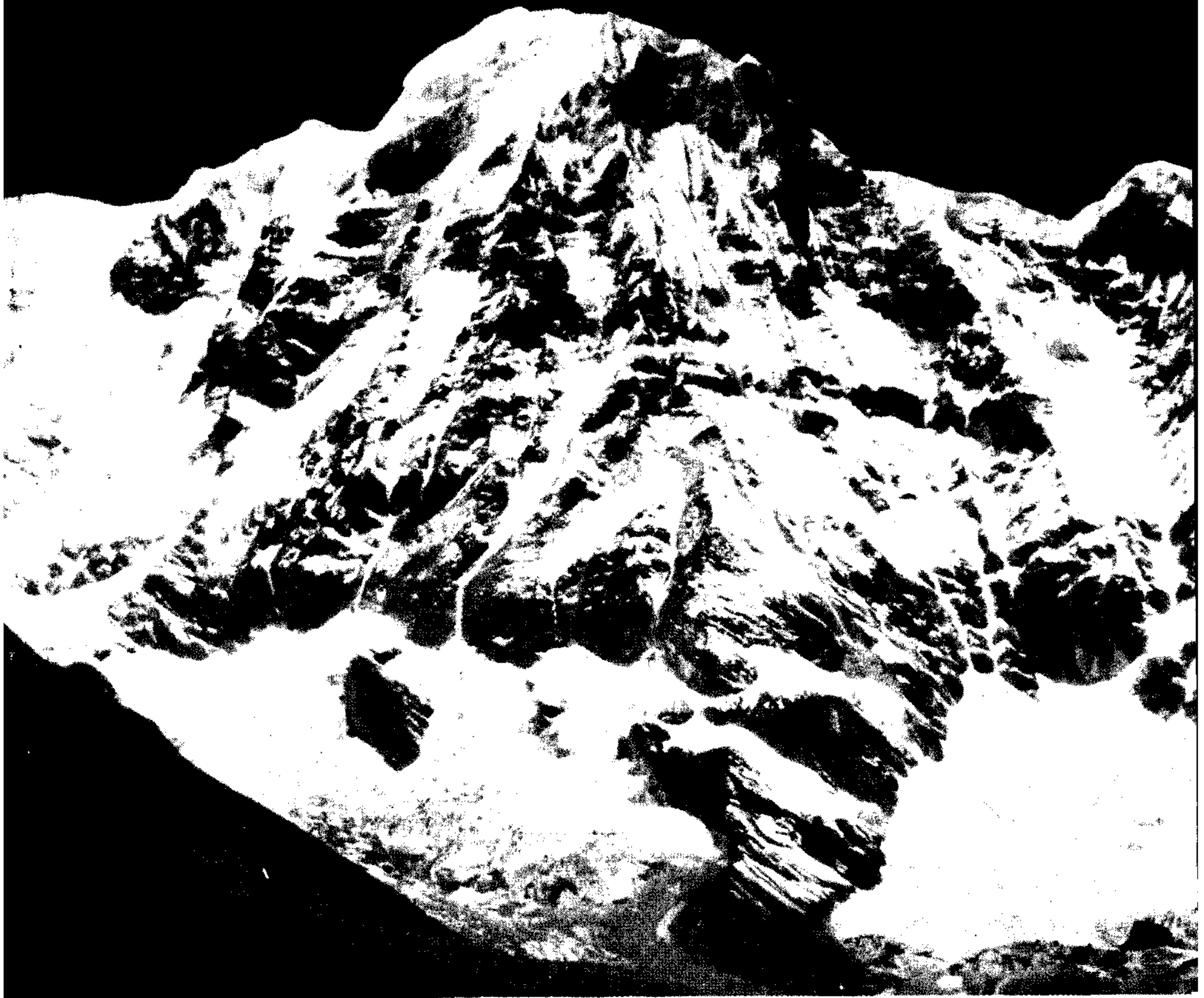


Prabuddha Bharata

or Awakened India



VOL 97 AUGUST 1992



ISSN 0032-6178



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Dt. Pithoragarh 262 524, U.P.

Publication Office

5 Dehi Entally Road
Calcutta 700 014
Phone 44-0898



Rates of Subscription
(inclusive of postage)

	Annual	Life (30 years)
India	Rs. 30	Rs. 500
Sri Lanka & Bangladesh	Rs. 120	Rs. 2000
U.S.A. & Canada		
Surface Mail	\$ 20	\$ 300
Air Mail	\$ 35	\$ 600
Other Countries		
Surface Mail	£ 15	£ 225
Air Mail	£ 25	£ 375

Cover: Annapurna Peak,
Nepal

Prabuddha Bharata

A Monthly Journal of the
Ramakrishna Order

Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

AUGUST 1992

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Arise! Awake!
And stop not till the Goal is reached.

Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 97

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No. 8

Divine Wisdom

घृतात्परं मण्डमिवातिसूक्ष्मं ज्ञात्वा शिवं सर्वभूतेषु गूढम् ।
विश्वस्वैकं परिवेष्टितारं ज्ञात्वा देवं मुच्यते सर्वपाशैः ॥

By knowing Him, the Auspicious, hidden in all beings like the film exceedingly fine that rises out of clarified butter, the one Embracer of the universe, by knowing God one is released from all fetters.

एष देवो विश्वकर्मा महात्मा सदा जनानं हृदये
सन्निविष्टः ।

हृदा मनीषा मनसाऽभिक्लृप्तो य एतद्विदुरमृतास्ते
भवन्ति ॥

That God, the Maker of all things, the Great Self, ever seated in the heart of creatures, is framed by the heart, by the thought, by the mind, they who know that become immortal.

यदा तमस्तन्न दिवा न रात्रिर्न सन्न चासच्छिव
एव केवलः ।

तदक्षरं तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं प्रज्ञा च तस्मात् प्रसृता

पुराणी ॥

When there is no darkness, then there is neither day nor night, neither being nor non-being, only the auspicious one alone. That is the imperishable, the adorable light of Savitṛ and the ancient wisdom proceeded from that.

नैनमूर्ध्वं न तिर्यञ्चं न मध्ये परिजगमत् ।
न तस्य प्रतिमा अस्ति यस्म नाम महद् यशः ॥

Not above, not across, not in the middle, nor has anyone grasped Him. There is no likeness of Him whose name is great glory.

नन्दृशे तिष्ठति रूपमस्य न चक्षुषा पश्यति कश्चनैनम् ।
हृदा हृदिस्थं मनसा य एवमेवं विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्ति ॥

His form is not to be seen ; no one sees Him with the eye. Those who through heart and mind know Him as abiding in the heart become immortal.

Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad

Beware of Your Thoughts—I

Thought is a force. It not only shapes our lives but to a considerable extent influences the lives of others. Most of its workings are underneath the surface. In our busy life, we are unconscious of its powers. It is the motive power which drives the machine of body and senses. All our activities are preceded by thought. First man thinks and then he acts. An act is the outer manifestation of inner thought; therefore, thought controls all our actions. Where there is no thought, there will be no work. Accomplishment of great works needs great thoughts. We presume that most of our thoughts are private, as it were, held in a watertight compartment. But thought itself is a motion and it has distinct vibrations. These vibrations are non-local. Non-local means they are not confined to a thinker but go forth and spread like fine particles. They are unconfined to space and time, they live and travel far. The modern medical technology has uncovered fantastic facts about how thought affects the body. The pervasive effect of cheerfulness or depression on all beings is self-evident.

Explaining the power of thought, Swami Abhedananda cites an interesting incident: "An experiment was made upon a healthy young man who was going to his office in the morning. Six of his friends put their heads together to give a suggestion to his mind, without letting him know that they were doing it. As he started out of his home, one of his friends, who was standing at the street corner, looked at him and said: 'How do you do? You look very sick; what is the matter with you? How strange you look today! Are you sick?'

The young man replied, 'No, I am very well; I have no trouble with me. I am all right.' ...Thus, six friends held him up at different stations on his way to the office, and they all said the same thing. Then it got in his nerves. The young man went to his office and said to himself: 'I do not feel very well now. What is the matter with me? All my friends say I am sick, I must be sick. After a few hours he began to feel the effect and was convinced that he was sick with high fever. He stayed in bed and called in a doctor. The doctor came, but the man suffered for a time from the effect of these suggestions. Next day it was explained to him that it was all a joke.'¹ The use of placebos instead of real drugs works wonders in many cases. Either positive or negative thought sometimes works miracles on the human body and mind. Even plants and animals respond to the power of thoughts.

In day to day life it is common experience that the presence of some persons cause inexplicable feelings of repulsion. On the contrary, some attract us toward them. Though these two categories of persons may be utter strangers to us, yet we feel for them a mysterious liking or disliking. The reason behind such occurrences is that an evil person or a hypocrite is surrounded by inimical vibrations—the result of his unhealthy thoughts. A good person, an honest man, on the other hand, radiates beneficial and friendly vibrations.

¹. Swami Abhedananda, *Science of Psychic Phenomena* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 1966).

Every person is to some degree sensitive to these thought vibrations in others, and is vaguely aware of the dominant traits of their character, either good or bad. For the same reason, we do not like to stay in some places for any length of time, while to some other places we are drawn again and again. Places too, have their pure and impure psychic environments which directly act upon our minds either positively or negatively. A place becomes holy or unholy, depending on the thought currents of the people who inhabit it.

Brightly lit markets, palatial buildings or swank mansions neither soothe the nerves nor bring one peace and tranquillity. The reason is obvious. But on the contrary, the semi-dark cave or cell of a holy man, or even the home of an unpretentious devotee of the Lord, fills one's heart with peace and bliss. Thoughts are powerful enough to spawn a sea of change in our environment. Our thoughts change the environment and it in turn acts upon us. Thought, therefore, is a potent instrument, like nuclear energy; either we can use it for the welfare of human beings, or misuse it to bring about mass destruction. Swami Vivekananda gave a lucid rationale behind the existence of temples and churches:

Every day of our lives we throw out a mass of good or evil, and everywhere we go the atmosphere is full of these materials. That is how there came to the human mind, unconsciously, the idea of building temples and churches. Why should man build churches in which to worship God? Why not worship Him anywhere? Even if he did not know the reason, man found that the place where people worshipped God became full of *tanmatras* (psychic impression). Every day people go there, and the more they go the holier they get, and the holier the place

becomes. If any man who has not much *sattva* in him goes there, the place will influence him and arouse his *sattva* quality. Here, therefore, is the significance of all temples and holy places, but you must remember that their holiness depends on holy people congregating there.²

This is the rationale behind all sacred places and shrines where commonly people come in large numbers to spend some time in that purifying atmosphere. A place becomes sanctified by the vibrations of pure thoughts of many persons, or it becomes holy where a great saint lived and touched the feet of God. The power and influence of pure thoughts do not vanish with time, but even after centuries a place associated with a great saint exerts its immense divine influence and infuses into the hearts of visitors, sublime thoughts and peace. The places sanctified by the Buddha, Christ, Nanaka, Chaitanya, Sri Ramakrishna and Sarada Devi, still draw millions and kindle in their hearts devotion and bliss. Ironically, man forgets that it is he who makes a place holy or unholy.

Casting further illumination on the subject, Swamiji continues:

The difficulty with man is that he forgets the original meaning, and puts the cart before the horse. It was men who made these places holy, and then the effect became the cause and made men holy. If the wicked only were to go there, it would become as bad as any other place. It is not the building, but the people that make a church, and that is what we always forget. That is why sages and holy persons, who have much of this *Sattva*

2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. I, page 252.

quality, can send it out and exert a tremendous influence day and night on their surroundings. A man may become so pure that his purity will become tangible. Whosoever comes in contact with him becomes pure.³

There are a large number of documented instances where in the presence of a saint even ferocious animals became docile and savages became gentle. None dares to harm a pure person or deceive an honest man. The sattvic vibrations emanating from these persons are so strong that dishonesty, untruth and violence tremble to face them. The company of such people is joyous and elevating. A few minutes talk with them unburdens a great load of trouble and agony from the heart. Their influence is cathartic. Blessed is that society in which there are more people with noble thoughts and high ideals. Flooding the markets and individual homes with high-tech gadgetry is not the hallmark of progress in civilization, but the real measure lies in the capability the country has in producing more and more human beings with pure character and noble mind. Everywhere nowadays people raise a huge cry about the steady decline of moral and ethical standards and crashing values. But what is society if not a collection of individuals?—we are those persons! We create the society and environment outside as we are inside. Have we looked into our own interior? Have we examined our vacuous and perfidious thoughts? The external society is nothing but the reflected internal mental life of man. If we are sending out every minute of our existence a mass of selfish, harmful, inimical thoughts and behold our society as degenerate and violent, upon whom are we to lay the blame? If the mind of every man is a battleground of selfish desires, greed, and

malice, how can the outside atmosphere be different from this?

The important thing to remember is that out thoughts good or evil, do not remain confined within our heads, however we try. Once they have taken shape they spread out like particles into the outer space, creating waves and ripples. There they accumulate like condensed clouds and in their turn affect the minds of others. People become disgusted or horrified at the mere mention of the names of Hitler, Stalin and other ruthless dictators. But it is undeniable that they were the creation of the collective mass-thought of humanity. The sea of destructive thoughts accumulated over the centuries found their expression in these despots. Mere thoughts are like tiny wavelets that at last combine into one giant wave that stands up and swallows up the rest. The same logic holds good in the descent of messengers of God like Buddha, Christ, and Sri Ramakrishna. The pious thoughts and prayers of the race found expression in the forms of these divine personalities. The world was flooded with love and light by their advent. It is an inexorable law that what we want we get. And what we desire depends entirely on our thoughts. If the world sees the rise of tyrants, people cannot simply absolve themselves from their secret share and desire in inviting such calamities on earth. These tyrants are the representatives of man's dark side, his evil thoughts. When people are truthful, righteous, peace loving and feel that they belong to the global family, surely they contribute to the fund of positive and auspicious thoughts that purify the atmosphere and make the world habitable. Generations born in such healthy, joyful environment inherit these qualities and add their own share to enrich it. That is the real cultural evolution. From savage to discriminating man, and then to man of kindness and love, and finally to

3. *Ibid.*

man divine. All beings are here on this planet to unfold that latent cosmic Intelligence.

Living beings have a kind of aura about them—the bio-luminescence. This aura changes its colours, becomes dim or bright according to one's thought patterns. Seers and a few spiritually gifted detect easily these auras that surround people. It is a simple matter for them to know who is deceitful or wicked, or a good person. Ordinary people, though not having a developed ability to discern the spiritual auras of other people, do occasionally have the flash of intuition enabling them to see into others' character. In the lives of Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi, on the other hand, we find ample evidence of this power working. The Master could at a glance read the inner character of others, within seconds, like an open book. He said, "From the hand I can tell whether a person is deceitful or guileless. ...Whether a person is good or bad can also be known from the way he walks."⁴ Greatly sensitive as he was to the environment around him, he would experience excruciating pain whenever a person of uncertain character touched him. Sarada Devi, too, receiving the salutations of all and sundry who came to her, paying their homage by touching her feet, used to feel a burning sensation when worldly minded people came. This was due to the unsurpassed purity of the Master and Holy Mother. One day Swami Brahmananda, a direct disciple, when he was young, coming to meet Sri Ramakrishna, the latter asked him why there was a shadow of darkness over his face. Was it the result of some wrong he had committed? The disciple was agape in wonder. He could not remem-

ber to have done anything wrong. But after quite a long cogitation he recollected he had told a lie in fun. Then Sri Ramakrishna cautioned him not to tell a lie even in joke.

In 1939 in Krasndar City, South Russia, the husband and wife team, Semyon and Valentina Kirlian, provided scientific proof with their invention of high-frequency photography, the existence of auras around living beings. A leaf torn from a tree, when placed in a field of high frequency current, revealed a myriad dots of energy. A human hand placed in the high-frequency field looked like the Milky Way on a starry night. Multi-coloured flares lit up, then flashes and sparks. It looked like a fire works display. They saw in living things the signals of the inner state of the organism reflected in the brightness, dimness, and colour of the flares. They found these 'light hieroglyphics' were the written records of the inner-life activities of a human being. They also detected that emotions, illness, worries, and thoughts changed the coloured signals of the flares. All these make up distinctive imprints on the form of the aura. The Kirlian technique was successfully demonstrated in 1972 at Manhattan's United Engineering Centre by two scientists. The Kirlian photos also showed that some sort of energy flow from physic healers into the bodies of their patients.

Human thoughts not only affect human beings, but other living things as well. Dr. Miller and the Spindrift researchers of Salem, (Oregon), U.S.A. have demonstrated through their experiments that seeds planted, irradiated with human good will and blessings showed eighty-four percent faster growth than the seeds planted without such human treatment of prayers and good will.

4. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) pp. 596-97.

"In one test, rye seeds were divided into two groups of equal number. They were

placed in a shallow container filled with vermiculite, a light, soil-like substance commonly used by gardeners. A string was placed down the middle of the container, dividing the seeds into sides A and B. The seeds on one side were prayed for and the others were not. After the seeds had grown, the slender rye shoots were counted. Results consistently indicated that there were more rye shoots in the 'treated' (prayed for) side than in the control side. This simple test repeated many times with many practitioners, indicated that the effect of thought on living organisms outside the human body was significant, quantifiable, and reproducible; and that the effects of human consciousness are not confined to the brain and body."⁵ Experiments were also conducted with striking success on unhealthy seeds, and the result showed that human thought exerted a positive effect on them. Paul Hawken in his book *Findhorn* describes about a small Scottish community in the north of Scotland where people talk to plants with amazing results. This community transformed a rubbish dump into a Garden of Eden.

Plants are very sensitive and their high sensitivity is much superior to human senses. Cleen Backster, the foremost lie-detector of America, in 1966, startled the world of Science by a repeatedly successful experiment in lie-detection which he made with a plant, *Dracaena Massagena*. In the experiment the plant was connected with a galvanometer. A galvanometer's needle moves when a weak electric current passes through the body of the machine. The needle or pen of the galvanometer which was connected to the plant traced various kinds of curves in response to the mental changes, or the slightest surge of

emotion in the person standing in front of the plant. The plant showed its reactions like a human being. It reacted when a man with a lighted matchstick approached to burn it, or when a ferocious dog suddenly appeared in the room, or when there was an entrance of a person who did not wish it well. ...The plant even displayed memory by identifying from a distance a certain culprit who did something wrong in its presence.⁶

Thought is not confined to one's own brain and body. It travels far and acts upon whatever it is directed and projected. Our good wishes, sincere prayers, otherwise, have no significance. The same truth holds good that the evil thoughts born out of ill-will do sufficient harm to others. Thoughts of greed, hatred, envy, are terrible—they are vicious forces. But it is also the law of nature that whatever one sends out comes back to him with redoubled energy. Sinful thoughts, after polluting the atmosphere, come back to the sender with great force, which he cannot escape. A wicked person not only harms himself, but invites calamity on himself. The evil forces let loose by a person come back to him with all vehemence and destroy him. Therefore, in English we use the expressions, 'to burn with anger, hatred, or jealousy'. Auspicious, compassionate and loving thoughts sent out for the good of others, after purifying the atmosphere, come back to the sender. The power of good packed in them suffuse the sender with peace and joy and protect him from the invisible inimical forces that are lurking in the atmosphere. Therefore Swamiji said, "Every thought of love sent out by us is sure to awaken a thought of love in res-

(Continued on page 333)

5. Larry Dossey, *Recovering The Soul* (New York: Bantam Books, 1989) page 56.

6. Swami Jitatmananda, "Holistic Science and Vedanta", Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Bombay, 1991, pages 5 & 6.

Memoirs of Swami Brahmananda

SWAMI SARADESHANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

I heard from Doctor Maharaj (Swami Purnananda) of the Udbodhan (Mother's house), about his once having the privilege of staying with Swami Brahmananda at Sashi Niketan in Puri. We heard from him that the mind of Maharaj always used to soar very high at that time. He related the following:

“On one full moon night the sky was exceedingly clear. On all the sides the beautiful smiling moonlight shone down. According to Maharaj's directions his bed was spread in the courtyard at night. As Maharaj was lying there on the bed he was talking and we were all listening to him. The night grew deeper as the conversation continued. We were feeling sleepy. Suddenly the memory of Sri Chaitanya Deva and his stay at the Nilachal came to the mind of Maharaj. Then in a sweet voice he began to tell with intense feeling: ‘In this kind of beautiful full moonlit night, Mahaprabhu could never sleep. Thinking of his separation from God, he would feel great restlessness and longing, and he would pass the whole night thus restlessly. “I am not blessed with the vision of Sri Krishna”—lamenting in this way and calling the Lord, night would pass into dawn.’ Describing this painful separation from God, now Maharaj himself also developed this kind of pain. He also started tossing on the bed and repeating again and again, “He could not sleep on this kind of beautiful night and

used to spend it in conversing on Krishna, and should we misuse the night by sleeping? Fie unto us!” Swami Purnanandaji, while recollecting Maharaj's ecstatic condition said: “Because of his extraordinary feelings our eyes also became free from drowsiness. Amazingly, we also spent the whole night without any sleep, sitting by the side of Maharaj.”

Recalling gratefully the affection and grace of Maharaj towards him, Purnanandaji said, “I was then a medical student. I wished to have the grace of Sri Sri Thakur in my mind. After coming to know of the arrival of Maharaj at Balaram Mandira, I went there and expressed my desire to see him. Maharaj also affectionately asked about my well being and asked me to sit down there. But after I sat down he did never say anything much to me. Sitting gravely, sometimes he used to be smoking the hubble bubble and sometimes not, though he retained the pipe in his hand. Now and then he would leave me sitting there and stroll on the veranda. When a visitor would come Maharaj would talk with him. After awhile when I wanted to take leave of him he said to me, ‘Just sit and wait a little bit more.’ I also would continue for sometime more in the hope of hearing something from him. But he never spoke. If I would show my eagerness he would say, ‘Aj thak, arek din habe—Not today, let it go till another day.’ In this way, waiting up to evening on several days, disheartened I used to depart. I even felt like giving up the whole venture as hopeless. But I could not hold myself back from

visiting him too! One day, nearly two hours were thus spent sitting without the silence being broken. So many thoughts were coming to my mind. It was as if time had come to a standstill. I would just stare at Maharaj when he would be in the room, or sometimes I would read a page from a book over and over if there happened to be any book nearby. When after passing the time in this way and reaching the point of almost unbearable restlessness, Maharaj's sweet and pleasing voice would be heard: 'Abar eso—Come again!' and my mind would be filled with bliss. Whenever an opportunity arose, I would earnestly ask Maharaj about what my duties were, in this way hoping to get some instruction from him, but every day he would reply, 'Aj thak, arek din habe!—Wait now, let it be for some other day!' After carrying on in this way for nearly two years, Maharaj bestowed his grace on me and my earnest desire was fulfilled."

Remembering the affection of Maharaj, Doctor Maharaj used to say with extreme humility and gratitude, "In order to pacify our disturbed minds and to increase our spirit of forbearance, Maharaj did so many such things without letting us know. Now we have come to realize that very well."

Regarding initiation by Swami Brahmananda, we heard another story also from Doctor Maharaj. Maharaj told him to perform at least 10,000 Japa every evening. In case there should be any mistake in counting the beads of the rosary he would have to start afresh, otherwise the results of Japa would be devoured by demons. According to the directions of Maharaj, Doctor Maharaj used to count the beads every day with great earnestness and concentration. But on some days when he missed the number, again he would start counting his beads from the beginning. On some occa-

sions when the prescribed numbers were about to be reached he confused the counting. So he would come very late in the dining hall to take his food. After recurrence of this kind of delay again and again all became annoyed. Holy Mother also was staying at the Udbodhan at this time. One day she called him and asked, "My child, why do you delay in attending your dinner?" His heart was softened by the affectionate and motherly words of Holy Mother. He started weeping. After being consoled by Mother, he became a bit pacified and expressed his fear that the demons would eat away the effects of Japa unless the count was the full 10,000 as directed by Maharaj. "Oh, Rakhal told you so?—that the results of your Japa will be devoured by demons?" Then reassuringly she told him, "My child, in order to remove the disturbances for your attaining stability and concentration of mind, Rakhal gave you such a prescription. I tell you, from now onwards you should come for your dinner as soon as the bell rings. There will be no harm in your doing so. After being thus assured by Holy Mother, Doctor Maharaj regained his confidence and since then all disturbance and difficulty subsided for him as he followed her instructions.

We came to know from an elder sadhu that the signs of sanctifying grace and attractive powers were seen in Maharaj since his tour in the Deccan and upon his taking up the work of expansion of the Sangha and giving spiritual initiations. Before this he used always to keep himself so concealed that nobody could recognize the divinity present in his personality.

I never had the good fortune to observe and understand Maharaj's extramundane high spiritual states of ecstasy and *bhāva*, but some of his moods that greatly impressed my mind and that still shine in my memory I shall try to present a glimpse here.

During the day, at different times, Maharaj appeared to bear special features in his eyes, face, tone of voice, way of talking, and even in the colour of his feet. I can now comprehend that those occurred as a result of the influence of the divine moods in his heart. But, as a matter of fact, it required an unusual ability to understand such high spiritual states of that great soul.

It was at eight or nine one morning when Maharaj went out for a walk along the bank of the Ganga inside the Math. Descending from the first floor of the monks quarters, Maharaj approached Swamiji's Temple along with two or three of his attendants. Having gone a little ahead, he was smiling as he stood facing the Ganga. One of the attendants held a coloured Rangoon umbrella over his head. Maharaj wore a cloth and a *chaddar* (wrapper) of ochre colour which looked very bright. I was then coming from Swamiji's temple towards the Math buildings. From a distance the heart warming sight of Maharaj drew my attention. Fascinated by the wonderful sight which met my eyes I stood enjoying it to my heart's content. It appeared to me that he was not a man of this world. The bright glow of his body shone through the ochre garb. His face was illumined with a soft smile. Even today the joy and beauty of that divine form comes to my vision.

Maharaj once was staying at Balaram Mandir. Reading from The *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* was being held in the evenings in the upstairs hall. One day just before evening we went there. Harihar Maharaj (Swami Vasudevananda) was then reading the book. The room was full. Maharaj was pacing from one end to the other of the adjoining veranda by himself. A glance at him revealed that his mind was soaring high on a spiritual plane far above the world. I was wonderstruck to find him in

that state. I asked myself: Is this behaviour akin to that of *Ātman* whose nature is described as lion-like? Many others were gazing with unwinking eyes at Maharaj, who seemed completely unaware of his surroundings.

On many occasions I saw him gazing towards the Ganga as though beholding a vision of the goddess. But a closer observation would reveal that the focus of his mind was completely indrawn and never outward. That very look of his captivated our heart and soul. Was this sight the same as Sri Ramakrishna described as the yogi's inward look, like the eyes of a bird hatching her eggs?

Sometimes while talking, Maharaj's voice would sound so sweet and affectionate that the listener's heart would be filled with peace and calm. We could then realize to some extent the truth of the statement in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, "Thy words are a great solace to the strife-torn life in the world." An elderly brāhmin from Bhawani-pur, a lawyer by profession, was a great favourite of Maharaj. On holidays he used to frequent the Math quite often. He used to spend a long time in Japam and meditation. One day, sitting at the feet of Maharaj, he was relating to Maharaj his experience of spiritual fervour. Maharaj encouraged him to proceed further saying, "This joy too is a lower state; there are higher states too. And that Bliss can never be expressed in words."

Revered Maharaj was about to proceed to Balaram Mandir from Belur Math. A motor car was waiting for him in the courtyard. Sadhus and brahmachārins offered their pranams when he came down and stood in the shade of the mango tree near the steps to the shrine. Khoka Maharaj (Swami Subodhananda) quickly appeared

there and bowing down his head at the feet of Maharaj smilingly requested him, "Please return here as soon as possible." Without any reply Maharaj smiled and entered the car which soon left. The mart of joy that prevailed as long as Maharaj was present at the Math faded.

From this time sorrow began to mount day by day for word came from Calcutta that Maharaj had become very ill with an attack of cholera. When anyone going from the Math to Calcutta brought back favourable news of Maharaj's condition, hope was infused in everybody's mind. But again, adverse news crept in to weigh down hope. The fount of joy at Belur Math became stilled, as if a mantel of darkness was covering everything, even during the day. Special worship and *swastyayana* rites, to avert calamity and secure welfare were offered, and special treatment and nursing care was taken up for Maharaj. The sadhus and devotees poured their hearts into all the efforts to bring him around.

Even during this critical illness the transcendental divine moods of Maharaj and his words imparted a thrill of divine joy to the attendants. One day the King of Vrajadham, Sri Shyamasundara (Sri Krishna) Himself, the personified form of Consciousness Absolute, appeared and took away His Eternal Companion, the *Rākhālrāj*, by the

hand to His own Abode. The mortal remains of Maharaj were left on earth. His ever-pure body was brought to the Math where worship was offered. *Āratrikam*, the waving of lights and flowers, were offered over the pure body which was kept facing the shrine. The divine lustre of Maharaj's face at the time of his departure to the Divine Abode remained unaffected even after his arrival at the Math. Hearing the sad news a stream of grief stricken devotees poured into the Math grounds. The extraordinary divine beauty of Maharaj's face helped to assuage the anguish in their hearts to a great extent.

My memory is weak. Many events have slipped away. But whenever I recollect the graceful form of Sri Maharaj my heart swells up with great joy. In that delightful state of my mind, many glimpses, talks, and moments often come alive. I do not know whether my pen has been able to depict the character of that great spiritual personality. But even if a little glimpse of Sri Maharaj has been revealed through my writing I shall consider my efforts to have been successful. "The great teacher and leader of mankind, Brahmananda, who is dancing and playing with Sri Krishna on the lotus, in full blossom, floating on the river of Jnāna,—to him I offer my salutations."

(concluded)

Mata Gujri Ji

JASBIR KAUR AHUJA

The annals of Sikh history resonate with chivalry, valour, and great sacrifices. Among the great women was Mata Gujri Ji. Her story is again here recounted. The author, who lives in Patiala, Punjab, has translated many works of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature into Punjabi.

Mata Gujri was a unique woman in the history of India who sacrificed her husband, her son, and her four grandsons so that people would be free to worship the Gods of their own choice unfettered by the dictates of the fanatic Mughal ruler of the time, Aurangzeb. Mata Gujri had a supreme distinction of being the wife of Guru Tegh Bahadur, whose precious life was sacrificed for the cause of Dharma.

The history of India has been greatly influenced by the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Guru Tegh Bahadur was beheaded at Chandni Chowk in Delhi on November 11, 1675 because he protected the frontal marks and sacred thread of the Hindus, though he himself did not believe in them. He gave this problem a universal colour, holding that every one has a right to worship according to the religion of one's own choice. On the place where his body was cremated, stands the Gurdwara Rakabganj Sahib. Bhai Jaitaji, a devotee, reached Kiratpur with the Guru's head—a sacred possession!

On seeing this tragedy, Mata Gujriji's eyes were filled with tears. She quietly bowed before her husband's head and silently pondered over the thought, "You are excellent in your sacrifice. Please bless so that we too come up to the mark!"

Gujri was born in 1627 in Kartarpur, Jalandhar District of Punjab. Guru Tegh Bahadur was destined to marry Gujri, a

daughter of Shri Lal Chand and Smt. Kishan Kaur. The literal meaning of Gujri's name is 'one who gives comfort to others'. Their marriage was solemnised in Kartarpur. They both were to play significant roles in shaping the history of India. After the death of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, with his mother Nanaki and wife Gujri, went to live at Bakala.

After their marriage for the next twenty years of his life, Guru Tegh Bahadur lived in perfect isolation. He used to sit in a cell for his prayers to the Almighty. Gujri helped him in every way. It was a period of supreme Tapasya for both of them. Referring to this period of their prayers, Guru Gobind Singh, the son, writes in his autobiography, *The Bachitra Natak*:

"That in his previous life, he (Guru Govind Singh) did penance on sapat-sring mountain near Hemkunt—And because of his Tapasya, his spirit was united with the Supreme Being. His future parents, namely Guru Tegh Bahadur and Mata Gujri ji, had meditated on the name of the Lord for a long period with great devotion. The Supreme Lord was pleased with their worship and granted them a boon. And this boon is a son of the stature of Gobind Rai (later Guru Gobind Singh) who moulded the destiny of India."

Bounties of God are immeasurable. A Muslim poet says: "Had Guru Gobind Singh not been there, there wouldn't have

been even a single Hindu! Aurangzeb, the cruel emperor must have got butchered all the Hindus or got them converted to Islam. No other religion would have survived in India."

Guru Gobind Singh himself further tells us in his autobiography:

"The divine Guru sent me for religion's sake on this account I have come into the world—to extend the faith everywhere, seize and destroy the evil and the sinful. Understand this, ye holy men, in your souls. I assumed birth for this purpose of spreading the faith, saving the saints and to uproot all the tyrants."

The new history was evolving itself on the ashes of the tyrannical rulers. Now, it was the time for Guru Gobind Singh to play his grand role, assigned by the Almighty, on this huge stage of the world. The ruler was no other than the same Aurangzeb, who got Guru Tegh Bahadur brutally beheaded in Delhi.

Zafarnama is a letter of victory, written by Guru Gobind Singh to Aurangzeb. In fact, the Guru was given assurance by the officials of the Mughal Samrat that if they vacated the fort of Anandpur, the Guru and his people would not be harmed. On the insistence of the devotees, the Guru agreed to leave the fort, though reluctantly. When the Guru left the fort thereafter, the army forces fell upon him on the way. All their written vows were blown to the winds. On reaching the flooded Sirsa, a complete confusion was caused. The Guru's mother, Mata Gujri, with her two young grandsons (sons of Guru Gobind Singh), Zorawar Singh, aged eight years, and Fateh Singh, six years, went towards one side. And the Guru himself with his other two elder sons, Ajit Singh, Jughar Singh, and his forty Sikhs went towards another, and finally reached Chamkaur Sahib (Ropar District

of Punjab). Mata Gujri with her two younger grandsons was escorted by their personal cook, Gangu, but in the meanwhile they lost sight of the Guru.

Gangu had been working in the Guru's kitchen since his childhood. On seeing the immense wealth with Mataji, an evil thought arose in his mind. He thought it would be an easy thing to steal the jewellery which Mata Gujriji had, and he would enjoy the rest of his life in ease and comfort. Exhausted and weak, the children were lying asleep, when Gangu cried at the top of his voice, "Thief! Thief!" Mata Gujriji still awake, was frightened over the future of her little ones. Mataji told Gangu, "Do not shout. None has come here. If you want the jewellery I would be happy to give it to you as you are our old servant. It is better if it falls into your hands instead of going to the Mughals." Gangu pretended that he had been insulted and accused by Mataji of ingratitude. He not only took possession of the whole jewellery, but betrayed them to the ruler of Sirhind province.

All the three soon found themselves kept in a cold tower for the night. The floor was hard and there was no bedding. Cold winds had a devil's dance in the open tower. There was no sleep for them, instead they prayed to the Almighty. The next morning the two Sahibzadas, grandsons of Mata Gujri, were taken before the ruler of the province. Mataji had no choice but to send them, but she blessed them and told them to abide by the ideals for which their brave father stood and fought for.

The ruler's court was full to its capacity. On reaching there the young lions roared, "*Wahe Guruji ka Khalsa, Wahe Guruji ki Fateh!*" That is, "The Khalsa belongs to God, Victory to God!" They were advised by the courtiers to bow before the governor,

but they boldly refused saying, "We bow to God only, and not to the worldly lords." The ruler felt insulted and burned with anger. But neither his anger nor his threats could change their minds. They refused to accept Islam either, so they were entombed alive in a brick wall. After their ruthless execution, Todar Mal, a devotee, went to grandmother Gujriji and conveyed to her the tragic news with tears in his eyes. Hearing it she collapsed and left for her heavenly abode. It was the ill-fated day of 27th December 1704. Before her death she said her prayers to God. She also said that the children were immortalised by their martyrdom, but Sirhind would have to pay. Soon her prophecy came true when Banda Bahadur razed Sirhind to the ground. Todar Mal performed the last rites of the children and Mata Gujriji at a place where now

Gurdwara Jyoti Sarup at Fatehgarh Sahib is situated near Sirhind.

Such a great woman was Mata Gujriji, who gave birth to a son like Guru Gobind Singh, by whom the destiny of India took a new turn. Such a mother alone can command respect as has been described by the poet Tulsidas, the author of the great epic, *The Ramayana*. He says: "That the mother should give birth either to a benefactor or the brave! Else, she should remain barren; and why lose her splendour?"

It is said that there is always a woman behind a great event. And Mata Gujriji has raised the status of Indian womanhood. She played a unique role. When we think of her perseverance and supreme sacrifices, we cannot but bow our heads in reverence to her memory.

BEWARE OF YOUR THOUGHTS—I

(Continued from page 326)

ponse; so too with every unloving thought." Evil thoughts attract their own kind hovering in the universe. Thoughts of love and kindness draw the same thoughts from the atmosphere. It is an exercise in futility if we only think of our welfare and happiness and do not care a fig for others. When we feel for the good of the many, our own good is vouchsafed by a natural law.

"One can live in isolation disconnected from the rest" is a myth. All living beings are interconnected and interdependent. According to Advaita, life is one, the multiplicity we see is illusion. When a person has kind thoughts and a sincere prayer for others in his heart, he is helping himself, unknowingly. The less and less one thinks of himself, the more and more happy he

will be. This is the secret of nature. He who understands it, on him are the blessings. Separation from the whole brings all sufferings, thoughts of hatred, fear, and jealousy. "You will find at last," teaches Swamiji, "that the easiest way to make ourselves healthy is to see others are healthy, and the easiest way to make ourselves happy is to see others are happy".⁷ We have no other way, if we want to escape from the destructive forces of the universe, but to send good thoughts for the well being of the whole of humanity. Twentieth century science has proved that the universe is based upon non-local and holistic connections.

7. Complete Works, Vol. I, page 146.

The Cult of The Buddhist Tantra

DR. AMULYA MOHAPATRA

The precepts and practice of Buddhist Tantras, especially of Tibet, has received a fair amount of popular attention in recent years all over the world. The author teaches Philosophy at D.A.V. College, Koraput in Orissa.

The Buddhist Tantrism essentially represents a very important position during the lifetime of Buddha. Buddha recognised the *iddhis* or supernatural powers and mentioned four *iddhipadas*¹ conducive to the attainment of supernatural and mystic powers. He himself practised the *asphanaka-yoga* (yoga of psychic expansion) when he was in search of the eternal Truth. Some of the disciples of Buddha also obtained miraculous powers by the practice of Tantra. Although Buddha himself was against all the miraculous powers, when his disciples made request stating that the path of Buddhism was very difficult to follow, he ultimately gave *mantra* (powerful mystic syllables) to persons who aspired for Truth but yet continued their lives amidst worldly affairs. But the introduction of the mystic *mantra* produced a rift in the Buddhist Order and subsequently the Mahāyāna and later the Vajrayāna schools developed.

Buddhist mysticism assumed three different forms, viz. *Vajrayāna*, *Sahajayāna* and *Kālacakrayāna*, and had the general design of *Mantrayāna*. *Vajrayāna* and *Sahajayāna* represented two aspects of the same mysticism, the first dealing with mystic ritualism of a more esoteric nature, and the second laying more stress on the esoteric aspect. The first attaches importance to *mantra*, *mudrā* and *maṇḍala* and maintains that

their practice is necessary for the awakening of psychic energy (*śakti*). The word for *śakti* in these schools is *Prajñā*, which is principle, the male being *Vajra*. The *Sahajayāna* is said to have been developed by a set of mystics called *Siddhas*, who are traditionally believed to have been eighty-four in number.²

The Vajrayāna.

Most of the Tantric Buddhism is composed by the *Vajrayānist* teachings. In Vajrayana the word 'thunder-bolt' is interpreted as *sunyata*, which means the 'firmness' and it cannot be soaked, pierced, cut or burnt in any way. It is like the indestructible *ātma* (soul) of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. The *Vajrayānists* preached the Tantric tenets and doctrines of *Mantrayāna*, a particular form of *Mahāyāna*, in which the thought of the *mantras* (charms) *mudrās* (mystic signs) and *maṇḍalas* (circles of deities) dominate.

It was called *Vajrayāna* because *śūnya* of the *Vajrayāna* is something different from the *śūnya* of the *Madhyamika* (nihilists) or the *Vijñānavādins* (idealists) because it includes the three elements *śūnyā* (reality), *vijñāna* (consciousness) and *mahāsukha* (great bliss).³

1. *Chando* (will), *Vīriyam* (effort), *Cittam* (thought), and *Vimamsa* (investigation)—*Childer's R.C. Dictionary of Pali Language*, p. 157.

2. *The Cultural Heritage of India* Vol. IV (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1956) p. 220.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 220.

The *Vajrayāna* made many contributions to Buddhism and Buddhist culture in general. The Hindus were also impressed by its grandeur and were induced to accept some of the *Tantric* doctrines, dieties, *mantras*, *sādhanās*, etc. Not only did the *Vajrayāna* introduce element of Yoga into ordinary worship, but it also gave a regular system of *mantra* which could be used for all possible purposes, even by a householder. The *mantras* or mystic syllables constitute the backbone of *Vajrayāna* worship. The *Vajrayānist*s maintain that the *mantras* are endowed with great powers and can even confer Buddhahood or omniscience. The repetition of the *mantra* is, however, to be done with the greatest care; for instance, it should not be uttered either too quickly or too slowly. The mind at the time of repetition should be completely concentrated on the letters of the *mantra*, should be free from evil thought, and the *mantra* must not be repeated when the mind is agitated or tired.

The *Vajrayāna* deities are conceived as *śūnya* in their manifestations. The idea of images and their external manifestations of *śūnyatā* and the *bīja mantra* (a *mantra* in monosyllabic form) is central. The deity is worshipped in different forms for different purposes, as in the case of *Tārā*, the female deity who is worshipped as *Janguli Tārā*, *Dhanada Tārā*, *Shūla Tārā*, *Khandirvani Tārā*, *Mahattari Tārā*, *Varada Tārā*, *Maheśvarī*, *Ekajata Tārā*, and so on. Another deity named *Manjuśrī* who is worshipped as *Sthiracakra*, *Manjughośa*, *Arapakana*, *Vajranaṅga*, *Vadirat*, *Vadirāj*, and so on. Some other divinities are worshipped as *Prajñā-pāramitā*, *Viśvamātā*, *Mārīchī*, *Chundla*, *Bhukutī*, *Saraswati*, etc. The chief deity named *Avalokiteśvara* is known in various manifestations, namely *Sadakṣari*, *Lokeśvara*, *Lokanātha*, *Vajra-*

dharama, etc. All these deities are different forms of *Śakti*.⁴

In Buddhist *Tantras* the gods are represented as embracing their *śaktis* and enjoying the bliss of *mahāsukha*. The conception of *mahāsukha* (supreme bliss) came from the idea of *karuṇā* (compassion) and *śūnyatā* (voidness). When *karuṇā* and *śūnyatā* are joined together in union, a *yogi* is able to enjoy immense joy by controlling his senses and making himself purified both mentally and physically. This union introduced *Tantra* cult in Buddhism.⁵

The *Vajrayānist*s also developed the theory of five *Dhyāni-Buddhas*: *Vairochana*, *Akṣobhya*, *Ratnasambhava*, *Amogha-Amitāva*, and *Siddhi*, who are the presiding deities respectively over *rūpa* (matter), *vedana* (feeling), *saṃjñā* (conception), *saṃskāra* (experience), and *vijñāna* (consciousness). These are the stages of realization. These five *Dhyāni-Buddhas* and five *skandhas* are mentioned in the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* of *Vajrayāna*.

Dhyāni-Buddhas.

The *Dhyāni-Buddhas*, like the *skandhas*, were considered eternal, and they manifested themselves without passing through the intermediate stage of a *Buddhisattva*, or in other words, without depending on others for their origin. The *Guhyasamāja Tantra* gave each of the *Dhyāni-Buddhas* a *śakti* and mentioned their *sādhanā* (method of worship) in a magic circle. This introduction of the *Dhyāni-Buddhas* may be considered to be a landmark in the evolution of the *Tantrika* culture among the Buddhists. From the *Dhyāni-Buddhas* and their *saktis* arose their families of *Buddhisattavas* and *Buddhiśaktis*, which are the manifestations of a single power.

4. Bandyopadhyaya, P., *The Voice of Buddha* (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1988) p. 78.

5. *Ibid.* p. 75.

According to the conceptions of the *Guhyasamāja* school, we find in the *sangiti* that a single power called *kāya-vakcitta-vajradhara*, that is, the holder of the *Vajra*, consisting of the three elements: *kāya* (body), *vāc* (speech), and *citta* (mind), the embodiment of Buddha, manifests itself in the form of the five *Dhyāni-Buddhas*, their *śaktis*, and so on. That is to say, the five *Dhyāni-Buddhas* are nothing but the manifestations of one single power. This power is described as the embodiment of *śūnya* or *vajra* from which the name of the school *Vajrayāna* is derived. The power of *śūnya*, according to the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, is expressed by the three eternal things, namely: body, speech and consciousness, which are the three attributes of human beings.

We shall now turn to the views of the *Guhyasamāja* (sacred community) regarding the principles of deity-realization and the various experiences through which the *sādhakā* has to pass before the deity is realized. The *Guhyasamāja* calls this process *upāya* (means), which is recognized as of four kinds: *seva*, *upasādhanā*, *sādhanā*, and *mahāsādhanā*. *Seva* (worship) is subdivided into two, namely: *sāmānya* (ordinary) and *uttama* (excellent). Of these two, the *sāmānya seva* (ordinary worship) consists of four *vajras*: first, the conception of *śūnyatā*; second, its transformation into the form of the germ-syllable; third, its evolution in the form of a deity; and the fourth, the external representation of the deity. In the *uttama seva* (excellent worship) yoga, with its six limbs, should be employed. These six limbs are: *pratyahāra*, *dhyāna*, *prāṇāyāma*, *dhāraṇā*, *anusmṛti*, and *samādhi*.⁶

In the *Guhyasamāja* the *Dhyāni-Buddhas* are given a *mantra*, a colour, a *śakti*, a direction and a guardian of the gate. They are the progenitors of the five *kulas* or families of deities and men worshipping them were known as *kaulas*, and the process of worship was called *kulācāra*, or family conduct. These *Dhyāni-Buddhas* change themselves into the forms of *Buddhisattavas* and their female principles, who are responsible for creating everything found in existence.

Ten planes of spiritual progress in Buddhist *Tantra* are known as *Pramudita*, *Vimala*, *Prabhakari*, *Archismati*, *Sadhupati*, *Sudurjaya*, *Abhimukhi*, *Durṅama*, *Achala* and *Dharmamedhya*. In order to attain the said planes the worshipper is required to purify his mind, renounce all worldly desires, shun the sense of *ahamkāra* (egoism) and identify himself with his chosen deity.

Paths of Vajrayāna.

The *Vajrayāna* also gave rise to several later *Yānas* (paths) such as the *Sahajayāna*, *Kālacakrayāna* and *Mantrayāna*. We shall briefly observe here the *Tantric* aspects of these.

The *Sahajayāna*, *Kālacakrayāna*, *Mantrayāna* and *Vajrayāna* are the different parts of *Mahāyāna*. The philosophical background of these sects is supplied by the *Madhyamika* and *Yogācāra* system of philosophy. The *Sahajayāna* have adopted a very liberal and easy path to get liberation. They did not believe in restrictions regarding food or drink, and advocated *Śakti* worship. The *Sahajayāna* thus belonged to the *Yoga Tantra* class.

The *Kālacakrayāna* seems to be a later development of *Vajrayāna*. *Kālacakra* is a deity and an embodiment of *śūnyatā* and *karuṇā* (compassion), is embraced by the goddess *Prajñā*. The deity *Kālacakra*, like

6. *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. I, pp. 519-20.

many other *Vajrayāna* deities, is fierce in appearance and is embraced by the *śakti*, which shows that the *Yāna* is merely a branch of the *Vajrayāna* in its higher forms of *Tantras*. The central deity, as the name *Kālacakra* indicates, is the circle of time, and is surrounded by such minor deities.

The school called *Mantrayāna* or the 'spell vehicle' originated, according to Tibetan traditions, with Nāgārjuna, who is alleged to have received it from the celestial *Buddha Vairocana*, through the divine *Bodhisattava*, at the iron tower in southern India. The *Mantrayāna* concerns itself with *mantras* and *yantras* or magic circles etc. It believes that certain special mystic forces are generated by reciting words of a certain combination, pronounced in a certain manner. The *mantra* element was introduced in *Mahāyāna Buddhism* in the form of *dharani* to realize the ultimate truth. The element of *maṇḍala* (mystic circle) was introduced with *mantra* and *mudrā* into the *Tantric Buddhism*.

Practical Aspect of Tantra.

It may be said that Buddhism was regularly introduced into Tibet in the seventh century. In 747 AD a famous saint and teacher, padma sambava succeeded in establishing the *Vajrayāna* form of Buddhism which was tainted with magical practice and *Brāhmanist* ritual. Gradually, over the centuries, the pure Mahayana doctrines also were introduced into the land. A large number of Buddhist Sanskrit texts and *Tantric* texts were translated into Tibetan. The *Tantric* sect was established by Padmasambhava in the eighth century. The followers of this sect consider Padmasambhava as their *Guru*. In course of time Tibetan kings and their followers have influenced the Buddhist religion in Tibet. At present its religious head, the *Dalai*

Lama becomes the spiritual head, who gives more stress on learning, moral purity and discipline among the people of Tibet.

The religion of Tibet, called *Lamaism*, is probably the most singular form of Buddhism in existence. However, the *Tantric Buddhism* in practice is invigorated among the natives of Tibet. The Buddhist *Tantras* have classified the *Tantric Sādhana* into three major groups, viz, *Uttama* (good), *Madhyama* (medium), and *Adhama* (low). The worshipper who is possessed of *uttama siddhi* is called an *apta-kāma puruṣa* whose desires are fulfilled on mere wish. Similarly, a *madhyama siddhi* is said to be able to commune with the deities, move in the air, enter other's bodies, cure diseases, etc. An *adhama sādhanā* (siddhi) also acquires fame, long life, prosperity, etc.

The *Tantric* monks perform the practical rites of *Shānti* (restoration of peace by removing diseases, etc.) *Vashikarana* (subjugating others), *Stambhana* (forcing others to obey) *Uchatana* (destroying intimacy), *Videsana* (agitating others) and *Marana* (killing).

Some of these practices centred on the ritual of *pañca-kāmaguṇa*, viz. *madya* (wine), *matsya* (fish) *māṃsa* (meat), *mātsarya* (malice) and *maithuna* (sexual intercourse) which refer to *pañc-makāras* of the Hindu *Tantric* cult. But on the whole it is not the correct path of Lord Buddha for the attainment of *Mahāsukha*, or *Nirvāṇa*. The final goal of *Tāntric sādhanā* is the freedom from the misery of attachment. The positive aspect of Nirvana is *mahāsukha* (supreme bliss) or *satta ukha* (incessant bliss) in *Tāntric Buddhism*. The conception of *mahāsukha* gradually occupied a cosmological and ontological significance in *Tāntric Buddhist* schools by describing it as the ultimate

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Selfless Karma Yoga

JUSTICE MADHAVAN NAIR (Retd)

Justice Nair, formerly of Kerala High Court, discusses lucidly some of the intricacies of Karma (work) as defined in the Gita.

The Pandavas were exiled from the country through treachery and by gambling with their cousins the Kauravas. Even after the expiry of their term of exile the Kauravas refused to restore their kingdom. Both parties assembled large armies for a fight and met on the plain of Kurukshetra. When the war was about to begin Arjuna, the chief warrior among the Pandavas, became emotional and expressed reluctance to discharge arrows against his kith and kin. Krishna could not brook Arjuna's desire to give up a righteous cause, nor could he countenance the triumph of treachery and avarice on the side of the Kauravas. Urging Arjuna not to shirk his rightful duty, Krishna explained Karma-yoga and told him:

"Your right is only to karma, never to results ;

Don't be a producer of *karmaphala*.
Nor should your inclination be to inaction." (*Gītā* 2:47)

This verse expresses the gist of Karma-yoga in the form of three negative rules of conduct. The first is, not to think of results while doing a work. To put it emphatically Krishna said, "Your right is only to do a karma or work, but it does not extend to results."

Man is an active being. While awake he cannot remain for one moment without doing some work or other with his body, mind, or speech. So, to work is his natural right.

Ordinarily man thinks that his doing a work entitles him to the possession and

enjoyment of its results or proceeds also. But Krishna tells that man should not think so. For one reason, man exists as a part of the *Jivaloka*, the world of living beings. He takes benefit of others' works. The food he eats, the milk he drinks, the cloth he wears, the house in which he resides, the road he travels, the vehicle he uses, and so on, are all the results of works done or contributed by others. So a person should not be egoistic or possessive, and he should also work for the benefit of others. (*Gītā* 3:25) In other words, he cannot have the results of all his works to himself. Sages say that the right course for a person is to do the works that come to him in a natural way and think them to be his contributions to the welfare of the world. If the results of a work produce some personal benefit, he may regard those as his share of the world's welfare ; if the results of a work do not come to him, they will benefit others, and the doer shall not grudge it. Since a doer, when he does a work, does not know whether all its results will be for his own benefit, it will be wise for him not to anticipate or desire the results of any work, but leave them to their own course.

There is another cogent reason also for cultivating dispassion and a spirit of detachment. To understand it, and other ramifications of the verse, one has to know the working of *Karmabhava*-s (subtle impressions) and *Karmaphala*-s (the fruits that accrue to works).

Every sensation of perception and every impulse for action originates as a vibration

or wave in the depths of our mind. Referring to such waves, Swami Vivekananda observed:

Whatever work we do, the mind is thrown into a wave; and after the work is finished we think the wave is gone. No; it has only become fine, but it is still there. When we try to remember the work, it comes up again, and becomes a wave. So it was there; if not, there would not have been memory. Thus every action, every thought, good or bad, just goes down and becomes fine and is there stored up. (*Complete Works*, Vol. I, p. 243).

Here, as in several other contexts, Swami Vivekananda has used the term 'mind' to denote the subtle body (*Sūksma-śarīra*). It is not the soul, but the fine body that closely accompanies the soul. Pertinent is the following observation of his:

Each man consists of three parts—the body, the internal organ or the mind, and behind that, what is called Atman, the Self. The body is the external coating, and mind is the internal coating of the Atman...who is working the body by means of the internal organ, the mind.

(*Ibid.* Vol. II, p. 254)

Thus, every physical action that has been concluded, every mental action that has flared up and subsided, and every heartfelt prayer or speech that has been spoken, continue their existence in the form of very fine impressions or waves in the mind or subtle body. Such a permanent existence in seed-form of all past actions or karma is called the KARMABHAVA of that act. The Sanskrit term *Bhava* literally means existence, and *Karmabhava* means the existence of a karma. In his lectures and writings Swami Vivekananda referred to it using the well known term *Samskāra*. (Vide: *Complete Works*, Vol. I, p. 54).

So all our actions and experiences in the world, good and bad, do not cease to exist on the completion of the action, but are recorded in the subtle body. Every set of fine waves, that is a *Karmabhava*,

contains perfect reflexions of past karmas or works. It contains all aspects of the karma, including its merit and demerit, good or evil. In so far as a karma serves other beings, or brings spiritual elevation, it is said to be meritorious; conversely, to the extent a karma brings harm to other beings or disregards God, it is unmeritorious. Every *karmabhava* in the subtle body preserves the merit and demerits of past actions intact until they bloom out to yield their "fruits" to the doer.

What exactly are the fruits of an act? The benefits or the miseries that arise from an act or work are said to be its consequences. The consequences that follow directly the performance of an act or work are called its immediate consequences or RESULTS. Besides them, the merits or demerits in an act also have their consequences, but they occur only long after the performance of the act is over. So they are said to be the ultimate consequences or FRUITS of the act, or *Karmaphala*. Though the term 'fruit of action' is literally applicable to both the immediate and the ultimate consequences of an act, it is generally used exclusively to denote the ultimate consequences alone. The fruition is said to occur as inspiration for a new act which will result in pleasurable or miserable experiences in life. These experiences are the rewards or penalties that God awards to the doer for the merits or demerits of his acts. The *Brahmasūtras* (3:2; 38-41), and the *Bible* (*Jer.* 17:10), affirm that God awards the fruits of actions. Such awards take time, and therefore the fruits of action are experienced only after an interval after the performance of the act is over. Because of that interval, many persons assume that their acts have no requital. But they are totally mistaken. As the merits and demerits of a karma, which involve the germs of its fruits, abide in its *Karmabhava* which

stays in the subtle body of the doer himself, the doer cannot escape the consequences. Swami Vivekananda said: "All our works now are the effects of past *Samskāras*; again these works, becoming *Samskāras*, will be the causes of future actions; and thus we go on. (*Complete Works*, Vol. I, p. 245).

If a *Karmabhava* or *Samskāra* contains the demerit of non-discharge of a bounden obligation incurred in a prior life, its inspiration will be to an action leading to the discharge of that old obligation. (Old Puranic stories have illustrated that debtors took rebirths as horses, oxen, or watchdogs, to serve their past creditors, thus discharging their debts). When an act is done in discharge of a past obligation, its results must benefit the person who is the reincarnation of the creditor of the past life; the doer cannot have any return for his present act—not even a show of gratitude by the recipient of its benefit, because he got only what has long been due to him. If, in ignorance of the old obligation of past life, the doer expects a normal return for his present act, it will certainly fail. If then he becomes depressed, he will be worrying over a mirage only. Since men do not remember their past lives and therefore do not know which acts are done in discharge of prior obligations and which acts are not, therefore Krishna told Arjuna not to expect or desire results of any work he does, but be contented with whatever results that enure to his benefit in the natural course. He told Arjuna: "Your right is only to karmas, never to their results."

The second implication or rule in the verse is that a person should be careful in all of his thoughts, words and actions so as not to give rise to *Karmaphalas* that will produce fruits to be experienced in later life. It is the desire for results of works that causes the doer to experience the happiness

and misery that comes as work fructifies. It happens thus: The desire for results causes an attachment to the work. Attachment involves a feeling or thought of 'I' and 'mine'—the work is mine, I do the work, its results are mine, the results must enure to my benefit, and so on. Such an identification of self with the work forms an attachment to the work. Then God decrees that if the work is his, its merits and demerits are also his, and he must have the rewards or penalties for them. Thus, the desire for results makes the doer experience the pleasureable or miserable fruits of his works. In other words, through desire for results, the doer binds himself to fruits of action. On the other hand, if the doer thinks that every impulse or inspiration for action comes from the All-pervading God, and he is only complying with them to fulfil God's will (*Gītā* 18:61), he will not feel attached to the work. When thus, works are done as bidden by God, the results or proceeds must be at the disposal of God. The doer will not have any thought of them for himself. He will be contented and happy to get whatever comes to his benefit in the natural course. (*Yadṛchhā lābha santuṣṭo...Gītā* 4:22) To him they are God's allotment in his favour. If works are done in such an attitude, the doer will not be bound to any *Karmaphala* in regard to his acts. (*Gītā* 5:10)

We noted above that it is the fruits of action or *Karmaphala* that are experienced as pleasures or miseries in life. So, avoiding fruits of action is avoiding both worldly pleasures and miseries. There is no way of avoiding miseries alone, because they are inseparably mixed up with the worldly pleasures. Either we must have both, or we miss both. Between the two, losing both is deemed more covertable than having both. Because miseries hit deeper and last longer than worldly pleasures, the depressions

caused by miseries are not fully compensated by the joys of worldly pleasures. Further, the absence of misery is, by itself, a virtual pleasure.

Krishna knew the common man's difficulty in giving up desire for results of his own works. He mentioned a laudable solution for that difficulty, and that is to dedicate all our works to God, to make every work an offering to the Lord.

Whatsoever you do, enjoy, sacrifice, give, or observe in vow, dedicate them all to God. (*Gītā* 9:27)

The *Bible* also directs:

Whether therefore you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God. (1 *Cor.* 10:31)

When works are done as offerings to God, their results follow suit, and become part of the offerings. Then the doer will not think of them as his dues, and will therefore be free of *Karmaphala* in respect of those works.

The third rule mentioned in the verse is not to be ever inclined to inaction. The preceding direction to avoid fruits of action is not to be taken as an excuse for desisting from works. No work that arises in a normal way should be shirked under any pretext; because, that work may be to discharge an unknown prior obligation left

undischarged in a prior life, or it may be the fruit of a *Karmabhava*, or it may be an inspiration directed by God as part of his programme of maintaining the world, or a combination of all these aspects. God looks after the general welfare of the world, through acts of the living beings therein; and for that purpose He inspires actions in them. Any attempt to evade a natural inspiration for action will be an attempt to thwart God's will, or a negation of one's natural obligation to contribute one's might to the general welfare of the world. Inaction serves no earthly or spiritual purpose; it serves only to corrupt the mind with unholy thoughts. Hence Krishna said, "Your inclination shall not be to inaction."

The observance of these three rules of conduct mentioned in the *Gītā* (2:47) will make our works pure, and also our mind pure. It will assure constant peace of mind and contentment. In essence, these three rules are only three aspects of one rule, not to think of results but do all our works earnestly, remembering the omniscient God always. That is the way to live our life at its best. The practice of consecration of all acts to God will keep the mind in constant remembrance of God. When the remembrance of God rises in devotion and becomes dynamic, it will procure a flow of Divine Grace on the devotee.

THE CULT OF THE BUDDHIST TANTRA

(Continued from page 337)

reality transcending both *bhāva* (existence or emotion) and *nirvāṇa* (extinction). It is like neither existence nor annihilation, neither self nor non-self.

Although Buddhism formally condemns the quest for and display of magical powers

and even considers mystical trances and ecstasies as but transitory steps to the exalted end of complete liberation, having no final value in themselves; the followers of Buddhism, however, accepted the Tāntric aspects for their quick success and gratification.

Art and Religion

ISH KUMAR

Beauty and Truth are inseparable. Inspired art spontaneously tries to give expression to ineffable beauty, and the same is termed divine ecstasy by the mystics. The author of this scholarly essay is a life long educationist. He is ninety now and lives in Bokaro Steel City, Bihar.

Art is the creation of beauty, beauty as abstract, not concrete, as substance, not form. In that aspect, beauty becomes synonymous with truth and goodness. Art provides the purest and the most beautiful dress to religion. It fulfils its highest function and acquires its most valuable significance when it becomes the vehicle of spiritual beauty. Exquisite sight and enchanting sound are a stepping stone to spiritual uplift. At its highest level, truly inspired art even becomes a substitute for religion, as we shall presently see. Such art is not the creation of human mind; it is a matter of inspiration. The artist only tries to communicate to others what he has been communicated from above. The divine sources inspire him and he merely becomes a vehicle. He is both receptive and expressive. In fact, he has to escape from his own small personality like a mystic and open out his mind to receive. At the moment he is not a person, but a medium. Art and mysticism are both an expression of human search for something higher than the ordinary.

Music is said to be the highest of arts, since it speaks to our hearts more directly than the most inspired language of poetry (the next highest) can. It can express the mystical experience better than words which take time to penetrate into us to be understood. Tolstoy says about music, "There is more soul in sounds than in thoughts. Thought is a purse containing copper coins;

sound is unsmirched by anything, inwardly pure.... They (musicians) are almost all religious." The fatigued intellect finds a tonic and the harrassed emotions find immediate comfort in music. It is a spiritual, intangible entity that is a key to the human heart. It can elevate us above the strife of life more easily than other arts, for they speak only of shadows, while it speaks of the thing itself. It speaks of something subtler than intellect. It washes away from our soul the dust of every-day life. In religious gatherings with concert music, a man finds the most exalted refuge from the drab realism of his prosaic life. Such music alone can express his ethereal feelings, the divine stirrings and echoes which have been suppressed by mundane activities. It gives expression to genuine mystical fervour, deep reverence, profound humility and an utter withdrawnness from the turmoils of everyday life.

No wonder that Socrates, in his prison life, took to practising the music of Dionysius to ease his conscience. And this is what Paul Burton says about Beethoven's *Missa*: "This is a work whose performance stirs me to depth when I hear it, so reverential, so supernal is it...It must surely be the most spiritual composition, perfect expression of the link between man and God." Do we need more evidence? Here it is: "Bach is the most beloved composer—a man for all ages, all people, all instruments. His music is fundamental in its laws, in its

expression, in its faith, in its capacity to penetrate the human soul. Bach is passionately religious." It is said that the pathos in Anand Moyee's voice caused hearers to weep. "It was like listening to a divine angelic voice. Those who heard her singing devotional songs were thrilled to ecstasy." "God respects me when I work and loves me when I sing," said Tagore. "Music hath charms to soothe the savage beast." (Congreve) Horace spoke of music as "the healing balm of troubles." "I feel physically refreshed and strengthened by music," said Coleridge. And here is Robert Browning:

There is no truer truth obtainable
By man than comes of music

"Music is the universal language of mankind." (Longfellow) Even Goethe who was not particularly musical said that music made him unfold... "like the fingers of a threatening fist which straightens amicably." Why should Shakespeare be left behind?—"If music be the food of love, play on." And lastly, John Oldham:

Music is the cordial of troubled breast,
The softest remedy the grief can find.
The gentle spell that charms our ears to
rest
And calm the ruffled passions of the mind.

The trouble about music is that when it becomes a hindrance, even dangerous. Its further difficulty is that it vanishes as soon as it is over. Then poetry comes to our rescue.

Poetry too, like music, perhaps more than music, is a matter of inspiration. Shri Aurobindo, himself a religious mystic as well as a poet said, "The voice of poetry comes from a region above us, a place of our being above and beyond our personal

intelligence, a super mind which sees things in their innermost and largest truth by a spiritual identity." It is said that asking a poet to write a poem is like asking a pregnant woman to give birth to a red haired child. You cannot do it. It is the work of God. "Poets are born," it is said, "and what they write just writes itself." "If poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves of a tree," said Keats, "it had better not come at all."

A poem was never written ; it only
happened.
A poem was never planned ; it only
occurred.

Poetry issues no commands like religion ; it solves no problems like philosophy. It just happens to us. It grips us with hoops of steel. It may not add any philosophical or ethical fact to our knowledge ; it makes us a different being to however small an extent. It makes us see through life deeply and vitally. Sidney made a very acute and clear statement when he said, "Moving is a higher degree than teaching. Poetry delights us as it moves us with a desire to know ; it instructs us as it moves us to do what we know." Moving is the real function of poetry. It appeals to our hearts, to our feelings. It gives life to dead matter, it makes it afire and aglow. What are called ethical doctrines are all given in books and are taught in schools and churches. Why don't they appeal to us ? Why don't we act upon them ? That is because they come to us in a lifeless form, as a dead matter, a mere addition to our knowledge. They remain outside our being like a lump of salt placed in the vegetables. In poetry, the salt is powdered and becomes a part of the vegetable. Philosophical and religious truths remain a dead lumber until poetry infuses life into them. They remain outside us, a sort of objective reality, intellectually

apprehended, a mere addition to our knowledge. Poetry gives them life and vitality. It makes wisdom concrete and lovely with its music and imagination. It makes ideals and virtues charming and attractive. "Abstract thought is meaningless," said Keats, "until it is steeped in feeling and the precepts are inert till they have been tested on the pulses of man." Then we begin to feel them. They stir us to the very depth of our souls and become parts of our being. Only at that level they can be said to become real truths and influence our conduct. What is an abstract notion of anger, becomes the living personality of Ajax going about mad with fury, slaughtering the sheep of the Greek army, fancying them to be his enemies. Similarly, jealousy takes the form of Othello and ambition of Macbeth, and so on. These problems go down deep into our soul and we forget that we are witnessing a play. We forget that it is Minorma who is playing the part of Desdemona whom we might see hale and hearty after a couple of hours. No wonder that a lady, while witnessing the play, stood up in her seat and shouted furiously to Othello, "You fool, can't you see?" No wonder that even a man of strong intellect like Dr. Johnson left the hall, because he could not bear to witness the scene of Cordelia's death in *King Lear*. In scenes like that, your intellect is overpowered by your feelings. Coleridge called it "suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith." A philosopher may call it mere make-believe and fiction, but these fictions are more powerful than facts. They are more vital and real.

That brings us to the two universally recognized functions of poetry—delight and instruction. "Poetry," said Robert Frost, "begins in delight and ends in instruction." "Delightful teaching is the end of poetry," said Sidney. Delight is the very nature of

poetry, its definition, so to say. If it does not give delight it is no poetry at all, however valuable its instruction. Rightly did Dryden declare, "Delight is the chief, if not the only end of poetry; instruction can be admitted but in the second place, for poetry only instructs as it delights." "The function of poetry," said Dr. Johnson, "is to instruct by pleasing." Vallery, the French poet, compared the effect of poetry to that of ripe fruit which is sweet to the taste, but provides a good nourishment to the system. You feel the taste, you don't feel the nourishment. In poetry, you have to teach people as if you taught them not." Poetry does not teach, it transforms and transports. Longinus was the first critic to realize this function of poetry. Poetry, he said, carries away the reader and lifts him out of himself. Ecstasy, passion, exultation, intensity—these constitute what he calls 'sublimity' or liveness, which includes nobility. Poetry is magic, not message; art, not social service. It conveys its moral and spiritual truth insensibly. "What oft was thought, but never so well expressed." The same moon which for a scientist may be a mere specimen of the rocks, lifeless and inert, becomes "the maker of sweet poetry" and fills the hearts of the poets with joy, peace and beauty. And the rainbow which is a mere refraction of the rays of the sun, makes their hearts leap up.

That is how poetry affects us. The poet does not try to convince us intellectually like the philosopher. He does not preach like a priest. He touches our hearts. "Axioms in philosophy," said Keats, "are not axioms unless they are proved on our pulses." And here is Shelley: "The great instrument of moral good is imagination and poetry administers to the effect by acting on the cause." Oscar Wilde was very right when he compared Christ to a work of art. Indeed that is the charm of Christ, when

all is said ; "He is just like a work of art. He does not really teach one anything, but brought into his presence, one becomes something."

"Great things happen," said Blake, "when men and mountains meet." Greater things happen when men and poetry meet. There are two provisoes however ; poetry must be poetry and not verified jingle, and man must be poetically sensitive. Both the transmitting and the receiving sets must be in perfect order and the miracle is bound to happen. Is there any wonder then that some of the serious critics have tried to make poetry identical in essence with religion ? "The aim of poetry," said Wordsworth, "is to make people more actively and securely virtuous." Santayana said that religion and poetry were identical in essence. "Religion is poetry become the guide of life, ...poetry is religion allowed to drift. At their point of union both teach their purity and beneficance." And this is Middleton Murry: "High poetry and high religion are at one in the essential quality that they demand that man shall not only think thoughts, but feel them." Matthew Arnold went a step further. "The strongest part of our religion today is its unconscious poetry. Poetry will eventually take the place of conventional religion which is tending to become more and more frozen and fossilised under the growth of science and industrial revolution, scientific agnosticism and material greed. Poetry provides a grand application of noble ideas to the business of living, a string bulwark of morality and a perennial source of spiritual consolation, elevation and invigoration." He prophetically added, "Most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry." Dr. Richards endorsed this view, "Poetry may or may not replace religion ; it will support it. It will in fact make religion live which otherwise is being

killed at the hands of priests and churches. Real religion inspires poetry ; poetry keeps religion alive." Yeats considered poetry to be the chief voice of conscience... "the nearest we can come to an authoritative religion." T. S. Eliot thinks that poetry would curb the growing secularism and profundity of the age. He wants it to be christian though, unconsciously rather than deliberately and definitely. Is it any wonder then that the greatest religious books the world over are couched in poetry, rhymed or unrhymed. In the *R̥g Veda*, God is compared to a poet due to his faculty of creation. In the *Quran*, the poets are called "the pupils of God Himself". That is because, as Herbert George says, "A verse may catch him whom a sermon flies," and in harsher language Austen says:

Consult the lark and not the owl,
The poet, not the philosopher.

I have so far been talking of morality and religion, but I am afraid they are now becoming obsolete terms. After Freud and his psychoanalysis, we now talk of sense of values and of mental health. In this context, Dr. Richards has tried to explain the psychological function of poetry. Our mind is an extremely sensitive balance, he says. Whatever we see or hear or experience affects us sensitively. From morning till evening we come across dozens of small or great happenings, sad and glad and mad, till when we go to bed. We are confused about what to make of this phantsamagoria, called life. It appears to be a huge confusion and chaos and we don't know what to make of it. The poet then comes to our help. He "sees life fully and sees it whole." What appears a mere blur to us looks to him a clear and distinct picture. The lense of his vision is better focussed and he tells us:

Happy the man, and happy he alone,
 He who can call today his own.
 He who, secure within, can say,
 Tomorrow do thy worst, for I have lived
 to-day.

Our life depends on how we respond to our experiences. Are our responses limited, crude, narrow or vicious? Do we get easily upset? Do we sympathize with misery? Are we kind or cruel in our reactions? The answers to these and many such questions decide the worth and value of our living. Poetry, says Dr. Richards, helps us in our reactions in three different ways. It expands our responses to life. Secondly, it refines our responses which otherwise would be crude and vulgar. And lastly, poetry resolves the conflict of our responses. It imposes order and discipline in our life which is chastic, contradictory, absurd and irrational. It dresses life and its object is greater beauty, charm and loveliness. ...Our hearts are a battleground of good and evil, joy and sorrow, hope and fear, pleasure and pain. We are constantly on tenterhooks, confused and puzzled to be or not to be, to do or not to do, to follow our head or our heart, to obey the flesh or the spirit—that is our problem, every hour of the day, every minute of the hour. Again and again we fall on our knees and cry like Othello: "O Lord," and 'perplexed in the extreme; we throw a pearl away.' Very often we cry like Macbeth: "We will proceed no further in this business." Still more often, like Hamlet, we are on the horns of a dilemma... "to die, to sleep, perchance to dream, there is the rub." That is life, warns Shakespeare, and you must beware if you would escape tragedy. Poetry gives us deeper insight into the miseries and misfortunes, the conflicts and the frustrations, the shocks and the sorrows, and ultimately leads us to what Aristotle called 'catharsis'. It gives unity and design to confused lumber

called the phenomenal world. It is "as a mirror which makes beautiful that what is distorted." (Shelley). It lets out our emotions which otherwise would upset our brain and overturn our heart. That is why Byron said, "Poetry is the lava of imagination whose eruption prevents an earthquake." Poetry happens, I have said. Let us compare our minds before and after reading a poem. If it is a great poem and we are sensitive readers, something is bound to happen; the only condition being that the readers must react with what Wordsworth called 'wise passiveness'. Then their mental activities are widened; their responses are cultured and coordinated. In a word, their hearts are expanded, softened and reconciled. Dr. Richards conclude, "The poet would remain the physician of society which has lost its integrity and gone to pieces. ...Poetry offers the best process of reconciliation of opposites and contradictory impulses." In this connection, let us remember Freud's own testimony which should be most convincing. He frankly admitted that for the discourses of psychology attributed to him, the credit must firstly be given to the poets who had already objectified the impulses of the human mind and heart which he only systematised scientifically. The poet says, "Open wide the sacred doors, let there be light." And here is Milton—

Nor love thy life, nor hate, but what
 thou livest
 Live well, how long or short permit to
 heaven.

And Browning—

I count life just as a stuff
 to try the souls's strength on.

And again:

We fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
 sleep to wake. "The great end of poetry,"

(Continued on page 357)

Agastya and Ravana—A 'Scientific' Appraisal

DR. S. K. BALASUBRAMANIAN

In a brief span an attempt is made to trace the scientific facts behind mythological legends of the Purāṇas. The author is of Poona, Maharashtra.

AGASTYA is the patron saint of the Tamils. He is regarded as the founder of their language. The story of how he came down to the south from the northern regions has an interesting parallel in science.

Mount Meru is regarded as the axis around which the sun god revolves every day. The Vindhya mountains, though secondary to the mythical Meru, felt that they were also entitled to the same honour as Meru and haughtily ordered the sun god to circumambulate them also every day. The sun god could not and did not oblige. The Vindhyas decided to force the issue. They started to grow taller and taller till their size upset the galactic equilibrium. The gods requested sage Agastya to quell the mountain using his wits. The great sage reached the Vindhya foothills along with his wife and son. The mountains received him with due respect. The sage expressed a desire to visit the southern regions and indicated that the tall mountain interfered with his plans. The Vindhyas humbly submitted to his desire and reduced their height so that he could cross over. It also promised to remain in that humble state till Agastya returned to the northern regions. Predictably, he never did so. True to their promise to the sage the Vindhyas are still remaining in their humble elevation awaiting the return of the sage.

The story of a growing mountain has a parallel in a recent scientific discovery.—But it is the Himalayas that are still growing and not the Vindhyas. The peak of

Everest grows almost a foot taller every year.

The reason for this growth is considered to be what has come to be called the 'continental drift'. This discovery came from a trivial observation that the outlines of the South American continent on the map could be snugly and accurately fitted into the hollow part of west Africa, called the Gulf of Guinea. Similarly, the west coast of the Indian subcontinent bounded by the Himalayas can be fitted onto the east African coast from Dar-es-salaam in the south to the horn of Africa in the north (Somalia). The earth's crust is believed to be made up of tectonic plates, deformed bits that constantly move relative to each other. The entire land mass on the crust was once a continuous super continent which broke up in several places and moved apart. The Americas are one such piece that drifted westward and are still continuing their westward drift at the rate of a few centimeters a year. From the rate of the current drift we can arrive at the date of the original split, which is considered to have taken place about 150 million years ago. These relative movements have created fault lines along the earth's crust on land and in the seas. These faults are responsible for the earthquakes.

The Indian land mass started northwards and hit the main Asian plate with tremendous violence, wedging itself below the Asian plate and raising it. This process gave rise to the Himalayas and Tibet. The

subcontinental land mass is still moving northwards raising the height of the Himalayas which are amongst the youngest mountain ranges of the world.

The story has another coincidence. The land's end of India—Kanya Kumari—was attached to Africa at a place called Kenya today. If the two names are ancient the correlation is startling. Somnath temple and Somalia also happened to be near each other originally.

A similar reference occurs in the story of Ravana. Ravana was a *rakṣasa* (demon) king born of sage Vishrawas and Kalikasi, an *asura* (demon) woman. Her tribe's name curiously has a similar sonance with the name of the major tribe of Kenya—the Kikiyu. Ravana had ten heads and was an enormous brute of great intellect. He propitiated Siva and obtained a boon of invincibility. Armed with Siva's blessings he drove out his stepbrother Kubera, the lord of Wealth, from his kingdom in Lanka. Mad with power and driven by overweening ambition he pursued Kubera to the Himalayas. On his return journey he strayed into Siva's territory and duly warned by the God's attendant, Nandi, the Bull. Relentlessly pushed by his own pride and throwing caution to the winds he inserted his hands below the Himalayas and shook the mountains striking terror into all the denizens of the mountain range, and in particular Pārvatī, Siva's consort. Siva saw through Ravana's mischief and pressed the mountain range down with his toe, crushing Ravana. At his last moment Ravana realized his folly and sang the *Sāma Veda* to propitiate the God. The story ends with a humbled Ravana returning to Lanka to continue his life of depravity till it was ended by Rama.

The event of Ravana lifting the Himalayas and shaking the mountains has a note worthy parallel in the scientific belief that the Indian plate is pressing hard below the Asian plate raising the Himalayas and rendering the region geologically unstable.

Ravana was ten headed and mighty. He was arrogant, proud and ambitious. He was also intelligent and sensitive and was a formidable scholar. His story has other suggestiveness also.

The human system comprises ten sensory organs—the mind, the eyes, the ears, nose, mouth, skin, hands, legs, and the generative and excretory organs. All these are controlled by different centres in the brain. The areas have been mapped in detail and electrical stimulation or drugs can selectively activate these organs. The ten heads of Ravana represent these controlling areas in the human brain. Instead of small patches in the normal brain, each organ is cultivated and controlled by a separate head. Ravana must have been an enormous person with varied skills, each operated at peak efficiency by an individual control centre in a separate head. Ideally he should represent the peak of the evolutionary process. But Ravana represents evolution running berserk.

A Sanskrit verse expresses this aptly:

*Ati rūpat Sītā hr̥ta, ati garveṇa Rāvaṇo
hataḥ
Ati dānāt balirbaddho, ati sarvatra
varjayet.*

Sita was a victim because of her excessive beauty; Ravana was killed by excessive pride. Bali was contained by excessive philanthropy; excess should be avoided always!

Excellence, not excess, is evolution.

The Caste System

SWATI BHATTACHARJEE

The caste system is a hornets' nest. This enigmatic problem has perpetually engaged both philosophers and social scientists either defending it or disparaging it. The author, who is a student of philosophy, examines critically the viewpoints of both the schools. She lives in Calcutta.

Here is a fable from China. Once upon a time, there was a man who strongly believed that all should be equal. While visiting a pond one day, he was rather pained to find a stork with its very long legs, and a duck with very short ones. Disdaining all disparity, he operated on both, adding a fair amount of the stork's leg to the duck. His good intentions bore the obvious result. The stork could not stand high enough, and perished. The duck could not swim well enough, and it died as well.

The fable is, as all fables are, as ridiculous as it is true. And it also serves amply to make it clear why we should pursue the study of the relations of Philosophy and the Social Sciences. One should only recall how splendid philosophical theories, when implemented in society, totally lost their benign colours, and unleashed such reigns of terror and misery as were undreamt by their propounders.

The Philosopher himself is not a little to be blamed. As Ransom has said, "The philosopher is apt to see a lot of wood and no trees." For the philosophers search for ideals—the Grand Dictum—that shall enfold and encompass all. But the social sciences specify, draw attention to the smallest of all detail that makes up the General. Philosophy and the social sciences are complementary to each other. Philosophy without a reference to social sciences would be

desultory theorizing. Philosophers themselves revolt against "abstruse, obscure philosophy"—devoid of touch of reality. On the other hand, social study without an insight into the underlying philosophy would be baseless, empty. Every social belief and practice presupposes some sort of philosophy. Justification lies at the root of all.

I feel that a discussion in very broad and general terms on the relationship between philosophy and social sciences is likely to lead us only to mouthsome platitudes. There shall be much reiteration of the obvious, and lesser illumination of the doubtful. The nexus between these two disciplines can best be brought out by a particular case study, rather than a general comparison. I have selected a case which provides ample interest for both the philosopher and the social scientist, namely, the caste system in India. Philosophers have acknowledged a deep and well grounded philosophy behind the institution of caste. On the other hand this caste system has been a perpetual challenge to social scientists at home and abroad. Few other social institutions have been probed as persistently, but have remained as mysterious. This is an endeavour to show how a scientific study of the subject would benefit from a philosophico-analytical study of it.

The significance and importance of discussing the institution of caste can hardly be exaggerated. It has been widely acknow-

ledged as the bane of the Indian society. It is relevant to every aspect of Indian life, political, social, economic, cultural and religious. Blood has flowed, flesh has burnt, governments have toppled on this one issue of caste.

In the Indian society, caste is another name for controversy. But what would astonish a student at the outset, is the wide lacuna between the viewpoints of the social scientists and the philosophers. Philip Mason, Director of the Institute of Race Relations, London, writes in his book, *Patterns of Dominance*, denigrating the institution:

Of all systems of human inequality, the Indian is the most ancient, the most highly systematized, and the most complex. It has lasted more than 2000 years, and is still strong. ...it embodied a differentiation between people more extreme and explicit than is to be found even in the plantation slavery of the Southern United States or in South Africa today.¹

The philosopher stands on the other extreme. "I do not propose any levelling of castes," says Vivekananda, "caste is a very good thing. Caste is the plan we want to follow. There is no country in the world without a caste."²

Assuming that both are totally sympathetic towards the common man, that there were no pretensions in their concern for the poor and the downtrodden, how can we explain this radical difference in their points of view. Why should one condemn and discard the same principle that the other regards as inevitable and worthy of praise? This essay is an attempt to analyze such

disagreements and consider possible reconciliations. For unless a philosophically informed sociologist, and a scientifically oriented philosopher cooperate, we cannot hope for reasonable solutions.

In viewing the caste system as a social institution, the cardinal problem for the social scientist, which causes much indignation, is that the caste structure is believed to be the creation of trans-empirical reality. There has been common acceptance of the ontological basis (because it is a natural phenomenon) of the caste stratification of the Hindu community which was enunciated and repeated by generations of Hindu metaphysicians. Many accounts of the origin of the caste system have been offered by the social scientist as well. There have been attempts to explain caste in terms of heredity and occupational pattern, such as given by H. H. Risley and E. Senart, in terms of "charisma attributed to kinship", as given by Max Weber, and in terms of "Aryan and non-Aryan distinctions", or colour disparity. Detailed evaluation of these theses is beyond the scope of this essay. But it can be said without hesitation that whatever may be the social scientists's view of the origin of caste, the normative system of the Hindus is based on their popular conception of the ontological basis of the social strata and their respective functions. The doctrine of *Karma* or action, transmigration of the soul, rebirth, *Prarabdha-karma*, *Puruṣakāra*, all these fit in most logically with the doctrine of the caste structure of the Hindu community, and gives it a solemn rigidity that the modern social scientist finds awesome and terrible. Philip Mason thus writes: "The Hindu does not think of 'genetic' inheritance. The Harijan brings with him an ethical heritage of misdeeds in a past life and it is therefore legitimate to treat him without pity." Caste system is spoken of in terms of des-

1. Philip Mason, *Patterns of Dominance* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970) p. 137.

2. Swami Vivekananda, *Caste Culture and Socialism* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1965) p. 10.

cent, and is justified in terms of rebirths and misdeeds in a past life. In other words, the unique character of the caste structure of the Hindu community is intimately tied with the unique character of the Hindu Philosophy. The ethos of the Hindus is based on their common belief in the ontological structure of Reality. It is therefore necessary, before we proceed further, to examine the philosophy in which we shall find the roots of the caste system.

The oldest extant passage in which the creation of the fourfold order occurs is the *Puruṣa Sūkta* (90.12) of the tenth book of the *Ṛg Veda*. It states that the *Brāhmaṇas*, *Kṣatriyās*, *Vaiśyās* and *Śūdrās* have been separately created from the mouth, the arms, the thighs and the feet respectively of the Creator. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* says that for the purpose of His creation, the Creator created first the *Brāhmaṇa*, then the *Kṣatriyā*, then the *Vaiśyā* and the *Śūdrā*, and last of all, the *Dharma*, mightier than the four (1/4/7-8). There are other theories as well, which are less familiar. The four classes are variously said to have sprung from the words, *Bhūh*, *Bhuvah*, *Svah* (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, II-1,4); from the three *Vedas*: *Sāma*, *Yajur*, and *Ṛg* (*Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, III-12,9); from different classes of gods and *āsuras* (*S.P. Br.*, XIV-4, 2, 23); from the imperishable, the perishable, and other principles (*Harivamsa*, 11816). But while these accounts only seek to trace the origin of caste, the explicit formulation and consolidation of the caste system can, perhaps, best be found in *Manu*. There are four and only four classes in society, says *Manu*, and no fifth (*Manu*, 10. 4). They are called *Varṇās*. The word *Varṇā* means colour. What does *Varṇā* signify in this context? Mrs. Besant writes, "Each of these types, having a different colour predominating in it, the four castes were

called the four *Varṇās* or the four colours and to the clairvoyant eye, the *Sukṣma Śarīra* (or aura) of each caste was at once recognizable by its dominant colour due to the relative density of its materials." (Pedigree of Man, page 83) Dr. Bhagwan Das has echoed what Mrs. Besant has said in his *Manavdharmasār*.

*Ācaryāścet sūkṣmadarśi r̥sidivyākṣvān
tathā
śiśyasya sūkṣmadehasya varṇa nirvarṇan
kṣamah
tadā bhavet kṣanenaiva vināyāsena
nirṇayah*

(If the *Ācārya*, teacher, possesses supernatural vision, and is able to determine the *varṇa*, colour, of the aura, then he can effortlessly determine the *varṇa* of his disciple.)

What are these four *Varṇās* or colours? The *Padmapurāṇa* has said:

*Brāhmaṇānām sitovarṇaḥ kṣatriyanām
ca lohitaḥ
vaiśyānām pitakaścaiva
śūdrānāmasitastathā.*

(The colour of aura of the *Brāhmaṇa* is white, that of the *Kṣatriyā* red, *Vaiśyā* yellow, and *Śūdrā* black.)

There is another interpretation supported by C. W. Leadbeater, which states that the *Varṇās* given by *Manu* refer to the colour of the skin. But this view does not seem acceptable after all. In the first place, the four *Varṇās* were mentioned in the *Ṛg Veda* itself, much before *Manu*. Secondly, it does not cohere at all with the account of the difference of *Varṇās* that are variously mentioned in our *Śāstras*. According to these accounts, the difference in the *Varṇās* is due to the different ways in which the

three fundamental constituent elements, *Sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* are balanced. A dominance of *Sattva* gives the *Brāhmaṇa Varṇā*, a dominance of *Rajas* the *Kṣatriyā Varṇā*, a dominance of *Rajas* mixed with *Tamas* the *Vaiśyā Varṇā*, and a dominance of *Tamas* mixed with *Rajas* the *Śūdrā Varṇā*. (*Mahābhārata*, *Bhaviśyapurāṇa*, 3/4/23).

Sri Hirendra Nath Dutta, in his book, *Manur Varṇāśramadharmā*, has pointed out, there is no need to suppose that this classification is applicable only within the Indian society. Considering the nature of the aura, the whole population of the world, whether English, German, Zulu or Chinese; whether Hindu, Christian, Muslim or Jew, can be classified into these four colours or *Varṇās*. Because, there is no fifth caste—*Varṇa na asti tu pancamaḥ*, (Manu 10.4). This *Varṇā* determines the consequent profession—the *Svadharmā* or *Vṛtti*, or *Karma* of the people. Each of the four *Varṇās* are endowed with those duties only, for which they are best suited. These are briefly and definitely stated in the eighteenth chapter of the *Gītā*. The Indian philosophers thus determined classes on the basis of natural endowment and the consequent profession.

Cāturvarṇyaṃ mayā sṛṣṭaṃ guṇakarmavibhāgaśaḥ...(According to the aptitudes resulting from the dispositions of nature (*guṇas*) and works, the social order of fourfold division has been created by Me.)

We find a similar approach in Plato's theory of the ideal State. He lays down the Principle of Specialization as the very principle of justice. The 'myth of metals' is invented to stabilize the separation of classes. The Indian Philosophy undoubtedly has respectable counterparts.

Regarding the origin of caste, the crucial difference that crops up between the philo-

sopher and the social scientist is on the question: which is fundamental to its origin? Did philosophy (which we have just discussed) lead to the social stratification, or did the social processes lead to the formulation of the Philosophy? A social scientist would subscribe to the latter view. Romila Thapar writes in, *From Lineage to State*:

In its initial phase, the notion of varna attempted to construct a complete social framework using differentiated lineage systems demarcated by distinctive kinship forms...Added to this was the notion of ritual status which was made explicit in the idea of purity and pollution where the hierarchy goes from the purest to the most polluting...Yet implicit in this hierarchy is the attempt to define and limit the access of each group to economic resources by the gradually increasing insistence on occupational functions...

That Ms. Thapar does not consider the philosophical account of Natural Endowment to be a tenable account of origin of caste becomes clear when she says:

...the Sudra as a varna was clearly a category added to the original structure at a time when artisans and cultivators had to be accommodated and when alien groups were assimilated into the caste society and had to be assigned varying statuses.³

The philosophical theories are thus viewed as attempts to control and channelize the socio-economic developments.

It seems that unless the philosopher and the social scientist make important concessions to each others' viewpoints, a balanced theory will not be possible. The philosopher, if he ignores the anthropological and ethnological aspects of the *Varṇa-vyāvastha* will be far from actual reality. But the social scientist in all probability shall never be able to dissolve the mystery of caste if

3. Romila Thapar, *From Lineage to State* (Bombay: Oxford Univ. Press, 1984) pp. 50-51.

he takes the philosophy of *Varṇa-vyavasthā* to be an intellectual effort to accommodate the social processes.

The social scientist has an inclination towards treating the philosophy of natural endowment as a subtle instrument for dominance. We humbly offer two arguments against this attitude:

(1) If our philosophy and the system it advocated were genuinely meant to dominate and exploit, it would be only natural that the large mass that was dominated would try to revolt and alienate themselves from the system. But the process here is just the other way round. The process of Sanskritization amply shows that the trend had been just the opposite—the 'lower' people fighting to secure a better and surer place in the class system, and even those outside its periphery trying to be included in it. Also, any attempt which proceeded to do away with the caste system altogether never gained full impetus, nor could make any lasting headway. The intercaste tensions that occurred were not because the lower castes tried to alienate themselves, but because they claimed a higher rung in the caste hierarchy, and the upper castes resented these attempts.

(2) If he accepts the scientists view, the philosopher would find himself in a paradoxical situation. It is paradoxical that for the purpose of exploitation, the philosopher should propound a theory that absolutely forbids exploitation. ...*Mā gr̥dhaḥ kasyasvid dhanam—Do not covet what belongs to others. (Īśa Upaniṣad.)*

*Śrūyatām dharmasya tattvaṁ śrūtvā
cyāpyavadhāryatām
ātmanah pratikulāni pareṣāṁ na samācaret.
(Mahābhārata)*

(Listen to the truth of dharma, and realize this upon hearing it: Do not do unto others what is harmful to yourself.)

From the point of the student, the whole issue seems to boil down to the single question—Is the creation of *Varṇa* or caste an outcome of empirical phenomena, or is it an expression of trans-empirical Reality? Recent social studies tend to confirm that stratification into classes is endemic in man. M. Dgilas in his book, *The New Class*, has pointed out how a new class of party leaders, managers and bureaucrats emerged in Russia and China, frustrating attempts to create classless society. It seems that the conviction "all men are equal" which has coloured and flavoured so many social studies, may have to be changed after all.

Not unpredictably, objections against philosophy of caste system came principally on two grounds:

(1) Legitimizing inequality among men and dominance of lower caste by upper classes on metaphysical and ethical grounds.
(2) Inventing the myth of purity and pollution—an emotional vehicle for stabilizing the pattern of dominance—whose ultimate culmination was untouchability. The practice of untouchability is perhaps the height of indignity a society can inflict on the individual. It is true that the Harijan could not be sold like a slave in Virginia, and for that matter was nearer to being a serf than a slave. But the man outside caste must cross the road if he sees a Brāhmin coming. "To me it seems that"...writes Philip Mason, "of the two, pollution was perhaps the more consistently degrading."

Louis Dumont in his book, *Homo Hierarchicus*, shows that the caste system is based on the fundamental social principle of hierarchy. The two great ideals of modern life are the freedom of the individual and the equality of men. Both these ideals are negated by the three basic features of the caste system, viz, heredity, hierarchy and endogamy.

Caste is by no means the only means of making separation. The Indian scene, indeed, is a supreme example of divisions and subdivisions. Andre Beteille, in his *Caste Class and Power*, studied a village in South India with 349 households. There were 92 Brāhmin, 168 Śūdra, and 89 Harijan families. But on closer examination the 92 Brāhmin families were found to be divided into 12 *jātis* (subcastes who marry among themselves), the Śūdra into 26 *jātis*, and the untouchables into 4 *jātis*. In other words, the Indian society is permeated with inequality. The scale transcends humans—even the animals are classed. The cow is a Brāhmaṇ, the horse a Rajput. All this, supposedly, is supported by its religion, since the rules are usually governed by a caste panchayat which has the power to excommunicate the family which violates the rules, the dharma.

With these hard facts in mind, we turn again to our philosophy and religion. And once again we find only discord. For equality of all is the cardinal trait of Vedānta. There is no distinction of sex, caste or creed in the Ātman. It is only the Māyā that makes one a Brāhmaṇ, and another a Śūdra. When this Māyā is removed, all are equal. And this is the paradigm of equality, equality in the true sense of the term. The Indian philosopher, noticeably, has accepted none of the pragmatic connotations of equality that modern Western philosophers find so convenient, viz. equal opportunity, equal facility, etc. When we say 'all men are equal', more often than not, what we really mean is that 'all men ought to be equal'. For where is equality bonafide to be found in society?

The Indian philosophy is not an art of perfecting the method of minimum friction and maximum productivity. The Indian Philosopher can never compromise. That is

why it would be contrary to his ideal if he should pass an arbitrary and artificial dictum—all men in the society are equal, and could do as they please. For he knows that not before that ultimate realization of Reality can there be true equality. Therefore, our social and political rules were laid down such that all should *move towards* this one goal—Realization.

Paradoxically, this road to equality can come only by working through the inequalities. For creatures bound by Māyā can never disregard their innate differences which are dictated by their *Prakṛti*, nature.

...*Prakṛtiṃ yānti bhūtāni nigrahaḥ kiṃ kariṣyati.* (Gita, 3.33)

(All beings follow their nature ; what can repression do ?)

This proceeding of the *jīva* from inequality towards equality, imperfection to perfection, this doctrine of evolution of the soul is the very fundamental doctrine of Hindu Philosophy. Manu of *Manusmṛti*, so often castigated for condoning inequality, did believe in the basic equality of all:

*Sarvabhūtesu cātmanāṃ sarvabhūtāni
cātmani,
saṃpaśyan nātmayāḥ vai svārājyam
adhigacchati* (Manu 12.91)

(A spiritual seeker who sees the Self as residing in all beings and all beings resting in the Self, is established in the Kingdom of the Self.)

Sankaracarya, Ramanuja, Nanak, Chaitanya understood this. That is why they never sought to break away from the existing *varṇavyavasthā*, but aimed towards enfold-ing and elevating all within this socio-religious framework. In modern times, Vivekananda and Gandhi, who devoted their lives for the poor and the oppressed, while condemning severely the oppression by higher classes, nevertheless did not attempt

to do away with the fourfold class order of the Hindu society altogether.

But the *Varṇa-vyavasthā*, which the philosophy and religion of India would support, is not the same as the caste system. Just as it would be unfair to point towards a leper and say: "Behold the figure of a man," it would be unfair nay incorrect to point at the caste system and say: "Behold the social structure laid down by Indian philosophy." For the canker underlying the caste system is 'privilege'. The Brahmanas, who began spiritual development in India, started to arrogate powers and privileges to themselves. This marked the degradation of *Varṇa-vyavasthā*. The social structure founded on a transcendent altruistic philosophy disappeared, and in its place came the caste system, a hierarchy of privileges, endless rules and regulations passing in the name of religion designed only to dominate the poor and the helpless. This has continued for centuries—for privilege begets privilege until the situation has virtually become a clear separation between 'have and have-nots', the higher castes monopolizing education, services, trade and all conceivable privileges and the lower castes left with nothing but their indignity and misery.

Another source of disconcert for the social scientist is the hereditary determination of class. It is not difficult to show that original intention of the Indian Philosopher was not quite the same. The *Vajraschi Upaniṣad* says:

*Yah kaścideva aparokṣīkrtya ātmānaṃ
tn kāryate kṛtārthatvena
sa hyeva brāhmaṇo—nātra saṁśayah.*

(One who has realized the Self is the Brāhmaṇa.)

Kathak Brāhmaṇ even says that it is useless to ask who is the father and mother of the Brāhmaṇa. We should remember here the story of Satyakāma. (*Chāndogya*

Upaniṣad, 4.4.2-5) In other cases, *Vṛtti*, *Śīla*, and *Karma* are said to determine the *Jāti*:

*Śūdrā api śīlasampanno guṇavān
brāhmaṇo bhavet
brāhmaṇo api kriyāhīnaḥ śūdrāt
pratyantaraṃ bhavet.
(Mahābhārata: Vānaparva)
Chāṇḍalamapi vṛttasthaṃ taṃ devā
brāhmaṇaṃ viduḥ
kṣāntaṃ dāntaṃ jītakrodhaṃ
jītātmanaṃ jītendriyatvam
tvameva brāhmaṇaṃ manye seṣaḥ śūdrāḥ
iti smṛtā. (Gautama Saṃhitā)*

(Even a śūdra who possesses Śīla (purity) and is virtuous is no less than a brāhmaṇ. The Brāhmaṇ who fails to do his duty is inferior to the śūdrā.)

(Even, a dutiful śūdra is regarded by the gods as a brāhmaṇ. One who is patient, one who has restraint, one who has conquered the self, senses, and passions, he alone is a brāhmaṇ. The rest are śūdrās, goes the saying.)

On the other hand, Sankaracarya said that "the Śūdra is he who lacks all the 48 Saṃskāras, especially the Saṃskāras of birth and marriage. (Noticeably, in that sense, the bulk of the population considered to be Śūdras today are not Śūdras at all, for most of them have incorporated Vedic rites.)" Manu has also said:

*Na śūdre pātakam kiñcit na ca
saṃskāram iti.*

The crux of the problem, I think, is not so much the question of heredity in determining the class. For, is there a society where heredity does not play a role in determining the class of the social being? And in most cases, is it not the exclusive factor in deciding one's class? But what all shall rebel against is the idea of privilege. It is true that some *Smṛtis* ascribe unfounded privileges for the Brāhmaṇas. In all

fairness, we should not pay too much attention to these *Smṛtis*, however, nor take them to represent Indian Philosophy. Any *Smṛti* that contradicts the essence of the Vedas is to be rejected. And the philosophy of Vedanta does not support the privilege of one over another. As Vivekananda has said, with the exception of the Vedas, every book must change, for instance, one *Smṛti* is powerful for one age, another for another age. He has also said elsewhere, "...the discussion on caste is useless, especially for the Brahmana, because the day for privileges and exclusive claims is gone."

Again, the verdict of the Indian philosopher that one should not take the duty of another class (Gita, 3.35), is not an attempt to create social immobility, economic security and stabilize oppression as is commonly supposed. What the Indian philosopher really asserts is that it is not only undesirable but impossible for a man to follow a duty that is against his nature (*Prakṛti*). That is why Sri Krishna says in the *Gītā* (18.59):

*Yad ahaṅkāram āsṛitya na yotsya iti
manyase
mithaiṣa vyavasāyaste prakṛtistvām
niyokṣyati.*

(Should you resort to your ego and resolve not to fight, vain shall be your decision, for your nature shall compel you).

It is, therefore, only sensible that one should follow that line of duty for which he is best suited. "Equal opportunity for all", which the modern social scientist so admires is, to the traditional philosopher, meaningless. His dictum is, "the right opportunity for the right man." This he believes, can serve best at once to bring out the potentiality of an individual and assure a most profitable interaction of the society and the individual.

Of all the evils that pass in the name of philosophy and religion, the worst perhaps is the myth of purity and impurity in general, and untouchability in particular. Both are directly against the spirit and philosophy of Vedanta, and the *Manu Smṛti* as well. Manu says: "*Varṇa na asti tu pañcamah* —There is not a fifth caste." But the Harijans are treated as a fifth class outside the *Varṇa* scheme. The myth of untouchability can claim no philosophical justification at all. Nor can a philosophy that holds all men to be children of God possibly attach the stigma of impurity to a hapless section of humanity. These undoubtedly social evils, and the Bhakti movements have been endeavours to cleanse Indian society of these cankers.

Lack of insight into philosophical motive often leads to unwarranted suspicion of the philosopher's good intentions. The sociologist has quite a few misgivings in accepting that our social division was really based on *Guṇa* and *Karma*. They gingerly point out that in reality, a man can never change his *Varṇa*. As Philip Mason says, "...it is sometimes claimed that the Varna of an individual can be changed in his lifetime, but if an example is quoted, it is usually two thousand years old."⁴ Here again we find how lack of insight in the underlying philosophy leads to misunderstanding of the social system. For the intention of an individual, but of the group as a whole. As Vivekananda says:

The law of caste in every other country takes the individual man and woman as the sufficient unit. ...Here, the unit is all the members of a caste community. Here too one has every chance of rising from a low caste to a higher, or the highest, only, in this birthland of altruism, one is compelled to take his whole caste along with him.⁵

4. *Patterns of Dominance*, p. 147.

5. *Caste Culture and Socialism*, p. 6.

This process of inclusion and elevation within caste structure has been acknowledged by M. N. Srinivas as 'Sanskritization'.⁶ The social scientists have recorded how the tribal groups like the Bhils, Gonds, and Oraons have come within the class structure. (*Hindu Samajer Gadan*: Nirmal Bose) More recently, A. R. Walker in his book, *The Toda of South India: A New Look*, has shown how Todas are moving towards Hinduization. With due respect to all the conflicting views, we can conclude at least that this process is undeniable, and is a confirmation of the intention of the traditional philosopher.

But even if the lack of philosophical insight of the social scientist can be overlooked, the passivity and insensitivity of the philosopher-intellectual in facing the situation today is inexcusable. The philosophy which had preached the dignity of humanity in its highest strain is now treading upon the necks of the poor and the low. But where is the philosopher who is to reveal all monstrosity that passes in the name of philosophy? A philosopher who would warn people against the demagogues who encourage and enhance oppression and

6. M. N. Srinivas, *The Cohesive Role of Sanskritization and Other Essays*, (Bombay: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989).

exploitation in the name of religion? The misfortunes resulting from casteism are grossly observable in the economic and psychological deprivations of the lower classes. But even more lamentable is the aggressively unsympathetic attitude of the elite. As K. Balagopal writes in his article, *"This Anti Mandal Mania"*: "There is perhaps no issue on which we are such hypocrites as caste. Nor any other which brings out all that is worst in us with such shameful ease."

The need of the hour is for a philosopher who, standing at the grassroots level, can say categorically that caste is a means of assimilation of the diverse, and not for the purpose of creating dissension and deprivation. A thousand reiterations of mantras and slokas would be of little avail if we shut our eyes to the immediate reality. The philosopher, is no less responsible to his people than the social scientist. There cannot be fact-free philosophy just as there can be no value-free social science.

The problem we have taken up should not, in all fairness, be concluded with a few useful warnings tied neatly to a well-guarded optimism. For questions loom large and dark over our horizon. The philosopher must summon all his wisdom. The social scientist must make use of all his resources. Both are answerable—to Man.

ART AND RELIGION

(Continued from page 346)

said Keats, "is that it should be a friend to soothe the ears and lift the thoughts of men." No wonder that even a scientist like Charles Darwin declared in his declining years that if he had heard some poetry and listened to some music at least once a week, perhaps the part of his brain that atrophied

would have kept alive through them. The loss of these tastes, he realized, was the loss of happiness and injurious to intellect and even to moral character by enfeebling the emotional part of their nature.

(to be continued)

If Only Flowers Blossomed

PROF. V. GOPINATH

If only flowers blossomed! If only every branch
of the Mind-Tree gave forth flowers in each twig,
If only a flower burst from every vein,
If only each blood-drop turned into a flower!
I would pay homage then with them all,
with all my mind, heart and soul!
To Thee, O Player on the Flute!
I would perforce repeat the Pooja of old,
of the great elephant-king who plucked
Lotuses one by one, to offer them all
To the Four-armed god, MAHAVISHNU:
How many births have I suffered, O Lord!
I couldn't still get in my clasp, Thy Feet!
O Lord! Tell me please how many days,
Nights, Nature's Cycles, deluges and fires,
I have to pass through yet; I don't know why
you didn't give succour to my soul so long!
Wilt Thou grant me Thy Divine Flute,
The Flute that touched Thy sweet-red lips,
The Flute that Thou gave to Radha,
The Flute that fell and lay in Brindavan
when Radha shed her mortal coil,
The Flute through which Life's music
Flowed on and kept the world's life-flow
The Flute akin to my Nine-doored body:—
Wilt thou not make my frame
The playground of Thy mighty Lila?
The beauteous form of Thine, yellow-barbed,
Lips with sweet—red honey, the Bent Frame,
And Thy soft feet that quelled the pride
of KALIYA, the venomous serpent—king,
And Thy world-bewitching smile,
Lo! When will I have the Vision, O My Lord!
I don't know yet, still I gain say:
If only flowers blossomed! with them I will
Adore Thee day and night, O Madhusoodana!
O Lord! Let me turn into a tiny drop
In the mighty ocean of Thy sweet glance!

REVIEWS & NOTICES

THE HIDDEN FORCES OF LIFE: Compiled from the Works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1990. 203 pages plus vii; Rs. 45/-.

In this beautifully bound book, the compiler has attempted to synthesise the views of Aurobindo and the Mother on the secret forces that are at work in the universe. These forces, whether physical or non-physical, are invisible, and determine the nature of the human consciousness. The anti-divine forces pull the individual to the depths of degradation, while the divine forces raise him to the heights of spiritual illumination. The book is divided into eight cohesive and well-structured sections.

When the hostile forces of the vital world descend into the material world, there is corruption, destruction and cruelty. Through yoga and spiritual discipline, one can go inward and establish a conscious connection with the Cosmic Self, and intervene positively to deflect the negative impact of these forces. Yoga can transform one's consciousness to perceive the reality of these hidden forces. To Aurobindo, the three occult sources of our action are the *superconscient*, the *subliminal*, and the *subconscient*. We are, however, aware only of our surface being. The role of the superconscient has been "...to evolve slowly the spiritual man out of the mental half-animal." (page 43)

Aurobindo's theory of spiritual evolution is meant to emancipate and guide humanity to a new destiny. Aurobindo re-interprets and furthers the ideas contained in the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita to suit the needs of the present crisis in the human race. According to the Mother, life on earth, including the human life and all its mentality, "...is a mass of vibrations, mostly vibrations of falsehood, ignorance and disorder, in which are more and more at work vibrations of Truth and Harmony coming

from the higher regions and pushing their way through the resistance." (page 177)

The gradual emergence of a perfected spiritual consciousness from Matter, Life and Mind, results in the Supermind. The descent of the Supermind into human consciousness is a necessary factor in the evolution of spiritual consciousness. This process of total spiritual transformation is retarded due to the ignorance that exists in the human mind. To Aurobindo, human aspiration is most important. So Yoga and mental discipline are necessary to enable man to realise the Supermind that is concealed in his self. Aurobindo envisages its manifestation first in a few, and then its spread in the many. The realisation of this truth will enable man to have "...a glimpse of a larger kingdom of self and world closed to the first earth life." (page 147) This will aid in the establishment of a harmonious society. The only indispensable factor is the "...ardent will for progress, the willing and joyful renunciation of all that hampers advance....." (page 155)

To the Mother, "...all mental constructions, all material efforts are vain, futile, if they are not consecrated to this Light and Force from above, to this Truth which is trying to express itself..." (page 174)

This book presents lucidly yet another aspect of Aurobindo's integrated philosophy aimed at increasing the spiritual consciousness of man. The objective is to create a new consciousness, and a new power which will lead to the appearance of a divine race on earth. This book is an indispensable asset to all those who wish to liberate their mind from the destructive forces which continually fragment it; for it is egoism and lack of faith which prevent one from perceiving the ultimate Truth.

Dr. Rama Nair
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FOR SEEKERS OF SPIRITUALITY

The sensible man does not try to diagnose his own disease and prescribe medicine for himself by reading medical books. In case of disease, a doctor's advice should be sought. In the same way, if after reading many books and scriptures one proceeds to choose for himself a particular spiritual discipline, his mind may become confused and troubled by doubts and misgivings, progress may be interrupted, and waste of effort and even harm may result. The reason is, that the various scriptures contain divergent or even contradictory directions and methods, suited to aspirants of different temperaments and capacities, and different stages of life. It is, therefore, dangerous in many cases to decide for yourself what is exactly suitable for you. The Guru alone can direct you to the right path. That is why spiritual knowledge has to be acquired direct from the Guru. Know that the initiation and instructions given by him are the only path for you to follow. If you do the spiritual practices as enjoined by him unswervingly and with full faith in them and in him, you are sure to achieve success in course of time. In any event, never give up these practices and take to other methods under anybody else's advice. If you jump from one thing to another, the only result will be that you will lose your way and drift about, without gaining anything.

Never think yourself to be weak. Have firm faith in yourself. Think, "There is nothing that I cannot do; I can do everything if I will." Why should you acknowledge defeat to your mind? Know that if you can subdue it, the whole world will be under your feet. One who has no self-confidence does not have real faith in God. Swami Vivekananda has said that the real atheist is he who has no faith in himself.

Nobody listens to the words of one who has no self-confidence; and God also does not listen to his prayers.

Your mind will inevitably be restless at the time of meditation so long as the idea has not taken firm root in you that the world is insubstantial and transitory, and that He alone is the only Reality. Love of God will grow and at the same time the mind will become calm to the extent that one is freed from the thirst for sense pleasures. All the pleasures of the world will become trivial and distasteful if even a particle of His Love is experienced.

Japa, meditation, ritualistic worship, prayer, remembrance, reading sacred books, association with holy men, godly conversation, retiring into solitude and thinking spiritual thoughts—whichever of these attracts you, according to mood and opportunity, and gives you joy, take advantage of that and do that. But meditation and Japa are the main things. Never miss them for a single day, however occupied you may be, or even in times of sickness or infirmity, in misfortune or calamity. In such circumstances, if you cannot or do not find it convenient to carry on your practice in full measure, make salutation, pray and do Japa for at least ten or fifteen minutes.

Asana is that posture in which one can sit for meditation steadily and with ease for a long time. But the spine has to be kept straight, and the chest, neck and head should be held erect, so that the entire weight of the upper part of the body may fall on the ribs and the chest may not sag. A stooping posture, in any case, is not healthy.

*from the teachings of
Swami Virajananda*