

Johannes Bronkhorst

johannes.bronkhorst@unil.ch

Review of:

Susmita Arp: Kālāpāni: Zum Streit über die Zulässigkeit von Seereisen im kolonialzeitlichen Indien. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag. 2000. (Alt- und Neu-Indische Studien, 52.) 258 S. ISBN: 3-515-07813-4.

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The difficulties Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi — later known as Mahātmā Gandhi — had to face from the side of the leaders of his caste before his departure as a youth to England in 1888 are widely known. The details of the discussions that took place all over India around that time about the question whether sea voyages for members of higher castes were allowed are less generally known. Few Sanskrit scholars will know, for example, that the Sanskrit-Sanskrit dictionary called Vācaspatyam contains, under the entry *kali*, a reprint of a small treatise composed by the author of the dictionary, Tārānātha Vācaspati, which embodied an important and influential contribution to the debate about this issue toward the end of the nineteenth century. They may not know either that the famous P. V. Kane still took an active interest in this issue.

The book under review initially considers the pre-history of this debate, i.e., the passages in the Dharmaśāstra literature which deal with, or were believed to deal with, a prohibition of sea voyages. They are few in number, and later discussants often focused on lists of practices to be avoided in the Kaliyuga (*kalivarjya*). The bulk of the book deals with the late nineteenth and early twentieth century discussion, with special emphasis on Bengal. It is remarkable that this debate did not really start until after the 1860s, which may not be unconnected with the fact that the newly opened Suez canal enormously facilitated travel to and from England.

Susmita Arp presents some important publications dealing with the permissibility of sea travel in detail, and discusses numerous others. She focuses her attention on sources in Sanskrit, Bengali and English, and analyses the arguments used. These are not all exclusively based on the interpretation of ancient texts, but involve numerous other considerations, as shown by the author of this book.

The title of the book is taken from a drama called Kālāpāni, written by Amritalal Basu and first performed in 1892, which makes fun especially of those who plead for the freedom to make sea voyages. The last chapter deals with it in detail.