the one hand, and sectarian Agamas on the other. Two types of texts besides Purānas are included in Smṛti: *dharma* literature and the epics. Unlike Purānas, these two other types of texts are not assigned by the *Sūtrapāṭha* to any particular level of the *devatācakra*. But this does not mean that the *Sūtrapāṭha* values them more highly than it does Purānas; it means, rather, that they are among the many types of traditional literature the *Sūtrapāṭha* does not even bother to mention by name.<sup>24</sup>

One epic text, though, is exempted from the *Sūtrapāṭha's* general devaluation of the scriptures of orthodox Hinduism. This text is the *Bhagavad Gītā*. One *sūtra* of the *Sūtrapāṭha* (XIII.153) is a commentary in Sanskrit on a single verse of the *Bhagavad Gītā* (7.16), and a series of other *sūtras* (X.85-90) summarizes the text. But the really telling *sūtra* is the one which contrasts the *Gītā* with the rest of Vyāsa's work: "My woman, the *Gītā* was spoken by Srī Kṛṣṇa; everything else was spoken by Vyāsa" (XI. 108).

It is not clear whether the contrast is just to the *Mahābhārata*, or to the Vedas and Purānas as well, but in either case the main point is clear. The *Gītā* is singled out as the only authoritative text among the traditional Hindu scriptures. The basis for its selection is not that, as a part of the *Mahābhārata*, the *Gītā* is part of Smṛti; the basis is rather

24. Several *sūtras*, though, refer to epic (and Purānic) stories (e.g., X. 76-77, XIII. 13; XI. 83); and a few *sūtras* seem to quote from *dharma* texts. Examples of the latter are XII. 81 and XIII. 133, which are the same as *Samvartasmṛti* 113 and *Mitākṣarā* 3. 58, respectively.

that it contains the words of Kṛṣṇa. And, for the Mahānubhāvas, Kṛṣṇa is an incarnation of Parameśvara.

This brings us to our discussion of the Mahānubhāva scriptures and the new basis on which their authority rests.

### Counter-structure: The Mahānubhāva Scriptures

For a clear statement of a Mahānubhāva position on scriptural authority, we must turn to one of the few Mahānubhāva texts in Sanskrit. The *Lakṣanaratnākara*,<sup>25</sup> which Raeside<sup>26</sup> dates to the early fourteenth century, consists of definitions of thirty-two technical terms. The second of these terms is “*pramāna*,” which usually means “valid knowledge” or “valid means to knowledge.” But, as the commentary *Battisa Lakṣanāci Tīpa* points out, the *Lakṣanaratnākara* definition deals with only one kind of *Pramān*.<sup>27</sup> It calls this kind *Brahmavidyā* (“the science of Brahman”), and defines it as follows:

The *pramāna* called *Brahmavidyā* conduces to the attainment of correct experience. [It comes] from *Iśvara*, who is completely authoritative and omniscient. It is of three kinds: *Sruti*, *smṛti* and *Ṛddhācāra*. And the *pramāna* spoken by the Supreme is inaccessible to all minds.

Two elements of this definition are of particular interest here: the naming of *Iśvara* as the source of valid knowledge, and the listing of three kinds of texts in which this knowledge is found. The first of these points to the basis of the Mahānubhāva scriptures’ authority, and the second to the hierarchy in which those scriptures are ordered.

“*Iśvara*,” here, is equivalent to “*Parameśvara*.” The source of authoritative knowledge is for Mahānubhāvas the same being whom they hold to be the final goal or the source of liberation.

25. Ānerājavyāsa. *Lakṣanaratnākara*, ed. H.N. Nene (Nāgpur: 1937).

26. Raeside, “Bibliographical Index.” p. 484.

27. *Battisa Lakṣanāci Tīpa* is the most detailed of three commentaries included in Nene’s edition of *Lakṣanaratnākara*. *Battisa Lakṣanāci Tīpa* lists eight types of *pramāna*: the kind *Lakṣanaratnākara* is concerned with—called *āptavākya* by *Battisa Lakṣanāci Tīpa*—and seven others—*pratyakṣa*, *anumāna*, *upamāna*, *arthāpatti*, *abhāva*, *sambhava*, and *aitihya*.

*Parameśvara*. Thus, the authoritative character of scriptures is to be judged according to whether—and at what remove—they come from *Parameśvara*. By this criterion only the *Bhagavad Gītā* and the Mahānubhāvas’ own scriptures are judged to be authoritative. This same criterion ranks the Mahānubhāva scriptures into a number of classes distinguished according to how directly they come from *Parameśvara*—that is, how close they are to the words of a *Parameśvara*-incarnation.

*Lakṣanaratnākara* names three such classes of Mahānubhāva scriptures: *Sruti*, *Smṛti*, and *Ṛddhācāra*. The first two classes bear the names of the two main types of orthodox Hindu scriptures, but the commentary *Battisa Lakṣanāci Tīpa* makes it clear that it is not the orthodox *Sruti* and *Smṛti* which are being referred to.

*Battisa Lakṣanāci Tīpa* defines *Sruti* as the *sūtras* spoken by *Parameśvara* (*Cakradhara*) and heard by *Nāgadeva* (the “*adhikarana*”);<sup>28</sup> and it specifies this definition by listing the chapters of the *Sūtrapāṭha*.<sup>29</sup> *Smṛti* it defines as the description of the deeds and appearance of *Cakradhara* remembered by *Nāgadeva* and narrated by him to the next generation of disciples (“*sādhikarana*”).<sup>30</sup> Finally, *Battisa Lakṣanāci Tīpa* defines *Ṛddhācāra* as the writings of *Kesobāsa* and other Mahānubhāvas (“*mahānubhāvi bāmdhīm*”) about the deeds, thought and practice of *Cakradhara* and *Nāgadeva*.<sup>31</sup>

Thus the categories *Sruti*, *Smṛti*, and *Ṛddhācāra* form a hierarchy ordering the Mahānubhāva scriptures according to a line of descent from *Parameśvara*. Similar passages from other texts extend the hierarchy, adding other categories to these first

28. *Parameśvaroktasūtramātra adhikaranāsi śrūta jālem, bhāvanī parām[e]śvaroktasūtramātra śruti śabdem bolije.*

29. The text lists eleven parts (*akāṣa bheda*) of *Sruti*: *Acāra*, *Vicāra*, *Dṛṣṭānta*, *Anyavyāvṛtti*, *Yugadharmā*, *Vidyā-ārga*, *Samsarana*, *Samharana*, *Mahāvākya*, *Nirvacana*, and *Uddharana*. This list differs somewhat from the contents of the *Sūtrapāṭha* we now have.

30. *Parameśvarācem vīrahana vartana dekhilem tāise smavaṇi adhikaranem sādihikaranāprati nirūpīlem jem līlācāritra te smṛti bolije. āni adhikaranem dekhilī śrīmṛti smavaṇi sādihikaranāprati sānghitalī, bhāvanī mṛtījnāna smṛtiśabdem bolije.*

31. *Prā[m]eśvarācā āni adhikaranāca vṛttanatu vicaru vyavaharu to sādihikaranim keśavādi mahānubhāvī bāmdhīm līlā to ṛddhācāra.*

three. Two such passages are quoted by Kolte;<sup>32</sup> and V. V. Parkhe<sup>33</sup> quotes one additional one. All of these accounts differ slightly from one another, but I will present only the most clear and detailed one here. Dattomuni Dutonde's *Anvayasthala* names five categories of scripture:<sup>34</sup>

1. *Sruti*: Parameśvara's teachings, in his own words;
2. *Smṛti*: the teachings of Nāgadeva and other disciples of Cakra-dhara;
3. *Vṛddhācāra*: the teachings of Nāgadeva's disciples, including Kaviśvara;
4. *Mārgarūdhā*: the teachings of Kaviśvara's (and his peers') disciples including Paraśarāmbāsa, and of their disciples, including Acala; and
5. *Vartamāna*: the teachings of the disciples of Acala and his peers.

Here we see clearly that the scriptures have been arranged in a hierarchy paralleling the succession of authority in the order. The counter-structure of scriptural authority parallels the social counter-structure of the leadership of the sect.

The *Sūtrapāṭha* makes no mention of a hierarchical classification of scriptures, although it does include a number of *sūtras* (X. 153-162; XII. 137) legitimating the authority of Nāgadeva. In X. 159, for example, Nāgadeva is addressed as follows: "Nothing contrary to the scripture leaves your mouth." And the next *sūtra* addresses similar praise of Nāgadeva to another disciple: "My woman, he will speak nothing of his own; everything he will speak is mine."

Besides a definition of the basis of scriptural authority and a classification of the scriptures, another aspect of a structural (or counter-structural) approach to scripture is the formulation of principles for interpreting the scriptures. The *Sūtrapāṭha* does include the rudiments of such principles. Some are quite general

<sup>32</sup> Kolte, p. 61-62.

<sup>33</sup> *Smṛtisthala*, ed. V. V. Pārkhē (Dombivāḷī, Thānem District: Sunītā Prakāśana, 1970), p. ix-x.

<sup>34</sup> Kolte, p. 61-62. This may be the unpublished "*Vṛddhānvaya*" by Dutonde Dattobāsa which Raeside ("Bibliographical Index", p. 505) mentions Kolte's referring to elsewhere. If so, it may belong to a category of texts which Raeside characterizes as "later and less reliable" than, but otherwise similar to, "*Vṛddhācāra*" texts.

statements: for example, several *sūtras* point out the difficulty of understanding the scripture (XII. 142), the necessity of working hard at understanding it (XII. 143, 144), and the impossibility of understanding it without the qualification (*adhikāra*. X. 150), or without Parameśvara's permission (X. 152). And two *sūtras* (XII. 145 and 146) advise that one should first learn and accept the scripture before expecting to understand it fully: "Take it, assimilate it; then after some time it [will] prove useful," and "Just accept it for now; later you will know it through experience."

Besides these general statements, the *Sūtrapāṭha* also mentions some somewhat more specific principles of scriptural interpretation. Two *sūtras* emphasize that to understand the meaning of a *Sūtrapāṭha sūtra* it is necessary to understand the context (*prakarana*) in which the *sūtra* was originally spoken. XI. 135 says, in part: "The meaning is subject to the context. The context makes the meaning applicable." And XII. 148 specifies that one should "Be aware of irony (? *kāku*), sarcasm (? *kaksā*), metaphor (? *bhāvārtha*) and context (*prakarna*)." *Laksanaratnākara* gives Sanskrit definitions of these four terms, and its commentary, *Battisa Laksanāci Tipa*, provides numerous examples of their application, but the basic principle is found in the *Sūtrapāṭha* itself.<sup>35</sup>

Another *Sūtrapāṭha sūtra* (XII. 147) enunciates a more conservative but equally important interpretative principle: "These are the words, and this is the meaning of the words. Do not let go of the words."

The counter-structural side, then, of early Mahānubhavas' attitudes toward scripture can be seen in their approach to their own scriptures: in the definition of the basis of the scriptures' authority, in the hierarchical classification of texts, and in the principles of scriptural interpretation. Perhaps the crowning counter-structural touch is the fact that the scriptures become secret. They become the private property of the sect, and are preserved

<sup>35</sup> This principle, which points to an intimate connection between *sūtra* and biography, gives rise to biographical commentaries on the *Sūtrapāṭha*. *Prakaranavaśa* (*Prakaranavasa*), ed. Mādhavarāja Panjabi (Amarāvātī, 1968?) and *Niruktaśeṣa Pam. Bhīṣmācārya Samkalita Niruktaśeṣa* (Nāgpur: Vidarbha Saṁśadhana Mandala, 1961), for example, consist of stories telling the context in which each *sūtra* was spoken.

in manuscripts copied in secret codes. The adoption of the codes is probably later than the composition of the *Sūtrapāṭha*,<sup>36</sup> but the secrecy is legitimated by the *Sūtrapāṭha* itself. "Do not tell this doctrine to anyone," commands *sūtra* XIII. 27; and XII. 155 says: "This is your secret. Do not tell your secret to anyone else." Having rejected the elitism of the learned by composing their scriptures in Marāṭhī rather than Sanskrit, the early Mahānubhāvas then hid the scriptures from public view. They thereby created a new elite: the Mahānubhāvas themselves.

### Conclusion

We have seen what we have called the anti-structural and counter-structural sides of the Mahānubhāva attitudes to scripture. On the one side, the early Mahānubhāvas rejected scriptural authority and devalued the orthodox scriptures of Hinduism; on the other side, they created a formal scriptural authority of their own.

Turner's suggestion is that movements like that of the Mahānubhāvas go through a process in which anti-structure and counter-structure are *successive* stages or moments. In the present state of our knowledge early Mahānubhāva history, it is difficult to judge whether such a *sequence* of stages did characterize early Mahānubhāva attitudes to scripture. We can only tell that both anti-structural and counter-structural attitudes are present in the *Sūtrapāṭha* and the other texts we have examined.

We can also see that, in these texts, the two attitudes seem closely linked. "This scripture," the *Sūtrapāṭha* says of itself, "includes all scriptures; but it is not included by any of them" (X.151; cf. XIII.119). The Mahānubhāva scriptures are *better* than any others: it is this that makes the others dispensable. The development of the new scriptural authority—the counter-structure facilitates the rejection of the old. Here, it seems, counter-structure is the bulwark of anti-structure, not just its sequel.

36. Raeside. ("The Mahānubhāvas," p. 599) dates the invention of the codes to the second half of the fourteenth century, whereas the *Sūtrapāṭha* probably dates from the end of the thirteenth or the beginning of the fourteenth century.