

Article

An 18th Century Jesuit “Refutation of Metempsychosis” in Sanskrit

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Received: 28 August 2017; Accepted: 11 September 2017; Published: 17 September 2017

Abstract: The *Punarjanmākṣepa*, a work in Sanskrit from the 17th–18th century Jesuit milieu, aims at refuting the notion of reincarnation as believed by the Hindus in India. It discloses an interesting historical perspective of missionary comprehension and criticism of the belief. This paper briefly examines the context, purpose and the rhetorical strategies of the work and incidentally situates the subject of reincarnation in the 18th century European intellectual ideologies.

Keywords: metempsychosis; Hinduism; Jesuits; Carnatic mission; Sanskrit; 18th century

The *Punarjanmākṣepa* (“Refutation of Metempsychosis”), a work from the 17th–18th century missionary Jesuit milieu, is exceptional not only with regard to the topic and the manner in which this is dealt with but also for the historical context in which it was written. Scholastic in nature, it aims at rejecting the belief of metempsychosis attributed to the Hindus in India. It exists in three south Indian languages and in Sanskrit but is presently published only in its Tamil version. The three other versions are still in manuscript form and most probably all are *codex unicus*. This paper aims to give a brief analysis of the work as known from its Sanskrit version¹ and to examine certain rhetorical strategies in the Refutation. It incidentally situates the subject of metempsychosis in the contemporary European intellectual ideologies.

Created in 1695, the Carnatic mission, based in Pondicherry, started to develop from 1699 onwards disappearing in 1762 when the Society of Jesus was banished from France. The two aims assigned to it by the King of France, Louis XIV were the “defence of Religion”, that is, Catholicism, and the “study of things that may contribute to the perfection of arts, sciences and navigation”. Thus when a request from the King’s Library for manuscripts reached the Carnatic mission in 1728, it sent Indian manuscripts in several successive consignments.² The 1735 consignment from Pondicherry mentions a *Punarjanmākṣepa* in Sanskrit, though the manuscript was retrieved in the Library after 1739.³ It is the only known copy of this work to date.

This palm leaf manuscript, deposited at the Biblioth que nationale de France under the accession number *Sanscrit* 1761, consists of 38 engraved leaves. It is written in Telugu script showing Kannaḁa traits. According to the post-colophon, which is in the Telugu language, the manuscript was copied by a J n nambhaṭṭu on Monday, 24 December 1733.⁴

¹ All references to the *Punarjanmākṣepa* in this article are to the Sanskrit manuscript preserved at the Biblioth que nationale de France, Paris (De Nobili n.d.).

² See (Colas and Colas-Chauhan 1995a, pp. 7–8).

³ See (Colas and Colas-Chauhan 1995a, p. 28).

⁴ *pram dica saṁvatsarada m rgaṣira ba 30 somav raṁ n du j n nambhaṭṭu vr sina saṁskṛtasall paṁ sam ptaḥ*.

The *Punarjanmākṣepa* exists in three other Indian languages: Telugu,⁵ Kannaḍa⁶ and Tamil.⁷ Roberto De Nobili (1577–1656), to whom the work is attributed, arrived in India in 1605 and contributed to the development of the Jesuit Madurai mission.⁸ According to his contemporaries, he quickly mastered Tamil, Sanskrit and Telugu. While there is no evidence to prove that the present Sanskrit version (represented by the BnF manuscript) was composed by De Nobili, Rajamanickam’s hypothesis that De Nobili must have written an earlier Sanskrit version, now lost, is interesting but without sufficient proof.⁹ All the extant works which can be ascribed to De Nobili with certainty are in Tamil, none in Sanskrit. Moreover, we learn from the Jesuit Archives that the *Punarjanmākṣepa* and other Jesuit texts were translated into Sanskrit at the request of an erudite Brahmin desirous of learning more about the doctrine of the Jesuits. The French Jesuit Jean Calmette (1692–1740) states in a letter dated 2 January 1735, from “Ballapouram” (today Chikkaballapur, 40 km north of Bengaluru): “The prime minister of the prince of Ballapouram [...] sent an eminent Brahmin scholar of the region who wanted to see our religious books and have an exact knowledge of our doctrine. We have had some books translated into Sanskrit such as a big Catechism of faith,¹⁰ a Refutation of Metempsychosis, etc.”¹¹ Here the expression “have had translated” (*avons fait traduire*) seems to indicate that Calmette or the French Jesuits did not themselves translate these works into Sanskrit but made (converted?) Indians translate it under their supervision.¹² The Carnatic mission probably had or made several copies of its books in Sanskrit for it would not have given away or lent its sole copy. The BnF manuscript of the Sanskrit *Punarjanmākṣepa* pre-dates Calmette’s letter by about one year. A rapid comparison of the Sanskrit *Punarjanmākṣepa* with the versions in the other three languages shows that it lacks the introduction (named *viveka*) present in them. The manuscript abounds in mistakes and dittographies pointing to the fact that it did not receive the customary post-scribal corrective reading.

It is not certain from which of the three Dravidian languages the Sanskrit *Punarjanmākṣepa* was translated. The Telugu version of the work conveys a text which is more developed and clearer in certain passages than in the Sanskrit version. The Sanskrit manuscript appears to have been copied among the Telugu-speakers. Its post-colophon is in Telugu. Curiously the Telugu expression *toḍameragānu* on fol. 11r (line 7) is also found in the corresponding passage of the manuscript of the Telugu version (BnF Indien 582, fol. 13r, line 7). Only a comprehensive philological study and comparison of the different versions could show their relative chronology. That the work in the three versions was copied (and distributed) in the 1730s seems to indicate that it was of great importance for the French Jesuit missionaries in their apostolate during those years.

1. Context and Purpose

In the early phase of its expansion in South India, the linguistic priority of the fathers of the Carnatic mission was to acquire vernacular (non-Sanskrit) languages to communicate easily with Indians of all social classes. The newly arrived missionaries learnt Tamil, Telugu and Kannaḍa (and Bengali for those who were sent to the Chandernagore branch of the mission) first and foremost to preach Christianity “*dans les terres*”, in far away places outside Pondicherry.¹³ Their sermons and

⁵ Manuscript BnF Indien 582 (De Nobili n.d.), sent by the Carnatic mission in 1734, arrived at the Library in April 1737. See (Colas and Colas-Chauhan 1995a, pp. 26–28).

⁶ Manuscript number 7078 in the Marsden Collection at the School of Oriental and African Studies, dated 1739, fols 143–163 (De Nobili n.d.).

⁷ (Tattuva Pōtakar 1963) Edited by S. Rajamanickam, Tūttukkuṭi: Tamil Ilakkiyak Kaḷakam, 1963.

⁸ For De Nobili’s life and achievements, see (Dahmen 1924). About his interest for transmigration, see (Clooney 2014, pp. 35–46).

⁹ See (Rajamanickam 1972, p. 91).

¹⁰ This could be the work entitled *Satyavedaprasaṅga* in Sanskrit and *Satyōpadēśamu* in Telugu. See (Colas and Colas-Chauhan 1995a, p. 17, note 84.)

¹¹ See (Fonds Brotier n.d., vol 89, fol. 49v).

¹² See also (Colas and Colas-Chauhan 2014, p. 69.)

¹³ See (Colas and Colas-Chauhan 1995a, p. 9.)

writings varied not only according to the language of the audience and readers but also according to the level of their education.¹⁴ They later realized that they had to learn Sanskrit and produce a corpus of texts in that language to match the Brahmin scholars who had books in Sanskrit and conducted religious and metaphysical discussions in that language. They thought that converting elites like Brahmins would lead to the Christianization of the rest of the Indian society.¹⁵ Several French Jesuits of the early phase of the mission¹⁶ had learnt Sanskrit but the acquisition of that language in the mission become more systematic in the late 1720s.¹⁷ The translation of the *Punarjanmākṣepa* into Sanskrit was perhaps part of the efforts of the Carnatic mission to build a collection of authoritative texts comparable to the Hindu *śāstras*.

Though the *Punarjanmākṣepa* intended to refute the thesis of the Vaidikas (lit. the followers of the Veda, signifying the Hindus), it also aimed at the newly converted to Catholic religion who may still have been tempted to continue to believe in metempsychosis.¹⁸ This belief was fundamentally incompatible with Catholic conceptions such as individual responsibility and divine justice. Christian missionaries feared that it would hinder a thorough conversion of the neophytes and would also leave Christianity in India fragile.¹⁹ Moreover, the survival of this belief among Indian converts would have entailed serious condemnation from the numerous Catholic enemies of the Jesuits in Europe. The French Jesuits of the Carnatic mission were ready to compromise on certain articles of the Christian faith,²⁰ but they, like the other Jesuit missionaries in Japan, China and Tibet, rejected with abhorrence the notion of transmigration.²¹

By the 18th century, Jesuits posted in various parts of Asia had understood that metempsychosis was a deeply established conception in all societies and religions from Japan to India.²² The Asian specificity of this conception in its various aspects probably prompted them to reconsider its supposed geographical and historical origin. Early missionaries in Asia thought that the so-called metempsychosis was an aberration mainly derived from Pythagoras, incidentally mentioned by Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas.²³ The second part of the 18th century saw the opinion of the Carnatic missionaries shifting from the thesis of a Greek origin of “metempsychosis” to that of an Indian origin, as seen in Cœurdoux’s position. In 1769 Voltaire also adopted this new viewpoint.²⁴

The French Jesuits were also attentive to the question of the metempsychosis because since the second half of the 17th century European intellectuals were inquisitive about that topic. While the Christian doctrines about the nature of soul were being questioned by the European intelligentsia, some of them, like the alchemist François Mercure van Helmont (1618–1699),²⁵ certain Platonists of Cambridge, among them Henry More (1614–1687),²⁶ philosophers such as John Locke

¹⁴ Their dictionaries and grammars sometimes distinguish the socio-linguistic levels of word meanings. See (Colas and Colas-Chauhan 1995b, pp. 382–83; Colas 2011, pp. 36–37).

¹⁵ Adopting De Nobili’s doctrine of “*pénétration par en haut*” (Dahmen 1924, p. 30), they wanted to “crush the head of the serpent” (see Colas 1996, pp. 200–3, 213).

¹⁶ Such as Pierre Martin (1665–1716) and Pierre Mauduit (1664–1711).

¹⁷ With fathers Gilbert Ducros (1692–1730), Memmius René Gargam (1686–1754), the scribe and probably co-author of a Telugu–Sanskrit–French dictionary sent to France in 1730, Jean Calmette (1692–1740) who, in 1737, claimed to have written verses in Sanskrit and Jean François Pons (1698–1752 [or 1753]) who studied Sanskrit in Bengal in 1731–1732 and wrote a Sanskrit grammar. See (Colas and Colas-Chauhan 2014, pp. 65–67; Colas)

¹⁸ See *Punarjanmākṣepa*, fol. 1. Conversion to Christianity was not always taken seriously by the new converts and apostasy was frequent. See, for example, the *Iruvaiprasaṅgālu* sermons in Telugu (Colas and Colas-Chauhan 2014, p. 77).

¹⁹ The persistence of the belief in rebirth among converts was a subject of concern for ecclesial institutions: see (Clooney 2014, p. 33, fn 15).

²⁰ See (Clooney 2014, p. 25); our observations on the *Iruvaiprasaṅgālu* (Colas and Colas-Chauhan 2014, pp. 80–81).

²¹ See (Clooney 2014).

²² See (Bouchet [ca 1714] 1781, p. 172). For an analysis of Bouchet [ca 1714] 1781, see (Clooney 2005, pp. 54–65).

²³ See Clooney 2014, *passim*. However Bouchet, in around 1714, mentions an opinion according to which the “peoples of India” invented the notion of metempsychosis: see (Bouchet [ca 1714] 1781, p. 175).

²⁴ For Cœurdoux, see (Clooney 2014, p. 52); for Voltaire, see his *Dieu et les hommes*, (Voltaire 1769, p. 24).

²⁵ In a work published in 1690. See notes 31 et 124 of Jacques Brunschwig’s edition of (Leibniz [1765] 1966, pp. 57, 479).

²⁶ See (Leibniz [1765] 1966, p. 57; Crocker 2003, pp. 119–20).

(1632–1704)²⁷ and, in the early 18th century, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716),²⁸ took an interest in transmigration; some even adopted it. It is difficult to evaluate to what extent the early missionary reports about the omnipresence of this belief in Asia kindled the interest of European philosophers in this conception.

The notion of metempsychosis also nourished scepticism among intellectuals vis-à-vis the traditional Catholic view that God, having created the individual soul, introduces it into the foetus at a particular stage of its development. The Catholic position lost ground during the 18th century and in 1769 the deist Voltaire mocked it and declared his preference for metempsychosis. Making fun of a God eternally lying in wait (“*éternellement aux aguets*”) to create souls at moments of conjunction of seed and womb, he found the idea of the “Bracmanes” more ingenuous, adding: “*Il y a dans cet antique système de l’esprit et de l’équité*”.²⁹ The doctrine of metempsychosis, wrote Voltaire *alias* Docteur Obern, is “neither absurd nor useless”.³⁰ As early as 1756, Voltaire, in his *Essai sur les Mœurs et l’Esprit des Nations*, had stated that metempsychosis prevented bad actions and violence.³¹

The interest of the Carnatic Jesuits in this topic grew along with the pressing questions about metempsychosis from French enlightened intellectuals. Father Bouchet’s letter to Monseigneur Huet, mainly on the subject of metempsychosis, confirms this concern at the beginning of the 18th century.³² This however does not mean that the French Jesuits of the Carnatic mission wanted to eradicate the belief in metempsychosis in India merely because of the growing intellectual interrogations in Europe.

2. Summary³³

The *Punarjanmākṣepa* is in the form of a dialogue between a master (*guru*) and a disciple (*śiṣya*). It contains eight chapters.

Chapter one (fols 1–3) presents the subject of the work, which is the refutation of the belief of Vaidikas in metempsychosis (*punarjanman*, literally, “re-birth”), synonymous with “the state after death”, “future life” (*pretyabhāva*) for the soul. According to this belief, when a body is destroyed, its soul, abandoning its previous body, successively bears various kinds of animal bodies, enters stones, vegetation, etc. then again enters a human body.³⁴ The Vaidikas put forth four reasonings (*yukti*) in support of this belief. The first reasoning is examined in chapter two; the second in chapter three; the third in chapters four and five. The fourth reasoning, that metempsychosis should be admitted because it has the sanction of the Purāṇas which are authoritative texts, is rejected in the very first chapter on the grounds that the Purāṇas are not valid because they are not accepted as authoritative by a part of Vaidika scholars (*paṇḍita*).

Chapter two (fols 3v–6v) is devoted to the refutation of the first reasoning of the Vaidikas, according to which the soul (*jīva*) resides in the body like a human being in a house, like a bird in a nest. This refutation, based on Thomist hylomorphism, states that the soul and body are two parts (*aṃśa*) of a single entity (*vastu*) and are not comparable to the house and the resident of the house which are two whole entities, not parts of a single entity. The house does not grow, gain weight, etc. as a body does; the soul does not leave and re-enter the same body, as the resident of a house does. While the body manifests the emotions of the soul, the house is not affected by the resident’s feelings. If the Vaidikas hold that the soul is a whole entity, then they have to accept that the soul by itself is the human being,

²⁷ See (Locke [1689] 1864, pp. 300, 313).

²⁸ See Leibniz’s *Nouveaux Essais* written in 1703 (Leibniz [1765] 1966, pp. 198–210). On the speculations of abbé François de Lanion (165.–170.?) on transmigration, see (Leibniz [1765] 1966, pp. 199, 479) (J. Brunswig’s note 122).

²⁹ (Voltaire 1769, p. 25).

³⁰ (Voltaire 1769, p. 24): “*La doctrine de la métempsicose surtout n’est ni absurde ni inutile*”.

³¹ See (Voltaire [1756] 1963, p. 60).

³² See (Bouchet [ca 1714] 1781, especially p. 170).

³³ For shorter summaries, see (Arokiasamy 1986, pp. 77–100; Colas 1996, pp. 204–7; Clooney 2014, pp. 42–46; Colas and Colas-Chauhan 2014, pp. 69–75).

³⁴ Fol. 1v.

capable of continuing as a human being in whichever body, that of a dog for instance. But the reality is that the soul and body come together to form a whole entity, be it a human being, an animal, a tree, etc. and they acquire the power of performing different actions. The nature of being a whole entity is due to the coming together of a *form* (*mātrā*, lit. “measure”), namely, a soul, and a material support (*ādhāra*, lit. “support”, “substratum”, “receptacle”) namely, a body. Of these, the soul is the main (*pradhāna*) cause whereas the body is the auxiliary (*sahakārī*) cause.

According to the *Punarjanmākṣepa*, human and non-human souls have two capacities (*śakti*) in common: growth and knowledge through the inner and outer senses. Human souls have two other specific capacities, intelligence (*buddhi*) and mind (*manas*), which are extra-corporeal and not dependent on the limbs of the body. The human soul is capable of producing activities through these two capacities even after the destruction of the body, while the souls of animals cease to exist when they do not have a body as support. Moreover, human souls cannot be the *forms* (*mātrā*) of the bodies of dogs, etc., nor can the bodies of dogs, etc., be the material support (*ādhāra*) of human souls.

Chapter three (fols 7–11) is devoted to the refutation of the second reasoning of the Vaidikas, that the innumerable souls which reside in different bodies are of the same nature. As in chapter two, the refutation is based on Thomist hylomorphism: (1°) A soul exists as the *form* (*mātrā*) of a particular individual body; (2°) Each individual soul possesses a fixed and distinct character; (3°) Therefore one particular *form* (*mātrā*) produces one particular entity (*vastu*), and not several particular entities. This is illustrated by two examples, that of an object (a plate) and of an elephant. A soul which is the *form* of the body of an elephant produces the entity “elephant”; it cannot produce an entity “ant”. It cannot be said by the Vaidikas that the above *form* of the body of an elephant, having entered the bodies of mosquito, bug, etc., becomes the *form* of a mosquito, a bug, etc. The work also adds a social application of this view: while the classes (*jātis*) among animals are on the basis of their natural differences, the classes (*jātis*) among human beings are due to their worldly transactions linked with social convention.

The work then presents a sequence of (non-Thomist) attacks on three “untruths” connected with the above second reasoning of the Vaidikas. The first untruth is that one should perform good religious acts at the time of death for obtaining a pleasant body in the next birth. A list of objections follows: human souls in trees cannot perform such acts; the souls of animals and trees are destroyed on their death; religious post-mortem rites for the dead are the fruits of the imagination of poets; animals and trees do not possess the function of knowledge and no virtuous and sinful acts could lead them to Paradise (*mokṣa*) or Hell (*naraka*). The second untruth is that the human soul leaves one body and enters another non-human body. If so, it would be a crime to deprive any living being of life, for example, to cut vegetation and vegetables for cattle and oneself. The third untruth is that human soul indifferently enters the bodies of animals, birds, trees, etc. This would mean that all difference among living beings resides in bodies and that the degree of difference between a baby donkey and a baby dog would be the same as that between a baby donkey and a human baby.

Chapter four (fols 11v–14v) refutes the third reasoning, namely that the difference (*tāratamya*) in class, education, wealth, status and health, by birth or acquired during a life-time, can be explained only if it is admitted that they are produced by the virtue and sin (*puṇya* and *pāpa*) earned in previous lives. This chapter denies that good fortunes such as kingdom, wealth, health, beauty, pleasures, etc. enjoyed in this life are due to virtuous acts such as austerity, donations, prayers, sacrifices, etc. performed in a previous life.

It is questioned whether these virtuous deeds were performed by the force of destiny (*lalāṭalipi*, literally, “the writing [by the Creator] on the forehead”) or by free will. In the first hypothesis, persons destined for good fortune would enjoy it even without having performed virtuous deeds. As regards the second hypothesis, the deliberate choice of sinful acts out of free will would lead to the breakdown of the society and of the institution of kingship. The text here draws the analogy in which the society is compared to a body and the king to its head. God who creates the body (the society) would not leave the creation of its head (the king) to causes like the virtuous deeds of human beings.

Then follows a series of “reasonings” (*nyāya*) which are disjointed laconic attacks, often sustained by striking illustrations, pointing out paradoxes and contradictions in the Vaidika position that virtuous acts in a previous life bring about good fortunes in the present life: renouncers would renounce enjoyment in the present life not for spiritual ends but to gain pleasures in the next life; enjoyment with many men by prostitutes would be the result of an earlier virtuous life and faithfulness in a couple would be an unfortunate consequence of a previous life; there would be inconsistency between the traditional belief that kingship is a good reward for a virtuous previous life and the Purāṇic statement that “Hell (inevitably) comes after kingship”. Furthermore, if the Vaidikas admit that the very first members of privileged social classes (*brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*) were created by Brahman from his different limbs, it would signify that their socially advantaged condition was not a reward of the virtuous deeds of a previous life.

Chapter five (fols 15–20) refutes another aspect of the third reasoning, that misfortunes such as poverty, disease, and the condition of belonging to the lowest social class, etc. in the present life are due to sins committed in a previous life. The question is raised, as in the preceding chapter, whether these sinful deeds were performed in the previous life by force of destiny or by free will. In the first hypothesis, predestined stealing, etc., cannot be considered as sinful actions. Moreover, misfortunes such as birth in an inferior class, poverty, etc., of the present life cannot be considered as the results of sinful deeds because actions done under duress are neither sinful nor virtuous. Regarding the second hypothesis, the text refers again to the argument based on its arbitrary and conservative monarchist conception of the society. Human beings would not perform by free will sinful deeds which would result in their birth in inferior classes. As a result, there would no inferior social classes such as *caṇḍāla*, etc., in the world, in which case the society would be like a body with a head (namely king) but without feet (servants).

The *Punarjanmākṣepa* employs the analogy between the human body termed microcosm (*piṇḍa*), and society, termed macrocosm (*aṇḍa*). The Creator who creates the human body, also creates the limbs, head, feet, etc.; limbs cannot arise from causes other than God, such as human deeds of previous life. God also creates kings etc. who are the head of the great body, which is this society, and low classes, such as *caṇḍāla*, etc., who are the feet of the society. If the fortunes and misfortunes of human beings were due to their past acts it would signify that God is not free in his governance of the world. Only God’s desire (*cittavṛtti*) is the cause of the accomplishment of the world order (*lokakramapravṛtti*).

In order to illustrate that visible causes for fortunes and misfortunes should be accepted rather than invisible causes such as deeds of a past life, the text presents certain “cases” (*viśeṣa*): a person named Caitra afflicted by a disease of boils due to his association with prostitutes; another named Cakrāyudha decapitated for stealing from the king’s treasury. The Vaidikas may attribute these misfortunes to prior sinful deeds or even argue that God procures the visible sinful deeds such as debauchery and stealing as a result of a sin committed in a previous life. But this reply is not acceptable because it involves three errors: favouring invisible over visible causes, attributing sinful intentions to God who would instigate human beings to sin, ignoring the sin-purificatory force of contrition (*paścāttāpa*). Another case is that of Sugrīva, afflicted by a terrible leprosy, whose suffering the Vaidikas consider as a punishment that destroys the sins of a previous life. They also believe that repentance (*paścāttāpa*) destroys the sins of a previous life. But since the sins of a previous life cannot be remembered in the present life, there could be no repentance with regard to them. The *Punarjanmākṣepa*, which believes in the virtue of contrition (*paścāttāpa*), adds that a person is called sinner (*pāpātman*) as long as his mind does not refrain from sin; suffering helps to adopt virtuous behaviour through contrition which consists in turning back mentally from sin. This is followed by the examples (*dr̥ṣṭānta*) of a servant who remained treacherous and unrepentant even after punishment and of the unrepentant Sugrīva mentioned above.

Chapter six (fols 20–25v) points out that, according to a Vedic statement, the creation of the universe occurred from nothing and according to a Purāṇa passage, Brahman created *brāhmaṇas* from its mouth, *kṣatriyas* from the two arms, *vaiśyas* from the two thighs and *sūdras* etc. from the

two feet. This signifies that there did not exist any cause such as virtuous and sinful acts of previous life, that created the world. The *Punarjanmākṣepa* declares that God created all beings and everything. He gave human beings and animals the possibility of reproducing themselves. But human birth is particular because when the foetus created by a father and a mother becomes fit to be connected with a soul, God himself creates the new human soul. At the time of death, the human soul, having earned the grace willed by God, leaves its body and reaches eternal Paradise (*mokṣa*). If it is devoid of the grace of God, it falls into Hell (*pātāla*) and never escapes from it.

The text presents several other reasonings (*yuktis*) against metempsychosis. This notion would challenge the existence and omnipotence of God who governs the world by his free will (*svātantryeṇa*) through just laws. If metempsychosis were admitted, it would signify that the world is governed by the sins and merits of individuals, which would render the existence of God superfluous. To explain why in spite of God's governance and appropriate laws, virtuous persons undergo suffering while sinners enjoy good fortune, it is stated that suffering helps virtuous souls to refrain from sin, to obtain more merits through forbearance and to be models for others through their ideal behaviour. On the contrary, God gives sinners wealth like money, grain, etc., to augment their punishment.

Another "reasoning" is that if the sufferings of this life were the result of sins committed in past life, such results being of limited duration, people would not hesitate to sin again. The "True Veda" (namely the Bible) proclaims eternal suffering in Hell for the sinners, which is the only means to make them fear sin. As earthly enjoyments are not the supreme aim of human beings, it is worth bearing earthly sufferings and renouncing the pleasures of the present life for reaching Paradise. The text compares God to a king who does not hesitate to punish culprits, even by death if necessary, to implement and maintain order. God creates all souls in order that they enjoy Paradise (*mokṣa*) which is called their own kingdom (*svarājyaṃ*), the earth being for them only a "foreign country" (*paradeśa*), a "territory of action" (*karmabhūmi*). Since the souls of animals are destroyed with their body, all pleasures are to be enjoyed by them only on the earth and the earth is said to be their "own country". Thus, God created animals with downward vision for them to gaze at the earth³⁵. Paradise being the country and the supreme aim of human souls, God created them with upward vision.

Then follows a series of short random arguments. The thesis of metempsychosis lacks order: it is not coherent that the body which suffers is created now and that the sin which causes that suffering was committed even before the existence of that body. It is also not logical to say that the soul which has committed sin in a previous body is punished with disease, etc., in the present body. The holders of metempsychosis cannot explain good fortune in the absence of prior good deeds and misfortune in the absence of prior bad deeds. Moreover, if the sins and virtuous deeds of previous life were exhausted in the sufferings and enjoyment of the present life, there would be no Paradise and Hell for them to go to.

Chapter seven (fols 26–32) explains how divine design (*daivacitta*) and not metempsychosis legitimates social inequality (*tāratamya*). It takes the model of microcosm/macrocosm, which is said to be accepted "by all the people of this country", as the basis for discussion. Just as various limbs are needed for the functioning of the body, which is the microcosm, so also many kinds of human beings, comparable to various limbs, are required for the unimpeded functioning of the world, which is the great body or macrocosm. If there were no hierarchy between the limbs, the body would not function. Similarly, if there were no social hierarchy, society would be in chaos.

God is not partial in the creation of inequality because he is just (*nītisvarūpa*) and free since all his wishes are always fulfilled (*avāptasarvakāma*). Nor does he require the individual *karman* of human beings for the creation and governance of the world. He desires by his free will that each person conducting himself according to the function assigned by him reaches Paradise through meritorious behaviour. Fulfilling one's own social function and respective activities without jealousy is for the

³⁵ A commonplace topos gently mocked by Montaigne, who quotes Ovid's *Metamorphoses* I, 84, as being a mere poetical view: see (Montaigne [1595] 1962, p. 463) (*Essais* II, 13).

benefit of the whole society and for one's own benefit. The servant serves the king not because of the king's supremacy but for his own livelihood; the king spends his wealth, etc., not for the livelihood of the servant but for the stability, etc., of his own kingdom. An interesting story (*kathā*) on the conflict among limbs is told to illustrate the necessity of working together without jealousy for the good functioning of the society. Each part of the body one by one ceased to work, judging that they worked only for the benefit of the stomach. When the stomach was not longer fed, the whole body including the limbs, became weak. As a result, the limbs realized that they should abandon jealousy and work together. Another example illustrates the need to adhere to one's own position in the society. Just as a king assigns soldiers to different parts of a fort under siege, God assigns human beings to higher, middle and lower sections of the society where all should work properly at their places according to God's wish. Therefore, God's wish is the cause for the hierarchy among human beings and not virtuous and sinful deeds performed in the previous life.

Human hierarchy is also declared to reveal God's greatness. The example of the appointment of the soldiers at different places of the fort is significant because the existence of men on earth is nothing but a war against demons, sinners and the body. Demons, in order to make souls fall into Hell, make them unmindful of sins; sinners give wrong advice to virtuous persons to tempt them into sinful behaviour; the body diverts human beings from the path of righteousness through avidity, anger, etc. God bestows grace to help men fight these three enemies and win over them. Victory over sin by righteous souls at the various levels of society for the efficient functioning of the world pleases God; social hierarchy and victory over enemies manifest God's greatness.

The chapter concludes with the declaration of a "particular truth" (*satyavaiśeṣa*) which explains why God did not create equality among all human beings. God desires all people to remain in their own rank in the society, win over the above-mentioned enemies and, without complaining, earn his grace obeying the order set by him. God sends to Paradise (*mokṣa*) those who succeed and to Hell those who fail. The means to save (*taraṇopāya*) human souls is the same for those in the higher and lower social conditions. Just as the food received by the mouth nourishes all limbs, the teaching provided by the "true preceptor" (*sadguru*) who is the mouth of the great body, helps people of all ranks, who are like limbs of that body, to reach Paradise. It should be known that the immoral sensual pleasures were not created by God nor are they favourable to the moral functioning of the world. Desires, like the unquenchable thirst of a sick person, are insatiable. These desires and fortunes etc., originated in sin such as illicit pleasure, stealing, killing, etc., are earned by the free will of the sinner and not by his previous virtuous or sinful deeds.

Chapter eight (fols 32v–36v) specifically discusses the question of innate handicaps and sufferings faced during a life-time. Handicaps and diseases at birth are to be attributed not to sins of a previous life but to unhealthy food, the fall of the pregnant woman, the wrong sexual behaviour of the parents during pregnancy, etc. Combining moral and embryological considerations and seeking the authority of medicine (*vaidyaśāstra*), the work states that the weakness of blood and sperm are due to immoral behaviour. Handicaps in new-borns are explained by taking the analogy of the bad quality of a field (womb) and grain (sperm) and the analogy of defective pots which are ill-baked because of an uneven or insufficient fire. Defective or incomplete limbs in the embryo are caused by defective sperm or blood.

There are four reasons why God produces suffering such as diseases, etc., in sinners. The first is the edification of others. On seeing the sinners suffer, others become convinced that the sufferings of the sinners will be greater in Hell and that they should avoid committing sins. God also gives suffering to the sinner on the earth so that he repents and decides to follow a virtuous path. A third reason for inflicting suffering on sinners is that they refrain from sin and remain firm in the practice of virtue, austerity, etc. Suffering is also sent by God to purify the sinner through pain, just as gold is purified by heat, in order that he reaches the supreme sojourn (*paramapada*).

God also gives suffering such as diseases, etc., to virtuous people, but out of compassion. Suffering encourages virtuous persons to earn further virtues on the earth for the enjoyment of supreme felicity in the other world. Secondly, God also makes good persons suffer because suffering increases their

faith; they understand that their suffering is in conformity with God's design. Suffering also intensifies their love (*prīti*) for God. Fourthly, virtuous persons gain patience through suffering which gives others the occasion to praise God and to follow the example of the virtuous. Thus ends the *Punarjanmākṣepa*.

3. The *guru* and the True Veda

The *Punarjanmākṣepa* is, as mentioned above, in the form of a dialogue between a master and a disciple. It is not certain whether this mode of presentation is merely rhetorical or if it corresponds to a particular historical or pedagogical situation. The master (*guru*) represents a Catholic doctrinal authority, apparently a Jesuit father, who is attributed, at least in the Sanskrit translation of the work, with a linguistic style fit for educated Brahmins. He names his doctrine "the True Path" (*sanmārga*)³⁶ and refers to his Scripture, that is, the Bible, as "the True Veda" (*satyaveda*) composed (*praṇīta*) by God himself,³⁷ or as the "Veda of the Lord of all (*sarveśvaraveda*)"³⁸ or simply "Veda".³⁹ He does not quote the Bible or any other Christian work, although he refers the readers to a work entitled *Ātmanirṇaya*, which is attributed to De Nobili.

4. Vaidikas and Veda

The *Punarjanmākṣepa* criticises the belief in metempsychosis of those whom it names Vaidikas. It states that some impure souls (*malinātman*), ignorant of the Lord of all, follow the doctrine (here named Veda doctrine, *vedamata*),⁴⁰ which has mutually contradictory meanings. Though they adhere to various paths (*mārga*),⁴¹ they come together to admit the notion of metempsychosis. There are also some among the followers of the True Veda composed by the Lord (namely, the Bible) who wonder if this notion is true or not. Since their faith in the True Veda is not unshaking, they do not qualify to follow the True path and for the cessation of worldly existence (*saṃsāra*). The aim is to refute the notion of metempsychosis from the point of view of the True Veda, in order that all Vaidikas obtain faith in the True Veda by the grace of the Lord and follow only the True path.

The *Punarjanmākṣepa* occasionally distinguishes the Veda of the Vaidikas from a Purāṇa and also questions the authority of Purāṇas on the grounds that they are not accepted by all learned people (*paṇḍita*) among Vaidikas. It however quotes a Purāṇic statement as evidence.⁴²

5. The *Punarjanmākṣepa*, a *vade mecum* against Metempsychosis

The purpose of the *Punarjanmākṣepa* could have been to furnish arguments to the Jesuits in their missionary work and to the converts as well, in their debates with Hindus. It is interesting to note that some of the arguments which Father Bouchet declared to have employed during his discussions with Indians on metempsychosis, are found in the *Punarjanmākṣepa*.⁴³

The *Punarjanmākṣepa* seems to be a sort of handbook against metempsychosis with various kinds of arguments arranged more or less systematically, sometimes long, sometimes brief, sometimes

³⁶ Fol. 1.

³⁷ Fol. 23v.

³⁸ Fols 3, 29v.

³⁹ Fol. 30v.

⁴⁰ Fols 1, 14.

⁴¹ Fol. 1. However, folio 1v refers to those who do not believe in metempsychosis and states that their view is discussed in another work, the *Ātmanirṇaya*.

⁴² Fols 14, 21.

⁴³ See (Bouchet [ca 1714] 1781) (impossibility of justifying through metempsychosis the existence of social classes at the time of creation, model microcosm/macrocosm and Hell as the outcome of kingship, pp. 239–45) and *Punarjanmākṣepa* (respectively, fols 14v, 16 and 13v–14). See also (Clooney 2005, pp. 59–60). Bouchet's letter also reports that Indians compare the soul in a body to a bird in a cage (p. 181), a man in a house (p. 182) and a man in a jail (p. 187). These comparisons are mentioned in the *Punarjanmākṣepa*.

recurrent.⁴⁴ The disciple repeatedly calls for arguments which are designated as “reasonings” (*yukti, nyāya*). While most arguments involve reasoning, several are based on Christian presuppositions. Theoretical expositions alternate with polemical attacks, at times illustrated by instances and stories. Some reasonings point out real contradictions in the Hindu metaphysical tradition, for instance the incompatibility of God’s omnipotent free will with the karmic constraints of individual souls which arise from past deeds.⁴⁵

6. Ideological Strategies and Argumentative Tactics

At least five ideological strategies which also are the fundamental lines of reasoning may be distinguished in the *Punarjanmākṣepa*, besides its argumentative tactics. The first strategy is the belief in one omnipotent and supreme God. It is the keystone of the *Punarjanmākṣepa* and of the four other ideological strategies. God possesses infinite compassion (*anantakṛpā*, also *karuṇā*)⁴⁶ and infinite justice (*atyantanīti*).⁴⁷ The creation and functioning of the world is based on the divine design (*daivacitta*).⁴⁸ God’s free will is put forward as a main argument against the thesis of metempsychosis. He creates and governs the world, including its social hierarchy,⁴⁹ by his own free will,⁵⁰ promises Paradise,⁵¹ and confers suffering on sinners and virtuous souls⁵² for their own sake and for the benefit of the world, etc. Rejecting the Vaidika position that the good and bad fortunes of the present life are caused by the deeds of a previous life, the *Punarjanmākṣepa* declares that only God’s wish is the cause and not *karman*.⁵³ God has no use of individual *karmans*.⁵⁴

The second strategy, mainly exposed by the *Punarjanmākṣepa* in chapters two and three, is the Thomist scholastic hylomorphic reasoning. It aims to prove that there is one individual soul (“form”) for each human being, which soul is associated with a single body (“matter”), a conception diametrically opposed to the thesis of metempsychosis. According to the Thomist doctrine, the human soul and its body are incomplete from a natural standpoint; their union forms the complete entity which is the human being. From the metaphysical point of view, however, the human soul is complete in itself because it continues to exist beyond death.⁵⁵ It may be recalled in this context that the Jesuits were followers of the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas and that from the 16th to the 18th century, several of them such as Francisco Suárez (1548–1617),⁵⁶ were important contributors to the second Thomist scholasticism of the Catholic Church.⁵⁷ But the belief in metempsychosis was not a common Thomist topic of discussion,⁵⁸ for Thomas Aquinas only briefly criticized the conception of metempsychosis

⁴⁴ The *Punarjanmākṣepa* to a certain extent can be compared to the *Iruvaiprasamgālu*, with the difference that it was intended for the educated higher classes of the society while the latter was intended for labourers, soldiers, etc. (see [Colas and Colas-Chauhan 2014](#)).

⁴⁵ See for example, fols 22–23.

⁴⁶ Fol. 35v.

⁴⁷ Fol. 27, 30.

⁴⁸ Fols 27, 35v.

⁴⁹ Fol. 27v.

⁵⁰ Fols 16v, 22.

⁵¹ Fol. 27.

⁵² Fol. 33v.

⁵³ Fols 22v and 23.

⁵⁴ Fol. 27.

⁵⁵ See ([Gilson 1922](#), pp. 138–51; [Peillaube 1930](#), col. 1043; [Owens 1994](#), pp. 178, 180).

⁵⁶ For a detailed exposition of his theses about the individual soul, see ([Gracia 1994](#)).

⁵⁷ The second scholasticism also includes the extra-European scholasticism sometimes named “colonial scholasticism”, that is, works written in Latin America under Spanish domination. See ([Hofmeister Pich and Culleton](#)).

⁵⁸ See ([Hedde 1929](#), col. 1592), quoted in ([Colas 1996](#), p. 216, note 20).

attributed to Pythagoras.⁵⁹ Therefore, besides the Thomist arguments, the Jesuits in India had to search for new reasonings better adapted to the cultural context. The *Punarjanmākṣepa* testifies to this effort.⁶⁰

Social reinterpretation of the model of the microcosm and macrocosm is the third ideological strategy noticed in the work. It intends not only to explain human suffering and social inequality, but also to legitimate them.⁶¹ The place of the individual in the social hierarchy is due not to the deeds of past lives, but to divine design. The macrocosm (*aṇḍa*), that is, the whole universe including the society, is considered a “great human body” comparable to the microcosm which is the human body (*piṇḍa*). The *Punarjanmākṣepa* states that this conception is accepted also by “all the people of the country”⁶² because their scriptures declare that the Creator created the superior classes from the head of the great human body, the lower classes from its feet, etc.⁶³ It however pays no attention to the real meaning of the notion of *aṇḍa* which signifies the whole material universe and applies the analogy only to the social dimension of *aṇḍa*, emphasizing that everyone should remain in his own social condition for the welfare of the whole society. Contrary to the Thomist reasoning, which would have been unfamiliar to Indians, the above model perhaps better appealed to them because it had the sanction of Hindu scriptures⁶⁴ and because it confirmed social conservatism. It may be noted that the socio-political interpretation of the microcosm/macrocosm model was also common in European thought, especially among the Jesuits of the 16th–18th century who followed Albertus Magnus (c. 1200–1280) and Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) in this regard, as it contributed to legitimate monarchy.⁶⁵

The fourth ideological strategy is an empiricism according to which visible causes have precedence over the invisible. The *Punarjanmākṣepa* clearly rejects that an invisible cause like the sins of a previous life could produce diseases, etc., while there exist visible causes like debauchery.⁶⁶ Socio-medical empiricism makes this work attribute defects at birth not to metempsychosis but to causes such as wrong diet, defects of the sperm, etc.

The fifth ideological strategy is of a metaphysico-moral nature. Chapter eight supplants metempsychosis with a simple pattern that is typically Christian. A single life which ends with the ascension to Paradise for the right-doers and a fall to Hell for sinners supersedes the succession of many lives preconized in metempsychosis. The *Punarjanmākṣepa* considers that the terror of eternal suffering in Hell is a better deterrent than the fear of temporary sufferings in posterior lives.⁶⁷ God sends suffering to virtuous people for their own spiritual benefit and to sinners to lead them to contrition, thus enabling contrite souls to escape eternal Hell.

Apart from these five main ideological strategies, the *Punarjanmākṣepa* displays argumentative tactics. Random successions of brief reasonings point to the contradictions in the Vaidika viewpoint.⁶⁸ The work also presents particular cases (*viśeṣas*), stories (*kathās*) and examples (*dr̥ṣṭāntas*). The Vaidika explanation for particular cases of suffering are presented and rejected and valid alternative

⁵⁹ In his Commentary on Aristotle's *De Anima*, I, 8. See (?), pp. 117–18). This work was part of the education of Jesuits in Europe (Mesnard 1966, p. 71). Thomas Aquinas mentions the Pythagorean example of the soul of an elephant leaving the body of the elephant and entering the body of a fly. A similar example (elephant and ant, mosquito or bug) is employed in the *Punarjanmākṣepa*. See fol. 4v, 7v, 8v, etc.

⁶⁰ According to Cronin (1959, p. 145) De Nobili searched in Rome for books on metempsychosis to strengthen his arguments against this belief, a subject on which he corresponded with other Jesuits in 1607–1609 (Županov 2001, pp. 155–57).

⁶¹ See fols 12, 14, 16, 21, 26–26v, 32v–33v.

⁶² Fol. 26.

⁶³ Fols 12v, 14, 16, 21. The notion of the “great body” as a cosmical man who symbolizes the ideal society is referred to in the *Puruṣasūktā* (*Rgveda* 10.90) according to which each limb represents a social class.

⁶⁴ Indian illustrations of the duad microcosm/macrocosm are found in works of all periods, in the Upaniṣads (*Aitareya* 1.1.1–4, *Muṇḍaka* 2.1.1–10, *Chāndogya* 8.1.1–3, etc.), as well as in Tantric and Nātha works (see for example, Mallik 1954, pp. 21, 39–40, etc.). See also the Sanskrit maxim *yathā piṇḍe tathā brahmāṇḍe*, “As in the body so in the universe”.

⁶⁵ For Albertus Magnus, democracy is the worst of political regimes and is like a monster with multiple heads. For his views and those of Thomas Aquinas, see (Molnár 2002, pp. 75–76; Bigongiari 1957, pp. v–xxiv, xxvii). Renaissance philosophers and humanists too adhered to the microcosm/macrocosm conception: see (Oosterhoff 2015, p. 29; Conger 1922, pp. 55 ff).

⁶⁶ Fol. 17.

⁶⁷ Fol. 23v.

⁶⁸ Fols 9v–11, 12v–14v, 25v–26.

explanations are given (see especially chapter five). Stories and examples have a unilateral anti-Vaidika explanation. They bear resemblance to the *exempla* which the Jesuits used in works like the *Iruvaiprasaṅgālu*, a collection of Telugu sermons.⁶⁹ A typical story is that of the conflict between the limbs of a human body.⁷⁰ Examples like that of the treacherous servant who remains so even after punishment and without repentance,⁷¹ of the king who does not hesitate to inflict severe punishment⁷² and of the king who assigns soldiers to high and low positions⁷³ illustrate the discussions.

7. Linguistic Affinity and Ambiguity

The Sanskrit version of the *Punarjanmākṣepa* to a certain extent overcomes the difficulties with regard to the equivalence between Christian and Sanskrit religious terminology. For instance, the work employs the Hindu generic designations of God and never sectarian personal names of Viṣṇu, Śiva, etc. God is referred to as “Lord of all” (*Sarveśvara*), “Supreme Lord” (*Parameśvara*), “Lord” (*Īśvara*), “Fortunate One” (*Bhagavant*), “God” (*Deva*), “Creator” (*Kartṛ*), “Master” (*Svāmin*), “Supreme One” (*Sarvottama*) and “Dear One” (*Vallabha*), terms which do not deprive the work of its Christian flavour nor contradict Christian doctrine.⁷⁴ Certain common Sanskrit terms of Hinduism denoting moral qualities and emotions of God and the feelings of devotees, for instance, “pity” (*dayā*) and “compassion” (*kṛpā*) of God⁷⁵ and “faith” (*śraddhā*)⁷⁶ and “devotion” (*bhakti*)⁷⁷ of the believers, also appropriate to Christianity, are employed.

A number of common Sanskrit terms, however, stand for particular Christian notions. For instance, *pāpa* designates “sin”⁷⁸ which is very different from the meaning it has in the Hindu context of the karmic retributive process. Thus *mokṣa* also stands for Paradise as conceived in Catholicism and does not refer to the Hindu notion of liberation from the cycle of successive existences.⁷⁹ Moreover, *mokṣa*, believed to be a particular topographical site,⁸⁰ is referred to in compounds such as “country of Paradise” (*mokṣa-deśa*), “kingdom of Paradise” (*mokṣa-rājya*)⁸¹ and called “supreme sojourn” (*paramapada*).⁸² *Samśāra*⁸³ denotes a single existence whereas in Hinduism it designates the flow of successive lives. The *Punarjanmākṣepa* also adds completely novel significance to various Sanskrit words. Thus, in its Thomist hylomorphic demonstration, *mātrā* and *ādihāra* respectively denote the Thomist notions of “form”, that is, soul, and “matter” or “material support”, that is, body.⁸⁴

In its search for points of convergence with the Vaidikas, the *Punarjanmākṣepa* is keen to show that it shares some fundamental notions with them. But as we saw with the duad microcosm/macrocosm said to be accepted by Indians, the similarities are either partial or ambiguous. The notion of *paścāttāpa*, for example, is declared to be common to Christians and Vaidikas.⁸⁵ But in fact in the *Punarjanmākṣepa* it corresponds to the precise Catholic belief of contrition and not to repentance as held

⁶⁹ See (Colas and Colas-Chauhan 2014, p. 79).

⁷⁰ Fols 28–29.

⁷¹ Fols 19v–20.

⁷² Fol. 24.

⁷³ Fols 29–29v.

⁷⁴ However, the expression “Supreme soul” (*śrīparamātmān*, fol. 32v) is specifically Hindu.

⁷⁵ Fol. 17v.

⁷⁶ Fol. 1.

⁷⁷ Fols 6, 12v, 19, 35v.

⁷⁸ The Telugu–Sanskrit–French dictionary BnF Indien 601 translates *pāpa* as “péché”, “crime” and “vice”.

⁷⁹ See the dictionary BnF Indien 601, s.v.

⁸⁰ See fols 10, 22, etc.

⁸¹ See fols 25, etc.

⁸² Fol. 35.

⁸³ See for instance, fols 1 and 30v.

⁸⁴ The Jesuit dictionaries BnF Indien 600 (Telugu–French, copied before 1730) (n.d.) and Indien 601 (Telugu–Sanskrit–French) (Cœurdox n.d.) do not note the Thomist sense of these Sanskrit terms. On these dictionaries, see (Colas and Colas-Chauhan 1995b; Colas 2011, pp. 34–42).

⁸⁵ Fol. 18v.

by the Indians. Just as the Carnatic Jesuits accommodated the way of life of Brahmin renouncers,⁸⁶ they also adapted their discourse, language and vocabulary to the public or readers⁸⁷ for whom their message was intended. The absence of direct references to the life and death of Jesus-Christ or citations from the Bible, for instance, could be understood in a similar perspective of adaptation.⁸⁸ The linguistic accommodation of the Sanskrit *Punarjanmākṣepa* perhaps helped attract the attention of Indian interlocutors. But it also created a semantic area of such ambiguity that it is not certain that the Vaidikas apprehended the real significance of the arguments.

8. Conclusions

The Jesuits followed Thomas Aquinas's recommendation that in the debates with Pagans and Muslims, who did not acknowledge the authority of the Bible, Christians should resort to "natural reason" acceptable even to non-Christians.⁸⁹ Thus De Nobili and early Jesuit missionaries in South India were convinced that reason was adequate to defeat Brahmins and their doctrines.⁹⁰ The *Punarjanmākṣepa* is an important testimony to this conviction. The topic of metempsychosis above all was crucial to them because the eradication of this belief was essential for an in-depth conversion of Indians. But the impact of the *Punarjanmākṣepa* and the role played by Jesuit reasoning in converting Indians to Catholicism remain difficult to assess.

The Sanskrit *Punarjanmākṣepa* resorted to an argumentative style and adapted to the vocabulary, social norms and socio-religious disposition of Hindus, but it perhaps failed to acquire the aura of a śāstric treatise among Hindu erudites. No extant work from the Hindu side is known which would have responded to the *Punarjanmākṣepa*. Nor does this work show evidence of any counter-argument from the Vaidikas. As the *Punarjanmākṣepa* did not direct its criticism towards a well-defined adversary⁹¹ or quote arguments, etc., from any particular Indian school of thought, it perhaps did not evoke a polemical opposition from any group. Refutation of metempsychosis isolated from the notions associated with it, such as the nature of soul in the Indian philosophical systems, could have deprived the *Punarjanmākṣepa* of the seriousness and solemnity it sought among Indian erudite circles. Above all, the most scholastic line of argumentation of the work, namely, Thomist hylomorphism, being based on unfamiliar presuppositions, would have been impossible to debate for Vaidika scholars. When the Carnatic Jesuits had the *Punarjanmākṣepa* translated into Sanskrit, they do not seem to have added any further elements within this version. Nor did they later compose any new work on this topic, even though they had gathered enough intellectual resources to further indianize their philosophical argumentation.⁹² Thus the debate or intercultural exchange between Jesuit and Hindu scholastics, which modern indologists and historians may aspire to see illustrated in the *Punarjanmākṣepa*, remains elusive.

As mentioned above, several 17th and 18th century European philosophers were interested in the notion of metempsychosis, but such new ideas did not find their way into the then Jesuit perspective which was nearer to the 17th than the 18th century. An objective report from the Jesuit missionaries placing the Indian notion of metempsychosis in the context of Indian metaphysics could have contributed to furthering interest in this topic among certain European philosophers. But this was not ultimately to be the case, as Occidental idealization of the philosophical notion of "reason",

⁸⁶ For the method of adaptation (*accommodatio*), see (Dahmen 1924).

⁸⁷ See (Colas 1996, pp. 203–10; Colas and Colas-Chauhan 2014, pp. 68–83).

⁸⁸ See (Clooney 2014, p. 25).

⁸⁹ See (Goss 1998, p. 70; Aquinas 2016, I, 2).

⁹⁰ Colas 1997, pp. 211, 213. See Calmette's letter to Father Delmas (dated 17 September 1735) from Chikkaballapur (Martin 1840, pp. 621–22) and the undated letters of Jean Venant Bouchet and Pierre Martin (De Querbeuf 1781, pp. 8, 115, 116, 118) quoted in (Colas); see also (Gelders and Balagangadhara 2011, pp. 108, 112).

⁹¹ For an exceptional mention of the Mīmāṃsakas, see fol. 22v.

⁹² Father Jean François Pons who wrote a grammar of Sanskrit and had studied in Bengal the Indian systems of scholastic philosophy including logic was in Pondicherry from 1733 till his death (1752 or 1753). See (Colas).

associated with socio-political and economic development, had already become a dominating trend in the evolution of European thought.

Author Contributions: Colas and Colas-Chauhan jointly prepared the material and together wrote the article. Colas also researched on the European archival material and on the interest in metempsychosis in 18th century Europe, while Colas-Chauhan looked into the Telugu version of the *Punarjanmākṣepa*.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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