UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN-WESTVILLE

NIDAN

JOURNAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF
HINDU STUDIES & INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

Nidān

Journal of the Department of
Hindu Studies & Indian Philosophy

University of Durban-Westville

Volume 6 December 1994

Articles published in Nidān have abstracts reflected in Ultrich's International Periodicals Directory, New Jersey, USA, also in Periodica Islamica, Kuala Lumpur, Malayasia as well as the Index to South African Periodicals.

ISSN 1016 – 5320

Published and printed by

The University of Durban-Westville
Private Bag X54001 Durban 4000

The Department of Hindu Studies and Indian Philosophy would like to thank Champaklall Soni for his contribution towards the publication of this volume.

CONTENTS

ISSN 1016-5320 = Nidān, 6, 1994

ART AND RELIGION

M Varadarajan

INTRODUCTION

Art, in the context of religion, encompasses painting, sculpture, architecture, theatre, dance and literature. All the great religious books and epics like the *Bible, Rāmāyaṇa* and *Koran* have been acclaimed not only as the Word of God or epic distillations of human memory and experience; they have been also the containers of and vehicles to various and splendid art forms. Biblical stories are reflected in paintings, in places of worship; Koranic inscriptions feature in mosques and mausoleums; The *Rāmāyaṇa* is a veritable cornucopia, with the blossoming of not only poetry but theatre, dance and painting – all these being just a few of the wondrous manifestations of religious compositions and epic literature.

ARTIST AND ANONYMITY

A unique feature of ancient Indian art – whether related to religion or not – is the anonymity of the artist. No one knows who precisely authored the *Vedas* or most of the *Purāṇas* or created the magnificent temples and sculptures. It bespeaks the total submergence of the individual Self in the Universal Spirit. It recalls the words of the Buddha who said "Ananda, be lamps unto yourselves." Thus when the lamp in the artist is lit, the effulgence is such that there is no need for the lamp to proclaim itself by name any longer!

It is only in later centuries that the practice of ascription of the signature of the author or the composer or the painter or the sculptor, the *sthapati*, came into vogue. At the beginning of time, as Ananda K Coomaraswamy points out: "The objects to be made were ultimately "supports of contemplation...." The self-assertion of the individual artist as such was not sought or valued in the traditional community – the personal characteristics and psychology of the individual are the accidental and less enduring of the aspects of his existence.[1] He proceeds to say that, ideally, what is required of the artist is a renunciation of works which, according to him, is essentially the abandonment of the notion 'I am the doer' and a reference of the works to the real Author whose skill is invaluable.[2]

Speaking more or less to the same effect, R Srinivasan avers: "To lead us from the particular to the general, from the phenomenal to the noumenal, from the concrete to the abstract, from the shadow to the reality, from the seen to the unseen, from the seeming to the being, is the true object of Indian art."[3] Thus, the Indian tradition has been, as observed by Jitendra Nath Bannerji, that the artists and sculptors "generally hid themselves behind the names of such mythical artists like Viśvakarma, Māyā and others. We have no means of identifying an Indian Phideas, a Ployctus or a Lysippas."[4]

The above is true perhaps of all Oriental religious art – or even art in general – in a system where the artist lived by the canon of total obliteration of the Self. For instance, it has even been suggested by Okada and Joshi that the ornamental pool in the Taj Mahal is the celestial reservoir of abundance (*al-Kawthar*). The Taj itself has been interpreted by W.B. Begley as a symbolic substitute for the throne of God, placed by Islamic tradition just above Paradise. Some of the verses inscribed on the Taj say: "Enter thou, among my servants and enter thou my Paradise," but the only name to appear in the inscriptions is that of Amanant Khan Al Shirazi, the calligrapher, perhaps because calligraphy occupied pride of place in Islamic perception. As observed recently in an Indian Magazine which quotes Begley too: "This has, alas, kept historians guessing about the contributions of various architects as also contributions of the *Pletradura* masters from Italy and France – Veronco, Bronzoni and Bordeauk who interacted with anonymous Moghul painters, artists and lapidarists."[5] Till today they are unnamed, unhonoured, unsung!

BEAUTY IN ART OF RELIGION

I shall now deal with the fundamental tenet of all religions that one has to perceive Truth in order to alchemise one's being and existence on this earth. To the Indian mind, *satyam śivam sundaram,* and to the artist, the comprehension of Truth, comes through the perception of Beauty. As Clive Bell has observed, art and religion are two roads by which men escape from circumstances to ecstasy.[6] When the artist perceives Truth, through the path of Beauty, the effect is what the French would call ablouissement 'dazzling' or 'dizzying'. This is what the Upaniṣads also say "Nīlato yata madhyastvā vidyullekheva bhāswara," – Light dawns like the Sun emerging in a flash from a dense cluster of blue clouds. As observed by the French Composer Olivier Messiaen, the knowledge that dawns with this understanding is a perpetual ablouissement, an external Music of Colours, or the eternal Colour

of Musics."[7] It shows that God is beyond words, thoughts and concepts. "In Thy music, we will see music; in Thy light, we will hear light."[8] Such a spiritual uplifting of faculties gives us the clue to the awakening of light in the artist, who gets to be imbued with a magical, mystical, religious fervour.

It is precisely this which led Rukminī to address Kṛṣṇa as "Bhuvanasundara," the most beauteous in this universe; this is what led Madhusudhana Sarasvati to speak of Infinity as being the entire essence of Beauty: "Saundarya Sāra Sarvasva"; and it is the self-same perception which led the Tamil poet Kamban, while describing the beauty of Rāma, to state "Thol kaṇḍār tholey kaṇḍār" i.e. those who looked at the "ājānubāhu" (longarms) of Rāma looked only at the splendour of his arms, others were mesmerised by his eyes, yet others were hypnotised by his lotus feet and so on....

ENVIRONMENT, ART AND RELIGION

Another leading component of the interplay of art and religion is the rapport which the artist achieves in his beatific visualisation and harmonious presentation of the primal elements of Nature in his work. Arguing from our worship of rivers, mountains and trees, or in our theories of *Karma* and rebirth that all plants, insects and animals are born as men, or from the story of the Buddha's birth (where he enters into the womb of his mother in the form of an elephant), or even by our worship of some animals (cow, snake etc), S N Dasgupta observes: "It is no wonder that each artist should try to present our men and our Gods in perfect harmony with the world of Nature."[9] The representation of Śiva as the Cosmic Dancer, Naṭarāja, has the *Tiruvāsi* (cosmic energy) encircling the standing figure, while he carries the drum (symbolising the rhythm of creation, destruction and regeneration), in one hand, the deer in another hand, fire as the symbol of purity, tool of purification and means of self-illumination in the third hand, and water as the life-sustaining force in the fourth hand. As a symbolisation of creativity in its totality he embodies in himself both the male and female principles in his form as half male and half female otherwise called *ardhanārīsvara.*

The *Buddhist* and *Jaina* art works have been generally located in caves and verdant hills, far from the madding crowd, *Ajanta, Ellora, Sittannavasal, Rajgir, Khandagiri, Udayagiri,* etc. As Longhurst notes, "the Jains collected the most picturesque sites, valuing rightly the effect of environment on architecture."[10]

In the Hindu tradition of art, before cutting down a tree to fashion a deity from it, the ancient Indian sculptor worshipped the tree with these words:

> *yānīha bhūtāni vasanti tāni balim gṛhītvā vidhivat prayuktam*
> *Anyatra vāsam parikalpayantu kṣamantu tānyadya namo'stu tebhyah."*[11]

"Oh, thou tree, salutation to thee, Thou art selected for (being fashioned into) the icon of this particular deity; Please accept this offering rendered as per rules, May all the spirits which reside in you transfer their habitation elsewhere, after accepting the offering according to rule, May they pardon me today (for distributing them) Salutations to them.

On the same analogy, even when a stone was selected for sculpting an image of a deity, for example, of Viṣṇu, there were prescribed rituals which included worshipping the selected stone with sandal paste, flowers and *naivedya* (offerings of eatables) and propitiating the various *yadudānas, guyakas* and *siddhas* who may reside in the stone (or in the vicinity) and soliciting their permission for the use of the stone for making the image of Viṣṇu, while imploring them to reside in another place.

BHAKTI, ART, RELIGION

The next intrinsic element in art as applied to religion is the imperative for the emotion of *Bhakti* to suffuse the heart and soul of an artist. *Bhakti* is that which gives a golden glow to the *pratyakṣa* (common view) to evolve into the *parokṣa* (higher view). *Bhakti* calls for meditation too – though not in the formalised way, and it leads to transcendental experiences which can come only with the comprehension of Truth and Beauty. Through meditation, "a key notion and a central focus of all Indian religion and art," as Philip Rawson explains in another context, "the modes of music and the prototypes of sculpture and painting are thought to exist as superb heavenly entities, the task of each artist being to reveal and expose the beauty inherent in the celestial original."[12] In other words, art seeks to conscript the ear, the eye, the hand and the mind and engage them "into the imagery of the whole." In a sense, the calm of release, "which follows directly from the apperception of Truth" puts an end to rebirth, pain and to the submission of the trammels of time and sequence."[13]

Such is the concentration yearned for but it does not, of course, come easily to the artist, even when working in a religious cause, as for instance, while constructing a temple or a church or fashioning the idol of a deity. The *Yajurveda* states:

vratena dīkṣāmāpnoti
dīkṣayāpnoti dākṣiṇam
dākṣiṇyā śraddhām āpnoti
śraddhayā satyam āpyate

"By self-dedication *(vrata)* one obtains consecration *(dīkṣā)*
By consecration one obtains grace *(dākṣiṇa)*,
By grace one obtains reverence *(śraddhā)*,
And by reverence is Truth *(satya)* obtained.[14]

When we talk of *bhakti* in this context, we are not talking of a transient emotion. It should be of the type that the *Gopīs* in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* were endowed with, and which is spoken of in the Kṛṣṇa Karṇāmṛtam. The *gopīs* taunt Kṛṣṇa by asking him: "Do you harbour the illusion that you have freed yourself just by slipping out of our hands and running away? Let us see you trying to free yourself from the shackles of our hearts!" That is the kind of *bhakti* the artist needs.

ARCHITECTURE AND PLACES OF WORSHIP

Speaking of the architecture of places of worship, some scholars have observed that Hindu temple architecture seeks to "veil" whereas Western styles seek to "unveil." As Jos Pereira observes, "the first stresses the mystery of the sacred: the divine is inviolate and unfathomable and must be hidden from the gaze of the profane.... The second emphasizes the sacred's glory: The splendour and majesty of the godhead must be made manifest to all", as in St Peter's and the Gothic Cathedrals.[15] The Hindu temple is a progression of building from the towering *gopuram* at the entrance, through the spacious *prākāra,* to the *naṭamaṇḍapam, ardhamaṇḍapam* etc., onto the innermost sanctum sanctorum which is usually very dark. The idea behind the innermost chamber being dark is twofold: firstly, realisation or perception of the *Paramātman* is not easy; secondly, when you experience it, it is a flash of illumination, as you see the flickering of the lamp or the burning of camphor in the sanctum – *"Tamaso mā jyotir gamaya."* In the Western tradition, on the other hand, it is the unveiling of the splendour of the Universe, in a sense, as is reflected by the sheer grandeur of the churches, the spires, the vast expanse of painted ceilings, the towering splendour of the cupolas.

SYMBOLISM, ART, AND RELIGION

I would like to draw your attention to the symbolism of art in religion. Here, Hindu art differs from the Greek view. I have already quoted Srinivasan to show the movement from the particular to the general etc., culminating in the movement from the "seeming" to the "being" as the true object of Indian art. The vision of the Indian was bounded, as observed by Sir John Marshall "by the Immortal rather than the mortal, by the Infinite rather than the finite."[16] He proceeds to state that "on the other hand, to the Greek, man's beauty, man's intellect was everything and it was the apotheosis of its beauty and intellect that remained the keynote of Hellenistic art. These ideals, however, evoked no response in the Indian mind. Where the Greek was rational, the Indian was emotional, where Greek thought was ethical, the Indian was spiritual."

Thus, while Greek sculpture was concerned with total verisimilitude to the human form, the Oriental artist was consumed by a passionate vision of the imagery of the Infinite, as it crystallised in his mind's eye as it were. This is not to say that he sacrificed the principles of beauteous and physiologically perfect human construction but there was something more than physical exactitude in his creations. To give just one example, let me quote Heinrich Zimmer on the Gomatesvara Statue at Sravanabelgola (in the State of Karnataka, India): "It is human in shape and feature, yet as inhuman as an icicle, and thus expresses perfectly the idea of successful withdrawal from the round of life and death, personal cares, individual destiny, desires, sufferings and events."[17]

It is this spiritual perception that enabled Indian art to transcend merely terrestrial phenomena in all its literalism. How do you depict Devī or the Mother of the Earth, excepting as a symbolic figure? As pointed out by Philip Rawson: "As *prakṛti* she symbolises the first stage of the appearance of undifferentiated material actuality everywhere; she is the form and colour which the invisible centre projects; she is the beauty of the temple, transmitting energy downwards and radiating it outwards; she is the mirror reflecting and diffracting the original divine spark; she is also the power of speech and grammar, embodied into sacred and beautiful letters of the Sanskrit alphabet; she is the creating, sustaining and terminating power of time for bodily beings and forms; she is a divine maiden; she is the mother with large breasts and capacious womb; she is also depicted as ravaged and blood-stained; as Kāli the personification of death and the cremation ground, she is shown as black, red-eyed, with fangs and a lolling tongue; and as Durgā, personifying the combined energies of all the gods of Heaven, she is

displayed as beautiful and riding a huge lion. As Rawson concludes, "in sum, she is Time as active process and appearance, which brings us full circle to where we began – and back to the meditating *yogī*, who is the hero and culmination of Indian culture."[18]

In Buddhist art also exists a similar symbolism. As observed by Rawson again, the Buddha came to be thought of as having three bodies. His actual body, the *nirmāṇa-kāya* was rarely represented in art; his absolute body – *dharma-kāya* – is by definition unrepresentable. But between the two, the body of glory, the *saṃbhoga-kāya,* was capable of representing symbolically the Buddha nature. It has, among other characteristics, a bump on the top of the skull called *usnisa*; long arms, webbed fingers, lotus marks on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet; a twist of hair between eyebrows and breast. In the Buddhist shrines, the *śārīraka caitya* contained the physical relics of the Buddha or an *arhant.* The *Paribhogika Caitya* contained things used by a Buddha (or their copies) at sites of key events in the Buddha's life. But the *Uddeśika Caityas* are shrines "indicating" the nature of a Buddha, first symbols and all kinds of aniconic portrayals of the Buddha images like the *Bodhi* trees, Buddha footprints, lotus, *pūrṇa kuṃbha* (the vessel of plenty) and the *Dhamma* wheel.

There is symbolism in all of these. For instance, a shrine which has the depiction of a lotus, indicates that though born in water and grown in water, when it reaches the surface it stands there unsullied by water; just so, though born in the world and grown in the world, having overcome the world, a *Tathāgata* abides unsullied by the world – thus avers the *Samyukta Nikāya.* Ananda Coomaraswamy explains this kind of symbolism in his book "The Transformation of Nature in Art."[19]

Similarly, the *stūpa* of a Buddhist shrine also symbolises *Dhamma* and all its sacrifices. The *vasti* complete with honorific parasol discs equivalent to a *Bodhi* tree is a symbol of a Buddha's enlightenment and his enlightened mind. The whole symbolises, as Peter Harvey points out "the enlightened mind of a *Buddha* standing out above the world of gods and humans." Elsewhere it has been pointed out that "the non-personal and aniconic representation of the *Buddha* enabled artists to visualise the Enlightened One and his teaching in a purely spiritual way, without involving him in the sphere of *saṃsāra*....they succeeded in creating, in the midst of a teeming crowd of figures, a centre of emptiness suggesting the Buddhist *Nirvāṇa* state more convincingly than any human figure among a multitude of other human figures could have done."

In Christianity, St Gregory is often cited as the compiler of the body of Roman chant that bears his name – the Gregorian Chant – and is depicted "in medieval iconography with a dove (the Holy Spirit) perched on his shoulder."[20]

As for the symbolism of Naṭarāja, I have already touched upon it while talking about the symbiosis of the environment with religious art. Ananda K Coomaraswamy concludes that the symbolism of Naṭarāja practically embraces all the fivefold activities of the Lord – *sṛṣṭi* (creation), *sthiti* (preservation), *saṃhāra* (destruction), tirobhava (state of illusion) and *anugraha* (grace), the essential significance of the dancing figure being threefold; firstly, it is the image of His rhythmic play as the source of all movement within the cosmos (represented by the *Thiruvasi*); secondly, the purpose of His dance is to release the soul of man from the snare of illusion *(māyā)*; and thirdly, and most importantly, the place of the dance, Chidambaram, is within the heart.[21] Romain Rolland describes it as an example of supreme synthesis where everything has its place; every part has its function and all take part in the divine concert, their different voices and their dissonances creating in the phrase of Heraclitus a most beautiful harmony.

Going Eastward, towards Japan, the Zen anthology of the 16th Century puts it thus "the voice of the mountain torrent is from one great tongue; the lines of the hills, are they the Pure Body of the Buddha?"[22] As H. Munsterberg observes: "A mere blade of grass may be used as a sixteen foot gold Buddha."[23]

DANCE, MUSIC IN ART RELIGION

I have spoken so far of sculpture, painting and architecture. That leaves us with the important areas of dance and music – these two are, as we know, one integral continuum, the Darby and Joan of art, as it were! Music has always occupied a pride of place in religion. Since the days of the early Christian tradition, which recognised the great psychological value of music but seldom used it for esoteric or spiritual purposes, we have travelled a long way indeed. I have already drawn your attention to the Gregorian Chant. The early Church Fathers could not conceive of anyone actually listening to music other than for mere sensual enjoyment – probably a relic of their experience or perception of the Roman Empire music.

But things have changed and today, plain chant, as observed by the French composer Olivier Messiaen, "possesses all at once the purity, the joy and the

lightness necessary "for the soul's flight towards Truth."[24] To the singer and to the listener, it is a vehicle of entry into "those temples in the high spheres that can be opened through song only." Music struck in Sir Thomas Browne – a deep fit of devotion and a profound contemplation of the First Composer."[25] However, no one could have put it more movingly than T.S. Eliot when he says "Music heard so deeply, that it is not heard at all, but you are the music, while the music lasts."[26]

Similarly, it is not merely the poetic imagery, but the rapture of music and melody that endears Jayadeva's *Gītā Govinda* to our hearts: *yadi hari-smaraṇe* etc.

"If remembering Hari enriches your heart, if his art of seduction arouses you, listen to Jayadeva's speech in these sweet, soft lyrical songs."[27] Of course, the starting point of all music is the music in the *Vedas* particularly the *Sāmaveda,* whose recitation is *Sāmagāna.* Music is glorified as *Gandharva Veda.* As Yājñavalkya puts it: *avichyatam* (without flaw), *sāvadhānam* (with close attention), *paṭhan* (studying and by constant repetition becoming adept), *param brahmādhigachhati* (reaches the highest Brahman). "By studying according to ordained rules the singing of the *sāma* without flaw, and with close and rapt attention, by its study he reaches over to the highest *Brahman.*"[28]

It is also well known that song and dance have had a place in temple rituals as well. As the Śaivite *Suprabhedāgama* states:

> tadagre rudraganikāḥ sarvālaṅkārasamyutāḥ
> tadante gāyakāḥ proktāḥ tadante nartakāḥ vrajet.

"Bedecked dancing girls in front, the singers trailing behind and the male dancers further behind."[29] Similarly, the Vaiṣṇavite *Śrīpraśna Saṃhitā* describes young dancing maidens accompanying the Lord's procession, interpreting *śṛṅgāra* and other *rasas,* all singing to the mellifluous accompaniment of several musical instruments:

> *nartakyo'bhinayantyo vai śṛṅgārādirasān bahūn*
> *gāyantyaḥ susvarāḥ sarvā vādyaiśca vividhairapi*

In Islam, the recitation of the Holy verses of the *Koran* is verily in musical cadences. Of course, in the *Sufi* order, music has pride of place in religious practice. *Sama* (audition) called for strict rules of conduct and decorum as it developed into an institutionalised code, as pointed out by Joscelyn Godwin,

"allowing as the impetus to these ecstasies not only the canonical text but also devotional songs and instrumental pieces."[30] Finally, of course, everyone is aware of the Whirling Dervishes of the Near East. The *Ikhwan Al Sata* (in the 10th century) wrote "melodies which are composed of notes and rhythm", leaving "an impression on the soul similar to that made by the artisans work on the material which is the substratum of art."[31]

Sigerist (quoting 17th century author Epiphanius Ferdinandus) recalls that the writings on Jewish *Kabbala* (mysticism) contain a vision of a harmonious universe in which not only angels sing; but the stars, the spheres, the *merkavah* (chariot throne), the beasts and the trees in the Garden of Eden and their perfume, the whole universe sing before God. Godwin endorses the above, saying that, when given forth by one inspired portion the *Hasidic* song is an emotional outpouring....of the soul to God, "capable of transforming the soul of the singing worshipper to such an extent that definite stages of a mystic approach to god could be reached, stages which otherwise were most difficult to attain.[32]

Much the same could be said about dance, particularly Indian classical dance, which is based on a portrayal and communication of essential *rasas* or simply if inadequately defined, is the "essence of experience." The basic elements of our dance could be described as determinants *(vibhava)* or the physical stimulants to aesthetic reproduction, consequences *(anubhava)* or specific conventional means of registering emotional states in particular *abhinayas* (gestures and mime), moods *(bhāva)* or consciously emotional states which could be further divided into *vyabhichārī* (transient) or *sthāyī* (permanent), linked by the representation of *sattva bhāva* (involuntary physical reactions).

At this point, I must revert to religious literature – a passing mention of which I made at the very outset. Very often, and quite purposefully, such literature incorporates eternal truths or the principles of *dharma* or even include psychological factors. For instance, in the story of Rāma, Rāma is acknowledged as having prayed to Sūrya, the Sun God, to confer on him the power to destroy Rāvaṇa. He was in a quandary: "if I proclaim myself as Viṣṇu, then Rāvaṇa will surrender immediately and I cannot claim to have destroyed him. Thus, my incarnation would have become infructuous. On the other hand, if I act like a mere mortal, I cannot vanquish him who is endowed by Śiva with limitless power and strength"

Rāma concludes: "Hence, acting like a human, I have to resort to a device that will endow me with the power to kill Rāvaṇa." At this point the sage

Agastya comes in and advises Rāma to pray to Sūrya. You will thus see poetic fantasy and deep psychological insight woven into a religious book, resulting in the *Āditya Hṛdaya Stotra.*

The *Stotra* itself is a superb composition, containing not merely a statement of obeisance to One who endows the Universe with light which, along with water, makes things grow and prosper, but every word of salutation used by Rāma has been endowed with three meanings – the *sthūla,* the *sūkṣma* and the *kāraṇa* (the physical, the implicit and the causative). For example, as reflected in the following verse:

eṣa brahmāca viṣṇuśca śivaḥ skandaḥ prajāpatiḥ
mahendro dhanaghaḥ kālo yamassomo hyapāmpatiḥ.

The word *kāla* has a three fold meaning:– He who indicates Time; He who is *kālāgnirudra,* i.e. who can destroy the Universe; and He who comprehends the thoughts in everyone's mind, by analysing the word as *kālayati iti kālaḥ,* – such were the deep psychological insights and philosophical profundities that characterised an art form like religious literature.

Thus, ethics and aesthetics are one as Wittgenstein asserted in his masterpiece "The Tractatus." In a brilliant analysis, Richard Shusterman says that, to Wittgenstein, ethics and aesthetics were fundamentally unified in at least three significant aspects: firstly, both involve seeing things, *sub specie aeternitatis,* that is, transcendentally from outside, in such a way that they have the whole world as background; secondly, both ethics and aesthetics concern the realm of the mystical; and thirdly, both are essentially concerned with happiness.[33] To this, I would add: happiness not as an ephemeral phenomenon, but as a transcendental, illuminating, liberating experience. *"Ekesameva tadramyaṃ lagnaṃ yatra ca yasya hṛt.*[34] That image is beautiful to which one's heart is attached. The image has, of course, to be carefully chosen, meditated upon, worshipped without *ahaṃkāra* or the super egoistic, inflated opinion of oneself.

The ancient Chinese Book of Rites also speaks of mastery over music leading to regulation of the heart and mind, leading to a feeling of repose. Speaking of persons in such constant repose, Li Chi says: "Heaven-like, their action is spirit-like. Spirit-like, they are regarded with awe without any display of rage." This is exactly what Ananda K Coomaraswamy sought to convey when speaking of Indian music: "It is sorrow without tears, joy without exultation and passion without loss of serenity."

CONCLUSION

We seek and we find. The visions and the perceptions, the rigours and the disciplines, the exercises and the tribulations of an artist are the same as those of a spiritual seeker. The point that stands out in all this is that, whatever differences may be thrown up by religions in regard to all other aspects of humanity's quest for Truth – there is total unison at least in looking at art in relation to religion. It also calls for people of diverse tastes *("bhinna rucir janasya")* to achieve a rapport in their own individual way and according to their own endowments with artists and their creations – be it music or painting or sculpture or dance. What is needed in the onlooker or the viewer or the hearer is what *Abhinavagupta* calls *sahṛdayatva* ("capacity to have a common heart with the artist") to the point of understanding that the spectator's response to a work of art, as emphasized by Ananda K Coomaraswamy, is not confined to mere enjoyment or sheer gratification of the senses. In other words, the artist's aspirations of and the disciplines for creativity have to be matched by discipline and perception on the part of the spectator as well.

Goethe said of the aesthetics of Modern Europe: "For beauty they have sought in every age. He who perceives it is from himself set free.[35] As Ananda K Coomoraswamy has summed up: "Indian theory declares that in the ecstasies of love and art we already receive an intimation of our redemption. This is also the *katharsis* of the Greeks."[36]

ENDNOTES

1. Ananda, K. Coomaraswamy : *Selected Papers.*
2. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy: *Figures of Speech and Figures of Thought.*
3. R. Srinivasan: *The Facets of Indian Culture.*
4. Jitendra Nath Bannerji: *The Development of Indian Iconography.*
5. *India Today,* February 28, 1994.
6. Clive Bell: *"Art."*
7. Olivier Messiaen: 1977.
8. *Ibid.*
9. S.N. Das Gupta: *Fundamentals of Indian Art.*
10. Quote in Dr. Jyotiprasad Jain: *Religion and Culture of the Jains.*

11. Pratimā Lakṣaṇam from the *Bṛhat-Saṃhitā of Varāhamihira.*

12. Philip Rawson: *The Symbolism of Indian Art.*

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Yajurveda* 19.30.

15. Jose Pereira's Essay on "The Plan of the Hindu Temple and its impact on the Baroque Church," in *India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture,* Vivekananda Commemoration Volume, 1970.

16. Sir John Marshall: *The Monuments of Ancient India.*

17. Quoted by Dr. Jyotiprasad Jain: *Religion and Culture of the Jains.*

18. Summarised from Philip Rawson, *op cit.*

19. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy: *The Transformation of Nature in Art.*

20. Louis Rowell: *Thinking about Music.*

21. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy: *The Dance of Shiva.*

22. David L. Snelgrove (Ed).*The Image of the Buddha*

23. H. Munsterberg: *Zen in Oriental Art.*

24. Quoted by R.H. Blyth: *Haiku.*

25. Sir Thomas Browne: *Religio Medici.*

26. T.S. Eliot: *The Dry Salvages.*

27. Barbara Stoller Miller: *Gītā Govinda.*

28. Yājñavalkya: Book III, Chapter IV, Verse 111.

29. Olivier Messiaen: 1977.

30. Joscelyn Godwin: *Harmonies of Heaven and Earth.*

31. Quoted by Godwin: *op cit.*

32. Joscelyn Godwin: *op cit.*

33. Richard Shusterman: *After the Future.*

34. *Śukranīti-Sāra.*

35. G.W.F. Hegel: *On the Arts.* 1969.

36. Ananda K. Coomoraswamy: *The Dance of Shiva.*

ISSN 1016-5320 = Nidān, 6, 1994

CONCEPTS OF DEVOTION, PRAYER AND WORSHIP AS REFLECTED IN THE ṚKSAṂHITĀ

Maitreyee Bora

The fundamental elements that every man has to deal with are physical matter and physical energy. The developed expression of this view is known as materialism.[1] Man, the creature of flesh and blood that he is, is as stated by Stace (1953, p 11) born a materialist. As he belongs to the highest stratum of living creatures, he, besides suffering from physical pain, hunger, fear of death etc., also bears the brunt of emotional sufferings resulting from frustrated hopes, poverty, death of his kith and kin, etc. Feeling helpless, in the face of such sufferings, he turns to the supernatural. Religion was not born for the sake of religion but was created by man to 'deal with the forces that press in on us, endangering our livelihood, our health, the survival and smooth operation of the groups in which we live.... without which indeed life would be impossible' (Yinger, 1957, p 9). Yinger defines religion as 'a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggle with these ultimate problems of life. It is the refusal to capitulate to death, to give up in the face of frustration....' (*ibid.*, p 9). Solutions brought forth by innovators of religion, whatever be their value, bring relief to their adherents. Thus, religion is the means through which man carries the 'peak load' of his emotional needs. The very word *Dharma* (from *–/dhṛ* to hold or to carry) primarily signifies this very function of religion. *Dharma* sustains man and consequently the society which he lives in.

The nature of the 'peak load of human emotional needs' keeps changing, following the changes in social conditions. The nature of religious beliefs and practices of a particular people in a particular period of history is shaped by the nature of the 'peak load of emotional needs' of that people. The traits of a pre-historic religion reflect the ultimate concern of the pre-historic society to safeguard life and its basic needs such as land, cattle, rain, progeny, health etc. and thus, make life smooth and happy. This accounts for the *Ṛksaṃhitā* consisting of hymn after hymn dedicated to deities considered to be efficient aids to man in his endeavour to attain material well-being.

The *Ṛksaṃhitā* has been assigned by different scholars to widely different periods of time. Whatever be the age of the *Ṛksaṃhitā*, the fact remains

however that it is not very far removed from the beginnings of culture and civilisation in India. Besides, the hymns also reflect the religious speculations of people who might have lived centuries apart.[2] Vedic religion when it appeared in India could already have had a history behind it. Thus, Bloomfield (1908, p 16) says 'Indian religion begins before its arrival in India.'

The hymns of the *Ṛksaṃhitā* reflect the deep rooted faith in various gods of a people who were both pastoral and agricultural and were often engaged in strife with other groups of people both Aryan and non-Aryan. They created their gods in their own image. Human relations such as an emotionally rewarding faith in one's father, sons, brothers and friends, devotion to one's family and clan, served as the basis on which was shaped their concepts of god. According to Simmels (1905, p 360) 'Religion is the heightening and abstracting from their particular content of certain human relations – of exaltation, devotion, fervency and the like that are found widely in social life. Faith for example, is first of all a relation between individuals.' Thus, it is possible to explain the concepts of faith and devotion to god of an ancient society in terms of human relations. One comes across numerous instances in the *Ṛksaṃhitā* where one hears of familial and friendly relationships between the worshippers and their gods. The worshipper visualises in his god a father, a mother, a brother, a kin, a friend or even a son.[3] The word *pitā* derived from *–/pā* to protect, to nurture, signifies one who is the protector and master of the family. Being the father of his children he provides for them, is loving and sympathetic unto them. In an Indian setting a father inspires both awe and love. Through the analogy of the relationship between a father and his son, the Rgvedic worshipper gives full expression to his devotion towards and expectations from the progenitor and protector of his world. The worshipper looks upon god as his father and sees in himself a son of god. Thus RV.I.1.9 says 'Be easily approachable like a father to his son. Be with us so that we may not perish.'

It is possible to explain the significances of the analogies of *mātā, bhrātā, bandhu* and *sakhā* on the basis of the etymological meanings of these words. The word *mātā* comes from *–/mā* – to make.[4] Derived from *–/bhaj* to share or to serve, the word *bhrātā* denotes one who shares or supports. The word *bandhu* is formed from *–/bandh* to bind and denotes a *sagotra* i.e., a kindred.[5] Similarly, the word *putra* is derived from the word *put* plus *–/trai* to protect. Yāska explains the word as *'putraḥ puru trāyate'* i.e., one who protects in many ways.[6] In the *Ṛksaṃhitā* we come across expressions like *'pitur na putraḥ subhṛtaḥ'* – a good protector like a son unto his father (VIII.19.27), *'pitur na putraḥ kratubhir yatānaḥ'* like a son exerting for his father's sake (IX.97.30).

The word *sakhā* derived from the word *samāna* (equal) plus *–/khyā* to relate, connotes the senses of association, familiarity, attachment, belonging, participation, co ordination etc.[7] All of these meanings have been expressed in the Brāḥmaṇa sentence *'sakhāyaḥ saptapadā abhūma'*: we who had walked seven steps together had become friends *(Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa,* 3.7.7.11).[8] Mortals invoke god's friendship for they need his protection and favour and the friendship between man and god is such that can exist between the worshipper and the worshipped.[9]

In all these conceptions of god, stress has been laid on a sense of affinity between man and god. This affinity in turn conveys man's faith and devotion towards god. *Śraddhā* and *bhakti* i.e., faith and devotion are complementary to each other and as such denote almost the same sense in Sanskrit, viz., *ādarātiśayaḥ*. The sustaining power of faith as valued by the Ṛgvedic man of religion is reflected in the deification of *Śraddhā,* in the assertion that faith in god is rewarding, and in the manner in which *Śraddhā* is hailed and prayed for granting more faith in the performance of religious duties (X.151).[10] The *Ṛksaṃhitā* has placed *śraddhā* on a par with *ṛta* and *satya* (IX.113.4). In later Vedic literature, *śraddhā* has been hailed as the sustainer of the world: *śraddhā pratiṣṭhā lokasya devī' (Taittirīyabrāhmaṇa,* 3.12.3.1). *Śraddhā* is glorified as the most exalted wealth and is expressed in the form of a prayer to god: *'śraddham bhagasya mūrdhani vacasā vedayāmi'* (X.151.5). And this *śraddhā* carries in it the promises of material blessings. the *Taittirīyabrāhmaṇa* (2.8.8.8) clearly states: *'śraddhām kāmasya mātaraṃ haviṣā vardhayāmasi'*.

The word *bhakti* does not occur in the *Ṛksaṃhitā* in the sense of devotion. The word *bhakta* however, has been used at least twice to mean a devotee in the words *bhaktamabhaktam* (I.127.5) and *devabhaktam* (X.45.9).[11] Besides one also comes across references to *nāmasmaraṇa* and *kīrtana* which are the characteristics of later *Bhakti*-cult of Hinduism. Some examples are: *'kasya nūnaṃ katamasyāmṛtānāṃ manāmahe cāru devasya nāma'* (1.24.1), *'indra tava nāmāni īmahe'* (III.37.3), 'gṛṇīmasi tveṣaṃ rudrasya nāma' (II.33.8) etc.[12] Although compared to later ideals of *Bhakti* the aim of devotion as found in the *Ṛksaṃhitā* does not have the same connotation yet the germs of later *Bhakti* can be detected in these examples. The *RgVedic* concept of devotion comes under the category of Rājasī *Bhakti*[13] i.e., devotion influenced by passion. But whatever be the merit of this devotion, a sense of absolute faith is reflected in the hymns, when for example, the worshipper expresses his deep conviction that by virtue of his longing for god and through constant prayer he shall cross over all darkness and reach the other

side. He strongly believes that the boat which ferries him across is under the constant vigil of the gods.[14]

The most noteworthy Vedic word for prayer is *brahma*. It is an integral part of worship. Derived either from *–/bṛnh* or *–bṛh* to grow, the word denotes a sense of supreme good which is ever expansive: *'bṛnhati vardhate niratiśaya mahatvalakṣmaṇabṛddhimān bhavati'*.[15] The *Ṛksaṃhitā* speaks of unique prayers expanding like the spreading branches of a tree: *'brahmāṇyasamāni viprā viṣvagviyanti vanino na śākhāḥ'* (VII.43.1). The Vedic word for worship is *yajña*. Derived from *–/yaj* the word conveys a three-fold meaning viz., *devapūja* i.e., glorification of the divine, *saṃgaṭikaraṇa* i.e., co-ordination between man and god and *dāna* i.e., surrender. The worshipper is often referred to as *dāsvān* i.e., one who surrenders.[16] He surrenders unto god all his prayers.[17] Through this act of surrendering he seeks co ordination with god who has gifted man with the abilities to worship and pray. According to the *Aitareyabrāhmaṇa* (6.3.9) the initiated sacrificer gets symbolically surrendered unto god. He frees himself from being sacrificed unto god by offering an animal instead.[18]

Another fundamental meaning of *yajña* in the *Ṛksaṃhitā* is creation. In the *Puruṣasūkta* (X.90) we hear of the cosmic *yajña* through which all creation was generated. On earth through *yajña* man creates *dharma* which leads to the gods. *'yajuḥ skannaṃ prathamaṃ devayānam...dharmam'* (X.181.3).[19] As a result of his *yajña* saintly Devapi achieved miraculous rain and saved men from the drought.[20] It has been said that 'since man and man's actions and thoughts, hence also his prayers are a part of the forces of the universe, when we do not pray the result even in the physical world may be different from what it would have been had we prayed.'[21] The *Ṛksaṃhitā* also states that both *brahma* and *yajña* are gifts from heaven.[22] Hence, one does not perform them but rather spreads them.[23] Just like a shepherd returning the sheep to his master at the end of the day, man restores unto god the songs he obtained from god. As a reward he expects happiness from god: *'upa te stomaṃ paśupā ivākaraṃ rāsvā pitar marutāṃ sumnamasme'* (1.114.9).[24]

The prayer offered in a *yajña* is a formal petition to god seeking his blessings for a happy and peaceful life.[25] Its main element is the glorification *(vardhanam)* of god, thereby inspiring Him to unfold his benevolence unto man.[26] This aspect of Vedic prayer has led to various contentions such as:

a) the relation between god and man in the *Ṛksaṃhitā* is more like that of 'traders' (Macdonald, 1982, p 95).

b) magico religious nature of the prayers stand in the way of faith, love and devotion (Gupta, 1987, p 77).

c) prayer and worship are coercive in nature (Oldenberg, 1988, pp 184–187, 237), and

d) deliberations on ethics and morality and spiritualism are quite rare (Oldenberg, 1988, p 234, Gupta, 1987, p 50).

What we hear in a Ṛgvedic prayer is expectancy of reciprocity from god, and an expectancy cannot possibly be interpreted as bargaining. Nowhere in the *Ṛksaṃhitā* does man stand on a par with the divine so as to be able to bargain with god. When man says unto god 'With reverence we pray to you. We (mortals as we are) have our desires and you are benevolent. Here we are with our rituals. Why do you contemplate yet a while' (RV. VIII.21.6), he is begging to a higher entity, not bargaining.

So far as the magico-religious nature of Vedic prayer is concerned it may be mentioned that genetically prayer is related to spell or charm.[27] The effect of its magical touch can always be seen on an ardent worshipper. Prayer acts as a shield against threatening situations; *'brahma varma mamāntaraṃ'* (RV. VI.75.19^{d}).[28] Prayer is the energy that invigorates the mind with confidence in god and thus, sustains man in his battle against all odds. The Vedic Aryan cannot possibly be taken to be so naive as to literally believe that 'the reward he promises himself comes from the hands of god' (Oldenberg, p 184).

As to the contention of Oldenberg (p 186) that the prayers are coercive in nature, he states that the prayers clearly express the idea that the worshipper through magical coercion captivates and subjugates god unto him. By way of illustration he has referred to verses VIII.2.6, III.45.I, IV.15.5 and VI.51.8. According to him verse VIII.2.6 speaks of men with kine chasing Indra like a group of hunters chasing animals and enticing him with milch cows. The verse itself runs as follows *'gobhiryadīmanye asmanmṛgaṃ na vrā mṛgayante/ abhitsaranti dhenubhiḥ//'*. The two key words on which Oldenberg's view has been based are *mṛgayante* and *abhitsaranti* which he interpreted respectively as chasing and inveigling. But *–/mṛg* in Sanskrit denotes the act of seeking or looking for *(anveṣaṇam)* and *–/tsar* is used in the sense of sneaking or creeping. When these facts are taken into consideration the verse comes to mean that when men other than the true worshippers seek Indra as though a group of hunters are looking for animals, they with their kine and milch-cow sneak unto him. Sāyaṇa explains the word *abhitsaranti* as *'abhimukhaṃ kutsitaṃ gacchanti'* i.e., they approach

him in a despicable way. So far as the second example offered by Oldenberg viz., the sentence *'mā tvā kecit niyaman viṃ na pāśinaḥ* (III.45.1[b]) is concerned, the verb *niyaman* being in the subjunctive, its meaning is clear in itself: 'may no man be able to control you, as though they are fowlers catching birds.' The third verse referred to by Oldenberg to illustrate 'subjugation' of Agni by man belongs to a hymn dedicated to the sacrificial fire and the Aśvins. The verse in question clearly speaks of man controlling the sacrificial fire burning in the eastern and northern altars. Sāyaṇa has referred to this fire as *'pratyakṣeṇopalabhyamānaḥ'*.[29]

Yet another contention of Oldenberg (p 186) is that *namas* is a might that surpasses the gods through 'magic coercion'. He has referred to the Rgvedic statement *'namo devebhyaḥ nama īśe eṣām'* (VI.51.8[c]). *Namas* i.e., reverential salutation forms an integral part of *yajña*[30] and it implies subjugation *(prahvatvam)* of oneself unto one's god. The conception that the devotee's self-subjugation to god in turn subjugates god to his devotee brings in the sense of god being Bhaktaparavaśa, which implies that when the worshipper bows down before god, god cannot but grant him his wishes.[31] Thus, Varuṇa's wrath is pacified through *namas* and *yajña* (1.24.14), Indra comes to that worshipper who is *dāśvān* and *namasvin* (VIII.13.10)[32] and we hear of ancient sages who by virtue of constant self-subjugation unto god became pure and divine *(anavadyāsa devāḥ)* (VII.91.1).

Oldenberg's view on the religion of the *Vedas* has been that it is rather semi-religious in character. The gods are but elevated human beings (1988, p 23). They do not manifest any 'special holiness or rectitude'.[33] A similar view is held by Gupta (1987, p 50), who holds that the gods, being too human 'lack in super-human spiritualistic qualities', except of course Varuṇa the most ethical god of the *ṚgVeda* who is omnipotent and omniscient.

Swami Vivekananda (1953, p 2) has pointed to the fact that man being unable to grasp the abstract nature of god takes hold of anything 'that helps man to form a concrete image of the abstract'.

Man created god in his own image. In each man's image of god is projected his own ideal. The materialist sees in his god promises of material happiness, the man of ethics an upholder of moral laws and the spiritualist visualises his god as an omniscient entity who is holiness and rectitude itself. Although the Ṛgvedic idea of god's rectitude consists in not forsaking the supplicants, yet it has been observed that god is just to all: *'bhaktamabhaktamavo vyanto ajarā agnayo vyanto ajāraḥ'* (1.127.5).[34] Throughout the *Ṛksaṃhitā* the

sense of god's uprightness has been reflected through the concept of god being *Ṛtapā*. *Ṛta* in *Ṛksaṃhitā* besides being a terminology for cosmic order also denotes moral order.[35] *Ṛta* as a moral order consists in being good in thought and action. The *Ṛksaṃhitā* speaks of seven limits of human conduct *(sapta maryādāḥ)* and says that one who transgresses any one of them becomes sinful (X.5.6).[36] Hence the gods are entreated to lead man by the straight path: *ṛjunītī no varuṇo mitro nayatu vidvān aryamā devaiḥ sajoṣāḥ'* (1.90.1). At the end of this path lies a world full of wonderful bliss for him who values moral order: *'madhu vātā ṛtāyate madhukṣaranti sindhavaḥ'*, (1.90.6[ab]). Although one does not hear prayers for atonement of breach of morality except in the hymns to Varuṇa and the Ādityas, one can feel an undercurrent of ethical idealism in many prayers.[37] Worshippers have been referred to as *ṛtayavaḥ* (VIII.23.9) and *ṛtayantaḥ* (VIII.3.14, IV.8.3), earth and heaven as *ṛtāyinī* (X.5.3), and prayer as *ṛtavāka satya* (IX.113.2, 4). A striking feature of the Rgvedic sense of morality has been the idea that man may be unaware of his sin, yet is conscious that god is angry with him and hence he declares himself sinful.[38]

Coming to the question of spiritualism in the *Ṛksaṃhitā* which is saturated with an attitude of this worldliness, we see the Ṛgvedic man taking his first step in the journey of the quest of what lies beyond his visible world. It has been pointed out by Radhakrishnan (1968, p 57) that the temporal is the pathway to the eternal. It is however clear that every man does not perceive this path. According to Hopkins (Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, p 89) it is only some sporadic and extra ordinary personalities who spring beyond and stand apart from the mass. We come across such personalities in the *Ṛksaṃhitā* who have realised the Eternal out of a plethora of divinities.[39] The vast majority fail to realise this Eternal one because the veil of this worldliness shrouds their souls. The *Ṛksaṃhitā* says: 'You do not realise him who created these creatures, for something else has risen within you. Shrouded in mist and engaged in vain speech the hymn-chanter content with himself wanders about' (X.82.7).[40] In yet another verse the seer says: 'What shall he do with a *ṛk* who does not realise that it glorifies the abstract, imperishable, Being, in whom reside all gods. Only those survive who realise this' (1.164.39). These blessed few aspire to attain immortality by merging with god: *'martyastvaṃ syāmahaṃ mitramaho amartya'* (VIII.19.25[ab]). Referring to Agni Vaiśvānara the seer states that when this effulgent light is felt within the heart he knows not how to describe this feeling: *'vi me karṇā patayato vi cakṣurvīdam jyotirhṛdaya āhitam yat/ vi me manaścarati durādhīḥ kiṃsvid-vakṣyāmi kimunu maniṣye//'* (VI.9.6).[41] Vaiśvānarāgni is described as *'jyotiramṛtaṃ martyeṣu'* (VI.9.4). It is unmoving *(dhruvam)* but at the same time faster than the mind *(mano javiṣṭham)*.[42] The ecstasy of realising the

Divine Arbiter of the world within oneself is expressed in the verse which says: 'This (self) created by the gods is the abode of the Arbiter (Yama). For Him plays the flute and prayer bedecks Him' (X.135.7).[43] The *Ṛksaṃhitā* speaks of the ochre-robed ascetics who have realised the Divine. In this context a striking statement is made to the effect that when these ascetics move with the (ethereal) winds in a state of sagely ecstasy *(unmaditā mauneyena)* men perceive only their physical forms.[44] In other words when the ascetics are wrought in a state of divine intoxication only their outer forms remain in this world, not their inner beings.

The *Ṛksaṃhitā* is as it were, a record of man's godward journey that begins with a simple concept of god and religion and ends with the realisation of the Divine in Himself. The four aims of human existence envisaged by Hinduism viz., *Dharma, Artha, Kāma* and *Mokṣa* have their roots in the *Ṛksaṃhitā*. Hinduism recognises the utility of materialism as the stepping stone towards spiritualism. Thus, it has been observed by Radhakrishnan (1968, p 57). "Renunciation is the feeling of detachment from the finite as finite and attachment to the finite as the embodiment of the infinite."

REFERENCES

Ṛgvedasaṃhitā with the Commentary of Sāyaṇācārya in four volumes, Vaidika Samshodhana Mandala, Poona.

The Nighaṇṭu and the Nirukta, edited by L. Sarup, Delhi, 1984.

The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Vols. I, VIII and IX.

Bloomfield, M., *Religion of the Veda,* New York, 1908, p 16.

Gupta, Uma, *Materialism in the Vedas,* Delhi, 1987, pp 77, 50, 180.

Hopkins, E.W., *Origin and Evolution of Religion,* Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, Varanasi, p 89.

Macdonald, K.S., *The Vedic Religion,* Calcutta, 1982, p 95.

Oldenberg, H., *The Religion of the Veda,* Translated into English by S.B. Shrotri, Delhi, 1988, pp 234, 184–187, 237, 23.

Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life,* London, 1968, p 57.

Stace, W.T., *A Critical History of Greek Philosophy,* London, 1953, p 11.

Simmels, G., 'A Contribution to the Sociology of Religion', American *Journal of Sociology,* November, 1905, p 360.

Vivekananda, *Bhakti or Devotion,* Mayavati, Almora, 1953, p 2.

Yinger, J.M., *Religion, Society and the Individual,* New York, 1957, p 9.

ENDNOTES

1. Cf. *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,* Vol I, 1964, p 46.
2. Cf. Winternitz, M. : *A History of Indian Literature,* Vol I, Part I, Calcutta, 1962, p 49.
   Keith, A.B. : *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads,* Delhi, 1925, pp 2, 3.
   Ghurye, G.S. : *Religious Consciousness,* Bombay, 1965, p 191.
3. I.132.3, II.1.9, VIII.21.4, X.61.17.
4. Cf. 'aditir mātā sa pitā sa putraḥ' (1.89.10^{b}), 'aditir hyajaniṣṭa' (X.72.5^{a}).
5. The word *bandhu* besides conveying the sense of common ancestry also denotes 'spiritual kinship' as in *Atharvaveda,* 4.1.6. Another word for a kindred is *āpi* from *–/āp* to obtain to reach. Cf. I.26.3., II.29.4, VII.8.6, VIII.21.13, X.8.6 etc. Another word for a kindred is *jāmi* from *–/jam* to eat Cf. 1.76.3,4 Sāyaṇa explains the word as jamanti sahaikasmi pātre adantīti jāmayo bandhavaḥ (on 1.76.4).
6. *Nirukta,* 2.11.
7. Ch. *Unādisūtra,* 4.136. In later Vaiṣṇavite literature which glorifies *sakhībhāva* with the Lord, the word *sakha* also conveys the senses of love and devotion.
8. Cf. *'sakhāyau iva sacāvahai', Atharvaveda,* VI.42.1^{d}, 2^{a}.
9. Cf. I.53.2, 1.76.4, I.89.2, VI.88.5, VIII.32.13, VIII.93.3, XI.97.43 etc. Sāyaṇa explains man's friendship with god as *'yastṛyaṣṭavya stotṛstutyalakṣaṇena saṃbandhenāsmākaṃ mitrabhūtaḥ'.* (On VIII.93.3).
10. Cf. *'śraddhāṃ prātarhavāmahe śraddhāṃ mādhyandinam pari/śraddhāṃ sūryasya nimruci śraddhe śraddhāpayeha naḥ/".*
11. One however, comes across the words *devayantaḥ* (1.6.6, 39.7, 41.8, X.13.2), *devayan* (2.26.1), *devayu* (IX.12.2) and *devakāma (VII.2.9)* signifying aspirants of god.

12. Cf. I.24.2, I.154.3, VII.22.5, X.63.2 etc. *Nāmasmaraṇa* and *kīrtana* are sublime forms of worship signifying belief in the efficacy of god's names. Each name being correlated with a definite divine action, they reveal his full reality. Cf. Gonda J., *Notes on Names and the Name of God in ancient India,* Amsterdam, 1970.

13. Cf. *'viṣayānabhisandhāya yaśa aiśvaryameva vā/arcādāvarcayedyo māṃ pṛthagbhāvaḥ sa rājasaḥ'//*

14. Cf. VII.73.1, VII.66.3, VIII.25.11, *Bhāgavatapurāṇa,* III.29.9.

15. Cf. *Viśvakoṣa,* Vol 13, p 141, Some other noteworthy words denoting a prayer are *Vāk, Dhī, Manīṣā, Mati, Gīh, Śloka, Ṛta* and *Mantra.*

16. Cf. *'yo vāṃ yajñaiḥ saśamāna ha dāśati kavirhotā yajati manmasādhanaḥ',* 1.151.7. Cf. Sāyaṇa on *Ibid.*

17. Cf. *ā te agna ṛcā havirhṛdā taṣṭaṃ bharāmasi/ te te bhavantūkṣaṇa ṛṣabhāso vaśā uta//'* VI.16.47. Also see I.61.5, II.27.1, II.41.18, VIII.52.4, etc.

18. Cf. *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa,* 3.3.4.21.

19. Cf. *'yajuḥ yāgasādhanaṃ skannam skandanīyamāsecanīyaṃ prabṛñjanasādhanam.....dharmam',* Sāyaṇa on X.181.3.

20. Cf. X.98.5, *Nirukta,* II.10.

21. E.R.E. Vol VIII, 1915, p 689.

22. Cf. 1.37.4, II.34.7, V.41.7, VI.1.1, VII.73.2, VII.97.5, X.181.2, etc.

23. Cf. I.80.10, I.142.1.

24. Cf. 'krīḍārthaṃ srjasi prapañcamakhilaṃ krīḍāmṛgāste janā yat karmācaritaṃ mayā ca bhavataḥ prītyai bhavatyeva tat/ śambho svasya kutūhalasya karaṇammāccesṭitaṃ niścitaṃ tasmān māmakarakṣaṇaṃ paśupate kartavyameva tvayā'. *Śivānandalaharī* of Śaṅkara, Verse 66.

25. Cf. VII.35. It is an unique example of such a petition.

26. Cf. 1.5.8, 1.52.7, VII.12.1, VII.36.1, VIII.1.3, etc.

27. Cf. E.R.E., Vol IX, 1918, p 154.

28. Cf. VI.75.17.

29. Cf. IV.15.4 and Sāyaṇa on *Ibid.*

30. Cf. VIII.23.9, VIII.35.29.

31. Cf. VII.21.9, VII.36.5.

32. Cf. VIII.4.6, VIII.21.6, VIII.22.3.

33. As quoted by Gupta, p 180.

34. Cf. Sāyaṇa on *Ibid.*

35. Cf. Yamayamī Saṃvāda, X.10.

36. Cf. *Nirukta,* 6.27.

37. Cf. 1.104.4, 1.97, I.159.3, II.23.4–7, VI.51.13, VII.65.3, IX.73.6, X.9.4, X.10.12, X.89.8,9, X.100.7, X.117.2, 3.6. etc.

38. Cf. VII.86 and 89.

39. Cf. 1.164.46, X.72.2, X.81.4, X.82.3, X.90.2, 13, X.121.2, 7,8, X.125.1,4 X.129.6,7 etc.

40. Cf. Sāyaṇa on *Ibid.*

41. 'My ears enclose to hear, mine eyes to see him, the light that harbours in my spirit broadens. Far roams my mind whose thoughts are in the distance. What shall I speak, what shall I now imagine' (Griffith).

42. Cf. VI.9.5 Cf. *'anejadekaṃ manasojavīyaḥ', Īsopaniṣad,* Verse 4. Yāska describes Vaiśvānara as one who pervades all beings: *'pratyṛta sarvāṇi bhūtāni tasya vaiśvānara', Nirukta,* 7.21.

43. *'idam yamasya sādanaṃ devamānaṃ yaducyate/iyamasya dhamyate nāḍīrayaṃ ghīrbhiḥ pariṣkṛtaḥ//'.* Cf. Sāyaṇa,: *'yamasya niyanturāditysya vaivasvatasya vā',* on *Ibid.*

44. Cf. X.136.2,3. Sāyaṇa explains the words *'unmaditā mauneyena'* as *'munibhāvena laukikasarvavyavahāravisarjanena unmattavadācaranta yadvā utkṛṣṭaṃ madaṃ harṣaṃ prāptāḥ'.*

ISSN 1016-5320 = Nidān, 6, 1994

THE CONCEPT OF KAVI (POET) IN THE ṚGVEDA SAṂHITĀ

Nalini Devi Misra

The *Vedas* are considered to be the oldest literary monument extant in the world. Though the *Vedas* are religious texts, their literary aspects cannot be ignored. The *ṚgVeda Saṃhitā,* unlike the other three *Vedas* is a fine specimen of poetry of praise and prayer addressed to the gods.

Traditionally, the *Vedas* have the status of revelation just as the Bible or the *Qur'an* is 'revealed'. Certainly that ascription of revelation added a sanctity which placed the *Vedas* above rational analysis. But there is something more to it. What marked the hymns from ordinary everyday speech was the inspiration, an inspiration which so moved the composers that they trembled (cf. *viprah* from the root *vip,* to shake).[1]

It is the higher intellect *(dhī)* in human beings, generally with its deep insight which leads the vedic seers to a vision of ultimate Reality. The vedic hymn is said to have been revealed in a person's inner being.[2] The seers give the sacred speech to humanity through love.[3] Again the seers of the *ṚgVeda* are accustomed to utter the words which please the gods.[4] The gods generally teach the poets the sacred songs.[5] It is also clearly stated in the *ṚgVeda* that the poetic wisdom, the thought and hymns of praise come out of the god Agni.[6]

The Vedic poet-seers express themselves through various names such as *Viprah, Kavi, Yajamaña, Jaritri, Dhīra, Kārin, Karu and Ṛṣi* etc. The nature of these poet-seers are beautifully delineated in the *Vedas.* The present discourse aims at analysing the different concepts of *'Kavi'* (Poet) in the *Vedas,* specially in the *ṚgVeda.*

Yāska, the author of the *Nirukta* has given a two-fold derivation of the word *'Kavi'.* This word is derived by him either from the *kram* or from the root *kav.* He says that *kavih krāntadarśano bhavati, kavatervā.*[7] i.e. wise *(Kavi)* is so called because his presence is desired *(kam),* or the word is derived

from the root *kav* (to praise).[8] Durga, the celebrated commentator of the *Nirukta* is of the opinion that the word *Kavi* is derived either from the root *kram* i.e. whose vision goes far or from the root *ku* meaning to go.[9] Durga's view seems to be corroborated by the view of the author of *Uṇādi sūtras*. The author of *Uṇādi sūtras* gives the derivation of the word *'Kavi'* from the root *ku* with the suffix *'i'*.[10] The *Tattvabodhinī* comments upon its derivation as; *"ku śabde kavir vālmīkiśukrayoḥ."*[11] *Dhātupāṭha* also derives this word from the root *ku* meaning to sound.[12] Sāyaṇa, the famous commentator holds that the word *'Kavi'* can be traced either to the root *kram* (to pervade) with the suffix *'in'*[13] or to the root *ku* (to sound) with the *'i'*.[14]

The word *'Kavi'* literally means 'omniscient'.[15] This word is mentioned in the *Nighaṇṭu* as a synonym of *medhāvī* i.e. intelligent or wise.[16]

The ṚgVedic seers who were devoted to truth are called truth speaking people i.e. *satyavācah.*[17] These seers used the word *'Kavi'* having a two-fold meaning i.e. 'omniscient and wise'. Sometimes they address the gods such as Agni, Indra, Soma, Aśvinau, Sūrya, Mitravaruṇau, Dyāvāpṛthivī as *'Kavi'*.[18] In some places, the *yajamāna,* a person who performs a regular sacrifice and pays its expenses is also addressed as *'Kavi'*. Thus, the vedic sacrificer, *ṛtvijaḥ* and panegyrist *stotā* are also regarded as *'Kavi'* in the *RV.* The *RV.* introduces the name of a particular seer as *'Kavi'* who was a descendant of the noted seer Bhrgu.[19]

Agni, the fire god is worshipped with beautiful hymns by the seers. He is described as *Kavikratu,*[20] Omniscient, knower of everything relating to sacrifices. Agni is an embodiment of knowledge. He encompasses everything relating to knowledge on earth.[21] *Kavi* Agni is often requested to take oblations from the earth to the other gods.[22] Wise Agni is narrated as entering the hearts of people too.[23]

Like Agni, Indra, the second most important Vedic god is also addressed several times as *'Kavi'* in the *ṚgVeda.* Indra is addressed as a *ṛṣi,* born of old.[24] Once Indra killed Atka for Kavi's sake with deadly blows.[25] This Kavi was the father of Indra's friend Uśanā. Uśanā Kāvya is described as a special friend of Indra.[26] Indra mentioned that he is no other than Kavi Uśanā.[27] In the *ṚgVeda* it is narrated that Uśanā presented his thunderbolt to Indra as a symbol of love and friendship.[28]

The *ṚgVeda* describes vividly the nature of the soma plant. The Soma is described as a seer and a sage. The seers of the *ṚgVeda* reflect Soma as a

Brahman among the gods, the leader of the *Kavi-s, ṛṣi-s* of the sages, the bull of savage creatures, falcon among the vultures and axe of forests.[29] Somapavamāna is said to stir the wave of voice, songs and praises of the sacrificer like the rivers. The omniscient Soma goes singing just as a poet goes by songs and a sage by wisdom.[30] The wise Soma is described as a light winner, *ṛṣi-minded, ṛṣi-maker,* hymned in a thousand hymns, leader of sages, resplendent as a singer.[31]

Besides the Vedic gods, the *yajamāna* who performs a regular sacrifice is also narrated as *'Kavi'* in the *ṚgVeda.* The *yajamāna* is hailed as *'Kavi'* i.e. learned or intelligent and *'hotā'* i.e. one who offers oblations to gods.[32]

The worshipper *(stotā)* or the praiser is also seen to be addressed as *'Kavi'* in many places in the *ṚgVeda.* The seer requests the omniscient Vāyu to worship the *'Kavi stotā'*.[33] The same idea is repeated in the *ṚgVeda* 3–34–7. Here it is uttered by the seer that *'Viprāḥ uktebhiḥ kavayo gṛṇanti* i.e. the praisers who are wise singers glorify the achievements of Lord Indra with chanted praises in the houses of the *yajamāna,* he who is the patron of the Agnihotra sacrifice and others.[34]

The *ṛṣis* i.e. seers are awe-inspiring and truth-speaking people.[35] They often visualized in their minds some kind of spiritual experiences. Later sages have desired, according to A.C. Bose, "to repeat the spiritual experience of their predecessors. May that power come to us again".[36] The *Kavi-s* are the ancient seers. They are the learned people. They are swift in executing their duties. Being attached to the sacrifices they often 'moved' with songs. They worshipped gods for their favour.[37]

The *Kavi-s* who are well-versed in their own field interweave anew many things just as the rays of the sun interweave new chains of rays in the atmosphere.[38] Sāyaṇācārya is of the opinion that the *Kavi-s* are intelligent people. They knew their own activities. They are also experts in interweaving new ideas.[39] According to the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa the Kavi-s* were well versed in the *Vedas.* They were prudent and pious in their minds.[40] The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* repeatedly remarks that *kavir vidvānākūtābhijña ata eva gṛhapati*[41] i.e. *Kavi* is a learned personality and she is aware of the meaning of everything. According to Sāyaṇā, the *Kavi* is a *ṛtvik* i.e. sacrificer who is well-versed in the manifold activities of the sacrifices.[42] The seers were of mighty generations, they were firm minded and devout. They framed and upheld the heaven.[43] Assuming in this world mysterious natures, they decked the heaven and earth for high dominion. Measured with measures, fixed in their broad expanses, they set the great worlds apart and held them

firm for safety.[44] These seers glorify Agni with earnest thought, ensign of sacrifice, who fills the synod full.[45] The sages who are good singers have stored up thus sacred acts in Agni.[46]

The *'Kavi'* is a subject of honour in Vedic society. He is a rare personality and knower of the Self. Although he is young he is worshipped and honoured like a father.[47] Sāyana observes that a young *Kavi,* the knower of everything, is honoured like a father.[48] The *Kavi* speaks of himself as an artisan of words.[49] Songs are created in the poet's hearts.[50]

Out of the different concepts of *'Kavi'* as found in the *ṚgVeda,* it can be safely said that this word *'Kavi'* is used generally to mean a wise personality. He is the most intelligent among all sections of people on earth.

As Arnold[51] holds:

> Vedic poets were creating a poetic tradition in which we find all signs of a genuine historical development, that is, of united efforts in which a whole society of men have taken part, from father to son and holding up an ideal which has led each in turn to seek, rather to enrich his successors, than grasp at his own immediate enjoyment.

The *'Kavi'* is not an ordinary man. He perceives in his inner being something which inspires him to see more, and more precisely each and every object on earth. He desires to acquire an inspiration directly from the gods. Hymns were the powerful media to please the gods and gain their favour. Indeed hymns were the food of gods. The gods[52] when pleased by their worship have set a firm light in man to look on. And this unique 'Vision' sets the *Kavi* apart from the common run of man. Hymns afforded the *Kavi* a supra-normal vision. Even the sun, according to S. Bhattacharji,[53] revealed itself to the seer of a hymn. The *ṚgVeda* narrates that Agni is praised by the praiser with powerful praises.[54] Although in the Vedic age, the concept of *Kavi* (poet) has been woven with the concepts of gods, sacrificers, praisers and seers, yet the *Kavi-s* were distinct personalities who were themselves inspired and out of that inspiration flows their poetry.[55]

The sacrificers and the seers who dominated the Vedic intellectual domain were the true poets in the *ṚgVedic* period. The Aṅgiras seers, for example, were the true poets of old who dwelt with the gods. They won the hidden lights and they gained the dawn with their chants.[56]

Thus, it can safely be concluded that the word *'Kavi'* (poet) meaning a wise intelligent one, or one whose knowledge goes far, remains primarily confined to the sacrificers and the seers only in the *ṚgVeda.*

REFERENCE BOOKS

Original Works

Aitareya Brāhamaṇam with the commentary of Sāyaṇācārya, Vol I & II, Edited by Dr Sudhakar Mulaviya, Taraprinting House, Varanasi, 1st Edition, 1986.

AtharvaVeda Saṃhitā with the commentary of Sāyaṇācārya, Vol I, Edited by Shankar Pandurang Pandit, Krishna Das Academy, Varanasi, 1989.

ṚgVeda Saṃhitā with the commentary of Sāyaṇācārya Vol I-V published by Dr. T.N. Dharmadhikari and Shri. H.N. Joshi, Vaidika Samsodhana Mandala, Poona, 1978.

Yāska's Nirukta, Pt. IV : edited by Amareswara Thakur, University of Calcutta, 1970.

Vaiyākaraṇa Siddhāntakaumudi, Pt. IV with the commentary of Balamanorama and Tattvabodhini etc. by Giridhar Sarma Caturveda and Parameswarananda Sarma Bhaskarah, Motilal Banarsi Dass, Delhi.

Modern Works

Arnold, E.V. – *Vedic Metre in its Historical Development,* Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1967.

Bose, Abinash Chandra – *Hymns from the Vedas,* Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1966.

Bhattacharji, Sukumari – *Literature in the Vedic Age,* Vol I, K P Bagchi & Company, Calcutta, 1st edition, 1984.

Griffith, R.T.H. – *The Hymns of the RgVeda,* Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1986.

Lakshman Sarup – *The Nighantu and the Nirukta,* Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1984.

Varma, Siddheshwar – *The Etymologies of Yāska,* Vishvesvarananda Institute Publications, Hoshiarpur, 1953.

ENDNOTES

1. S. Bhattacharji, *Literature in the Vedic Age,* p 8.
2. R.V. 1–105–5 Vyūrṇoti hṛda matiṃ navyo jāyatāmṛtaṃ vittaṃ me asya rodasī.
3. R.V. 10–71–1 yadeṣāṃ śreṣṭhaṃ yadariprāsīt preṇā tadeṣāṃ nihitaṃ guhaviḥ.
4. R.V. 5–45–4, sūktebhir vo vacobhir devajuṣṭairindrānva'gnī avase huvadhyai.
5. R.V. 3–34–5, acetayaddhiya imā jaritri...
6. R.V. 4–11–3, tvadagne kāvyā tvanmaniṣāstvadukthā jāyante rādhyāni.
7. Nirukta : 12–13–2.
8. Sarup L. : *The Nighaṇṭu and the Nirukta* (Translation) p. 188.
9. Niruktam : 12–13–2. Durga's commentary : 'kaviḥ krāntadarśanaḥ athavā kavaterdhātor gatyarthasya kaviḥ kavati gacchatyasau nityam'.
10. Uṇādi Sūtras 67/578 'aca iḥ' 67/578.
11. *ibid* – Tattvabodhini commentary.
12. Varma. S. : The Etymologies of Yāska, p. 75. Indo-European *que* 'to pay heed to', *Gr. akeuei* 'he watches' agrees to some extent with the views of Durga.
13. R.V. 5–11–3.
14. R.V. 1–11–4.
15. R.V. 1–1–5, 1–12–7; S.V. 1–32.
16. Nighaṇṭu : 3–15.
17. R.V. 3–54–4 ṛtāvarī rodasī satyavācaḥ.
18. R.V. 1–1–5; 1–2–9 etc.
19. R.V. 9–2–23; 9–4–8, 9,10,11,12.

20. R.V. 1–1–5.

21. R.V. 2–5–3 pari viśvāni kāvyā nemiśca kramivābhavat.

22. R.V. 1–188–1 dūto havyā kavirvaha.

23. R.V. 2–6–7 antarhyagne iyase vidvān janmobhayā kave dūto janyeya mitryaḥ.

24. R.V. 8–6–41 ṛṣirhi pūrvaja asyeka iśāna ojasā....

25. R.V. 10–49–3.

26. R.V. 1–51–10.

27. R.V. 4–26–1: ahaṃ kaviruśanā paśyata mā.

28. R.V. 1–121–12 : yaṃ te kāvya uśanā mandinaṃ dādvrtra hananaṃ pāryaṃ tatakṣa vajram.

29. R.V. 9–96–6 : brahma devānāṃ padavīḥ kavīnāmrsir viprānām mahiṣo mṛgāṇām, śyeno gṛdhrāṇāṃ svadhitir vanānāṃ somaḥ pavitramatyeti rebhan.

30. R.V. 9–96–17.

31. R.V. 9–96–18.

32. R.V. 1–151–7 kavirhoṭa yajati manmasādhanaḥ.

33. R.V. 6–49–4 kaviḥ kavimiyakṣasi prayajyoḥ.

34. Sāyaṇa on R.V. 3–34–7 vipraḥ medhāvinaḥ kavayaḥ stotāraḥ vivasvataḥ viśeṣenāgnihotrādi karmārthe vasato yajamānasya sadane gṛhe....gṛṇanti stuvanti.

35. A.V. 2–35–4 ghorā ṛṣayo namo.

36. Bose A.C. : *Hymns from the Vedas*, p. 6, A.V. 7–66–1.

37. R.V. 5–45–4 nu kṣipraṃ yuvam ukthebhiḥ stotraiḥ kavayaḥ anūcānaḥ pūrve ṛṣayaḥ sujajñaḥ śobhanajajñaḥ.... pūjayanti.

38. R.V. 1–159–4 : navyaṃ navyaṃ tantuṃ a tanvate divi samudre antaḥ kavayaḥ sudītayaḥ.

39. Sāyaṇācārya on *ibid* (1–159–4).

40. A. Br. 2–1–2.

41. A. Br. 1–3–5.

42. R.V. 2–5–3 : kavayo medhāvino ṛtvijaḥ tatsaṃbandhāni karmāṇi pari abharat pari bharanti svāyattāni karoti.

43. R.V. 3–38–2 sukṛtastakṣata dyām.

44. R.V. 3–38–3 antar mahi saṃrte dhāyase dhuḥ.

45. R.V. 3–3–3 ketuṃ yajñānāṃ vidathasya sādhanaṃ viprāso agniṃ mahayanta cittibhiḥ.

46. R.V. *ibid.*

47. R.V. 1–164–16 kaviryaḥ putraḥ sa īmā ciketa yastā vijānāt sa pituṣpitāsat.

48. R.V. 1–164–16 Sāyaṇa's commentary 'piṭṛvat pūjyo bhavati'.

49. R.V. 9–112–3 kārurahaṃtato bhiṣagupal aprakṣiṇī nānā.

50. R.V. 1–67–3.

51. Arnold E.V. *'Vedic Metre in its Historical Development,* p. 21.

52. R.V. 6–9–5 dhruvaṃ jyotir nihitaṃ dṛśaye kaṃ mano javiṣṭhaṃ patayatsvantaḥ.

53. Bhattacharji S. : *Literature in the Vedic Age,* p 18.

54. R.V. 1–146–4.

55. R.V. 8–6–28.

56. R.V. 7–76–4 (Sāyaṇa's commentary: ye ṛtāvānaḥ satyavantaḥ kavayaḥ anūcānaḥ pūrvyāsaḥ pūrvakālināḥ pitaraḥ pālayitaraḥ sarvasyāṅgirasaḥ gūlhaṃ tamasāvṛtaṃ jyotiḥ sauryaṃ tejaḥ anvavindan, labdhavantaḥ...).

ISSN 1016-5320 = Nidān, 6, 1994

HUMAN NATURE AND ITS DESTINY IN INDIAN THOUGHT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE ADVAITA OF ŚAṄKARA

J.G. Desai

ABSTRACT

Indian culture, like the other cultures of the world, has always sought to understand the conditions and meaning of the struggle for existence in a universe, which is by all rational accounts, a mystery. Indian thought, therefore, has been perennially exercised over the enigmatic character of human life and the world.

This paper is a brief attempt to show how the thought traditions of India, especially the metaphysical perspective of Śaṅkara's *Advaita Vedānta,* sought to address the problem of human nature and its destiny. The ideas seminal to Śaṅkara's *Advaita* and to the *Upaniṣads,* from which he derived the essentials of his theory, have a long philosophic ancestry to be traced to the hymns of the *ṚgVeda,* one of which, at least the *Nāsadīya Sūkta,* has monistic import.[1]

The cautious acceptance of paranormal phenomena, hitherto relegated to the domain of the mystical, is becoming influential and presents a challenge to the long-standing hegemony of rigidly conservative scientism. The world of science has indeed become a house divided, and it is in the context of the resolution of this conflict that the metaphysical doctrines of India perhaps bear relevance.

In the Vedāntic and *Sāṅkhya-Yoga* traditions of Indian thought creative imagination, aesthetic sense, the intellect and intuition have always interacted to give rise to certain super-sensuous experiences usually associated with mysticism. But, it is interesting to note that scholars like D.C. Mathur argue that even science relies on super-sensuous experience or intuition. Thus Mathur says that in the many breakthroughs in science. – "A craving for wholeness, for total explanation" was displayed. He further adds: "Take away from a man's world his imagined goals, ideals, visions, myths, dreams and fantasies, and he will shrivel up."[2]

In like vein Piero Ferruci, commenting on certain developments in the field of psychology, welcomes the growth of "transpersonal psychology, its expansion of consciousness, peak experiences, ecstasy and enlightenment."[3] Ferruci believes that this trend can bring about a Copernican revolution, for the future of humanity lies in the search for the true Self.[4]

In general, Indian thought, with the sole exception of the materialists, has always been in fundamental agreement with this quest for truth. It is also among its early pioneers. In its attempt to find the truth, to know the central meaning of existence, Indian philosophy created many world-views in its long history of many centuries. Some of these thought-processes have survived to the present and represent, "one of the world's richest and longest-lived cultures."[5]

The over-riding concern of the many schools of Indian philosophy was ultimate freedom for the individual. A realised soul was a free soul and therefore it is said "A person of realisation becomes free; one who lacks it is entangled in the world."[6]

MAN'S UNIQUENESS

The well-worn theme of the uniqueness of the human individual as a self-reflecting and self-transcending being has been noted by the seers of Indian thought. The *Aitareya Āraṇyaka* thus says:

"Man alone knows the future, he knows this world and the next; and he desires to attain the immortal through the mortal. Thus is he endowed, while other creatures are aware of only hunger and thirst."[7] Immortality and personal effort to attain that state of immortality have been the ideal and the term destiny refers to this goal.

"Who has seen the first born, when he that had no bones bore him that has bones? Where is the life, the blood, the Self of the universe?"[8] This refrain about the mystery of things, has exercised the ancient Indian philosopher and still haunts man's imagination.

METHPHYSICS : DIFFERENT ATTITUDES

In India the *Cārvaka* materialists denied the existence of God and soul and on that basis rejected survival after death. The Buddhists too had no use for

God and soul; yet they yearned for *nirvāṇa,* a state of peace and enlightenment attained by the Buddha. The combination of matter and spirit constitutes the human individual in all the philosophic systems, except the materialist and the Buddhist. On the object side, it consists of the mind, the senses, intellect and the ego on the one hand, and the body on the other. On the subject side is the spirit or soul defined differently in each school.[9]

The union between entities disparate as matter and spirit is a mystery. It is not a straight-forward admixture or assimilation. The relation defies logical explanation, though rational attempts are made to support the notion that man is more than the sum of his parts. In modern psychology, as is well-known, there is the problem of the relation between mind and body, both of which for Indian thought belong to the perishable empirical series.

The realistic systems of *Sāṅkhya-Yoga, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika* and the *Mīmāṃsā* have a pluralistic conception of the soul, one inhabiting each body. The immediate subject of the conditions of pain and pleasure in the human individual is the mind-body complex and through it, indirectly, the soul.

WILL-TO-LIFE

Ignorant of its spiritual dimension, the personality pursues its chosen path, life-after-life with an incredible tenacity. A culture that believes in the hypothesis of rebirth shows that it does not despise life, though it may not like its negative conditions. The Buddha especially – and the *Sāṅkhya* to some extent – emphasizes the gloomy side of life. The *Vedānta* adopts a balanced view between the secular and the sacred, and usually has a positive outlook on life. The ontological support for the will-to-life is expressed thus in Upaniṣadic idealism:

"For who indeed would breathe, who would live, if there were not this bliss in space! For truly this (essence) causes bliss."[10]

The notion of *Ṛta* and *Dharma,* by extension, are the ethical principles of universal law and harmony, and guides to moral conduct. Indian philosophy in general accepts the principle of *Dharma.* Its corollary, *Karma* and rebirth, determines man's lot in life in terms of *deservedness*[11], so that arbitrariness is ruled out totally.

Human beings in their existential situation are not their own true being; the true spiritual reality, however, becomes entrapped in human nature, which

believes itself to be part of the historical process. It believes that it is the mask donned for the earthly masquerade. As is well known the word personality is derived from the Latin *"Persona"* meaning "sounding through"; thus an actor assumes a *"persona"* by virtue of his mask, which is taken off when the part is played.[12]

This notion of "the mask of personality" was not consistently upheld in Western history, according to Heinrich Zimmer.[13] For him the Judaeo-Christian legacy wished to keep the mask on forever, even beyond the grave.[14] It was not prepared to give up the ghost for good. One could compare this concept of early Western thought with the Hindu theory of *Līlā*: the world manifestation is the spontaneous free activity of the Supreme and the personalities in such a world, therefore, are not as real as the Great Being that put them forth.

The doctrine of the "Fall of the human personality" in Indian thought does not have the same connotation as in the Semitic tradition. In Indian thought selfishness, which is the ultimate sin, leading to like and dislike, love and hate, and a whole host of evils, is a relative condition, as contingent as the personality itself. These conditions cannot affect the soul, which by definition is pure and simple. The lapse from pure perfection which is different from moral perfection is the condition of the soul in space time.

By contrast, in the Semitic context, it is not surprising that there would be the Fall, given the idea that God created man in His own image. The image, because it inadequately represents the Divine, cannot be the perfect form of the divine essence.

The Indian doctrine of liberation can be understood in two ways: when man frees himself he frees the soul, the actor with the mask. In the process the human image, the empirical personality, realizes its inner depths; man as he is, dis-becomes. This view is not pessimistic as it may sound. Human nature as such is only of temporary duration. It has had a past, it exists now, and has a future in a transfigured sense. Some may say that it has no future at all, for its existence is ended when liberation is attained.

But to the liberated person the experience of the transcendent is the single most important event of his or her life, of unsurpassable peace and tranquillity. There is no sense of real loss for the consolation is in the *darśana*, the witnessing of the soul, the real subject, through the process of

mystical intuition.[15] Even in the case of the Buddha, there is *bodhi* or enlightenment, which has a positive connotation unlike the negative *nirvāṇa*. Both *bodhi* and *nirvāṇa*, however, signify the same experience.

THE QUESTION OF BONDAGE

This question, with reference to Śaṅkara's metaphysics could take the following form: who or what is the subject of bondage and how is he/she or it to obtain freedom from bondage? The very thought of who is bound evokes the immediate response, as attested to by most religions, that it is undoubtedly the human individual who is in bondage.

For the monistic or non-dualistic school a special significance attaches to this question of "who is bound"; in Śaṅkara's *Advaita* it begins to take a form that is likely to disturb the sensibilities of a religious mind, if not of a philosophic one.

The point can best be appreciated if the whole question is formulated differently as to what is it that is bound instead of posing it as if someone is bound. This way of looking at the problem is not alien to the *Advaita* but is at the very heart of it. It can be inferred without question from the central thesis of *Śaṅkara* that finite selves are nothing but the Absolute, the *Brahman-Ātman*, in earthly guise. As impersonal Reality, the Absolute may be denoted by "what' rather than by "who". In fact the entire cosmos is an apparent self-limitation of *Brahman*, the only unitary reality, absolute and deathless. If this principle is one without a second, as it is no doubt one of the recurring phrases in Śaṅkara's philosophy, then there can be no question as to what is bound, for there is no other besides the One that can, in one way or other, lose its freedom. So, whichever way one might turn, the conclusion is always that the question of bondage revolves around *Brahman*. In Śaṅkara's own words this ultimate reality of the One is stated as follows: "*Brahman* is the only ultimate reality, the world of multiplicity is false, and ultimately the soul *(jīva)* and *Brahman* are not different."[16]

Thus *Brahman* is the only Reality and the *jīva* is identical with it. This means that the Absolute has somehow become the finite selves.

Śaṅkara states that all finite selves are nothing but *Brahman*. Thus – "With the help of these illustrations of inferior beings the text shows that all individual souls are *Brahman*, who has entered into the aggregates of body and organs created by name and form. Similarly...you are woman, you are

man, you are a young man or even a maid; you are old, tottering about with the help of a stick; having taken birth you have your face everywhere."[17]

Yet the straightforward literal interpretation of the Absolute really becoming the selves is far from Śaṅkara's thought. At this juncture the notion of becoming – the *modus operandi* – is not immediately relevant. What is relevant is the essential principle that is involved: namely, that it is no other than *Brahman* that is the only subject of bondage. Having said this, it is interesting to note that in his attempt to refute the notion of the unconditional reality of the world, Śaṅkara argues that the phenomenal series cannot be said to have eternally co-existed with *Brahman,* that is, as a second entity. The mutable and perishable universe which is not in the same order of reality as *Brahman,* could not have existed prior to its origination. The whole problem connected with *Brahman* becoming the world and selves, which has significant implications as regards its bondage, hinges on the related problem of the originator and the originated. This means that the produced has a status only at the level of emergence and not before. Whereas the world has status by virtue of sense – mental cognition, the Absolute is above cognition and conception.

HOW DOES THE UNIVERSE ORIGINATE?

Śaṅkara accepts the position that the beginning of the universe does not admit of logical demonstrability. He rejects the possibility of creation out of nothing simply because he holds that the very existence of the universe depends on pure Absolute Being, its very ground and substance. He states, both on the authority of scriptures and on the basis of direct perception, that the effect is essentially the same as the cause.

"The world phenomena appear only because *Brahman* exists and not without it. Hence the world is non-different from *Brahman.*"[18]

This means that at the level of appearance the world phenomena are distinct and distinguishable as they are objects of apprehension; essentially, however, they are indistinguishable from *Brahman.* This theory carries with it the profound implication that though it is the sole reality and the subject of bondage, yet Brahman is bound not in a literal or real sense but only indirectly. Śaṅkara makes out that the world was nothing but the Absolute Self alone.

"The universe in which the difference of name and form were not manifest before creation, which was then one with the Self,....was denotable by the word and idea Self."[19]

Architects and others, for Śaṅkara, may need materials but not the Absolute, which is devoid of them.

Brahman is the essential and sufficient reality.

"Just as an intelligent juggler, who has no material, transforms himself, as it were, into a second self ascending into space, similarly the omniscient and omnipotent Deity, who is a supreme magician, creates Himself as another in the form of the universe. On this view the schools that hold such beliefs as the unreality of both cause and effect have no legs to stand on and are totally demolished."[20]

This passage suggests in no uncertain terms that the Absolute is this whole universe, that it has "othered" itself as it were. The Absolute really transforming itself as another is out of the question. In that case there would be no Absolute as it would have passed over into the world. Nor is it the case that the Absolute has split "into two halves, like a bamboo."[21]

The Absolute retains its self-identity, its fullness undiminished, while yet producing the world. Given this circumstance, the question to be answered then is, in what sense is the Absolute bound?

BRAHMAN, THE WORLD AND SELVES

The principle that Śaṅkara employs to signify the finitising process – the world and the many selves – is a philosophical stratagem that goes by the name of his now quite famous theory of *Māyā*. In a sense the thin veil separating, as it were, *Brahman* from all else is *Māyā*, a device through which Śaṅkara salvages the integrity and supreme sovereignty of the Absolute. It is again through *Māyā* that Śaṅkara attempts to shift the phenomenon of bondage to individuals who are the effects of *Brahman*, their ontological cause. But as individual personalities and psycho-physical entities, they are distinct and autonomous, and have a life history of their own.

PERVASION

The universe then is a pervasion of the Absolute, with the latter turning itself inside out as it were, without at the same time under-going any transformation. Accordingly every *jīva* – soul, together with its psychical and physical configurations, is the Absolute appearing under limited conditions. Individual beings regard themselves as finite centres of consciousness, real and independent. This is so because of an universal natural tendency, a *naisargika* or cosmic ignorance, termed *avidyā* or *nescience.*

"Nescience consists in the idea of Selfhood entertained about the body etc., which are not the Self. As a result of this self-identification follow love for those who adore that body and hatred for those who dishonour it, and fear and confusion from noticing its death. In this way, this multitude of evils, with infinite differences, that flows on forever, is obvious to all of us."[22]

For Śaṅkara nescience or cognitive error is the result of a strong illusory power associated with *Brahman.* In a significant statement Śaṅkara holds that though *Brahman* is at the root of the universe, Brahman's integrity is not compromised. Mysteriously *Brahman* transcends the world and yet in its immanence it is essentially identical with the plural selves.

SOTERIOLOGY

For Śaṅkara nothing less than metaphysical knowledge, *jñāna,* can free the finite consciousness, from its earthly bondage. Fundamental to Śaṅkara's soteriological ideas is his belief that the attainment of *jñāna* is not fortuitous, but the direct result of human endeavour. The spiritual requisites for an aspirant of *jñāna* are:

"Discrimination between the eternal and the non-eternal; dispassion for the enjoyment of the fruits (of work) here and hereafter; a perfection of such practices as control of the mind, control of the senses and organs, etc; and a hankering for liberation."[23]

Like Indian philosophers in general, Śaṅkara places a high value on the spiritual life, showing that for him freedom is the desideratum of all philosophising. *Brahma-jijñāsā* "a strong desire to know *Brahman*", leads to the knowledge of *Brahman*, which is "the highest human objective; for it completely eradicates all such evils as ignorance etc., that constitute the seed of transmigration."[24]

The realisation of God, while desirable as the highest religious goal, is *per se* not enough for liberation, as the dualism between God and self is not transcended. The aim is to eradicate all traces of *avidyā* which binds individuals into accepting earthly life as final. When gnosis displaces nescience then only is *Brahman* realised.

"(When) this universe....superimposed on....*Brahman*....through ignorance (is) sublated by enlightenment, then it is *Brahman* Itself that (is) presented through a denial of the manifestation superimposed by ignorance by saying *'Brahman* is one without a second', 'That is Truth, That is the Self, That thou art'. (Then) knowledge dawns automatically and....this whole manifestation of name and form....vanishes away like things seen in a dream."[25]

Liberating knowledge is a mysterious occurrence in which differences of the known, the knower and knowledge, which characterise perception and conception, are removed. It is impossible to describe *Brahman*; hence "even in scriptures, the Self is not presented like heaven or Mount Meru". The technical explanation is rendered as:

"Brahman is comprehended in the unanalysable mentation *(vṛtti)* of the form, 'I am *Brahman'*, that arises from hearing the great *Upaniṣadic* saying "'That thou art"'.[26]

While liberation, *mokṣa*, is the knowledge of the underlying unitary principle of one's own self and the universe, it at the same time establishes one in one's true status as that principle. The finite personality is in a sense exchanged for a universal one.

ENDNOTES

1. R.C. Majumdar, ed, *The Vedic Age* (Bombay : Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1971), p. 498.

2. S. Pandit, ed, *Perspectives in the Philosophy of Culture,* (N. Delhi : S. Chand & Co., 1978), p. 66.

3. *Inevitable Grace* (L Angeles : J.P. Tarcher, inc., 1990), p.4.

4. Ibid.

5. J.M. Koller, *The Indian Way* (New York : Macmillan Publishing Co, 1982), Preface, p. v.

6. S. Chatterjee and D. Datta, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy,* (Calcutta : University of Calcutta, 1968), p. 2.

7. *Aitareya Āraṇyaka* II.iii.2, quoted in M Hiriyanna, *The Quest after Perfection* (Mysore : Wesley Press, 1952), p. 22.

8. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* (London : George Allen and Unwin, 1956), p. 63.

9. S. Chatterjee and D. Datta, op. cit. pp. 25–6.

10. R.E. Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads* (Delhi : Oxford University Press, 1988). Taittiriya, 2.7.

11. K.H. Potter, *Suffering : Indian Perspectives,* (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), p. 2.

12. J. Campbell, ed., *Philosophies of India* (New York : Meridian Books, 1956), p. 236.

13. Ibid, p. 234.

14. Ibid, p. 236. Zimmer describes the western attitude thus – "the personality is eternal. It is indestructible. This is the basic idea in the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body,... the regaining of our cherished personality in a purified form, worthy to fare before the majesty of the Almighty....temporal in its beginning, immortal in its end."

15. S. Jhingran, *Aspects of Hindu Morality* (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass, 1989), p. 121.

16. Quoted in A.K. Lad, *The Concept of Liberation in Indian Philosophy* (Rewa : T.R.S. College, 1967), p. 112.

17. Swami Gambhirananda, *Brahma-sūtra-Bhāṣya* of Śri Śaṅkarācārya – henceforth B.S.G. (Himalayas : Advaita Ashrama, 1972), p 508.

18. Ibid, II.i.14, II.i.36.

19. Swami Gambhirananda, Eight Upaniṣads (Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama, Vol. I, 1957), p. 21.

20. Ibid, p. 23.

21. Ibid, p. 49.

22. B.S.G. I.iii.2, p. 162.
23. B.S.G. I.I.I., p. 9.
24. B.S.G. p. 9.
25. B.S.G. p. 621.
26. B.S.G. p. 31, footnote.

ISSN 1016-5320 = Nidān, 6, 1994

BOOK REVIEW

Dr P. Kumar K.S. Singh (ed). *The Mahābhārata in the Tribal and Folk Traditions of India, Shimla:* Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1993, pp. 264 (Rs 280)

The book under review is published under the auspices of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study in Shimla and the Anthropological Survey of India in New Delhi. It is a series of articles on the Mahābhārata traditions in India and was part of the two projects undertaken by the Anthropological Survey of India – *Rām-Kathā* and the *Mahābhārata* in the tribal and folk traditions in India. K.S. Singh, the editor of the present book, has done a good job in bringing the various articles on the topic. His organization of the book seems to have followed a structure according to various regions starting from the north of India down to the south, and covering a whole span of popular traditions. Although the term 'tribal' is gradually being replaced by other analogous terms such as 'primal', popular, folk *et al* in the context of cultural and religious studies, the authors of the book seem to have used it to distinguish in India the difference between what is known as "tribal" referring to the scheduled tribes, and the other communities who are variously known as scheduled castes and backward classes. The traditions which are associated with the latter are usually termed popular or folk traditions, while the former are usually known as tribal traditions in the context of India.

The content of most of the articles is complementary and provides an insight into how different communities in India have appropriated the story of the *Mahābhārata.* Certain epic characters appear to have a peculiar affinity to certain regions of India. What is interesting about this 'affinity aspect' is that some of the characters are not at all the main characters but part of the smaller episodes in the epic, e.g. Bhagadatta, Aniruddha in the north-east and Himalayan regions (see K.S. Singh's article, pp. 2–3). In some areas Duryodhana, who is usually depicted in the epic as the embodiment of evil, is considered their "god king." (Nehru Nanda's article, p. 49). In Himachal Pradesh, Vishnu, who is traditionally considered the god of the Hindus, is considered to be the god of the 'outcastes'. (see Sharma, p. 33). Some local traditions mention only sixty Kauravas (p 69) as opposed to the usual figure of one hundred. Many of the sages mentioned in the epic are considered

village gods. (p 37). Among the tribal people in Himachal Pradesh region, the epic battle is re-lived every year in the festival of Thodā. The followers of Kauravas are known as Shāthi and the Pāṇḍava followers are known as Pānshi. The two opposing tribes seem to be traditional rivals and engaged in stealing the married women and the live-stock of each other. This traditional rivalry seems to have been crystallized in the festival of Thodā. (see C.R.B. Lalit, p. 69).

In Assam region, the common people cherish the story of the *Mahābhārata* through the audio-visual art form of Ojāpāli (see Nabin Chandra Sharma, pp. 111 ff). K.D. Upadhyaya points out in his article that in Uttar Pradesh the story of the *Mahābhārata* is not as popular as the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. However, some of the main characters of the epic *Mahābhārata* are popular and are considered as gods or goddesses in the folk traditions (p. 130f). This is true of Gadhwal in Uttar Pradesh. (see Shivanand Nautial, pp. 79 ff.). Mahendra Bhanawat presents the localization of the various episodes of the *Mahābhārata* in the Rajasthan region (see pp. 140 ff.). The article on Central Indian traditions reveals the unique and interesting ways in which the epic characters are intertwined in local myths, as in the case of Bhīma in Orian mythology (see Mahendra Kumar Mishra, pp. 157 ff).

Not only did the epic characters influence the local traditions, the entire story of the *Mahābhārata* became the central theme for many creative works in the regional languages of India – e.g., Sarala Das' Mahābhārata in Oriya; creative compositions in Telugu by the poet-trio, viz., Nannayya, Tikkana, and Yerrapragada; Pampa's poetic work, Bikramārjuna Birilam, in Kannada; Mukteswara's work in Marathi, and the famous Tamil work Villipāratam by Villiputturar.

T.S. Rukmani's article draws attention to the extent to which a Sanskrit epic story became part of the Dravidian art forms, such as the Terukkuttu dance, especially centred around the cult of Draupadī. She points out that there are no temples associated with Draupadī and neither was she deified in the regions associated with the Sanskrit epic. The Tamilnad is however replete with the temple cult of Draupadī (see T.S. Rukmani, pp. 184 ff). Chummar Choondal deals with how the performing arts, such as Kathakali in Kerala have facilitated the survival of epic stories both in the oral and textual traditions (see pp. 211 ff).

N. Krishna Kumari deals with issues of women basing them on the Telugu oral songs related to the episodes of Subhadra and Arjuna. (pp 197 ff). P. Subbaya Chary's article provides an insight into the ways in which the

Mahābhārata epic became assimilated into the caste structure of the Andhra region. Thus some of the local myths related to the epic are in fact, as he calls them, 'caste myths'. (pp. 203 ff). Saraswathi Venugopal's article shows how the Tamil country claimed intimate connections with the epic through one of its main characters, namely Arjuna. The local deity, Aravan is seen as a son of Arjuna in local mythology which is assimilated into the Tamil works on the *Mahābhārata*. The Aravan festival is particularly significant for the homosexual community, pejoratively known as 'Eunuchs'. Alli, the daughter of the Pandya king is also seen as one of the many wives of Arjuna. (pp. 221 ff). While D. Seenisami dwells at some length on Villiputturar's work on the *Mahābhārata* and points out some omissions in the Tamil work, (see pp. 246 ff) Ranganayaki Mahapatra points out some peculiar Tamil customs preserved in the Tamil rendering of the epic (see pp. 241 ff). K. Lakshiminarayan's article takes a cursory look at the impact that the epic had on the local Tamil deities and the temples associated with them.

The book in general provides a great deal of material useful both for anthropologists and religionists. The articles are less theoretically presented than one would have expected. However, it may be seen as an advantage in that there is a lot of raw material for theoreticians. None the less, some theoretical reflection on the many dimensions of the epic could have thrown some light on conceptualizing and understanding India's differentiated traditions.

ISSN 1016-5320 = Nidān, 6, 1994

BOOK REVIEW

Dutta, A., and Agrawal, M.M., (ed.), *The Quality of Life,* B.R. Publishing Corp, 1992, pp. 307 (Rs. 300)

This volume consisting of twenty five, on the whole, excellent papers plus an inaugural and a keynote address and editor's notes, is a remarkable contribution to a most appropriate theme. This material was presented at a Seminar on 'Quality of Life' held at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study Shimla India in April 1990. The high quality of most of the presentations and the contextualised approaches of the contributions resulted in a publication which will remain undated for a long time and which will be to the benefit of not only India but for most countries which are trying to find their feet in situations of rapid social change and its often negative effects. This book should be read and used especially also in the new South Africa which gave its first liberated steps after the negative experiences resulted from the application of a rapid and degrading ideology. This has indeed affected the quality of human life in this country on so many levels. Most of the themes are of special significance for contemporary South Africa also.

Starting off with an exposition of what is understood by 'quality of life', essays on this theme concentrate on what it should be based. The significance of the practical saints of India receive the necessary attention with special reference to the *puruṣārthas* concentrating on *dharma, artha, kāma* and *moksha* which highlights the importance of the realm of the spiritual. Not merely the basic physiological and other needs are to be put forward as such attitudes are rightly referred to as "naive". Value judgements are basic to the quality of life as is evident among the great practical seers of India. Of vital importance are such value judgements also in South Africa at this very moment which point to the importance of the Scriptures of our various religions especially in a time of re-orientation. As in *dharma* our whole Universe – also our own little 'universe' – should be held together physically and morally.

It is very difficult to single out in such a book specific sections for special attention. The approach in this book is holistic which is in this sense different from much of the western mere scientific and thus distorted emphases when it comes to a theme such as the quality of life. This does not imply that this

study ignores the scientific dimension. All the papers on development thinking, development goals, development strategies, the prospects of balanced development reveal a most balanced approach to this activity in order to ensure its positive influence on the quality of life. After this exposition follows an analysis of the negative influences of living conditions on the physical, mental and emotive future of the younger generation for whom a well balanced educational system and its implications receive attention. Of importance is even the unexpected such as an analysis of the quality of rural architecture – how the mountain, the plain, the desert influenced rural architecture; whether the landscape has been effectively domesticated or not.

The latter part of the volume concentrates on 'social awareness', 'interactive institutions' and 'aesthetics'. Here issues such as the right to communicate, the hermeneutic approach to the quality of life, at what price to the quality of life, and changing values as well as the search for it in various human expressions such as in fiction, art and culture and its bearing on inner freedom, all these and more receive attention.

India's living conditions and its economy improved after its liberation. The desire is expressed that basic human qualities be encouraged in the face of alienation. The emphasis on individual rights rather than corporate obligations, on rewards rather than real responsibilities; the undue emphasis on intellectual, technical and political progress increasingly affects people's mental health as a result of the loss of "inner security, happiness, conscience, and the capacity to love and trust...the chizoid man is the natural product of the technical man..." With more comforts the modern person has less contentment. It is thus imperative to bring back "the truly human quality in our life-world" to which *dharma, artha, kāma* and *moksha* call the people who are fortunate to have it in their religious vocabulary. Of course, these highly valued spiritual and moral signposts have their equivalents in the other religions to which people adhere in South Africa but which are so often neglected.

Of special significance is also the reaction against outdated concepts such as the Cartesian dichotomy between mind and matter and the study and evaluation of all phenomena in quantitative terms. Alternative methods such as holistic medicine, holistic approaches to economy, to education etc., are envisaged. The necessity to produce a new 'Vision' of society is emphasized with a fundamental rethinking of the very premises which guide and govern modern institutions. Modern society is in an enormous crisis which is not centered in the society as such but this crisis is a personal and individual one

and only from this context could the quality of life emerge authentically on a global scale.

It will indeed be a most disappointing development if the discussions and findings of such an important event, modestly referred to as a "seminar" become localised instead of internationalised. Although the immediate reference is to India, the quality and stance of most of the papers should not be localised. It could be read with equal profit in the northern and southern hemisphere but, as the problems of the southern hemisphere are in many respects the same, this volume should be closely scrutinised and its suggestions and recommendations seriously considered for the sake of a better future. There are very few books which have so thoroughly dealt with the various issues that affect positively and negatively the "quality of life" in the human context. It should be a key document for discussion groups, seminars and conferences in any country but especially in these countries in the southern hemisphere which are facing multi-faceted crisis situations.

NIDĀN

Journal of the Department of Hindu Studies & Indian Philosophy

CRITERIA FOR SUBMISSION AND ACCEPTANCE OF PAPERS

1. Papers should be pertinent to any aspect of Hinduism or Indian Philosophy, and should not exceed 6000 words.

2. Papers will be subject to evalution by referees drawn from a source of local and international scholars in the above specialized areas.

3. Each paper must be prefaced by an abstract of approximately 100 words, setting forth the gist of the paper.

4. Gender discrimination should be avoided in the paper, unless it is necessary for the sense intended.

5. Notes should be rendered at the end of the paper and not as footnotes.

6. The author's full name, address, title, qualifications and present position, must be supplied on a separate page.

7. Each paper must be accompanied by a signed declaration to the effect that the paper is the original composition of the author. Such a declaration should be rendered on a separate page.

8. Publication of papers submitted cannot be guaranteed. Further, an article which is accepted for publication, may be held over for publication in a subsequent issue of the Journal.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

Southern Africa R15,00 or equivalent in All other countries US $ 20.