Caste and purity: A study in the language of the Dharma literature

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The caste system, according to the currently prevalent view, is based on purity, each caste being located on a hierarchical gradation of purity, a thesis laid out most compellingly by Louis Dumont. It has generally been assumed that purity is the basis of hierarchy in ancient India. This paper examines the ancient texts on Dharma relating to purity and social hierarchy and finds that the texts establish no link between the two and that they rarely, if ever, refer to purity as an abstract condition or state. The language of purity itself is multifaceted, containing numerous terms with significant differences in meaning, and it makes a clear distinction between persons and things. With respect to persons, the vocabulary clearly indicates that the focus is not on any permanent, or even transitory, condition of purity but rather on the transition from impurity to purity, on the recovery of lost purity; the dynamic meaning dominates the use of the major Sanskrit terms for purity.

With this volume on the theme of tradition, pluralism, and identity, we celebrate the lifelong achievements of Professor T. N. Madan both as scholar extraordinaire and wonderful human being, a man who is as secure in his own identity when he is talking with a villager in Kashmir as when he is addressing a scholarly audience in Texas. The Indian tradition down the centuries, however, has managed pluralism primarily within the context of interlocking group identities, the most basic of which is caste. And the caste system, according to the currently prevalent view, is based on purity, each caste being located on a hierarchical gradation of purity. The higher the caste the greater the degree of purity.

This thesis was laid out most boldly and most compellingly by Louis Dumont in his seminal work *Homo hierarchicus*, first published in 1966. Purity, according to Dumont, is the basis of hierarchy in traditional India and is, therefore, the ideological principle behind the caste system. Quigley (1993: 1), in his critique of the Dumontian thesis, acknowledges that the prevalent view among both Hindus and outside observers considers castes to be 'hierarchically ranked on a purity-pollution scale'. Madan (1989: 365) himself states that 'according to traditional

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caste ideology, which is obviously the brainchild of Brahmins, the key to the rank order lies in the notion of ritual purity.

Dumont’s thesis has not gone unchallenged. In a ‘Review symposium’ published just four years after the appearance of *Homo hierarchicus* and organised by Madan with contributions from ten scholars, several critiqued the central point of Dumont’s thesis that caste is based on purity. McKim Marriott’s (1990) efforts to construct an ‘Indian ethnoscociology’ using what he terms ‘Hindu categories’ are in large part directed against Dumont. In the same volume Nicholas Dirks undertakes a frontal attack on Dumont’s thesis, claiming that in his own ethnographic work he has ‘found that purity and pollution are not the primary relational coordinates which endow hierarchy with its meaning and substance’ (Dirks 1990: 61). In his recent book Quigley (1993) likewise challenges the premise that caste is based on the gradation of ritual purity.

The connection between caste and purity that is at the heart of Dumont’s thesis, furthermore, appears not to be based on ethnographic data. This is a point asserted repeatedly by reviewers, and it is the basis for Dirks’ (1990) critique. Madan (1971: 9) remarks that the ethnologists ‘complain of his [Dumont’s] attitude to empirical evidence’ and acknowledges Dumont’s ‘devaluation of the ethnographic datum’, but he notes:

What distinguishes this work from the usual social anthropological discussions of caste is that it does not proceed from fieldwork to a model of how the system works. Instead it begins with a cardinal explanatory principle—hierarchy—and boldly sets out to build a model thereon, throughout maintaining the position that theory or ideology overrides and encompasses ethnography. . . . Models, therefore, are not to be judged as true or false but as possessing more or less explanatory power.

Yet Dumont cannot invoke the principle of hierarchy and its basis in purity totally a priori; they must be derived in some way from the evidence of how the Indian society functions or from the native social ideology. So, if not ethnography then what is the source of such evidence? Some think that his source is Sanskrit texts. Berreman (1971: 22–23) explicitly states that Dumont ‘relies heavily on some classical Sanskrit texts while ignoring others’ and concludes that his thesis ‘conforms well to the theory of caste purveyed in learned Brahmanical tracts. But it bears little relationship to the experience of caste in the lives of the many millions who live it in India.’ Von Furer-Haimendorf (1971: 24) notes Dumont’s ‘expertise in classical Indology’.

Are the classical texts of Brahmanism, then, the inspiration behind Dumont’s ‘model’ of the caste system? These texts, especially the technical literature on

1 Madan (1971). Besides Madan, the reviewers were E. Leech, G.D. Berreman, C. von Furer-Haimendorf, R.S. Khare, V. Das, J.S. Uheroi, J.C. Houterman, D. Kantowsky, and M. Singer, with a response by Dumont. Especially critical of Dumont’s thesis are Berreman, Veena Das, and Uheroi. For a recent defense of purity as the basis of caste from a psychosocial perspective, see Dundes (1997).
Dharma (Dharmaśāstra), however, recognize only the division of human society into four varṇas. Their social ideology is based on varṇas and not on jāti, castes being subsumed under varṇa ideology as hybrid forms. Leach (1971: 15) appears to hint that Dumont's ideology is borrowed from the Brahmanical theory of varṇas when he remarks on

Dumont's insistence that the structure of jāti organization which is "out there", external to the observer, is integral with the structure of varṇa hierarchy... As anthropological outsiders we need to pay close attention to the varṇa system because it helps to make sense of the facts on the ground and, in turn, continually forces the facts on the ground into a coherent pattern.

Brahmanical scholarship is consistent on this point, and the technical literature on Dharma continues to focus on varṇa as the basis of Indian society throughout the medieval period and right up to modern times.

In Dumont's (1980: 66-91) own treatment of varna, however, he states clearly that although varna and jāti are both based on hierarchy divorced from 'power', the varṇa hierarchy is not based on the pure and the impure (1980: 66, 73). So, according to Dumont, on this crucial point the two systems of social hierarchy in India diverge. And yet he acknowledges that much of the caste ideology, which Madan (1989: 365) calls 'the brain-child of Brahmans', is derived from the varṇa ideology. We are then faced with not just a theoretical or ideological problem but with a historical question: when and how did caste ideology of purity/impurity emerge out of the varṇa hierarchy? The historical question is raised by Madan (1971: 12): 'It is not clear, however, at what time Dumont believes the crucial structural elements of the caste system, as presented by him, to have crystallized.' Is it plausible, furthermore, that the same Brahmin intelligentsia that kept purity out of the varna hierarchy would have made it the cornerstone of the caste hierarchy?

Even though, as Dumont himself acknowledges, varṇa hierarchy is not based on a gradation of purity/impurity, nevertheless the same Brahmanical social thinking that developed the varṇa ideology also placed great emphasis on purity, creating intricate and minute rules on pollution and purification. These rules and the ideology underlying them have not been subjected to thorough scholarly scrutiny.

An important way to get a handle on this ideology, I think, is to study the vocabulary of purity/impurity in these texts. Scholars regularly use Sanskrit equivalents in dealing with purity under a tacit assumption that this will somehow take us closer

2 Another question is the ideological basis of the varṇa hierarchy, a question Dumont never fully answers except to draw a distinction between 'dignity' and 'power' and the separation of status from power. The mythical legitimisation of the varṇa division is, of course, contained in the Purusa Hymn of the Rg Veda (10.90) which portrays the creation of the four varṇas from four parts of the creator's body and posits thereby a biological (racial/genetic?) basis for varṇas. The early Vedic texts, however, indicate that raw power was a central ingredient in varṇa hierarchy, illustrated by the metaphor of food and cattle, the lower varṇas being the 'food' of the upper varṇas (see Smith 1990).
to the reality on the ground. Yet, there is no single term in Sanskrit for either the substantives 'purity/impurity' or the adjectives 'pure/impure'. The existence of a large number of terms in a language for a broad area of human experience is prima facie evidence for that area being central to that culture and for its nuanced and often technical treatment by that culture. It is interesting to note, however, that, despite the enormous amount of writing on the concept of purity in India, there has been no sustained and detailed study of the Sanskrit (or other vernacular) terms for 'pure/impure'. That is what this paper attempts to do within the confines of the ancient Dharma texts in an attempt to uncover the complex ways in which they deal with the category today subsumed under 'purity'. This is an exercise in philology in the best sense of the word, a philological study that is context-sensitive and therefore refuses to reify anything, least of all words, and examines the changing patterns of word usage that opens a window into the changing reality of the social world lying behind the language. Such a study may also throw some valuable light on the ongoing scholarly debate about the caste system and contribute to the cross-cultural study of purity and pollution, to which I will return in the concluding section of this paper.

I

The vocabulary of pure/impure

The principal terms for pure/impure in the Dharma literature belong to seven families, some of which contain several individual terms with their own nuances and technical meanings. For convenience I introduce each family under its most prominent representative in the order I treat them.

1. sucī—saucā, asucī, āsucā
2. śudhyatā (śudhayatā, āśudhayatā)—śuddhi, sūdha, aśuddha

See, for example, Marriott (1990: 33). Madan himself is concerned about the use of the modern English term 'purity' to describe the lived reality of Indian life.

I use deliberately, but only as far as seems reasonable, the Sanskrit words śuddha and sūdha instead of 'suspiciousness' and 'purity'. The former two words or derivatives from the same are in use in most languages of India. My hesitation in using the two English words throughout the chapter arises from the fact that they have become omnibus words and conceal more than they reveal (Madan 1968: 49-50).

The abstract term 'purity', as we will see, is absent in the vocabulary of Dharma texts.

4 Marriott's (1990) use of the term 'Hindu' is misleading, pointing as it does to a refined and unchanging substance or category. There is a similar refined use of 'Hindu' with reference to food in Khare (1992), about which I have written elsewhere (Olivelle 1995). On the context-sensitive nature of Indian culture, see Ramakrishnan (1990).

6 I have ignored a few terms, such as kalama, which in the Dharma literature always refers to moral turpitude or sin: A.1.22.4; 1.24.25; 1.28.18; 1.29.1 (the last three repeat the same expression); B.2.4.5; Va.28.6 (same as B); M.4.260; 12.18; 12.22; Vṛ.1.36; 23.60; 52.14; Y.3.218.

7 So as not to make matters more complex than they already are, I have not treated separately compound terms, such as viśuddhi and pariśuddhi (and other compounds with the prefixes vi- or pari- etc.). These, as far as I can tell, do not add new meanings or nuances, except to make the term more intensive. So pariśuddha or viśuddha may mean 'purified to an extraordinary degree.'
Let me make a few general comments before proceeding to a more detailed analysis of each term. First, a grammatically negative term (e.g., āsact or anedhyā) is not always simply the opposite of the positive; negatives often develop their own semantic overlay, creating highly technical meanings. This is a common phenomenon in Sanskrit as witnessed by the well-known term ahīṃsā, whose meaning goes well beyond what may be expected from the simple negative of hīṃsā.

Since there is considerable semantic overlap between several of these terms, the use of one in a particular text or context may not always be of special significance. Often the selection may be based on the exigencies of metre (in verses), or on alliteration and other 'sound effects'. There is the danger of 'reading too much' into a word. In this study, I have tried to survey a broad sampling of cases before determining whether nuances and technical meanings are attached to particular terms in particular contexts or by particular authors.

In my discussion of individual terms, I will focus on several significant questions. Does a term refer: (a) to a person or to a thing; (b) to a condition (that is, to a person or thing being pure, or more generally to the abstract 'purity') or to a transition (that is, a person or thing becoming pure, the recovery of lost purity); (c) to what we have come to call 'ritual purity', to common cleanliness, or to the areas of morality and criminal law (four areas that are not always as clearly distinguished in our sources as in our own minds); (d) to an individual in his own existential being or to a class or group (or to an individual as part of a group)? The resolution of these questions, I believe, is important not only to our understanding of ancient Indian world views and ritual practices, but also to the ongoing debate on the role of purity in caste identity and hierarchy.

For a diachronic study of the terms for pure/impure we need both an absolute and a relative chronology of the Dharma texts. Unfortunately, as is the case with most ancient Indian literature, we cannot place certain or accurate dates against any of these texts. In footnote 8 I give a tentative chronology that may be of some help for those unfamiliar with this literature.  

8 Kane (1968) gives the following chronology: Gātānā 600-400 B.C.E.; Āpastamba 450-350 B.C.E.; Baudhāṇyā 500-200 B.C.E.; Vasistha 300-100 B.C.E.; Manu 2nd century B.C.E to C.E. 2nd century (I would place him closer to the later than the former date). Vīśṇu 300 B.C.E. to C.E. 100 (the current handed down text C.E. 400-600); Yājñavalkya C.E. first two centuries; Nārāda C.E. 100-300; Vaiśikāra C.E. 300-400. This sort of chronology is a mere house of cards without too much supporting evidence. My own opinion is that, whatever may be said about the original versions, with regard to the texts as we have them now, Āpastamba is the oldest, followed by Gātānā, Baudhāṇyā (although this text has undergone extensive additions), and Vīśṇu and Vaiśikāra in no particular order (see Lārvīla's comments, N. vol. 2, pp. aix-xxii; Manu is probably the oldest of this
Within the confines of this paper it is not possible to discuss fully and in detail every occurrence of these terms in the Dharma literature. I will confine myself to presenting illustrative examples for each major meaning or nuance, relegating to the charts attached to each family of terms the exhaustive listing of the evidence.

1. Śuci

The term śuci is an adjective derived from the verbal root śuc and in its earliest usage meant 'shining, bright, white'. By the time of the early Dharma texts the term had acquired its traditional meaning of 'pure', although more literal meanings continued to coexist.9 As its primitive meaning indicates, śuci alludes to a positive quality (bright, pure) in a subject, and its dynamic meaning refers to the regaining of this lost quality. In contrast, we will see that śuddhi refers directly to the getting rid of impurities, the positive quality being indicated indirectly as the result of such purification. For the sake of clarity, I give below four significant areas in the semantics of śuci.

1. An important distinction our texts make is between the purification of persons and of things, such as vessels, seats, or a piece of ground.10 Śuci is the most common term for 'pure' with reference to persons.11 When a text wants to make this distinction clear, it invariably uses śuci (or its derivative śauci; see section 1.2) for persons and śuddhi for things. The use of separate terms points to an ideological distinction between persons and non-persons in the area of purity.

Gautama is the first author to use the expression dravyasuddhiḥ ('purification of things'). He introduces the section (G 1.29–34) on the different methods for cleansing articles made of metal, clay, wood, and so forth with this expression (G 1.29) and distinguishes that from personal purification, śauci (G 1.35), a topic he deals with in the very next section (1.35–45). This distinction is brought out most clearly by Manu. In the first chapter he gives a table of contents which lists śauci and dravyāṇāṃ śuddhiḥ (M 1.113) as two separate entries, the former referring to personal purification and the latter group, all of them composed well into the common era, although Viśu contains sections belonging to an old sûtra text.

Kālidāsa, in his Rūpamāna (1.2), for example, calls 'summer' the hot season, śuci. References in the Dharma texts to god as śuci probably have the meaning of bright or shining: A 1.22.7; B 1.104; 1.13.2. Interestingly, the word 'pure' itself is derived from the Indo-European root for fire, from which is derived the Greek pyros and English 'pyre' and 'fire', as well as the Sanskrit pūṣya (see section 4 on pūṣya).

10 In this study I make the broader distinction between persons and 'non-persons', the latter including animals, objects, activities (e.g., rite), bodily discharges, and detached parts of the human body, such as hair and nails. Within the category of 'person' I include 'pure' used with reference to the human body (śaṭṭha) or bodily parts (āṇga), such as hands and mouth.

11 Anātman is the earliest Dharma text, uses puyata (see section 3) in preference to śuci with regard to personal purity, using the latter mostly in its second meaning. This may indicate a development of the purity vocabulary within the Dharma tradition. It may, however, be simply a matter of personal preference or idiosyncrasy, or even a regional difference in the vocabulary.
to the cleansing of things. In the body of the text he maintains this distinction with a verse that concludes his discussion of personal purification and introduces the next topic, the purification of things:  

\[\text{éṣa śaucasya vah prakṣāḥ śāraśtasya vinirnayah / nārāvidhām dhravyānām śuddheṣa śrūta nirnayam īl} \]  

('I have explained above the settled practice regarding the purification of the body. Listen now to the settled practice regarding the cleansing of things') (M 5.110). This distinction is also evident in a rule that prohibits vedic recitation when a person finds that ‘the ground where the recitation takes places is unclean or he himself is impure’: svādhyāyāvabāhīṁ asuddham ātmanāṁ cāśuccim (M 4.127).

Throughout the Dharma literature, the term for ‘pure’ within the sections on personal purification is invariably śuci. Even outside these sections, śuci most frequently refers to the purity of persons rather than of things (see Figure 1: A.1.a–b).

Śuci is not used exclusively with reference to people, however, although this is its primary sense. It has a broader application; animals, clothes, mines, and water are said to be śuci. The most frequent use of śuci outside the context of persons, however, occurs in the set phrase śucand deśe ('in a clean [or cleansed] place') with reference to the area where a ritual act is to take place (see Figure 1: A.2.b).

2. The connection of śuci with persons carries over into the area of morality and personal character. Thus, in many contexts, especially in the appointment of ministers and other public officials, śuci is used with the meaning of ‘upright’, ‘honest’, ‘loyal’, ‘trustworthy’—that is, a man of character and integrity. The king ‘should appoint Aryas who are upright and honest to protect his subjects’ (āryaṁ chaucin saṣyaśilāṁ prajāgaptae mādhyānī [A 2.26.4]). The king himself, as well as his ministers, officials, supervisors of mines and gambling houses, ambassadors, judges, and witnesses in a court should be śuci upright (Figure 1: A.1.c).

3. In the area of criminal justice śuci means ‘innocent’, although this meaning is recorded only in the somewhat late texts of Manu and Nārada. A man who has undergone an ordeal successfully is said to be śuci (M 8.115). A king’s power is demonstrated by that fact that his word can make a guilty person (aśucin) innocent (śuci), and vice versa (N 18.49).

4. When śuci is used with the first meaning, it most frequently indicates ‘purification’ or ‘becoming pure’ rather than ‘being pure’; that is, śuci indicates that a person has become pure through some purificatory activity (see Figure 1: A.1.a). This usage, together with its counterpart in śuddhi (see section 2.1), shows that the concern of Dharma authors was with the constant struggle to recover lost purity rather than with some abstract notion of ‘purity’ that may attach to persons or groups.

This dynamic meaning is most evident in the expression śucir bhavet (‘he becomes pure’) coming at the end of the description of purificatory rituals. Thus, after he has bathed in and drunk a mixture of cow’s urine, cow dung,
Figure 1

A. suci

1. Person:
   a. becoming pure: A 2.18.6 (?); G 1.48; 9.2; 20.21; B 1.6.15; 1.8.23; 1.8.24; 1.8.25.
      1.11.38; 1.11.41; 2.15.18; 2.15.19; Va 3.41; 10.31; 23.31; 29.21; M 2.51; 2.107; 2.176; 4.35;
      5.106; 5.143; 8.87 (twice); Y 1.13; 1.195; 1.225; 2.99 (twice); 3.21; 3.26; 3.51; Vi 22.89;
      23.49; 23.55; 60.15; N 1.67; 20.17; Vkh 1.2; 2.1.1.
      freed from sin: Y 3.245; 3.257; 3.303; B 1.10.5 (twice); M 5.106; Y 1.187; Vi 22.89 (twice).
   b. being pure: B 1.10.5 (twice); M 5.106; Y 1.187; Vi 22.89 (twice).
   c. morally upright: A 2.15.11; 2.25.13; 2.26.4; G 1.14; B 2.14.6; Va 2.9; M 2.109; 2.115;
      5.106; 7.22; 7.31; 7.38; 7.66; 7.62; 7.63; 7.64; 8.77; 9.188; 9.335; Y 1.28; 1.121; 1.139;
      1.312; 1.322; 1.335; 1.291; Vi 3.71; 29.10; N 1.133; 1.209; Vkh 3.5 (?).
   d. criminally innocent: M 8.115; N 18.49 (twice).

2. Non-persons:
   a. becomes pure: Va 12.15.
   b. is pure:
      place (lieu de fête): A 1.11.23; 2.4.23; 2.18.8; G 1.36; B 1.8.11; 2.5.11; M 2.222; 3.206;
      5.68; Y 1.15; 1.227; Vi 61.17; Vkh 3.5.
      others: B 1.9.2; 1.9.3; 1.9.6; 1.13.1 (lit. sacrifice); 1.13.4; 3.5.2; 3.9.2; Va 3.47; 14.27; 21.14;
      28.8; M 5.130; 5.131; 9.70; Y 1.197; 1.191; 1.192; 1.193; Vi 23.49; 23.50; 23.52; N 18.42.

B. išuca

1. Purification:
   a. person: A 2.15.12; G 1.35; 1.42; 9.25; 9.71; 14.44; B 1.6.2; 1.6.15; 1.7.1 (twice); 1.8.1;
      1.8.3; 1.8.4; 1.8.11; 1.8.52; 1.8.53; 1.14.19; 2.4.5; 2.11.24; 2.15.11; 3.1.23; 3.1.25 (twice).
   Va 4.35; 4.37; 6.17; 6.19; 11.28; 12.17; 19.47; 28.6; M 1.113; 2.61; 2.69; 3.126; 3.192;
   4.93; 4.148; 4.175; 5.94; 5.97; 5.98; 5.100; 5.106; 5.116; 5.137; 5.139; 5.140;
   5.146; 7.45; 9.11; Y 1.15; 1.17; 1.71; 1.98; 1.209; 1.232; 3.29; Vi 22.26; 22.89 (twice);
   22.93; 23.42; 60.24; 60.26; 91.18; Vkh 2.9 (twice); 3.4.
   b. thing: B 1.14.16; Va 3.48; 3.53; M 3.114; 3.11 (twice); 6.53; Vi 21.34 (divine image).

2. Virtue: G 8.23; 10.51; Va 6.23; 11.53; M 3.235; 6.92; 10.63; 12.31; Y 1.122; 3.66; 3.137; 3.313;
   Vi 2.16; Vkh 1.4; 2.4.

C. asuci

1. Person:
   a. impure: G 16.46; B 1.6.14; Va 4.38 (? sinner); 5.6; M 4.71; 4.127; 4.142; 4.143; 5.35; 5.76;
      5.78; 5.81; 5.84; 5.86 (?); Y 1.135; 1.149; 3.30; Vi 96.28; Vkh 2.14; 3.3; 3.4.
   b. morally bad (sinner): A 1.21.12; 1.21.19; 1.29.14; 1.29.15; 1.29.17; 1.29.18; 2.12.23;
      G 9.11; 9.16; 23.22; B 1.10.5; 2.2.15; 2.2.23; 2.2.24; N 14.24.
   c. guilty: N 18.41; 18.49 (twice).

2. Non-persons:
   a. impure: (adj.): B 1.9.6; Va 4.23; 14.30; M 4.124; Y 1.149; Vi 70.17; 98.76; N 18.42; Vkh 3.5.
   b. filthy substance (substance): A 1.2.29; M possibly 5.86; Vi 5.106; 60.13; N 5.6.

D. išuca (asuci)

Period of impurity: G 2.3; 14.1; 14.23; 14.29; 16.18; B 1.11.1; 1.11.11; 1.11.19; Va 4.9; 4.14; 4.23;
4.31; 4.34; 4.35; 23.24; M 5.59; 5.61; 5.62; 5.74; 5.80; 5.97 (twice); 11.183; Y 3.6; 3.18; 3.37;
Vi 19.12; 19.18; 20.21; 21.1; 22.1; 22.6; 22.7; 22.8 (twice); 22.10; 22.11; 22.12; 22.13;
22.14 (twice); 22.15; 22.16; 22.17; 22.18; 22.19; 22.21; 22.33; 22.35 (twice); 22.38; 22.39; 22.40;
22.43; 22.45; 27.5; Vkh 2.11; 2.14; 3.8.
milk, curd, ghee, and a decoction of Kuśa grass, 'a man who has been bitten by a worm is purified' (krmidaṅgaḥ sūcīr bhavet: B 1.11.38). More commonly, however, the verb bhavet is dispensed with and the prescription of the rite concludes with just sūcīḥ—'after bathing he becomes pure' (snātaḥ sūcīḥ: M 2.176); 'after bathing the father becomes pure' (apospṛṣya pitaḥ sūcīḥ: M 5.62); and with regard to food particles stuck to the teeth, 'a man becomes pure by simply swallowing them' (nirgirnn eva tac chucīḥ: G 1.40; B 1.8.25; Vu 3.41).

The dynamic meaning is also prevalent whenever sūcī is used adjectively. Thus, when a text states that a sūcī Brahmin should do something, it does not mean that a 'pure Brahmin' (static meaning) should do it but that a Brahmin 'having become or made himself pure' should do it, and refers to a purificatory rite such as bathing or sipping water that would precede any ritual act. Thus, when Manu (M 4.35) describes what a Vedic student should do when he recites the Veda: ṭhpaśeṣonaḥkaṇḍasūnaṁ dāntah śuklāmbatat sūcīḥ ('having cut his hair, beard and nails, keeping himself subdued, wearing white clothes, pure'), the term pure as an attribute of the student while studying indicates that he should make himself pure before study, just as he should cut his hair, make an effort to subdue his senses, and wear white clothes.

There are occasions, however, when sūcī means being pure, an affirmation that a person or thing is in a state of purity. When such a static meaning is intended, sūcī invariably stands in the position of the predicate rather than a simple attribute—thus, śvā nṛṣigaṅgāṁ sūcīḥ ('in catching a deer a dog is pure': B 1.9.2); ahaṭam vāsāvāṃ sūcī ('new clothes are pure': B 1.13.4); nityam aṣyam sūcī striyām ('the mouth of a woman is always pure': M 5.130).

The predicative meaning, however, is comparatively infrequent and occurs mostly with reference to objects rather than to persons.

The multiple meanings and nuances of sūcī permit the authors sometimes to play with that diversity. A good example is Manu 5.106 (variants in Vi 22.89; Y 3.32): sarvasya eva śaucāṇāṁ arthaśauvam param śnryāṁ yo 'the sūcī hi sa sūcī na mṛdāvāśīcor sūcīḥ ' 'Of all forms of purifications [a], keeping oneself pure [b] in transactions is the best, snṛīs say, for a man is pure [c] when he makes himself pure [d] with respect to transactions (or procuring wealth); he is not pure [e] by becoming pure [f] using earth and water.' Here [a] has the general meaning of purification (see section 2.1), while [b] already borders on keeping oneself honest; [c] and [e] appear to have the static meaning of being pure (as predicate), but that state is earned through a dynamic process of purification [d] and [f], where [d] again has the meaning of honesty and integrity, while [f] is washing to get rid of stain and smell. As this verse shows, the four meanings I have separated for heuristic purposes are seen by the authors as forming a single spectrum of meanings.

12 It appears that when sūcī used adjectively has a somewhat static meaning, then it refers to moral character ('upright'; meaning #2) rather than to personal purity.
1.1. **Sauca** Sauca is what Sanskrit grammarians call a *vyrdhi* derivative, that is, a word derived from another word by strengthening its first syllable. We get *sauca* from *suci* with the strengthening of *u* to the *vyrdhi* grade of the diphthong *au*. Words derived in this manner indicate in the most general way a relationship to the meaning expressed by the primary word. When the derived word is a neuter substantive, however, as is the case with *sauca*, it often expresses an abstract concept. Accordingly, we should expect *sauca* to mean 'purity'. Its primary meaning, however, is not the abstract quality of 'purity' but the dynamic process of 'purification'. This may well be due to the specialisation of meaning that *vyrdhi* derivatives often undergo, but I think it is more likely that this meaning became attached to *sauca* because, as we saw, the primary meaning of *suci* is not simply 'being pure' but 'becoming pure'. Thus *sauca* came to mean 'that which is connected with becoming pure', that is, the process by which a person becomes pure.

Just as *suci* acquired the specialised meaning of 'becoming pure' with reference to persons, so *sauca* is used specifically with reference to the purification of persons (see Figure 1: B.1.a). We saw above that the Dharma literature distinguishes the purification of persons from that of things by using *sauca* for the former and *suddhi* for the latter. The rules of personal purification are collectively referred to as *sauca*: thus, a teacher is instructed to teach *sauca* to his students (M 2.69; V 1.15).

Although *sauca* is used as a general term for purification by bathing, washing, sipping water, purificatory rites, and penances, it is used especially with reference to washing the anus, the penis, and the hands with water and earth (used as a cleansing agent) after voiding urine or excrement. Thus, for example, *krtaśucavāsīsta* is earth 'left over from a previous purification' after toilet (Va 6.17). Manu (4.93) instructs a person to perform *sauca* after he has risen in the morning and answered the call of nature. And when texts refer to the different degrees of *sauca* for students, householders, hermits, and ascetics, they are speaking about the purification after toilet (Va 6.19; M 5.137).

I have failed to notice a single occurrence of *sauca* as an abstract noun indicating 'purity' in the Dharma literature. The closest we come to such a usage is in passages that list *sauca* among other virtues or habits that a person should cultivate (Figure 1: B.2). The earliest such occurrence is in Gautama: *uññāñeyā yāmagunnatā/ dayā sarvatthāṃ uññā parah sā amīśāvā saucam antyāśo māngalam akārpanaṃ asyakhyeti*—'Now, the eight virtues/qualities of the self are: compassion toward all creatures, patience, lack of envy, *sauca*, tranquility, having an auspicious disposition, generosity, and lack of greed' (G 8.22–23). The commentator Haradatta, citing a series of verses that explain each of these virtues, states that *sauca* refers to the *purification of things*, mind, speech, and body. Later, explaining the provision that even Śūdras should cultivate the virtues of truthfulness, not getting angry, and *sauca*, Haradatta gives the same explanation.

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13 Here I take 'purity' as an abstract concept connected in some ways to the way it is used by Dumont as an objective state inherent in different cases. *Sauca* does refer to 'purity' in the sense of concern with, and the procedures for, 'becoming pure'; such concern is evident in the use of the term for a specific virtue or habit.
think the natural tendency of the native commentator to take śauca even within the context of virtues as attention to internal and external purification is correct. Virtues, after all, are not unalterable states, like being white or tall; they are habits to be cultivated. It makes better sense, therefore, to see the virtue of śauca as the habit of engaging in activities of purification.14

Although śauca applies most frequently to persons, it is used occasionally in some texts with reference to the purification of things (see Figure 1: B.1.b). Thus Baudhāyana uses it for the purification of honey and milk (B 1.14.16), Vasiṣṭha for the purification of articles made of ropes, bamboo, and leather (Ya 3.53), and Manu for the purification of metal vessels and grain (M 5.118; 6.53).

1.2. Aśuci Even though aśuci is the negative of śuci, its earliest usage indicates that it had already acquired a technical meaning connected more with śuci in the sense of ‘upright, honest, innocent’ than in the sense of ‘pure’.

Āpastamba uses aśuci eight times. Certainly in six of these and in all likelihood also in a seventh,15 aśuci is used not as an adjective but as a substantive with reference to a type of sinner. The sins that create this state are called aśucikāra, ‘making someone aśuci’. Āpastamba does not know or does not recognise the distinction common in later literature between mahāpātaka and upapātaka, grievous and secondary sins causing loss of caste. He begins the section on sins by stating that ‘social interaction with outcastes (paitra) is not permitted, as also with degraded (apapātra) people (A 1.21.5–6). Then he describes one group of sins which he calls patantiyāni (‘causing loss of caste’: A 1.21.7–11), and a second group of sins which he calls aśucikarāni (‘causing someone to be aśuci’: A 1.21.12–19). These two groups must correspond to the two categories of people in the introductory statement, an aśuci, therefore, is an apapātra, a degraded person with whom social interaction is forbidden.

Gautama uses aśuci four times (see Figure 1: B.1.a, b). Certainly in three of them, and possibly also in the fourth (G 16.46), the term has the same or similar technical meaning. Thus, when someone sees an aśuci, he should look at the sun to regain purity (G 23.22). An aśuci is also listed alongside nīcchā and adhārṇika (barbarians and the unrighteous) as people with whom one should not speak (G 9.16).

Besides Āpastamba’s patantiyāni sins, Baudhāyana is the earliest writer to mention the traditional upapātaka, secondary sins causing loss of caste (B 2.2.1–14). Nevertheless, he gives as a third class of sins, the aśucikarāni (B 2.2.15). This category of sins disappears from the Dharma vocabulary after Baudhāyana.

14 The other option in these contexts is to take śauca as referring to śuci in the sense of upright and honest. If that is the meaning, then the virtue to be cultivated is uprightness or honesty.
15 The doubtful case is the compound aśucikāra which can mean ‘impure semen’ or ‘the semen of an impure man’, meaning the semen of a man who has committed a crime making him an aśuci. The sentence reads: aśucikāraṁ yan nivartate na tena seha saṃpratyo vyānte—Likewise, there can be no association with what is produced [i.e., child] by the semen of a so-called man (A 1.20.14). I think here also aśuci refers to the class of sinners listed earlier, for otherwise it is difficult to explain how the issue of impure semen would be subject to such serious social disabilities. The same expression occurs in the very same context also in B 2.2.24. The eighth case is A 1.2.29 discussed later.
An element of this meaning, however, is retained in the use of asuci within moral and criminal contexts (see Figure 1: B.1.c). The king should punish asuci, 'guilty' or 'immoral' people (N 18.41); the word of the king can make an innocent person (staci) guilty (N 18.49); and when cattle are stolen, suspicion falls on a village where there are 'bad people' (asuci jranth: N 14.24).

In later texts the common meaning of 'impure' both as an adjective and as a substantive emerges. Thus, a menstruating woman is asuci for three days (Va 5.6), menstrual blood is asuci (Va 4.23), and one is asuci for ten days upon hearing of a relative's death (M 5.79). Used substantively with reference to things, asuci means simply filth, especially bodily excretions. Apastamba (A 1.2.29) speaks of limbs 'smeared by asuci (asucilipta), where asuci, as the commentator Heradatta himself acknowledges, refers to filthy substances such as urine and faeces. A lavatory is asuciśthana ('place of asuci': N 5.6).

An interesting feature of the negative asuci, a feature shared by its counterpart asucaka (see section 2.3), is that in its diverse senses it frequently exhibits a static meaning, a feature quite different from the generally dynamic meanings of the positives stuci and studdhi.

1.3. Āśuca. Like āśuca, the term āśuca is a 'vyādhī derivative' with the negative prefix 'a'. Even more than āśuca, however, āśuca developed a restricted technical meaning. In the Dharma literature it invariably applies to the period of impurity following a death or a birth (see Figure 1: D). The period of impurity following a birth is sometimes characterised as śāuaca ('caused by childbirth'), while the period following a death is sometimes distinguished from the former with the expression savāśuaca ('āśuaca caused by a corpse').

16 In a very similar context, Va (3.48) uses the phrase amedhīyālitā, 'smeared with amedhīyā', a term more closely identified with bodily excreta (see section 6.1).

17 The grammatical derivation of āśuca is somewhat problematic because of the double vyādhī of both the initial negative 'a' and the second vowel. The easiest derivation is the addition of the negative prefix 'a' to āśuca. This would give āśuca and not āśuca, and Panini's rule 7.3.30 is intended to permit the optional strengthening of the initial 'a' even in such cases. The alternative is to derive it from āśuca. Panini 5.1.121 disallows such a derivation if āśuca is taken as a谭partha compound (i.e., meaning 'not pure'). Even if we take it as a Bhavabhūti (i.e., 'one who does not possess the quality of pure'), the derivative should be āśuca and not āśuca. Although grammatically the derivation from stucaka is easier, semantically the latter appears to make better sense, for then āśuca would mean 'a state of being āśuca or impure'. As we have seen, āśuca does not simply mean 'purity' but 'purification', hence its negative should be 'non-purification' rather than 'non-purity'. Alternatively, we could have taken āśuca to mean precisely 'non-purification', that is, a period when purificatory rites are discontinued, as is in fact the case when people are in a period of āśuca. The expression samdhiṣuca, 'immediate purification' (for example, for a king: M 5.94; G 14.9-12, 44-46), that is contrasted with āśuca does support the latter meaning. I want to thank George Cardona and Madhav Deshpande for their valuable insights on this question.

18 Mūla (6.62), for example, clearly distinguishes stūvaṃ āśuca from stūkaṃ. Space does not permit me to discuss here the unresolved question concerning the different periods of āśuca for different varnas, the length of time increasing for lower varnas. See Dumont (1980: 70); Mīnes (1990); Crenstein (1970); Tambiah (1973: 208-18).
The term āśauca (or āśauca) is a strictly technical term in the Dharma literature. It is never used with a more general meaning of ‘impurity’.

2. Śuddhyati

The verb śuddhyati20 in all its verbal forms has the meaning of ‘becoming purified’ and is used most frequently with reference to a ritual or an act of purification (Figure 2: A). The verb is used indiscriminately with reference to persons and things. Both references are found in the same verse of Vasistha: rajoṣa śuddhyate nāri niśi vṛghe śuddhyate—‘A woman is purified by her menstrual flow, and a river by its current’ (Va 3.58; cf. M 5.108). The verb has a wide semantic compass, referring to the purification from bodily stain or ritual impurity, the release from sin, the acquittal from legal charges, and the discharge from a criminal charge by paying the penalty.

The verb is used very frequently, and this may be due in part to the fact that the term śuci does not have a verbal counterpart with the same meaning.21 Thus, when an author wants to use a verb for purification, his choices are limited to this and to the less frequently used verb pāyate (see section 4).

When the texts want to indicate an act of purification in a transitive sense, the only term they use is the causative śudhyati (‘make someone/thing pure’). It is totally absent in the vocabulary of the elder texts, appearing for the first time in Manu (Figure 2: B). Although used much less frequently, it has about the same semantic range as śuddhyati. Some exceptional usages include neutralising the effects of poison in food (M 7.218), clearing roads of dangers such as robbers (M 7.185), and deducing expenses in legal calculations (Y 2.122, 2.1-66).

Śuddhaha, the nominal derivative from śuddhyati, appears for the first time in Vasistha (Figure 2: C) and refers to a means (see paviira and pāvana) or the act of purification with the same semantic range as the verb.

2.1. Śuddhi

We have seen above that the texts make a clear distinction between the purification of persons and things by using āśauca for the former and śuddhi for the latter.

19 The only instance when such a meaning appears possible is in Gautama: nā tadāpaṣāpi rājānād āśaucaṁ—‘No impurity is contracted through his (i.e., a child before initiation touch’ (G 2.3). Stenzer’s edition reads here āśaucaṁ, while the commentators Haridatta and Maskarit appear to read ṣāvayaṁ, glossing it with atisāvayaṁ (‘state of being impure’). Here also my suspicion is that the provision refers to a child a relative of whose has died or who has touched a corpse; even in that condition his touch, unlike that of an adult in a similar condition, does not create āśauca. The two forms āśauca and āśauca (both permitted by Pāṇini 7.3.30) occur in the Dharma texts, although the former is much more frequent, orthographic confusion often makes it difficult to isolate the original reading. But both forms generally have the same meaning. The term āśauca (‘a person in a period of āśauca’) is found only in Vāk 2.14.

20 In the Dharma literature this (the Parasmani) is the dominant form. The Ānaneśtheda form sūtahya is much less common: B 1.13.19; Va 3.67; M 5.108.

21 Śuci is, of course, derived from the verbal root śuc, but the verb itself did not undergo the semantic development of śuci and is never used in the Dharma literature for becoming pure.
Figure 2

A. śūḍhyati

1. Person:

2. Non-person:
   b. śūḍhyati (and verbal derivatives)

1. Person:
   a. purification: Va 27:13; M 11:160; Vkh 2.13; 3.3.
   b. moral/legal: M B 20:2; 11:226 (twice); 11:258; Y 2:769; NM 8:3.39; 20:17; 20:40.

2. Non-person:
   b. legal: M 7:185; Y 2:122; 2:146; NM 3.5; 3.5; 3.6; 19:26; 15:27.

C. sōḍhana

1. Person:


D. sōḍdhi

1. Person:
   b. punity: M 9:9; 11:160; Vkh 1:9; 3.3 (four times).

2. Non-person:
   b. legal: Y 2:92; NM 1:3; M 2:44; 1.78 (twice); 18.43 (twice).

E. sūḍdha

1. Person:
   b. pure: B 1:9.1; Va 27:15; M 5:129; 10:76; VI 23:48; Vkh 3.6; 3.8; 3.11 (four times); 3.12; 4.3.
2. Non-Person:
   a. purification: Vkh 2.15.
   b. pure: A 1.19.7; Va 27.15 (white); M 5.128: 10.90; 12.27; Y 3.72; Vkh 2.12; 2.13; 2.14; 5.1; 3.5; 5.8.
   c. moral/legal: M 4.11; 6.201; 9.279; N Mā 3.6: 1.102; 7.8.
   F. asuddha

1. Person: Va 27.15; M 5.58: Vi 11.8; 12.6; 14.5; 57.4; Vkh 3.11 (twice); N 17.5.
2. Non-person: M 4.117; Y 2.266; N 7.8.

Suddhi, the nominal derivative of the verb śudh, however, is used more generally with regard to both persons and things, but with rare exceptions it normally has a dynamic meaning, referring to the act or process of purification/cleansing rather than to a state of purity. The dynamic meaning is even more pronounced in āśuddhi than in śuci. Unlike the latter, āśuddhi is a noun and refers directly to the act of purification, the getting rid of impurities, whereas śuci indicates a person ‘becoming pure’.

Even in moral contexts āśuddhi refers to the elimination of immoral or sinful qualities through an appropriate penance rather than to a state of moral purity. Thus, in introducing the chapter on secret penances, Vasistha (25.1) states: ‘I will explain fully the purification (āśuddhi) of all sinners whose guilt has not been made public’.

In legal contexts āśuddhi is used with reference to the discharge of a debt (Y 2.94; N 1.102), the exoneration of an accused man (Y 2.95; N 1.222; 6.19), the settlement of a dispute (N 1.78), and the establishment of the authenticity of a legal document (Y 2.92) — all appearing in late texts.

The fact that āśuddhi always indicates purification rather than purity may be the reason why its negative form, asuddhi, is totally absent in the Dharma vocabulary. It is clear that although it is possible to speak of impurity, it makes little sense to speak of non-purification.

2.2. Āśuddha Like āśuddhi, the past participle āśuddha is used with regard to both persons and things, both in ritual and moral/legal contexts (see Figure 2: E). Unlike āśuddhi, however, it is used in the sense of both ‘purified’ (dynamic) and ‘pure’ (static). The former is the most common. Thus, for example, Baudhayana (1.11.32) states: ‘When someone accidentally touches the corpse of an outsider, he becomes pure (āśuddha) immediately after taking a bath with his clothes on’; and Gautama (20.10): ‘An excommunicated man may be purified (āśuddha) by performing a penance, however, and when he has been so purified (āśuddha), they should fill a golden pot with water from a very sacred lake or from a river and make the man take a bath with the water from that pot.’

The term, however, often simply means pure or white (Figure 2: E.1.b, 2.b), and in this sense it is used predicatively. Thus, ‘almost pure’ (āśuddha bhikṣā) and may be eaten (A 1.19.7); the hand of an artisan is always ‘pure’ (āśuddha kāravaśaśāsī, M 5.129).

22 The negative occurs only once, in the compound āśuddhāśuddhi (Vkh 1.9) in the context of holy ascetics (Parāshurambhas) who eliminate all binary opposites. This is a unique usage and may be an artificial formulation limited to this context.
2.3. Asuddha. As in the case of asuci, the negative asuddha often has a static meaning, although the dynamic meaning is quite common. The first use of this negative is found in Vasiṣṭha (25.15) and has a dynamic meaning: ‘When a man consumes barley grains in accordance with the rules, he becomes visibly pure (ṣudhyati): if he has become pure (lit. if his being has become pure: viṣuddhacāhāve) the grains remain white (suddha), whereas if he has not become pure (asuddha) the grains become discoloured.’ When an initiated child dies, the relatives become impure, asuddha (M 5.58). Both persons and things are said to be asuddha, in the sense of both ritual impurity and moral/legal culpability (see Figure 2: F).

3. Prayata.

Prayata is the past participle of the verb yam with the prefix pra and in the vedic literature meant simply ‘outstretched’ or ‘presented/offered’. This meaning is still present in the expression prayatañjali (‘with his cupped hands outstretched’: B 2.1.35), but even here we see that this gesture is done within a ritual context calling for a proper mental and bodily preparation. In the Dharma texts, however, the term came to mean ‘pure’ (see Figure 3), although, as Gonda (1961–62) has shown, it has the much wider meaning of proper internal and external preparation for a solemn rite.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. prayata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Person:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. purified: A 1.11.23; 1.15.2; 1.15.17; 1.15.23; B 1.11.40; 2.7.2; 2.7.4; 3.6.7; 4.2.13; Va 26.14; M 2.222; 4.145; 4.146; 5.86; VI 5.32.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. pure: A 1.15.3; 1.15.13; 1.16.9; 2.3.1; 2.17.4; B 2.7.2; M 2.183; 2.185; 3.216; 3.226; 3.229; 3.232; 4.49; 5.145; 8.258; 11.258; VI 66.15.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Thing:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. purified: A 1.17.11.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. pure: B 2.17.57.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| B. aprayata |
| 1. Person: A 1.14.18; 1.14.19; 1.14.20; 1.15.8–9; 1.15.13; 1.15.18; 1.16.14; 1.16.21; 1.16.22; 1.31.4; 2.15.19; B 3.2 (twice); 3.30; 2.7.2; M 5.142; 11.153; VI 23.54. |
| 2. Thing: A 1.16.21; 1.29.14; B 2.2.22. |

| C. prāyuṭa |
| 2. Thing: B 1.9.11; Va 3.56. |

| D. aprāyuṭa |
| 1. Person: A 1.11.25; Vkh 2.9. |

The oldest dharmaśāstric writer, Āpastamba, uses prayata, as well as the negative aprayata, much more frequently than any other term with regard both to persons and things. The term is absent in Gautama, used infrequently by Baudhāyana and Vasiṣṭha, and falls into relative disuse in later literature, except in standard

\[23\] For an extended discussion of the range of meanings of prayata, see Gonda (1960–61).
expressions such as *prayatnamān* (‘with himself ritually prepared or purified’; e.g., Va 26.14). The use of the term with reference to things is limited to the early texts, especially Āpastamba (see Figure 3: A.2, B.2, C.2).

4. Pūya

Derivatives from the verbal root *pūya* are used much less frequently in the Dharma literature than those from the root *śuch*. The active voice *punāti* (‘purifies’) is never used outside of Vedic mantras, except by Vasiṣṭha, who uses it no less than five times, perhaps with an intent to archaize his language. More frequent is the passive *pūya* (‘is purified’), and it is used with the same semantic range as the verb *śuch* with reference to both persons and things, and with regard to both ritual purification and the expiation of sins and crimes (Figure 4: A).

**Figure 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. pūya (including derivatives and negatives)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Person: Va 23.22; 28.10; B 3.7.1; 3.7.18; 3.9.10; 4.2.12; 4.2.16 (twice); 4.7.10; M 2.62; 3.257; 8.311.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Non-person: B 2.17.18; 3.1.15; Va 3.61; Vkh 3.4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. pavitra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Rite or mantra: A 1.2.2 (thrice); 1.26.7; 1.27.2; G 25.7; 26.10; B 1.2.16; 1.2.17; 2.7.2; 2.7.4; 2.14.5; 4.1.22; 4.2.16 (twice); 4.8.3; 4.8.4; Va 22.10; 23.47; 25.3; 25.4; 28.10; M 3.256; 11.225; Vi 46.25; 56.1; 64.36; 64.40; 72.3 (virtue); 100.2; Vkh 3.8.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Obj.: B 1.9.9; 1.9.10; 2.4; 2.8.11; 2.11.24; 2.17.11; 2.17.34 (twice); 2.17.37 (twice); 3.2.7; 3.2.17; 3.5.1 (twice); 3.6.5; Va 11.55; 14.24; 25.4; 28.4; M 3.25; 3.2.10; 1.223; 3.235; 3.250; 1.27.641; 1.102; 1.11.55; Y 1.240; 3.325; 1.251; Y 1.226; 1.230; Vi 23.47; 23.57 (cows); 48.6; 48.17; 79.16; Vkh 2.6; 2.8 (twice); 3.6 (twice); 3.8.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Parity: B 3.7.4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. pāvana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Person: A 2.17.22; G 15.27; 15.28; B 2.14.2; Va 3.19; 11.20; M 3.183; 3.184; 3.186; V 3.306; Vi 1.57; 99.4; 83.1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Non-person: G 19.12; B 1.2.16; 1.3.43; 3.10.10; 4.5.9; 4.5.25; 4.5.29; Va 1.16; 22.9; 25.11; M 2.20; 11.85; 11.177; Y 1.281; 2.83; Vkh 8.16.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The past participle *pūta* also has the same broad range of meanings but, unlike its counterpart *śuchha*, always has the dynamic meaning of ‘being purified’ rather than simply ‘pure’. This dynamic meaning is evident also in the rarely used negative *apūta*, which always means something or someone “not purified” or “not yet purified” rather than simply ‘impure’.

4.1. Pavitra

Of the nominal derivatives of the verb *pūya*, the most common is *pavitra* (Figure 4: B). It refers to any agent or instrument of purification. Thus, a water strainer is called *pavitra*, as also the two blades of Kuśa grass between the

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24 Va 6.3; 6.5; 22.10; 26.4; 28.15.
25 G 25.6; M 2.40; 2.830 (re. unhusked grain).
fingers during rituals, purificatory verses and rites, and penances. Other means of purification, such as a woman's menstrual flow, are also called parvita. Here also we note the focus on regaining lost purity, this time with reference to instruments that impart purification.

4.2. Pāvana The term pāvana ("purifying" or "impurifying") is derived from the causative of pū (pāvaya, 'to make someone/thing pure'). In the Dharma literature it has a somewhat restricted meaning (Figure 4: C). Although it is used a few times with reference to actions and rites that impart purity (in the same ways as sōdhana: Figure 4: C.2), pāvana is used most frequently as a technical term with reference to specially holy/learned Brahmins who are called pākṣṭipāvana, 'purifying those alongside whom they sit' during a meal.26

5. Ucchīṣṭa

Ucchīṣṭa is the past participle of the verb stū with the verbal prefix ut and means 'left' or 'left over'. Its most common meaning is with reference to food that is left over after a person has eaten (Figure 5: 2). Such food may be either left on the plate or attached to a person's hands and lips. In general ucchīṣṭa is viewed as impure and causes anyone coming into contact with it to become impure. In this sense, ucchīṣṭa is most frequently used as a neuter substantive (ucchīṣṭam).27

Figure 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ucchīṣṭa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Person:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. from food: B 1.8.28; M 2.56; Vi 68.36; 70.17.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. from bodily discharge: A 1.16.11; G 1.41; B 1.6.27; 1.8.29 (ucchīṣṭam); 1.8.51: 1.10.34; Vi 3.27; 3.42; M 4.73; 4.82; 4.109; 4.142; 5.144; 5.147 (both thing and person?);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Food: A 1.3.27; 1.3.37; 1.4.1; 1.4.2; 1.4.11; 1.4.5; 1.6.36; 1.7.27; 1.7.30; 1.15.23; 1.17.3; 1.2.17; 1.31.22; 2.9.7; 2.18.11; 2.20.2; G 2.32; 10.99; 10.17; B 1.3.35; 1.3.36; 2.1.26; 2.8.10; 3.6.5; 3.8.10; Y 1.10 (twice); 11.21; 11.22; 11.28; 11.28; 14.20; 14.21 (twice); 18.14; 23.9; 23.11; M 2.56; 2.209; 3.245; 3.249; 4.80; 4.211; 4.212; 10.125; 11.25; 11.152; 11.159; Vi 21.3; 21.15; 23.11; 28.33; 51.10; 51.46; 51.47; 51.50; 51.31; 51.32; 51.53; 51.34; 51.55; 51.56; 54.19; 71.40; 73.17; 73.25; 81.22; 91.18; Y 1.33; 1.154; 1.162; 1.167; 1.168; 1.209; 1.242; 1.257; 3.37; Vkh 3.2; 3.4; N 5.6.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Objects: B 1.8.32; 1.13.27; 1.14.2; Y 3.43; M 11.148; Vi 49.20; Vkh 3.3; N 1.57.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In an adjectival sense, however, the term refers to a person who is rendered impure by coming into contact with ucchīṣṭa food. Thus, after a meal a person remains ucchīṣṭa until he or she has performed the required purification (āuca).

26 A 1.17.22; G 15.27-28; B 2.14.2; Y 3.19; 11.20; M 3.183, 184, 186; Vi 83.1. The opposite of pākṣṭipāvana is pākṣṭadāśana, a man who defiles a company (A2.17.21).

27 For a detailed discussion of this term, see Malamud (1972). Some types of ucchīṣṭa are good and can be eaten. Generally such leftovers belong to a person superior to oneself. Thus, a wife may eat the leftovers of her husband, and a student the leftovers of his teacher (A 1.4.1-11; G 2.31-32). Leftovers of a sacrifice or an offering to a god is especially holy.
There are, however, other extended meanings of the term. Medhāśūti (on M 4.80), an early commentator of Manu, isolates four possible meanings of uccāśa: (a) because of contact with the inside of mouth while eating, the eater, the eaten food, and the plate from which one eats become uccāśa; (b) food left on the plate after someone has eaten off it is uccāśa; (c) as also what is left in the dish from which food has been served to someone; (d) and food left in the pot after people have been served; and (e) a person is uccāśa after voiding urine or excrement and before purification. According to Medhāśūti, the primary meaning of the term is the first, (a), resulting from food and fingers come into contact with the inside of the mouth.28

6. ‘Medhya

In its vedic usage the term medhya referred to animals and substances suitable for use in a sacrifice. In the Dharma literature, it is used with the wider meaning of ‘pure’ (Figure 6: A). The old connection with sacrificial substances, however, is evident because the term is used most frequently with reference to food or sources of food. Other items called medhya include the bodily parts above the navel, vessels, and soil. Persons are generally not called medhya. The only exception, interestingly, is women, who, like food, are to be enjoyed by men.29

Figure 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. medhya</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Food sources: A 1.17.11; B 1.16.28; B 1.9.1; B 1.9.2; Va 14.46; M 5.54; 5.129; 6.5; 5.11; 6.13; 11.13; 6.12; M 5.133.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Non-food items: B 1.7.4 (twice); 1.13.19; M 5.133; Vkh 3.4; N 18.41.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Parts of human body: B 1.10.19; Va 28.6; 28.8; 28.9; M 1.92; 5.132; Y 1.71 (twice); 1.194; 1.195; Vi 23.40; 23.51.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Actions/rites: G 19.13; B 3.10.11; Va 22.11.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B. anmedhya</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. As substantive:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Bodily substance: A 1.16.24; 1.16.25; 1.16.26; G 1.42; 9.12; Va 3.48; M 4.56; 5.126; Y 1.191; Vi 22.39.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Food: A 1.16.14; G 9.15; B 1.9.4; 1.9.10; 1.10.1; 1.14.18; 1.15.31; 2.2.36; 2.8.6; 3.8.18; M 2.239; 4.53; 5.5; 5.128; 9.282 (twice); 11.96; 12.71; Y 1.148; 2.213; Vi 23.43; 43.41; 51.36; 51.41; 71.32.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. As adjective:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Re. food/beverage: G 20.4; 23.23; Vi 22.84.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Re. body below navel: B 1.10.19; M 5.132; Vi 23.51.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Re. people/animals: A 1.17.5.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28 There is an interesting rule given by Āpastamba (1.31.22): ‘He should not give his leftovers to someone who is not a Brahmin. If he does so, he should pick his teeth, place what he has picked from his teeth on the leftovers, and then give it.’ Here uccāśa as (c) or (d) has to be converted to uccāśa as (b) if leftover food is to be given to an inferior person.

29 See Va 28.6; Y 1.71. The verb bhuj is used often with regard to both food and women: see, for example, Vijñāneshvara on Y 1.71.
6.1. Amedhya  The negative of medhya, just as the negative of icā, developed a technical meaning. With rare exceptions amedhya is used as a neuter substantive to refer to impure or dirty substances, especially bodily excreta. Baudhāyana (3.8.17–18), for example, says that one should not look at urine and faeces, and immediately adds, ‘if he sees amedhya’, clearly equating the latter with bodily excreta. This specialised meaning is not only documented in the Dharma literature but is also singled out for commentary by medieval commentators. Viśā electrode, commenting on Yājñavalkya 1.191 (see also on Y 2.214), defines amedhya as sariraṇa malā, ‘dirt originating from the body’. Anticipating Mary Douglas’s (1966) definition of dirt as substances that violate boundaries of cultural categories (i.e., ‘matter out of place’), Viśā electrode explains that the impure nature (amedhyatva) of amedhya substances results from the fact that they have come out of the body; only those substances that have come out of the body are amedhya, not those that remain in their respective places (amedhyatvam caiva evam . . . dehacyutam eva na svasthānān vāsthumān). So, a substance is not impure in itself but only in so far as it has been displaced and has crossed a boundary.

Viśā electrode’s astute observation is supported by the usage of the early Dharma texts. Aṣṭāśaṅkha (1.16.23–24), for example, says that food ‘in which there is a hair or some other amedhya’ is unfit to be eaten, indicating that amedhya must refer to other bodily substances such as hair. This is confirmed by that fact that commentators instinctively take amedhya to be some bodily substance, as when Śaṅkara (on Tattvārtha 1.2.13) glosses the term with niṣṭhāvānadi, ‘substances such as saliva’.

7. Mala

The term mala is a noun indicating dirt or impure substance (Figure 7: A). The early Dharma texts use the term only within the technical expression malaśabdavāsas, ‘one with dirty clothes’, with specific reference to a menstruating woman. The term is used extensively for the first time by Manu. Although it can refer to spiritual ‘stains’ or sins, in its most common meaning mala is a synonym of amedhya and refers to bodily excretions. That is the meaning in the well-known statement listing the twelve malas of human beings: ‘Oily exudations, semen, blood, fat, urine, faeces, snot, ear-wax, phlegm, tears, discharge of eyes, and sweat—these are the twelve malas of men’ (M 5.135; V 22.81). Viśā electrode (on Y 1.191) cites this list in explaining the meaning of amedhya, indicating that he saw the two terms as synonyms.

Mala, however, can also refer to the ‘stain’ of moral infractions (Fig. 7: A.1c). Authors sometimes play on this double meaning. Manu (11.94), for example, shows that both liquor and sin are mala, ‘dirt’ and ‘sin’, respectively: ‘Liquor is

30 A 1.9.13; G 9.3; Va 12.5 (medhyavāsas); M 4.34.
31 The Vedic text Kāthaka Samhitā (24.12) gives a similar list of twelve impurities of a man and calls them amedhyatva. Śaṅkara, commenting on Atharva Bṛhannāla 7.13.7, explains mala as sakrātayuta (‘semen and menstrual blood’), seeing in the term a reference to the householder’s āśrama connected with childbirth.
the dirt (mala) derived from food, and sin is also called dirt (mala). Therefore, Brahmans, Ksatriyas, and Vaisyas should not drink liquor. The negatives amala and nirmala are used as adjectives to indicate the absence of mala especially in a moral sense (Figure 7: D). Thus nirmala means a persons who is 'immaculate', free from the taint of sin.

II

Conclusions

I started this investigation with four questions: does a term refer: (a) to a person or to a thing; (b) to a condition or to a transition; (c) to purity or to the areas of morality or criminal law; (d) to an individual or to a group?

We are now in a better position to answer these questions. The vocabulary of pure/impure in the Dharma literature makes a clear distinction between persons and things. Although a variety of objects and animals are characterised as impure, the main focus is on bodily discharges, those oozing substances that violate the boundary of the human body.

With respect to persons, the vocabulary clearly indicates that the focus is not on any permanent, or even transitory, condition of purity but rather on the transition from impurity to purity, on the recovery of lost purity. The dynamic meaning dominates the use of suci and siddhi. There is no discussion about how one may remain in a condition of permanent purity, although the texts do talk about avoiding sources of moral and ritual pollution. To remain permanently pure is not only impossible (one has to eat and go to the bathroom), but also undesirable, for it would entail not having sex or children, both sexual activity and childbirth being sources of pollution.

Most of the terms for pure/impure are used both with respect to ritual purity and in the context of moral and criminal law. In the Dharma literature these three areas are not compartmentalised.

32 Liquor is considered dirt possibly because it results from fermentation.
Finally, we see no instance when a term for pure/impure is used with reference to a group of individuals or to a varna or caste, the only exception being people who have fallen from their caste due to grievous sins; these are often called asuci. Groups outside the established society, especially the Cãndãlas, are subsumed under the category of the 'fallen'. In general the Dharma texts place both Cãndãlas and grievous sinners in the same group and treat them alike. These people are impure precisely because they have breached the boundary of varna society; they have been excreted out of the social body and are hence impure, amedhya. Social interaction with these people is forbidden, and any contact makes a person within society impure (morally and ritually). But the overwhelming focus of the vocabulary concerns individuals, irrespective of their caste/varna affiliation, who have become impure and are in need of recovering their lost purity. A person of any varna, including a Śûdra, can become asuci, impure, and can recover purity (become suci) by employing the appropriate purification (āsaca).

Dumont is correct in his assessment that the ideology of varna is not based on purity. If it were we should expect to find at least some comment on the relative purity/impurity of the different varnas. What is even more important is that the ideology of purity/impurity that emerges from the Dharma literature is concerned with the individual and not with groups, with purification and not with purity, and lends little support to a theory which makes relative purity the foundation of social stratification. The mythical legitimisation of the varna division is, of course, contained in the Puruṣa Hymn of the Rg Veda (10.90). Some may think that the connection of the different varnas with different parts of the body, especially the association of the Śûdra with the feet, may support a theory of the relative purity of varnas. But this conclusion is never drawn in the Dharma literature even in contexts when such a conclusion would have buttressed the author's argument. Baudhayana, for example, appeals to the Puruṣa Hymn to demonstrate that Śûdras should serve the higher varnas, 'for they were created from his feet' (B 1.18.5–6). Feet here symbolise service, not impurity.

The evidence of these ancient texts gives greater support to the theory of impurity proposed by Mary Douglas (1966) than to Dumont's theory of caste as based on the gradation of purity. Scholars have connected impurity with hygiene, with morality, with the separation of spirit and matter, and so forth. I think Mary Douglas is right to reject such definitions, as well as the temptation to reify the pure and the impure, to see these as somehow descriptive adjectives like heavy or

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33 At M 1.92 there is an oblique reference to the Brahmā coming from the mouth (mukha) which is the 'purest' (nemiṣyata) part of the body. But no explicit conclusion is drawn from this fact that the Brahmā is purer than other varnas, only that he is the 'lord of the whole creation' and that gods consume offerings through the medium of the Brahmā's mouth.

34 Quigley (1993: 45–46) is right in his assessment: 'For Dumont, as we have seen, the opposition of the pure and the impure is the principle of hierarchy in the caste-system'. As it stands, this formulation is problematic because the opposition of pure and impure is a universal feature of human societies. The reason for this has been brilliantly explored by Mary Douglas in her book Purity and danger, and it is regrettable that she did not exploit her own insight further when she wrote the introduction to the first English-language translation of Homo hierarchicus.
blue, as indicating objective qualities inhering in substances. Pure and impure are relational and evaluative concepts—they are related to an ideology that establishes categories and fixed boundaries and they evaluate actions, objects, persons, and social interactions in relation to those categories. In this sense, with William James (Douglas 1984: 164) and Freud (Kubie 1937: 390), we can define impurity or dirt as 'matter out of place'.

If we can abstract pathogenicity and hygiene from our notion of dirt, we are left with the old definition of dirt as matter out of place. This is a very suggestive approach. It implies two conditions: a set of ordered relations and a contravention of that order. Dirt then, is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt there is a system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter (Douglas 1966: 35).

Concern for impurity translates into concern for maintaining the integrity of boundaries, both physical and classificatory, which in turn relates to the concern for maintaining social boundaries. The human body becomes the locus for expressing all these concerns, especially the concern for maintaining purity.

The body is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened and precarious. ... We cannot possibly interpret rituals concerning excreta, breast milk, saliva and the rest unless we are prepared to see in the body a symbol of society, and to see the powers and dangers credited to social structure reproduced in small on the human body (Douglas 1966: 115).

The most common examples of breaching boundaries concern the body. When internal substances break the bodily surface and ooze out, then the person becomes asūci, impure. Other persons coming into contact with such aśhrayā or unclean substances also become asūci. This is the type of impurity that has been subject to most scholarly scrutiny.

There are, however, other boundaries, and the impurities associated with their breach provide further insights into the Dharma ideology of impurity. Let me focus on just two: the spatial boundary of the village (although interesting information comes also from the boundary of the house) and the temporal boundaries of day, month, and year. In this context I want to deal with a subject totally ignored by scholars but looming large in the Dharma literature, namely the events causing anādhyāya, or the suspension of vedic recitation. Here are some of Apastamba's (1.9.14–19) prescriptions: there is anādhyāya in a village when a corpse is brought or a Cāndāla walks into its boundaries. Likewise when outsiders, even respectable people, come into a village there is anādhyāya for the duration of that day. This prescription mirrors another rule (A 1.10.11) which forbids collective vedic recitation for a day when a fellow student has gone out of the village. When a newcomer arrives or a member of a group leaves, its boundary is breached and the community disrupted; the two events are comparable to a birth and a death, both of which carry a period of impurity (āśāveca) and also anādhyāya for those within
the affected group. I think death causes a period of impurity to the community of which the dead person was a part precisely because the community has been disrupted and has to be reconstituted over a period of time. This is the reason, I believe, why in the Dharmaśāstras death impurity and birth impurity are always treated together in spite of the enormous difference between the two events. This is also the reason why the deaths of some individuals, such as infants, outcastes, and ascetics, do not cause ṛṣeuka, because they are not full and integral parts of the community.

An analysis of the times when recitation is suspended provides even more interesting data. Whenever normalcy is violated, there is an adhyaya. So, for example, when there is a solar or lunar eclipse, an earthquake, or a whirlwind, recitation is suspended. Interestingly, lightning, thunder, clouds, and rain cause a suspension only when they appear out of season. In the rainy season they are normal and are to be expected; therefore, they do not cause adhyaya. A large number of time-related suspensions happen when one time unit ends and another begins—that is, the time of twilight or sandhya when time boundaries are breached. Thus, there is adhyaya during the morning and evening sandhya, on new- and full-moon days, at the beginning of seasons, at spring and summer festivals, and even on the day that opens and concludes the annual course of study. The boundaries between time zones are marginal and thus ambiguous and inappropriate.

A final comment on boundary and margin: as the margin—the betwixt and between—is a zone where normal activity is suspended, so people temporarily or permanently in such a marginal zone are not subject to impurity, showing once again that impurity has to do with structure and thus concerns only those within a structure. So, for example, the death of a family member does not make a brahmacarī (student), a dīkṣita (a man consecrated for a sacrifice), an officiating priest, or an ascetic impure. Likewise, children before their Vedic initiation (upanayana) are exempt from all purity rules (A 2.15.19–25; G 2.1–6). Inversely, the death of a family member who is not fully incorporated into the corporate structure does not cause impurity or causes minimal impurity to its living members—thus there is no impurity when an infant dies.

Another interesting point about marginal people is that they are not permitted to engage in purificatory acts while they are in that state: thus menstruating women are not permitted to bathe or comb their hair before the conclusion of that period; people in mourning cannot bathe; and, according to some, a student is not allowed to bathe or brush his teeth (A 1.7.1; G 2.13). These are purificatory acts signalling the end of the period of impurity and, hence, are inappropriate during the period of impurity.

What stands out when we examine the Dharma vocabulary on pure/impure is the preoccupation with the body, a preoccupation that borders on scrupulosity and anxiety—śārīka. Madan (1988: 32, 61) speaks frequently about the śārīka of his Kashmiri pandits, an anxiety relating primarily to the observance of purity rules. Madhav Deshpande (1993: 41) refers to a suggestive euphemism prevalent
in Maharashtra: going to the bathroom is śāhka, urinating is called laghusāhika ('short anxiety') and defecation dirghasāhika ('long anxiety').

Anxiety is connected with intentionality. One recurring problem with scholarly treatments about purity in India is that it is often reified and turned into a self-existing reality. An important component of the Dharma ideology of impurity serves to undermine such a notion—and that is the connection between impurity and intentionality. Intention plays a central role in ethics, and some scholars, including Mary Douglas, contrast ethical and purity rules precisely on this point—intention has a role in ethical rules but not in rules of purity (Douglas 1966: 160). This, I believe, is mistaken. In Dharma discourse not only are terms for impurity and immorality often interchangeable, but intentionality is central also to rules of impurity, although its role there is in many ways different from its role in ethics. Let me cite a few examples in support.

First, it is a rule repeated frequently in the Dharmaśāstras that ignorance makes a thing pure. Let me repeat—lack of awareness (adrṣṭa) is given as one of the three means that makes a thing pure.35 If I have not seen that my rice has been licked by a dog, then, as far as I am concerned, my rice is pure. That this is not merely a śaścric fantasy is shown by a story that Dumont (1980: 383) himself relates. At a śrāddhā a boy from the dead man's family mischievously touches the plate of one of the assembled Brahmins. When the Brahmins are about to abandon the dinner, one of them remarks that there were no witnesses to the touching. So they proceed to eat, and the boy's mother admonishes him never to tell this to anyone. Surely, if purity were an objective reality my ignorance should have nothing to do with its existence. In a similar manner, the death of a relative away from home makes the relatives impure only when they hear about it, and then for a shorter period of time than if he were to die at home.

Second, there is what I would call 'stipulative purity'—that is, rules stipulate that certain people or objects are pure by definition. So, the hand of an artisan or cook, items sold in the market, the mouth of a woman, the beak of a bird that makes a fruit fall, a dog when catching a deer, and the excreta of a child, and so forth—these are all reckoned pure by definition (Vi 23.48ff). The earth is also pure by definition; so it cannot carry impurity from one person to another. Thus if a pure man and an impure man are sitting on a seat of straw properly arranged then the pure man contracts impurity because that straw constitutes a 'seat', whereas if the straw is strewn haphazardly he does not contract any impurity (A 1.15.13).

And finally, there is a wonderful method of purifying a thing suspected of being impure—you get a Brahmin to declare it to be pure. This method is resorted to also when one is anxious about one's own purity (B 2.12.5). This is rather like going to a confessor or psychologist—you want someone in power to say that everything is OK.

35 'Gods invented three means of purification for Brahmins: being unaware that something is impure, sprinkling it with water, and getting it verbally declared as suitable.' See Va 14.24; B 1.8.52: 1.9.9; M 5.117; Vi 23.47; Y 1.191.
The rules and practices relating to impurity in the Dharma texts constitute, I believe, a ritual apparatus rather than a social ideology. These rules do not create social structures but are intended to sustain and reinforce such structures. Within the specifically Indian context, I do not think that purity was the historical cause of the varna or caste system, nor did it serve as a theology to justify that system. As boundaries must precede attempts to sustain and strengthen those boundaries, so the caste system must precede rules concerning the pure and the impure that aim to sustain it. In this sense, Mary Douglas is right in saying that ‘dirt’ is a by-product of a system.

We can consider impurity rules as a system of socialisation. Individuals within the society must be made to acknowledge and support the social boundaries imposed on them, and this is effected primarily through social rituals. This may be one reason why many of the Dharmaśāstric rules on impurity are found in the sections dealing with the vedic student. In any programme of socialisation you have to start young! And it is within the socialising context that what I said about intentionality makes sense. Socialising involves paying attention, involves anxiety—ṣāṅkā. Rules of purity are meant to cause anxiety, for anxiety creates heightened attention to the boundaries that the rules are meant to uphold.

The socialising aspect of these rules also explains another aspect of purity/impurity: the ultimate aim of these rules is not to make people remain constantly pure, which is in principle impossible. Their aim, I believe, is to make people intent on recovering purity. Hence most of the terms used for purity, especially śuddhi and śaci, as we have seen, mean not being pure but the act of becoming pure. It is purification not purity that is at the heart of the system.

Attention to the socialising aspect of purity also helps us understand the connection between purity and auspiciousness (subha) that has received considerable attention recently (Carmean and Marlin 1985; Madan 1988: 48ff). The two have been viewed as both contradictory and complementary. I see the two as dealing with very different aspects of human and social life. Subha deals with the flow of time and life and seeks to direct that flow in benign, fertile, and prosperous directions. Subha is not connected with a programme of socialisation, with the protection of social boundaries and structures. That is the province of purity/impurity. In a totally pure world time would stand still, there will be no change; the world of total purity, ironically, would be a world of death. To be totally and always pure is not only impossible but from a variety of perspectives a highly undesirable condition. But that is pushing the system to its absurd limit. Purity is one among many competing and often contradictory values of human existence and human society. The purpose of rules of impurity is not to ensure permanent purity but to make people anxious about becoming impure and when they become impure, as they must, to make them anxious about recovering their lost purity. This anxiety, finally, is an integral part of the socialising process that sustains and strengthens cultural and social boundaries, including the caste system.
ABBREVIATIONS

A  Āpastamba Dharmasūtra
B  Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra
G  Gautama Dharmasūtra
M  Manu Smṛti
N  Nārada Smṛti
Va  Vaiśeṣika Dharmasūtra
Vi  Viṣṇu Smṛti
Vkh  Vaiṣṇava Dharmasūtra
Y  Yājñavalkya Smṛti

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