

# SHASTRIC TRADITIONS IN INDIAN ARTS

edited by

ANNA LIBERA DALLAPICCOLA

in collaboration with

CHRISTINE WALTER-MENDY  
STEPHANIE ZINGEL-AVÉ LALLEMANT

VOL. 1. TEXTS



STEINER VERLAG WIESBADEN GMBH  
STUTTGART

1989

**Playing by the rules:  
Śāstra and Sanskrit literature**

*Sheldon Pollock, Iowa*

api sphuṭati vindhyādrau  
vāti vā pralayānile/  
guruśāstrānugo margah  
parityājyo na dhimatā//  
(No matter if Mount Vindhya crumble  
or the winds of apocalypse blow,  
let the wise man never leave the path  
charted by teacher and śāstra)  
--*Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha*  
6.5.45

Rules are made to be broken  
--Anon. (N. America)

Among the most important features of Indian intellectual and cultural history, yet the least studied as a problem in its own right, is the existence and continuous development from the late Vedic period onward of the cultural grammars called śāstra. One of the more interesting and important questions provoked by these texts is their practical significance: What precisely has been the influence of śāstra upon actual practices, from legal decision-making to poetry-making to love-making? This question of cultural history (or perhaps more precisely, of *Wirkungsgeschichte*), should be supplemented by a related set of questions hardly less significant that are immanent to the genre itself: How do śāstras themselves conceive of their relationship with practice? What are the sources and implications of this self-understanding? What are the origin and nature of shastric authority?

I tried to address several of these questions of intellectual history more strictly viewed in an earlier article.<sup>1</sup> There I suggest that the conception of the relationship between theory (śāstra) and practice (*prayoga*) in traditional India is diametrically opposed to that commonly found in Western formulations from the time of Aristotle.<sup>2</sup> Theory in the classical Indian formulation is held necessarily to precede any practical instantiation. Knowledge thus always being pre-existent, practical efficacy is attained

<sup>1</sup> 'The Theory of Practice and the Practice of Theory in Indian Intellectual History,' *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105 (1985), pp. 499-519.

<sup>2</sup> Outside the Western tradition, too. In addition to the materials cited in "The Theory of Practice," p. 511, cf. Mao Tsetung: "Reading is learning, but applying is also learning and the more important kind of learning at that. Our chief method is to learn warfare through warfare. . . . It is often not a matter of first learning and then doing, but of doing and then learning, for doing is itself learning" (*Quotations from Chairman Mao Tsetung* [Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1972], pp. 308-9).

only by approximation to its textual paradigm. This model of the nature of *śāstra*, I argue, is derived from traditional views about the foremost *śāstra*, namely, the *Veda* (scripture).

Here I propose to extend this discussion - in a tentative and provisional way, I want to emphasize - into an analysis of what is perhaps the most salient surface characteristic of the traditional Indian *śāstra*, and at the same time one of its more puzzling: the nature of the rules it seeks to establish, the modalities of these rules, and the basis of the claims to authority that they assert.

The classical Indian *śāstra* is a genre that supplanted the wholly descriptive texts of the earlier period (exemplified by the *Vedāṅgas*, c. 600-300 B.C.), and that gave way, in some measure, to a new descriptive-analytical scientific discourse (exemplified by, say, Anandavardhana's treatise on literary aesthetics, the *Dhvanyāloka*, of the 10th century). One of the essential traits of the classical discourse is its nomothetic dimension: *śāstra* is above all a collection of rules for what the culture evaluates as a "successful" accomplishment of any given human activity. In the case of grammar, which as often may be considered paradigmatic for the human sciences, Kātyāyana expresses this notion in a crucial formulation: "While language is naturally communicative (*lokato 'rthaprayukte śabdaprayoge*) *śāstra* provides a constraint on behavior in accordance with an apriori assessment of the correct way of acting" (*śāstreṇa dharmānyamaḥ*). Patañjali elaborates: Just as there are prohibitions against eating certain animals (although these can satisfy hunger) or against sexual relations with certain women (although these can satisfy passion), so shastrically correct words must be used (even though sense might be communicable through incorrect words) for only thus can [spiritual] success (*abhyudaya*) be secured.<sup>3</sup>

To invoke *dharma* in the realm of prescriptive grammatical discourse - and observe that the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini, while descriptive of Vedic language, is prescriptive for secular<sup>4</sup> - is intriguing, and suggests a perhaps unanticipated direction of inquiry for an analysis of shastric rule-governance.

The most important and influential attempt to conceptualize *dharma* as a general structure of action (rather than as a specific social or ethical practice) is that made in the Mīmāṃsā system. *Dharma*, the central subject matter of Mīmāṃsā, is defined as that which is governed by rules promulgated in the *Veda* (*Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.1.2: *codanālakṣaṇo 'rtho dharmah*; *Veda*, here designated by "injunction," is elsewhere in Mīmāṃsā simply and significantly referred to as *śāstra*; see below). In my earlier paper I suggest that classical *śāstra* is linked to the *Veda* both with respect to its self-conception

<sup>3</sup> *Mahabhasya* (ed. Bhargavasastri Joshi, Bombay: Nirnaya Sagara Press, 1951), Vol. I, p. 65.

<sup>4</sup> The form and content of the *Mahabhasya* make it clear that *dharmabhyudaya* derives from grammatical purity in secular activity no less than in sacred; see also *Vākyapadīya* (ed. Raghunath Sharma [Varanasi: Sampurnanandasamskṛtaviśvavidyalaya, 1976.]) 1.139 with *vṛtti* and Raghunath's commentary ad loc.

and its normative authority.<sup>5</sup> If we couple this with what we see to be, as in the case of grammar, *śāstra*'s claims with respect to *dharma*, the problematic of *śāstra* invites us to call upon traditional Vedic hermeneutics to conceptualize the modalities of shastric rules.

The rules that *śāstra* makes available to us may be divided, according to one higher-level typology of Mīmāṃsā (there are various other ones, such as the differentiation between autotelic and non-autotelic ritual acts, *kratvartha/puruṣārtha vidhis*), into two distinct types: those that are *drṣṭārtha* ("whose purpose is obvious"), and those that are *adrṣṭārtha* ("whose purpose is not [or, not yet] obvious").<sup>6</sup> There is nothing at all evident about the point of the Vedic injunction "One should perform the *agnihotra* sacrifice." Since *śāstra* is defined as that which makes known to us *dharma*, something not knowable by any other means (perception, inference, or the rest),<sup>7</sup> and is in its very nature infallible (or, to be more exact, unfalsifiable),<sup>8</sup> we must execute this injunction although we may not have any empirical justification for doing so. In fact, while all Vedic rules are by definition authoritative, it is precisely because there is no intelligible purpose behind rules contained in non-Vedic texts that any of them can claim an authority as good as Vedic.<sup>9</sup> By contrast, the rule, "One should pound the sacrificial grain," is an injunction

<sup>5</sup> Op. cit., p. 519. A good example of how all these issues intersect is provided by one of the arguments Kumārila uses to prove that language must be anterior to any divine creation (he assumes for the sake of argument and against Mīmāṃsā principles that there is cosmic creation). God, he reasons, is not superior to humans except in respect to his *dharma*; *dharma* presupposes performance, but performance presupposes thought (*matī*); thought presupposes the *Veda* [i.e., verbalization; cf. Wittgenstein, 'All thought is language'], and the *Veda* presupposes a connection between signifier and signified - that is, language must have existed prior to any creation (*Ślokavārttika* [ed. Swami Dvarikadasa Sastri, Varanasi: Tara Publications, 1978], pp. 113ff.). This priority of language to action is analyzed at length by Bhartṛhari, *Vākyapadīya* I, especially vs. 120ff.

<sup>6</sup> The distinction is as old as the *Sūtras* of Jaimini (c. 400 B.C.), see for example *Purvamīmāṃsā sāsūtra* 11.1.28 (sometimes we find instead reference to *hetu-* or *karaṇādarśana*, *hetu-*, *karaṇabhāva*, and so on [cf., e.g., 1.3.4, 7]), and it informs all of the Mīmāṃsā system. No exactly comparable distinction is made in Western thinking on rule-governance. Something similar is however found in structural linguistics and anthropology. Saussure differentiates between "grammatical" and "lexicological" linguistic signs, the former being "[relatively] motivated" and the latter "arbitrary" (e.g., "dix-neuf," which is "motivated," suggesting "its own terms and other terms associated with it," in contrast to the arbitrary sign "vingt"). Lévi-Strauss adopts this distinction to conceptualize indigenous classification principles for totems and the like (Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966], p. 156). The structuralist and Mīmāṃsaka ideas are mediated by the Sanskrit grammarians, who differentiate likewise between *rūḍhi* ("grown" or etymologically irreducible lexical items) and *yoga* (those that are etymologically derivable).

<sup>7</sup> Compare *apṛāpte śāstram arthavat*, *Purvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 6.2.18, *Ślokavārttika*, *Citrakṣepa-parihāra* vs. 20, p. 486, and Śābara on *Purvamīmāṃsāsūtras* 1.4.4, 10.3.20.

<sup>8</sup> *Ślokavārttika* vs. 47, p. 45 is the most important formulation of the Mīmāṃsā epistemological position of *svataḥprāmānyam*.

<sup>9</sup> *Purvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.3.7, with *Tantravārttika* (ed. Kasinatha Vasudevasastri Abhyankar et al.,

whose purpose is clear to us: Pounding prepares the grain for use as an oblation. The authority of such rules, the Mīmāṃsākas agree, derives exclusively from their proven efficacy.<sup>10</sup>

Later Mīmāṃsā philosophers such as Kumāṛila indicate that this distinction is not as absolute as it first appears to be. In every *adr̥ṣṭārtha* rule there may, in fact must be a trace of practicality. We know that, since the *agnihotra* injunction is enunciated by the *Veda*, and Vedic injunction axiomatically defines *dharma*, which is some good (*artha*), there must be some good to be secured from the rule of performing the rite; this would consequently constitute an "evident purpose." In every *dr̥ṣṭārtha* rule, on the other hand, there is a trace of the *adr̥ṣṭārtha*: That sacrificial grain should be husked by pounding rather than by any number of other possible procedures, suggests that some unknowable purpose is to be served by conforming to the shastric prescription.<sup>11</sup>

Viewed as "cultural software" *śāstras* have their analogue in virtually every human society, in the textualized - or more often pretextualized, tacit - "grammars" that define a given culture for what it is.<sup>12</sup> In the West, we find comparable written grammars appearing with ever greater frequency in the post-Enlightenment period, which, incidentally, seem to develop along a similar trajectory as the Indian *śāstras*, from taxonomical description to normative prescription. A good example is provided by the history of European lexicography.

Now, in the case of Western understanding of rule-governance, from at least the time of Kant the principal distinction drawn is that between rules that are "constitutive" and those that are "regulative." Here no differentiation is made between evident/nonevident purpose, nor is attention paid to what is implied by the fact that a given rule could have been different but is not. A rule is constitutive if it defines or creates a form of behavior, which would cease to be what it is supposed to be if the rule were not followed - the rules governing the game of chess would be a good example. A rule is regulative when the form of behavior, which exists prior to and independently of the rule, can be done otherwise than according to the rule in question. The rules of table etiquette would fit

Poona: Anandasrama, 1970), Vol. I, p. 118. 12-13. For Jaimini and Śabara the converse is also true, that *smṛti* rules lose their claim to Vedic provenance and authority if they can be shown to be wholly motivated (*Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.3.4 with Śabara ad loc.); Kumāṛila for his part denies that any Brahmanical *smṛti* is ever non-authoritative by reason of its interestedness.

<sup>10</sup> Śabara on *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.3.2 (pp. 78-79); Kumāṛila, *Tantravārttika* p. 81.14-15.

<sup>11</sup> See *Tantravārttika* Vol. I, pp. 78 and 117. Later Mīmāṃsākas assert that all *dr̥ṣṭārtha* rules of the *Veda* contain an *adr̥ṣṭārtha* element in the very fact of their prescribing one thing instead of another (what is known as *niyamadr̥ṣṭa*, cf. Appayya Dīkṣita, *Rasayāna* [Benares: Chowkhamba, 1901], p. 213).

<sup>12</sup> Roy D'Andrade, 'Cultural Meaning Systems,' in *Cultural Theory* (ed. R.A. Shweder et al., Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 88-96.

<sup>13</sup> Adapted from John Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 33-34. For an analysis of rules in gen-

this category.<sup>13</sup> Whatever the theoretical problems surrounding this analysis of rules,<sup>14</sup> it serves to articulate a basic distinction to which we can all respond.

I want to consider now some injunctive statements (*vidhi-s*) from the shastric tradition in light of these two conceptual schemes for the modalities of rules. First some rules from the third chapter of the *Manusmṛti*,<sup>15</sup> which describe the performance of the *śrāddha*, the ritual offerings to the ancestors:

Let a twice-born man invite first a brahman in honor of the gods as a protection for the [offering]. . . . Let him smear a pure and secluded place with cowdung, and carefully make it sloping toward the south. . . . After he has poured the oblations in the fire, and performed the whole series of ceremonies in such a way that they end in the south, let him sprinkle water with his right hand on the spot [designated for the sacrificial cakes]. . . . Having made three cakes out of the remainder of the sacrificial food, he should, facing south and meditating, place them on [*kuśa* grass] in the same manner in which [he poured out the libations of water]. . . . Having sipped water, turned round toward the north, and three times slowly suppressed his breath, the sacrificer, knowledgeable in the sacred texts, shall worship the [presiding deities of the] six seasons, and the ancestors. . . . All the food must be very hot, and the guests shall eat in silence; though asked by the host, the brahmins must not comment on the quality of the sacrificial food. . . . An untouchable, a village pig, a cock, a dog, a menstruating woman, and a eunuch must not look at the brahmins while they eat . . . for whatever these see does not produce its intended result. . . . (*Manusmṛti* 4.204-240 [after Bühler])

Here we clearly have a set of *adr̥ṣṭārtha* rules for the performance of a sacred rite: there is no ostensible motive or purpose whatever to the various actions required. In some basic way, this mystery of purpose seems appropriate here. For one essential aspect of religious ritual seems to be precisely that it transcends the realm of action whose rational instrumentality is clearly ascertainable.<sup>16</sup>

eral see Georg von Wright, *Norm and Action: A Logical Enquiry* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), pp. 1-16. von Wright does not use the terms constitutive/regulative but employs "rule" and "prescription" respectively in the same sense.

<sup>14</sup> Hubert Schwyzer, 'Rules and Practices,' *Philosophical Review* 78 (1969), pp. 451-67. As in the case of the Mīmāṃsā category, constitutive and regulative rules are interactive. Constitutive entities entail normative rules, and the latter depend upon the former (D'Andrade, 'Cultural Meaning Systems,' p. 94).

<sup>15</sup> Ed. Vasudevasarma Panasikar, Bombay: Nirnaya Sagara Press, 1929.

<sup>16</sup> Compare the reflections - more generally directed - of Hobsbawm: "Indeed, it may be suggested that 'traditions' and pragmatic conventions or routines are inversely related. 'Tradition' shows weakness when, as among liberal Jews, dietary prohibitions are justified pragmatically, as by arguing that the ancient Hebrews banned pork on grounds of hygiene. Conversely, *objects or practices are liberated for full symbolic and ritual use when no longer fettered by practical use*" (*Invention of Tradition* ed. Hobsbawm and Ranger [London: Cambridge University Press,

Let us look at another example. The *dharmaśāstras* prescribe various rules that come into force at the different life-stages of twice-born men. Consider some of these rules that apply to a brahman in the period after he has completed his studentship (that is, when he has entered the stage of the *snātaka*):

Let him never look at the sun, when it sets or rises, is eclipsed or reflected in water, or stands in the middle of the sky. Let him not step over a rope to which a calf is tied, let him not run when it rains, and let him not look at his own image in water. . . . Let him not eat in the company of his wife, nor look at her, while she eats, sneezes, yawns, or sits at her ease. . . . Let him not bathe naked; let him not void urine on a road, on ashes, or in a cow-pen, nor on ploughed land. . . . Let him never void feces or urine when facing the wind or a fire . . . He must do so after covering the ground with sticks, leaves . . . remaining silent, pure, wrapping up his body and covering his head, in the daytime turned toward the north, at night toward the south. . . . Let him keep his right arm uncovered in a place where a sacred fire is kept, in a cow-pen, in the presence of brahmans, during the private recitation of the *Veda*, and at meals. . . . When he sees a rainbow he must not point it out to anybody. . . . Let him never wash his feet in a vessel of white brass. . . . By night let him keep at a long distance from the roots of trees. . . . Let him not eat after sunset anything containing sesame seeds. . . . Let him eat while his feet are still wet (from bathing), but let him not go to bed with wet feet. . . . (*Manusmṛti* 4. 37-75)

In order to cleanse the organs by which urine and feces are eliminated, earth and water must be used, to the degree that is necessary. . . . He who desires to be pure must clean the penis by one application of earth, the anus by three applications, the left hand alone by ten, and both hands by seven. Such is the purification ordained for householders; it must be doubled for students, tripled for hermits, and quadrupled for ascetics. (*ibid.* 5.134-37)

Such injunctions for daily life provoke a number of problems of interpretation. Like the rules dealing with the *śrāddha*, these are in large part obviously to be classified as *adr̥stārtha*. They are enunciated with the same mix of mystery and assuredness in their efficacy as the rules for the ancestral rite. The symbolic (or "arbitrary") as opposed to

1983], p. 4. my emphasis). While from the point of view of their *Entstehungsgeschichte* cultural rules may sometimes be susceptible of rational analysis (of the sort Mary Douglas undertakes for the Hebrew dietary restrictions in *Purity and Danger* [New York: Praeger, 1966], pp. 41-57), from the point of view of their *Wirkungsgeschichte* it is precisely the fact that the rules escape such analysis on the part of the agents involved that makes them so compelling. Maimonides suggests this: "When the sages said that the continent man is more virtuous [than the virtuous man] and his reward is greater, they had in mind the traditional laws [such as dietary restrictions] [rather than the "rational" laws such as the prohibition against murder]. This is correct because if it were not for the Law, they would not be bad at all" ('Eight Chapters,' in *Ethical Writings of Maimonides* [New York: Dover, 1975], p. 80).

functional (or "motivated") value of many of them are open to various explanations: Such rules might serve to separate out social or ethnic groups, give order to apparent chaos, or, what is perhaps most important here, invest things or events with a sacral quality.<sup>17</sup>

What is especially peculiar about these rules, however, is that they do not pertain to a realm we would be inclined to identify as "ritual," but rather to that "zone of freedom" from shared rules where all such personal routines with their acceptable alternatives exist.<sup>18</sup> It is precisely the textualization here, in the classic Indian code of behavior, of what are generally elsewhere part of "hidden culture," the implicit rules of daily life, that is so striking. Indeed, their very existence suggests that for traditional India at least we might want to expand the realm of the sacred to include daily life, which evidently was to a significant degree subject to the same sort of regulation, ritualization, perhaps even sacralization as "religious" events themselves. In fact, this applies, as we shall see, to much of Sanskrit aesthetic culture as well.<sup>19</sup>

While the Mīmāṃsā categories thus seem to describe something essential about two types of cultural rules (or at the very least tell us something central about the the indigenous perception of rule morphology), the Kantian categories provide us with an additional and crucial differentiation. The first set of Manu's rules functions to *constitute* the *śrāddha* ceremony, which in their absence could not exist as that ceremony. The second set, those concerning daily life, are by and large regulatory, since they merely serve, when not prohibiting certain types of behavior, to constrain it; things could be done otherwise.

What is equally as important as the question of rule-modality here, however, is the status and authority of the rules in question. The very fact of their being *adr̥ṣṭārtha* gives Manu's injunctions the force of actual Vedic rules, *śruti*. For the category of *smṛti*, while ill-defined (it being culturally useful that this should be so; see below, note 24), is according to Mīmāṃsā always assumed to be based on Vedic texts that are no longer extant (but have only been "remembered")<sup>20</sup> if no discernible motive can be discovered for them. Briefly put, the argument comes to this: *dharma* is knowable only by means of transcendent rules; all rules of *smṛti* whose purposes are not somehow intelligibly instrumental

<sup>17</sup> See Mary Douglas, *Rules and Meanings* (London: Penguin, 1973).

<sup>18</sup> Robert B. Edgerton, *Rules, Exceptions, and Social Order* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 36.

<sup>19</sup> One might speculate that the very emergence of *śāstra* into socio-cultural life at large may have occurred as a result of extrapolation from its presumed competence in the domain of ritual.

<sup>20</sup> I cannot detail the argument here behind what I take to be the original meaning of the word *smṛti*. In brief: 1) Mīmāṃsā does not hold that Vedic texts were "heard" originally by the ṛṣis, since there is thought never to have been an origin; 2) *śruti* no less than *smṛti* is passed down "in memory"; 3) *śruti*, consequently, means "what is actually now *perceived aurally* (in recitation), i.e., extant; *smṛti* is "what is remembered," i.e., material inferentially recoverable from present reformulations (in language or practice) that once existed as part of a Vedic corpus. Note the use of *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna* in the sense of *śruti* and *smṛti* respectively in both the *Purva-* and *Uttaramīmāṃsāsūtras*.



must inform us of *dharma*, and so acquire an authority as good as scriptural.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, since *smṛti* texts are a source of knowledge of *dharma*, their prescriptions can never, according to Kumārila, have merely the purpose evident in their surface discourse.<sup>22</sup>

The implications of this overview of rules in *dharmaśāstra* and of the indigenous and Western categories available for analyzing them are, I believe, significant for much of shastric discourse in traditional India. Often explicitly and always implicitly *śāstras* claim to regulate human practices, aesthetic no less than social, economic, political, and religious. Shastric rules can have both "evident" and "non-evident" significance, and the latter are in no way less authoritative than the former, despite being empirically unverifiable or unintelligible; on the contrary, such rules serve to reinforce the claim to Vedic provenance openly asserted or implied in virtually every shastric text. The failure of the indigenous tradition to conceptualize the modality of constitutive/regulative entails the conclusion that *śāstra* makes no distinction in the "what" and the "how" of cultural practices: rules of substance and rules of style, so to speak, are collapsed into a single normatively injunctive system.

What is the case in other areas of traditional Indian culture seems especially so in the realm of aesthetic, particularly literary, practice. From the beginning, *sāhityaśāstra* (like the *Mahābhārata*, *purāṇas*, *Ayurveda* and so on) has sought to secure its authority by explicitly linking itself to the *Veda*. As is well known, Bharata terms the *Nāṭyaśāstra* "the fifth *Veda*,"<sup>23</sup> while Rājasekhara identifies *alaṃkāraśāstra* as one of the *Vedāṅgas*, includes it in the category of *apauruṣeya* ("transcendent") texts, and numbers it among the *vidyāsthānas*, the "branches of knowledge of *dharma*" all of which seeks to secure the absolute authority of its injunctions.<sup>24</sup> This authority is even more clearly delineated by Vāmana at the beginning of his influential *Kāvyaṃkāraśāstra*: "Poetry is to be considered something good [*kāvyaṃ grāhyam*] because of its ornamentation. 'Ornamentation'

<sup>21</sup> As Kumārila puts it: "Where upon close examination no other motive can be found [for a *smṛti* prescription], it must derive its authority from a [no longer extant] *śruti* text, since it cannot have any other possible source" (*Tantravārttika* Vol. I, p. 118). So, too, Śābara, *ibid.*, pp. 78-9.

<sup>22</sup> *Tantravārttika* Vol. I, pp. 77-78.

<sup>23</sup> *Nāṭyaśāstra* (ed. Manomohan Ghosh, Calcutta: Manisha Granthalaya, 1967), 1.15ff.

<sup>24</sup> *Kāvyaṃkāraśāstra* (ed. C.D. Dalal and R.A. Sastry, Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1934), pp. 2-4. *Apauruṣeyatva* according to Mīmāṃsā is axiomatically authoritative. On the injunctive authority of the *vidyāsthānas*, see *Tantravārttika* Vol. I, p. 122; Kumārila and Mīmāṃsā in general are exceptional in their restrictive analysis of sources of dharmic authority and of the extension of binding rules (this is naturally the case, since one of Kumārila's principal projects is to delegitimize heterodox systems, in particular Buddhism; see especially *Tantravārttika* Vol. I, pp. 113ff.). As Kumārila puts it, "It is not our business to establish the authority of all forms of behavior; our only purpose is to understand *dharma*" (*Tantravārttika* Vol. I, p. 78). But of course it is the very breadth and variability of the conception of *dharma* that has allowed for ever more flexible interpretations, outside of Mīmāṃsā, of what counts as *smṛti* or *śāstra*, or may be numbered among the *vidyāsthānas* (on which see also, "The Theory of Practice," p. 502 and n. 17, and above).

is beauty. It is attained by eliminating 'faults' and securing the presence of the 'virtues' and 'figures of speech.' This can be achieved only via *śāstra*" (1.1.1-4).<sup>25</sup>

In its substance, too, the *sāhityaśāstra* of the classical period presents itself as a thoroughly normative discourse. Its prescriptions, for example, with respect to the structure of the *mahākāvya*, are well known.<sup>26</sup> Here the genre itself is constituted by the rules of the rhetorical tradition. Without the required descriptions of cities, seas, mountains, moonrise, sunrise and the dozen or so other items listed as early as Bhāmaha,<sup>27</sup> one simply no longer has a court epic.

This constitutive function of genre rules is assuredly something basic to every art-form everywhere, whether these rules are verbalized or not. For it is the rules alone that allow a cultural, especially aesthetic form to be repeatable and so to emerge as identifiable at all. However, this is not the case with what, consistent with the problematic constructed in this paper, I proceed next to examine: "that which can be done otherwise." I want to consider briefly some shastric constraints on literary practice in areas that would be thought to be exempt or unsuited to regulation. And, though it may not be necessary, I should state at the outset that my analysis is not meant to be evaluative. The rules of conventional art-forms can in fact create expectations and a heightened sensitivity in the

<sup>25</sup> Again, Mīmāṃsā seeks to restrict such claims as Vāmana's. In his discussion of the *śilpaśāstra*, Śabara remarks, "There is indeed a *smṛti* for this activity, which tells us how architectural creations and such things are made beautiful. But there is nothing at all *adr̥ṣṭa* about this. Beauty can be known without the help of *śāstra*, and so transmitted in *smṛti*. Thus no *śāstra* [i.e., Vedic text] need be presupposed as the basis of this *smṛti* [i.e., *śilpaśāstra*]. If [beauty] could not be known without *śāstra*, then *śāstra* [i.e., a no longer extant Vedic text] could meaningfully be presupposed [as its source]" (*Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 6.2.18). This sounds as if it is directed to an actual counterview. And in fact, transcendent origins are ascribed to *vastuśāstra* elsewhere, as in the *Matsyapurāṇa*, which lists the eighteen primal teachers of the art (starting with Brahṃā), and describes how Viṣṇu in the Fish-avataṛ revealed a compendious version of it to Manu (*Matsyapurāṇa* [ed. Poona: Anandasrama, 1981], 252.2-4). An exactly similar opposition of views is found in the case of the *kāmaśāstra*: Vātsyāyana's text, as he himself claims, derives ultimately from Prajāpati's vast *śāstra* on the *trivarga* (*KamSū.* 1.1.5-14; see above); for the Mīmāṃsākas, the authority of the *kāmaśāstra* rests exclusively on empirical grounds (*kāmaśāstrasya dr̥ṣṭāpramāṇamūlatvena pramāṇyasiddhiḥ, Nyayasudha* [ed. Benares: Chowkhamba, 1909], p. 132). There was clearly a need, widely perceived in popular culture, for Vedic or transcendent legitimacy, and just as clearly a resistance among the bestowers of that legitimacy - Mīmāṃsā - to what it viewed as a potential devaluation of the commodity.

<sup>26</sup> Louis Renou, 'Sur la Structure du Kāvya,' *Journal asiatique* 247.1 (1959), pp. 1-113; Daniel Ingalls, *Vidyākara's Śubhāṣitaratnakośa* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 33-34; David J. Smith, *Ratnākara's Haravijaya: An Introduction to the Sanskrit Court Epic* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 6, 33.

<sup>27</sup> *Kāvyaḷamkāra* (ed. P. V. Naganatha Sastry, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970), 1.20; cf. Daṇḍin *Kāvyaḷadarśa* (ed. by Rangacarya Raddi Sastri, Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1970), 1.16-17.

audience, which in turn lead to a refinement in artistry. Depending on the artist, rules can liberate as easily as they can imprison.<sup>28</sup>

In the fifth chapter of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Bharata describes the preliminaries of a theatrical performance. The entire preparation for the performance is thoroughly stylized, the entrance on stage of the performers, the warming up on the part of the musicians, and all the rest. The musical preludes are strictly regulated as to rhythm and tempo, as are the movements of the director and his assistants. The contents of the opening verses are prescribed as well as the character of the songs. A stylized banter between the director and assistants requires that "the fool should suddenly come in and deliver a discourse designed to excite the smile of the director" (5.137-38), and then raise questions that slowly lead into the plot of the drama. Bharata closes the complex description of the preliminaries by declaring that whoever produces a play in strict accordance with these rules (*vidhinaiva*) will have an auspicious outcome and ultimately go to heaven; but "whoever violates the rules and produces a play however he may wish" (. . . *vidhim utsrjya yathes-tam samprajayet*) will fail miserably and be reborn as the lowest form of life (5.175-76).

Now, the fact that there is a ritual, or indeed religious character to Sanskrit drama might be thought to have some appropriate bearing on the nature and degree of regulation in these components of the play. But what about such things as plot and character, matters viewed in the contemporary West as fundamentally determined by the individual artistic consciousness? How the playwright or storyteller develops a character, for example, provides an index to his interpretation of life and contributes to the uniqueness and individuality of his creation. In Bharata, by contrast, a typology of character and action is presented as something to be studiously followed, as in fact it appears to have been in virtually all subsequent Sanskrit dramatic and lyric poetry. For example, the heroine of an artistic work must be one of a finite number of types, and her behavior is regulated in detail:

[How one is to treat an unfaithful lover:] On seeing the beloved one standing much ashamed and afraid due to his guilt, the heroine should harass him with rebukes made up of words spoken in jealous indignation. But no very cruel words should be uttered, and no very angry words should be used, either. She should tearfully speak in reference to herself. . . . After saying . . . "Don't touch me," or "Go to the beloved who is in your heart" . . . she should turn back on some pretext and resume her joyful expression. In case of being taken forcibly by the dress, the hand, or the hair, the woman should be mollified even after observing signs of guilt in her lover. When taken by her hand . . . the woman should slowly draw near the beloved and release herself from him . . . [or] enjoy the touch of the beloved in such a way that he may not perceive it. . . . (24.271-80 [after Ghosh])

<sup>28</sup> Compare Oliver Taplin, *Greek Tragedy in Action* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 159-60.

Here again, if the prescriptions with respect to character and action enunciated by the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, by requiring what is typical anyway, might be thought to lose some of their inappropriate stringency, this is hardly the case with what pertains more strictly to individual poetic style. Consider now a few stylistic injunctions of the *alambkāraśāstra*, in particular those in one of the earliest of such texts, the *Kāvyaalambkāra* of Bhāmaha (c. 600 A.D.).

One should employ adverbs ending in the phoneme *a* [6.34]; One must use words ending in the *kvip* suffix only in the instrumental singular (*ā*) or genitive plural (*ām*) [6.40]; one must do the same in the case of the suffix *as* [6.41]; The use of the causative is everywhere quite attractive; while the suffix *nini* in the sense of "possessing a particular characteristic" can be used in all three genders [6.46]; One should use words ending in the suffix *ktin* . . . [6.49].

In one or another of these cases it may be that Bhāmaha is unpacking some complex rule of Pāṇini's. Yet in general he appears to be doing something quite different, articulating rules as to what he believes to be particularly "poetic" phonology or morphology. The rules rather clearly fit into the category of "non-evident purpose." As we saw above, such rules having no intelligible motivation to them, and for which, conversely, there are no empirical grounds for testing their efficacy (and that pertain to sciences numbered among the *vidyāsthānas*, above, pp. 26-27), can claim a "Vedic" provenance. This fact, along with the injunctive mode of Bhāmaha's enunciation of them suggests a virtually incontestable, categorical authority reminiscent of the ritual texts themselves. And this authority seems to have been actually perceived: the incidence of usage according with Bhāmaha's prescriptions<sup>29</sup> seems unexpectedly high (in comparison, say, with the more natural diction of the epic). This indicates that, as in the case of the various genres themselves (whether *mahākāvya*, *nāṭaka*, or other), and the types of character and action, the diction and style in general that we associate with classical Sanskrit poetry have been measurably influenced - have perhaps been defined - by shastric norms.

\* \* \* \*

To summarize these arguments, then, it appears that the traditional Mimāṃsā and the Kantian categories for the comprehension of cultural rules are necessary and complementary; both tell us something real and essential about the nature of norms in cultural practices. The shastric tradition - above all, it would seem, a tradition of rule-governance - does not as such differ from the implicit or articulated normative codes of other cultures. What seems to distinguish the Indian case to some degree is the intervention of normative discourse into areas we might not normally associate with strict rule-governance - such as the substance and style of literary art - and the peculiar degree of authority (deriving from the Vedic prototype) to which this discourse, by its pedigree or explicit declaration, lays claim. While I have here largely focused on the *ideal* dimension of *śāstra* and its self-understanding, a detailed mapping of actual cases of cultural production against shastric norms is likely to show much the same thing: that it is the

<sup>29</sup> See for example Renou, 'Structure du Kāvya,' pp. 46ff. and notes.

authority of tradition and the wide reach of its regulative power as they are both found encoded in *śāstra* that give many areas of Indian culture their most noteworthy characteristics of perdurability, continuity, and homogeneity.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Here again grammar would provide a paradigmatic case. Naturally, access to the shastric tradition - that is, Sanskrit learning - will be an important conditioning factor. But such learning on the part of patrons could prove to be as important as that of the producers themselves (an illuminating account of this tendency in the domain of South Indian Shaiva ritual is provided by C.J. Fuller, *Servants of the Goddess* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984]). As far as I can tell, studies of the sort I am suggesting here are rare. A paper that asks all the right questions for the domain of musicology, and for which one hopes more detailed answers will be provided, is Jonathan Katz, 'Indian Musicological Literature and its Context,' *Puruṣārtha* 7 (1983), pp. 57-75 (= *Inde et Littératures*, ed. Marie-Claude Porcher [Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1983]). See also Edgerton, *Rules, Exceptions*, pp. 15-16. for some general observations on the often very close fit between rules and actual practices in many societies. How far one could extrapolate from the precept-practice map of aesthetic production to other areas of traditional Indian life, especially matters of power and domination, is a question that merits close theoretical and historical scrutiny.