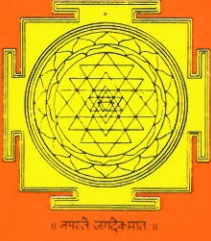


A PROJECT ON BHARATIYA-SAMSKRITI-SARVASVA-KOSHA



**Kalpatharu Research Academy Publication**

**Chief Editor : DAIVAJNA K.N. SOMAYAJI**

## **DHYĀNA AND ZEN**



By

**S.K. RAMACHANDRA RAO**

**KALPATHARU RESEARCH ACADEMY**

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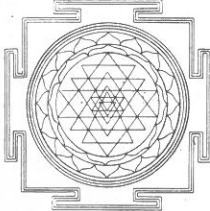
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## DHYĀNA AND ZEN



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॥ नमस्ते जगदिश्वराय ॥

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## PREFACE

It is well known that Indian principles and practices of yoga have greatly influenced the spiritual outlook of China and Japan. Of particular interest and the Chinese charm and Japanese Zen, which bear a clear and marked impact of Indian Dhyana techniques included in Ashtanga Yoga. Prof. Dr. S.K. Ramachandra Rao has kindly prepared this volume to highlight the borrowers of the Dhyana and Zen of near far east from Indian sources. The Academy is grateful to him for this service.

The Academy is deeply beholden to the gracious blessings of Jagadguru His Holiness Sri Sri Sri Bharathi Theerta Mahaswamiji, of Sringeri Sharada Peetham, chief patron of the Academy and to the keen interest of Shri V.R. Gowrishankar Administrator of the Sringeri Sharada Peetham and chairman of the Academy.

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Bangalore  
Sri Parthiva Nama Samvat  
Makara Sankranti  
Date : 14 January 2006

**DAIVAJNA K.N. SOMAYAJI**  
CHIEF EDITOR AND DIRECTOR  
**KALPATHARU RESEARCH ACADEMY**



**KALPATHARU RESEARCH ACADEMY**  
**INSTITUTION FOR**

- \* Promotion of Research - oriented Studies in Veda, Vedanga, Agama, Jyoutisha, Vedanta, Yoga and Ayurveda
- \* Study of Sanskrit language in particular and other related languages.
- \* Propagation of Vedic Phonetics
- \* Establishment of Veda Pathashalas in Guru Kula system
- \* Running of Oriental Libraries (Prachya Granthalaya)
- \* Collection, Preservation and Publication of Old Manuscripts

## INTRODUCTION

The present volume deals with the essential ideas of Dhyana and how they are responsible for the development of Zen in China and Japan. Buddha attached great importance to Dhyana (Pali jhana) and wherever Buddhism spread. It became an important detail of spiritual practice. This aspect of Buddhism makes it thoroughly an upanishadic practice (illustrated by nidhidyasana). The involvements of Dhyana and Zen are discussed in this volume.

I am grateful to Sri Daivajna K.N. Somayaji Director and Chief Editor of Kalpatharu Research Academy for including this book (which is in the nature of a compilation) in the Bharatiya-Sanskriti-Sarvasva-Kosha series of the Academy's publications.

My gratitude is due to the Jagadguru His Holiness Sri Sri Sri Bharathi Theerta Mahaswamiji of Sri Sringeri Sharada Peetham and the chief patron of the Academy, the Administrator of the Peetham Sri V.R. Gowrishankar the Chairman of the Academy.

Also I am indebted to my young friend and student Sri Shankar who went through the proofs this book carefully and helped me in various ways while this book was being produced.

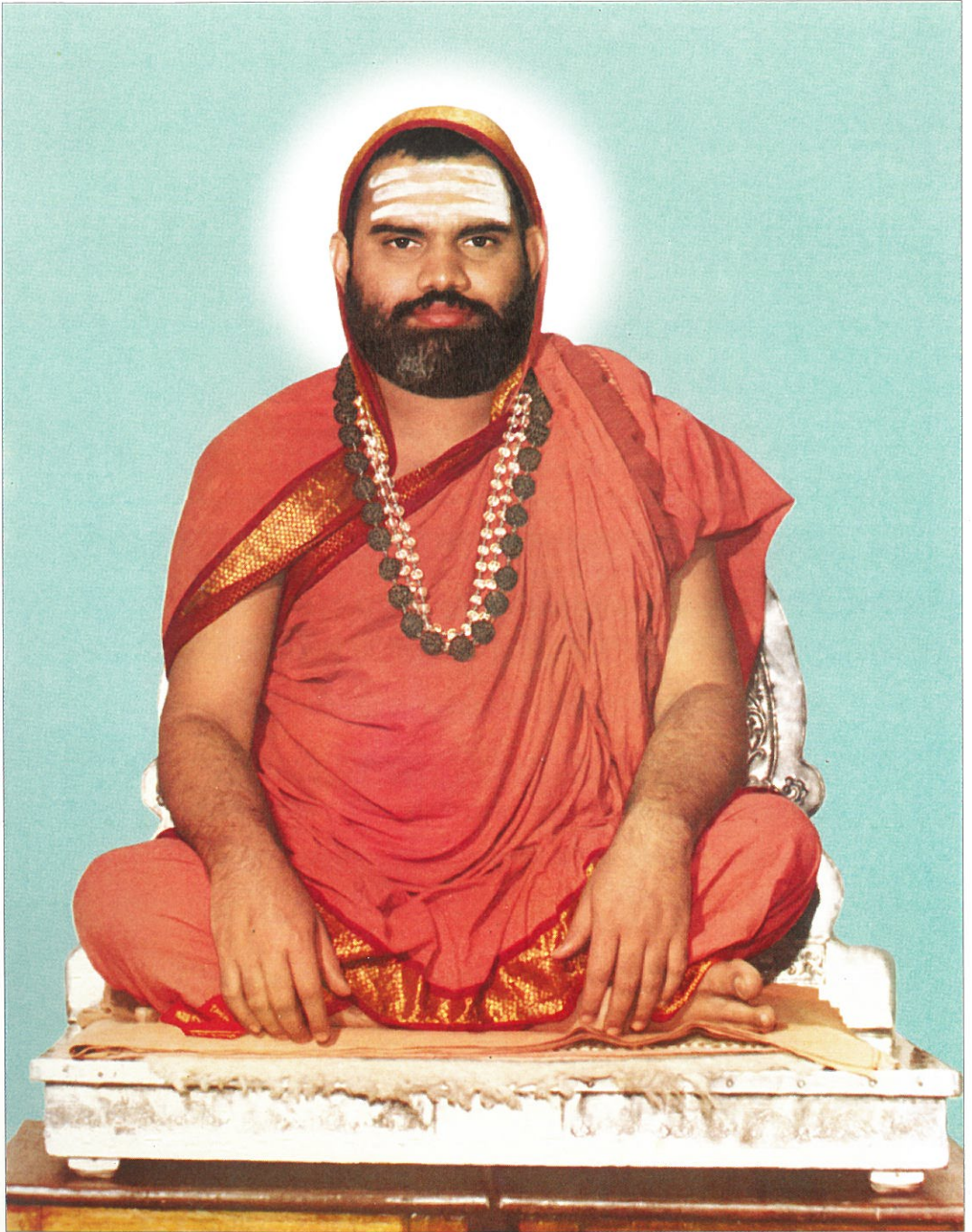
I am thankful to my friends at Omkar Offset printers.

**S.K. RAMACHANDRA RAO**



नमस्ते जगदेक मातः  
 मालासुधाकुम्भविबोधमुद्रा  
 विद्याविराजत्करवारिजाताम् ।  
 अपारकारुण्यसुधाम्बुराशिं  
 श्रीशारदाम्बां प्रणतोस्मि नित्यम्

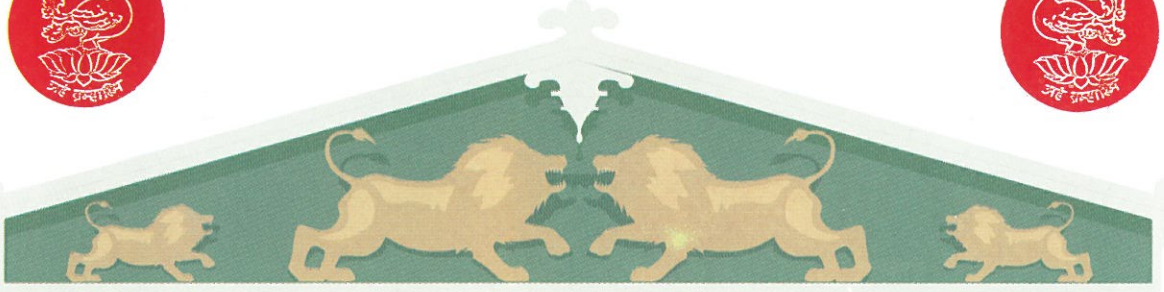




H.H. Sri Sri BHARATI THEERTA MAHASWAMIJI

HUMBLE DEDICATION TO OUR CHIEF PATRON

भारतीकरुणापात्रं  
भारतीपदभूषणम् ।  
भारतीपदमारूढं  
भारतीतीर्थमाश्रये ॥



॥ श्री शृङ्गेरी श्रीजगद्गुरुमहासंस्थानम् ॥

श्रीमत्परमहंसपरिव्राजकाचार्यवर्य पदवाक्यप्रमाणपारावारपारीण  
यमनियमासनप्रणायामप्रत्याहारधारणाध्यानसमाध्यष्टाङ्गयोगानुष्ठाननिष्ठ  
तपश्चक्रवर्त्यनाद्यविच्छिन्न श्रीशङ्कराचार्यगुरुपरम्पराप्राप्त षड्दर्शनस्थापनाचार्य  
व्याख्यानसिंहासनाधीश्वर सकलनिगमागमसारहृदय सांख्यत्रयप्रतिपादक वैदिकमार्गप्रवर्तक  
सर्वतन्त्रस्वतन्त्रादिराजधानी विद्यानगरमहाराजधानी कर्णाटकसिंहासनप्रतिष्ठापनाचार्य  
श्रीमद्राजधिराजगुरुभूमण्डलाचार्य ऋष्यशृङ्गपुरवराधीश्वर तुङ्गभद्रातीरवासि  
श्रीमद्विद्याशङ्करपादपद्याराधक श्रीजगद्गुरु श्रीमदभिनवविद्यातीर्थस्वामिगुरुकरकमलसज्जात

॥ श्री जगद्गुरु शृङ्गेरी श्रीमद्भारतीतीर्थमहास्वामिभिः ॥

अस्मदत्यन्तप्रियशिष्य श्री नरसिंह सोमयाजि विषये नारायणस्मरणपूर्वकं विरचिता  
आशिषस्समुल्लसन्तु ।

वैदिकान्ववाये लब्धजनिर्भवान् ज्योतिर्विद्यामभ्यस्य तद्द्वारा बहून् जनान् उपकुर्वन्नास्ते । वेदागमशास्त्रेषु  
भूयसीं श्रद्धामावहन् तत्प्रचाराय कल्पतरु संशोधनप्रतिष्ठान नाम्नीं संस्थां प्रत्यस्थापयत् । सा च संस्था  
विशिष्टान् ग्रन्थान् प्रकाशयन्ती वरीवर्ति ।

शृंगगिरि जगद्गुरु महासंस्थाने पारम्परिकीं भक्तिमास्थितवतो भवतो मनसि संस्थामेनां शृंगगिरि मठीयां  
विधातुं सङ्कल्पः उदभूदिति विज्ञाय मोदामहे । अत एव अदसीयानि प्रकाशनानि इतः परं मठीयत्वेनैव  
प्रकाशयिष्यन्त इत्यपि भवान् निरचिनोत् । दुर्लभाः भारतीयसंस्कृतिप्रबोधकाः विशिष्टाः ग्रन्थाः  
संस्थाननया प्रकाशयन्तां तेन च भवदीयो मनोरथः फलेग्रहिर्भूयात् श्रीशारदाचन्द्रमौलीश्वरयोरनुकम्पया  
भवान् इतोधिकं श्रेयः परम्पराभिः समभिवर्धतामिति चाशास्महे ।

शृङ्गगिरिः

ईश्वर भाद्रपदशुद्धदशमी भार्गवासरः

12.9.1997

इति नारायणस्मरणम्



## PART ONE

# DHYĀNA AND ZEN

## INTRODUCTION

The methods of meditation suggested by the Buddha (like those in Śrāvaka -Yāna, Mahāyana, Vajrayāna, Chinese ch'an, Japanese zen, and Tibetan Mahā-mudra) are meant, not to gain supernatural powers or to tranquillize the mind, but to transform the transactional human being, full of limitations and stresses, into an enlightened being, peaceful and Joyful. The Buddha emphasized the potential in every individual for such a transformation. He had achieved this transformation in his own life, and out of concern and compassion for others he told the world about this transformation. The figure of the Buddha represents not only perfect enlightenment (sambodhi, prajñā) but also selfless compassion (karuṇa). The two constitute an inseparable pair (yuganaddha, yab-yum).

There is in the background of all methods of meditation an inquiry into normal human nature, the way of the world that is habitual. This inquiry and analysis are preliminary to transformation that is planned. In the body-mind nexus, it is mind (chitta) that plays the leading role. In all transactions, thoughts (manas) generate, determine and direct behaviour. They are responsible for our misery, tension, confusion and restlessness. Meditational methods are primarily interested in transforming the thoughts.

It is not correct to say that it is in the very nature of mind (chitta) to have thoughts (manas). Thoughts are in response to stimulations from within and from without. Bodily sensations, sensory appraisals, memories and urges, feelings and emotions (like love, fear, anger and anxiety) cause thoughts to emerge and jostle about. Likewise objects and events in the outside world evoke thoughts of approaches, aversions and indifference. There could be mind devoid of thoughts, as for instance in dreamless sleep. In fact, thoughts are like mists that cover up mountains and lakes; they hide the mind. The proper pursuit for the meditator would be to get at the mind beyond the thoughts. This is described as the original mind, the essence of the mind, no-mind or self-mind (alaya-vijñāna, chitta-mātra, tathatā or Śūnya).

The thoughts that make our lives hectic, stressful, indolent, active, pleasurable, painful, anxious, eager, comfortable and crowded are not inherent in the mind, nor are they natural to mind. They rise and they disappear; they proceed and they withdraw. They are not unlike the breathing, which consists of breaths that come in (inhalations) and go out (exhalations). In fact, thoughts (manas) and breathing (prāṇa) are closely related. That is why breathing exercises figure prominently in yoga. The Buddha also advised that one must be mindful of the breaths (ānāpāna-sati).

Thoughts are generally outward oriented. They receive the external input, and they respond to stimulations from the objects in the surrounding. The presence of the objects outside are apprehended only by thoughts; thoughts can even conjure up the visions and images of

objects that are really not there at all. The very nature of thoughts is 'imagination' (the making of images). Thoughts not only make things real, but also relevant. But for the thoughts, objects in the world would neither be real nor relevant. The world is made up of thoughts more than objects; and life consists largely of the flow of thoughts. Thoughts come to terms with each other, collide with each other, and fight with each other. Thoughts synthesize, integrate, analyze, disintegrate, smoothe out, make and break.

But thoughts are discontinuous, despite the appearance of a flow, like the flames of a fire or the light from a lamp. In the midst of the seeming continuity, thoughts are individual, discrete, and evanescent. Each thought rises, and falls, allowing the next thought to rise, which will also fall. This is the limitative character of thoughts—one at a time. But they can have a cumulative effect. Several elemental thoughts could go to build up a complex thought, much like the letters in a word, or words in a sentence. However, thoughts do not always build up. They can be contrary to each other, contradictory and conflicting. They indicate likes and dislikes, moves, and counter-moves, approaches and aversions. They thus contribute to restlessness and anxiety.

Thoughts are by nature fleeting, they constitute a succession. Each thought, by itself and in its own time, is feeble and ineffective. When they are of a like nature and are also in a continuous line of succession, we call it attention or concentration. Generally, this needs an external object or cause which has the power to sustain the succession of thoughts. When this happens, the thoughts cling to the object or cause, which may be real or imaginary. They attach themselves to the object



or cause; they get rooted in the object or cause. This 'grasping' is called 'graha'. Attachment is the most important detail of transactional life; and all attachment is only in the thoughts, and of the thoughts. It is because of this that life becomes habitual and customary.

It is clinging that puts diverse and discrete thoughts and objects together and carves out an artificial oneness, a whole that is but a superimposition, an appearance, an illusion. Transactional life is like this. There is nothing natural in it, nothing original and nothing spontaneous. The mind that is natural, original and spontaneous is screened off by thoughts that cling to objects of the transactional life. What we consider as real and relevant is in reality the expression of clinging, 'deep-rooted colossal clinging.' Efforts to find happiness and peace in this transactional life characterized by clinging is like the man wanting to go to the Himalayas travelling in the direction of the sea. Transactional life, by its very nature and causation, is incapable of providing us with lasting peace or abiding satisfaction. The Buddha learnt this in his own life, and proceeded to move away from normal life.

And then, after a great struggle, he reached the other shore (pāram ita): from thoughts he dug into the mind, from the surface he dived into the depths, from appearance he moved into the real. He was transformed into an enlightened one (the buddha), after having been an ordinary mortal (pṛthakjana). The ecstatic utterances from his lips at the moment of liberation from the fetters of transactional living describe the 'samādhi' which characterizes the other side of life. He had discovered how the habitation for the worldly beings was constructed; he had moved far away from such habitation.

When he experienced the presence of illumination, it was not a vision of some light outside himself. It was the clear and bright mind in himself that he had discovered. It was devoid of all thoughts; the flames of the fire were extinguished. The thoughts did no longer rise and fall. Thoughtlessness was the sword that cut off transactional life. The mind that was busy with the world of objects and events was now merged in the original mind; it is in this sense that it is no-mind, void. It is what the texts call 'dharma-dhātu'. To realize this is wisdom (prajñā), which is not brought about by reasoning, intelligence or transactional prowess, but by "sitting quietly, not doing anything". This is what is known as "meditation" (dhyāna). This is the crucial teaching of the Buddha - to transform the normal human consciousness to the perfect and flawless Buddhahood by dhyāna and prajñā. Dhyāna is to free oneself from attachment with external objects. Prajñā is to realize the innate essence of the mind.

When Gotama the Buddha passed away, one of his intimate disciples, Anuruddha, is said to have uttered this gāthā:

नाहु अस्सासपस्सासो ठितचित्तस्स तादिनो ।  
 अनेजो सन्तिमारभ्य यं कालमकरी मुनी ॥  
 असल्लीनेन चित्तेन वेदनं अज्झावासयि ।  
 पज्जोतस्सेव निब्बानं विमोकखो चेतसो अहूति ॥

(*Dīgha-Nikāya*, 2, 157)

"The Buddha's mind when he was alive was firm and settled. He did not even then breathe in or breathe out. There were no thoughts

at all in his mind. He had gained absolute tranquillity. With an active mind, he endured the bodily pain. He has now died. Like a lamp going out, he is freed from his mind". Here is a picture of the Buddha, and also of the essential Buddhahood that is latent in every individual. Thoughts and breathing go hand in hand. When thoughts cease, the breathing also stops. His mind (chitta) that was active is the original mind, 'no-thought'. The bodily pain(vedana) is the necessity to be transactional, to have thoughts. His death relieved him of this need to move from no-mind to mind; he now got dissolved in the no-mind, freed from all transactions (vimokkha).

In the historical perspective, Kumara-jīva, the great translator, who arrived in China from India before 400 A.D. had a disciple in China Tao-sheng (360-434 A.D.) by name. It was he who emphasized the employment of dhyāna for the sake of obtaining prajñā. He insisted on meditational practices, and rejected the value of book-learning and reasoning in the matter of enlightenment. During the days of the next great translator Paramārtha, the renowned Bodhidharma arrived in Canton, China, in 520 A.D. He hailed from Kanchipuram in South India, and was a mystic-saint. He it was that transmitted the Indian lineage of dhyāna and prajñā to China. He was the 28th patriarch in this lineage, and became the first patriarch in China. This Indian lineage was like this :

1. Mahākāśyapa (the immediate disciple of the Buddha)
2. Ānanda (the cousin and disciple of the Buddha)
3. Śānaka-Vāsa (contemporary of the Buddha)

4. Upagupta (contemporary of Aśoka)
5. Dhṛtaka
6. Michchaka (Pāli name)
7. Vasu-mitra
8. Buddha-nandi
9. Buddha-mitra
10. Pārśva
11. Puṇya-yaśas
12. Aśvaghosha (author of Buddha-charita, 1st cent A.D.)
13. Kapimala
14. Nāgārjuna
15. Kāna-deva
16. Rāhulaka
17. Sangha-nandi
18. Gayaśāta
19. Kumāraka
20. Jayāṭa
21. Vasubandhu
22. Manoratha
23. Haklena (3)
24. Āryasimha
25. Basiyasita
26. Puṇyamitra
27. Prajñā-tāra
28. Bodhidharma (470-543 A.D.)



After him, the lineage in China=

29 (2) Hui-K'o (486-593 A.D.)

30 (3) Sheng-ts'an (death 606 A.D.)

31 (4) Tao-hsin (579-651 A.D.)

32 (5) Hung-jen (601-675 A.D.)

33 (6) Hui-Neng (638-713 A.D.)

In this lineage, it was Sheng-ts'an (Sosan in Japanese) who was a Taoist, who crystallized the Buddhist viewpoint in the typically Chinese and Japanese contexts. His gāthā:

"Follow your nature and accord with the Tao  
Saunter along and stop worrying.  
If your thoughts are tied, you spoil what is genuine

Don't be antagonistic to the senses  
For when you are not antagonistic to it  
It turns out to be the same as the complete awakening

The wise person does not strive (wu wei)  
The ignorant man ties himself up  
If you work on your mind with your mind,  
How can you avoid an immense confusion?"

He advised : "Let your mind alone; trust it to follow its own nature". His successor, Tao-hsin, asked him "What is the method of liberation?" Sheng thereupon inquired: "Who binds you?" Tao-hsin replied : "No one binds me". Sheng countered : "Why then should you seek

liberation?" It is said that Tao-hsin got liberated at once. This anecdote provides the central conception of Ch'an (Zen) ideology.

This ideology however is not peculiar to the development of Ch'an (Zen). It is a typical Indian outlook, and we find its formulations even in the Upanishads. The mystical traditions in India have all along followed this line of thought in their doctrinal essays and in their practices. This becomes evident in many tāntrik works, in Dattātreyā literature, in the Siddha literary works, and in books like 'Yoga-vāśishṭha' and 'Tripurā-rahasya' (Jñāna-kāṇḍa). This became the mainstay of Mahāyāna Buddhism, and its impact in China, Tibet and Japan was both creative and pervasive. The following pages of this book illustrate this impact.

## DHYĀNA AND ZEN

Years ago, a kindly friend put into my hands a remarkable book written by a Chinese ascetic, Chang chen-chi. The book was *The Practice of Zen*. I was then already practising Zen under the Japanese monk, the reverend Nakagawa of the Myokoji monastery, who was on a visit to India and stayed with us in Bangalore. My wife and I had also met the celebrated Zen scholar, D.T.Suzuki in Madras, I was acquainted with the books of Alan Watts, especially those on Zen history. Thus the book that was now given to me made an easy reading. It covered the familiar ground, but provided a new perspective. It reconciled many discordant notes and strove to present a synthetic viewpoint.

More importantly, it reminded me of the Indian background for the Chinese and Japanese developments of the theory and practice of enlightenment. Zen had its roots in India undoubtedly, but its immediate ancestor was Chinese. Bodhidharma took the dhyāna ideology to China, and when it was carried to Japan, it had already become characteristically Chinese. And there, it became typically Japanese. It was no longer the simple Indian ideology, but the 'view' remained the same. It is the image of the Buddha, symbol of Buddhahood that lies latent in every living being, that articulates in all the Ch'an and Zen sects uniformly. And this 'view' is what distinguishes the upanishads. The understanding of Zen will be complete only when it is viewed as a flower from the seeds hidden in the upanishadic soil.

Zen is well-known as a Japanese method of meditation with its applications in several fields such as martial arts, gardening, sports, management and entertainment. Not so well-known, however, is that it is Indian in origin. Zen is Japanese for the Chinese word Ch'an-na, which in turn is Chinese for the Pāli jhāna (skt.dhyāna). Mahākāśyapa was an immediate and enlightened disciple of Gotama the Buddha. One day he was sitting with the master silently and in full concentration. The Buddha picked up a lotus flower and held it in front of Mahākāśyapa; Mahākāśyapa at once smiled knowingly. He had understood what the master was seeking to transmit. There were no words that were exchanged. The teaching was altogether without words; there was no formal instruction. There was only a direct meeting of the hearts. It is said that Śākyamuni (the Buddha) had secret teachings but that Mahākāśyapa did not keep the secret. Yüan-chu (died 901 A.D.) says : "If you do not understand, then it is the secret of Śākyamuni. If you do understand, it is Mahākāśyapa not keeping the secret". Thus was the dhyāna school born. Traditionally, it had four aspects;

'Outside teaching, apart from tradition  
Not founded on words and letters,  
Pointing directly to the human mind,  
Seeing into one's nature, and attaining Buddhahood.'

The line of dhyāna masters began with Mahākāśyapa. After the passing away of the Buddha, Ānanda his cousin and personal attendant, became a disciple of Mahākāśyapa and received from him the wordless instruction. There were 28 masters in Mahākāśyapa's lineage, including



celebrities like Aśvaghosha, Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu. The twenty-seventh master in the line was Prajñātāra, whose disciple and successor was Bodhidharma, the first patriarch of ch'an (zen) school in China and Japan.

Bodhidharma (470-543 A.D.) of Kāñchipura in South India, the third son of Rājā Sugandhi, became a disciple of Prajñātārā and lived with him for forty years. After the demise of his master, and as instructed by him, Bodhidharma went to China in the year 526 A.D. He arrived (on October 12, 526 A.D.) at the port Kwan-tan (Canton ) of the Southern coast, travelling by sea three years. He was honoured by the Chinese emperor Wu-li, in whose court was the great translator Paramārtha. He lived for 150 years and died in China.

He was however not the originator of Buddhism in China. The teachings of the Buddha were already familiar to the Chinese. Tao-sheng (360-434), who was a disciple of the Indian saint Kumāra-jīva (died 413 A.D.), had already enunciated the doctrine of instantaneous enlightenment (awakening). This was in the background when Bodhidharma arrived in China (in 520 A.D.).

Bodhidharma's thesis on the 'practice' has been described as follows:

1. Endure all hardship. Think that owing to your previous karma, you are suffering the consequences.
2. Be content with your lot, be it sorrow or happiness, loss or gain.

3. Do not hanker after anything.
4. Act in accordance with dharma (own-nature or svabhāva) which is therefore pure.

He relied almost entirely on *Lankāvatāra-sūtra*, which he handed over to his disciples. He is said to have spent many years, sitting in the lotus posture and gazing at a blank wall, doing nothing but meditating. Towards the close of his career, he preached in the neighbourhood of Loyang. His main teaching, which has made a deep impact on Zen all through its career, was taken from *Vajrasamādhi-sūtra* : "Be at rest in all things and seek nothing, for Buddhahood is attained by perceiving ones own true nature".

His disciple Hui-k'o (486-593 A.D.) was the second patriarch. There is an interesting anecdote about his enlightenment. Bodhidharma was living in a cave covered by snow. It was winter. Hui-k'o waited outside the cave in this dreadful weather. When he was admitted into the presence of Bodhidharma, he begged to be instructed. Bodhidharma sternly refused. Hui-k'o went out, but stood at the door of the cave enduring the chill winter and snow-fall. After a while, Hui-k'o cut off his right arm, and sent it as a present to the master. He begged Bodhidharma to accept it as a mark of his sincerity.

Bodhidharma received him and asked 'What do you want?'

Hui k'o : 'Revered Sir, I have no peace of mind (hsin).  
My mind is agitated. Kindly pacify my mind!'

Bodhidharma : 'Bring out your mind, and lay it before me. I shall pacify it'

Hui k'o sought his mind and could not find it. He said: 'Sir, when I seek my mind, I cannot find it!'

Bodhidharma : 'There! I have pacified your mind!'

This is the beginning of a form of spiritual instruction known as 'mondo' (wen-ta), questions and answers. Hui-k'o at once got his enlightenment (tum-wu, satori). To know that in reality there is no mind at all to trouble us is itself a relief (pacification). The mind that troubles is only our own invention, a construction (vikalpa). It has no substance, one cannot find it when one works for it; for it is only the mind that is seeking the mind. The mind that seeks is as fictitious as the mind that is sought. The reality is only what is described as the 'original mind', a void, devoid of all processes, constructions and imaginings (which in fact are what cause distress).

Looking for the mind is silent and serene (mo) observation or reflection (chao). It is not merely calm, quiet and pervasive, but is beyond words and thought. Serene observation is not a mental activity. It is more a mirror-like awareness. It is clear and bright, transcendental and tranquil.

Bodhidharma's counsel for the practitioner is regarded as his thesis on practice:

1. Endure all hardship without complaint and ill-will. Consider that it has arisen as a consequence of your previous Karma.

2. Be content with your lot, whatever it is, loss or gain, sorrow or happiness.
3. Do not hanker after anything.
4. Act in accordance with dharma that is own nature (svabhāva) and therefore pure (unsullied by phenomenal transactions)
5. Have faith in *Lankāvatāra-Sūtra*.

Bodhidharma is counted as the twenty-eighth patriarch (27th being Prajñātāra). He was succeeded by Hui-k'o. The most important teacher was Hui-Neng (638-713 A.D.), the 33rd patriarch (sixth after Bodhidharma). He had several disciples, as many as 43 of them. It was he who was the main architect of the Zen school of thought and practice. Later, there were five major Zen sects, which were in due course consolidated into two schools, which are prevalent to this day: *Tsao-tung* (Sato in Japan) and *Lin-chi* (Rinzai in Japan). The former retains the original and simple teachings of Bodhidharma; it advocates the serene reflection in silent meditation. The latter school made the 'Koan' exercise popular. It is Kung-on in Chinese, working on the solution to a problem which has no solution, *hua-tou*, where the talking (*hua*) ends (*tou*).

The first school, following Bodhidharma closely, has offered ten suggestions for Zen practice, which are of great interest to all aspirants.

(1) Look within at the state of your mind, before the emergence of any thought. The thought originates, arises in the mind. It is usual to be aware of the thought after it comes into being. But one must become aware of the mind in which the thought arises.

(2) When, however, a thought has arisen and one has become aware of it, it must be pushed aside ('cut it off'), so that the mind in which it has arisen (the mind bereft of the thought) comes into awareness.

(3) Look at the mind all the time. One must continuously strive to keep track of the mind, pushing aside the thoughts that arise in it and disappear from it.

(4) Whatever you are doing (by way of daily or routine activities) persevere in this practice of observation of mind ("looking-sensation"). This is the essence of mindfulness (*smṛti*).

(5) Try to put your mind into a shock-like state. When something altogether unexpected happens, the mind is not only surprised but shocked. No thoughts arise in that state, but the mind is not vacant, dull or passive. It is alert, it is all agog, it is intense. But there is no particular direction it takes, no thought, no feeling, no fear, no desire, no ambition.

(6) Meditate as frequently as possible. By meditation is meant serene reflection or mindfulness, as already explained. This is done with eyes closed or with downward gaze.

(7) Meditate for brief periods with eyes wide open. The closed eyes signify withdrawal from the external world, shutting off all input (by way of sensations, stimulations and transactions). It is possible that the mind continues to be active, even over-active in this state because



this state is unusual, artificial, and effortful. It is, therefore, advisable to do the same practice of mindfulness, with eyes open.

(8) Even when you are involved in hectic work, even in the thick of the most exacting activities, take a break for a moment and look at the mind. Try to be mindful, albeit for a moment.

(9) Read sacred texts like *Lankāvatāra-sūtra* and *Prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra* frequently and turn your attention to the doctrinal issues pertaining to mindfulness. Thus your mind will be familiar with the practices which seek to transcend the mind.

(10) Associate with those who are themselves meditators, or who are sympathetic to the practice of meditation.

The practice of zen has two dimensions. One is to develop the correct 'view' (*chien*), which is comprehensive and uninvolved. It is like climbing to the top of a hill and looking at the village from there. The other is engaging in the right 'action' (*hsing*). This is like diving to the bottom of the sea and walking on the ground there. It is getting into the root of reality and working one's way from that level. Of the two aspects of zen, the emphasis is laid on the correct 'view', for it directly leads one to enlightenment or awakening to reality (*wu*, or *satori*).

The Zen yogis are of two kinds. There are those who develop the 'view' first, and then practice. There are others who 'practice' first and then develop the 'view'. The 'view' is crystallized in a brief musical

ejaculation (gāthā), said to have been communicated by the Buddha himself privately to Mahā-Kāśyapa :

‘The dharma’s fundamental dharma has no dharma  
The dharma of no-dharma is dharma too.  
Now that the dharma of no-dharma has been transmitted  
Has there ever been a dharma?’

The expression ‘dharma’ here signifies an attribute, a characteristic, a trait or feature by which an object can be known and differentiated from other objects. It is the discernible nature of an object. But this ‘nature’ is not natural to any object; it is superimposed on it by the mind (by feeling, thoughts and constructs). Reality in itself is devoid of all forms, names, thoughts and feelings, all of which appear and disappear and hence are unreal. The chinese patriarch Hui-K’o (Eka), already mentioned, sang another gāthā on the same lines :

‘From the seed-bed  
Flowers rise.  
Yet there is no seed  
Nor are there flowers!’

The ‘seed-bed’ signifies the ‘heart’, which is the ground on which the mind rests and rises. It is what is called the ‘original mind’, devoid of thought -constructions. In it are hidden the seeds of enlightenment (the Buddhahood). From these seeds emerge and appear the flowers of wisdom. But the seeds and flowers are not the original nature of

the 'bed', the soil. The seeds are put into it, and the flowers grow out of it. The 'bed' becomes a seed-bed, and only then the flowers sprout out of it. But the 'bed' is but void. It has no name, no form, no thought, no feeling, no inclination. In short, it has no 'dharma'.

It is what the Upanishads describe as 'nirguna' (devoid of attributes), 'nirvikalpa' (unchanging and incorruptible, bereft of constructs), 'dahara-ākāśa' (the subtle sky within the heart). It is of the nature-of void (ākāśa-kalpa) for it has no form, it is not graspable, it is pervasive, it is the ground for all objects and phenomena and it remains pure and untainted by anything.

## MINDFULNESS

Gotama the Buddha himself acknowledged that what he taught was the Veda and the Upanishads (esā vedopanisado). The principles were there. But the method of reaching those principles was what the Buddha discovered. This was the original contribution of the Buddha to human weal and welfare. He called it the 'path' (magga, skt. mārga), the 'strategy' for liberation (esa dhammo vimuttiyā). He claimed to show this path to the people; hence his frequent admonition "dhammam desessami" ("I shall teach you dhamma"). This was the mission that the perfectly enlightened one undertook to accomplish.

And this method was most simply becoming aware of ones own breathing, becoming mindful of it (ānāpāna-sati), as the gateway to liberation from the stresses of life. Mindfulness (*sati* in pāli, from *smṛti* in Sanskrit) is the most valid catchword that the Buddha popularized. His discourse on establishing mindfulness (sati-paṭhāna-sutta) is quintessential in the entire Tripiṭaka canon. If his first discourse in Sarnath on setting into motion the wheel of dharma laid down the principles, this discourse on mindfulness formulated the method succinctly and clearly. All divisions of Buddhism (Hīnayāna, Mahāyāna, Vajrayāna and so on), without an exception, recognize the supreme importance of mindfulness as a strategy for enlightenment.

In recent years the emphasis accorded to mindfulness of breathing as a strategy by a relatively unknown but exceedingly earnest Vietnamese

monk has impressed me. The venerable Thich Nhat Hanh is a Mahāyāna monk from South Vietnam. I met him in Calcutta years ago. At that time he was living near Paris, and was already elderly. I do not know if he is still alive. He was a scholar, saint and a poet. He was also a social worker. He was teaching meditation with uncommon zeal. I was told he was popular in Vietnam. He has written a book on mindfulness in Vietnamese, and it has been translated into English under the title '*The Miracle of Being Awake*'. He gave me a copy of this book and I found it absorbingly interesting. I proceed to record here what I found was the thrust of his message. It is obvious that this follows my own understanding, and the account is in my own words.

He relies on the statement suggested in the Pāli text, *Śatipaṭṭhāna-sutta* : If you can find the principles, you should also be able to find the method. This is true, for the principles and the method are so intimately associated with each other that one cannot exist without the other. The word 'principles' refer to the reality underlying all appearance, to reach or realize which is the aspiration of all people spiritually inclined. The 'method' is the strategy that is most expedient, and within the reach of all people, irrespective of learning, vocation, class, creed, country, sex or age. It is mindfulness.

What is this mindfulness? The author of this book distinguishes it from what he calls 'machine thinking'. The latter is thinking passively, involuntarily, as mechanical response to stimulation from the outside. We are normally thinking in this manner. We respond to external or internal input, spontaneously, impulsively, emotionally or logically. We



react to thoughts by further thoughts, and add feelings to thoughts. The thoughts are random, fleeting, scattered, discursive and disarrayed. As a result, we are under stress, agitation and anxiety. We lose the balance, peace, stability, and the sense of well-being. The author offers mindfulness "to master and restore ourselves".

He describes it as a 'miracle', for "we call back in a flash our dispersed mind and restore it to wholeness so that we can live each minute of life". He gives the example of a magician, who seemingly cuts on the stage a man's body into pieces and then makes him whole again. The body is in reality not cut at all, and the wholeness is never lost. The 'principles' that the Buddha enunciated speak of the mind as always clear, pure and peaceful. The distractions, dispersions, confusions and agitations are all but apparent. But appearances can also be troublesome, undesirable and stressful. They need to be removed. The method of removing them is mindfulness.

Mindfulness of what? Of breathing, which is natural to everyone. To be alive is to be breathing; no breathing, no life. And it is altogether uninterrupted, never discontinuous, quite unlike other functions of the body and activities. And breathing can be observed, watched and to an extent controlled, again unlike most other functions of the body. Further, it is well known that breathing and mind are closely inter-related; they are often described as like unto the charger (horse) and the rider. When mind is disturbed, breathing is also disturbed; if breathing is uneven and agitated, mind also is disturbed. It is therefore easy to be mindful

of breathing, easy to watch the breath as it comes in and goes out, easy to watch whether the breath is long or short, deep or shallow.

So the principle is to take hold of breath when the mind is disturbed. When breathing becomes even and calm, the disturbances of the mind will also disappear. In fact, breathing is the bridge that connects the body with one's own thoughts and feelings. On one side is the gross body, physical and physiological, and on the other side is mind, subtle and psychological. In between, affecting both, is breathing. Watching the flow of breaths, arising from the navel region and rising up to the nostrils in exhalation (out-breathing) and vice versa in inhalation (in-breathing), is what the Buddha called 'āna-apāna-sati'. It involves both the body and the mind. 'Smṛti' (Pāli Sati), the Sanskrit word for mindfulness, does not mean memory in this context. It means comprehensive and concentrated thought (ādhyāna, autkyam, utkaṇṭhā), making an impact upon the body as well as mind. It is therefore that Tang-Hoi said:

'The mindfulness of ones breath is the Buddha's great vehicle to save all beings caught in the cycle of birth and death'.

The practice of mindfulness that the venerable Thich Nhat Hanh suggests is not entirely the classical method retold, but is based on his own experiments, observations, insights and perceptions. He has taken into account the peculiarities of life-conditions of the present day, the needs and difficulties of the modern human being. He is aware that

“hardest of all is to practice the Way at home, second in the crowd, and third in a pagoda”. This exercise of mindfulness is not to be viewed as a toil (to be hurried through), nor as an escape or evasion. It is rather a relaxed encounter with reality. It is actually meditation. It is like sitting on the banks of a river, imagining oneself to be a pebble that is thrown into the water. The pebble goes straight into the water, without meandering and wandering, and reaches the bottom, where it rests firmly. The breath is at the bottom of one’s being (viz., at the centre of one’s being), and mind is the pebble. The mind goes straight to the breath, and rests there perfectly in this meditation of mindfulness. The watching of the breath is accompanied by the letting go of everything else. It is at once concentration and relaxation.

## I

The first stage of the practice is what the venerable Thich Nhat Hanh describes as ‘Following the length of the breath’. It is calculated to make the breath calm and even. When the inhalation (in-breathing) and exhalation (out-breathing) are even in duration (viz., length), it is restful, relaxing. One should understand that they are not even in normal life; the out-going breath is longer in duration than the in-coming breath. This should be known by experience. It is for this that the first stage is meant. The practice would take the form of watching the course of breath.

(a) Lie down on your back on a thin mat or blanket. The arms and legs are held straight, but not stiff. The body is in a state of ease

and comfort, but it should not fall off to sleep. So a mat is indicated, and not a comfortable mattress or bed. And the head is not supported by a pillow. All the muscles of the body are loosened, relaxed. If one feels drowsy, he should get up and sit. The breathing is normal here.

(b) Now the mindfulness (viz., watching the breath) starts. Where should we watch for (or observe the breath)? Breathing is the function of the lungs. But it is observed in the area of the chest, and also in the region of the belly (stomach). You not only feel the pulsations here, but feel also the upward surge and the downward bend as you inhale and exhale. The diaphragm plays a significant role here. As said earlier, inhalation begins at the nostrils and goes down to the navel; exhalation originates at the navel and reaches the nostrils before the breath goes out of the body. Inhalation is air becoming the breath; and exhalation is the breath becoming air.

While watching the breaths, no effort must be made. And the course of the breath is not to be interfered with. Just turn your attention to the breathing process; settle your mind on the breath. Watch where the breath originates and where it terminates, running with your mind along the course of the breath. Be mindful of the length of the breath. This practice is called 'following the length of the breath'. And this is how it is done:

(c) First attend to the out-breathing (exhalation). It starts at the navel and reaches the nostril. Watch its beginning at the navel and follow it to its termination at the nostrils. The length of the breath is to be

measured, and this is done by following it. Count slowly using either numbers (1,2,3 and so on) or words. The first number will be at the navel, and the last number will be at the nostrils. Suppose you count '5' during the course of exhalation, continue with '6' and '7' before you begin to inhale. The length of the exhalation will now be '6' or '7', instead of the normal '5'. After '5' the lungs will be devoid of air in the process of exhalation; and this condition is maintained for one or two more counts.

(d) Now begin to measure the length of the inhalation, starting from the nostrils and ending at the navel. But do not begin to do so immediately after the exhalation is over. Give a brief pause so that the lungs draw in fresh air on their own, as much as they want. No effort is made in this direction. And this is outside the practice of measuring the length of the breath.

After this brief pause, the second measuring starts. You are now being mindful of the inhalation. Follow the breath with counts, as you did in the case of exhalation. You will discover that this breath is shorter in length; it will not reach up to '5', much less '6' or '7'. Bear in mind the precise counts for exhalations and inhalations. The number of inhalations and exhalations may be according to your convenience, not less than 10 and not more than 20 in one practice-session.

You will be able to make the durations of exhalation and inhalation even, in a month of practice. In the meantime you will find the difference between the lengths of exhalation and inhalation gradually diminish. If



you are unable to watch your breaths while lying down on the mat, for any reason, then you may watch your breaths while walking, using your steps for measuring the length of the breaths, each step representing a number. The important thing is to equalize the durations of exhalation and inhalation. This is in Indian yoga called 'Sāmya' or 'Samatva', with its important influence on the mind. When the durations of exhalation and inhalation are equal, mind tends to be silent and serene. When breathing is even, it will also be quiet and light; the flow will be even, and even graceful. The mind thereby is mastered.

(e) This practice may be resorted to even in other conditions of daily life. Whenever your mind is disturbed, depressed, agitated or uneasy, just sit down and watch your breaths. The normal breathing slows down, as you are mindful of the breaths; the difference between the lengths of exhalation and inhalation is gradually reduced until they become even. Your mind will then resemble a pond where there are no ripples.

## II

(a) The next stage in the practice brings counting of breaths to the centre of the stage. You follow each breath and count. When the inhalation is being watched, you also mentally count one; and when the exhalation is on, count 2. And so on upto 10 (viz., the ten breaths); and then return to 1 and continue: Here, the counts are like a string which attaches your mind to your breaths. If you are not mindful, the counts are missed. It frequently happens in novices that mindfulness disappears; the counting must then be begun afresh.

(b) This is done sitting. You may assume the familiar lotus posture (crossing the legs, the left foot on the right thigh and the right foot on the left thigh) or the more usual half-lotus posture (left foot on right thigh or right foot on left thigh). The back must be perfectly straight, the spinal column erect but not stiff, with neck and head properly aligned to it. It is suggested in this practice that the eyes must be open, focussed about two meters away in front of you. The left hand (with palm up) must be placed upon the right hand in the usual meditating Buddha posture. All the muscles of the body especially of the hands, fingers, arms and legs, must be loosened and relaxed.

(c) While you hold your mind upon the breath, the venerable Thich Nhat Hanh, suggests that you wear a half-smile on your face. This half smile that we see on the Buddha's face is indicated here, for it not only relaxes the facial muscles but provides an inward glow of satisfaction and contentment. It is not, however, artificially grafted on the face; it should naturally flower out, indicating your joy at the opportunity given to you to practice meditation. The longer this half-smile is maintained, the better for the practice. The venerable Thich Nhat Hanh counsels : "Hold on to breath and half-smile". Mindfulness and satisfaction go together; and half-smile involves the body as well as the mind, even as mindfulness does.

(d) Mindfulness on the breath will not only help you to observe the breathing process but also to understand your own mind. While you are engaged in watching the breath, thoughts and feelings surface themselves. They are likely to disturb your meditation, unless you develop

the habit of ignoring them. Do not attend to them; do not dwell in them; do not like or dislike them; do not worry about them either. The slightest attention paid to them either by being pleased or displeased by them will only strengthen them, encourage them. Go on being mindful of the breath, watching and measuring the length (by counting), being utterly indifferent to the intruding thoughts and feelings. They will disappear on their own. You do not have to spend effort to dismiss them or chase them away.

It may be a good idea to watch the thoughts and feelings also as they surface; watching is merely registering their bare presence, without being analytical, discursive or curious. Even as you watch the incoming and outgoing breaths, you watch the appearance and disappearance of a thought or feeling. When it is there, it must be recognized. It should not disappear without your recognizing it. This is mindfulness. Further, when no thought or feeling is there, this absence also must be noted. You must be mindful that there is no thought or feeling; you are mindful only of the breath. It means that you have taken hold of your mind. Mindfulness as a practice is also the technique of gaining mastery over the mind. When that is done, no thought or feeling will be able to disturb your mind. The body-mind complex will be restful, relaxed, alert and awake.

The purpose of this meditation is not to prevent thoughts and feelings from entering your mind. Nothing is done to accomplish this negative state. Mindfulness is only being mindful of whatever is

encountered, only being mindful and nothing more. It has nothing to do with thoughts and feelings. The thoughts and feelings that do occur are allowed to occur, but care is taken that they do not lead to further thoughts and feelings. The tendency for chain reaction is cut down firmly. The thoughts and feelings do not mean anything for the meditator. There is no criticism, appreciation, condemnation or evaluation of any thought or feeling.

The only object for mindfulness during practice is breath. It is real, enduring, fundamental and uniform in nature for all beings. It is the universal principle in the individual being. It is basic to body as well as mind. It is life itself. Being mindful of it is the most natural thing to do. We come closest to reality. The body and mind are made whole. The power of concentration is built up; anxiety is shaken off; inner calm is gained; serene joy is the offshoot of this practice.

### III

The venerable Thich Nhat Hanh has another suggestion to make. This is in the context of the present-day conditions. The practice of mindfulness must be done every day. The best time, according to him, is between 10 and 11 in the night. There must be regularity in the practice; and it should not be hurried through as a ritual. It must be done leisurely, slowly and relaxedly. This may be difficult for many people. Their lives are so crowded with duties, responsibilities, obligations and concerns that the time for the practice may not be there at all. For

such people the venerable Vietnamese monk suggests that they reserve one day in a week, exclusively set apart for the practice of meditation.

That day is yours entirely. You are the master of yourself; all cares and worries are thrown away for that day. As soon as you open your eyes while still in bed that day, you must become aware that "Today is my day". And immediately a half-smile should light up your face. Do not jump out of your bed, for that day is entirely yours. You can take it easy. Sit up in bed slowly, and watch your breaths. Then get out of bed and attend to all the necessary actions, in a calm and relaxed manner, being mindful of whatever you do. When you walk about, measure your steps with quiet and long breaths, always maintaining the half-smile. These are the instructions of the venerable master.

Further, he asks you to 'bathe relaxingly and mindfully' for half an hour, 'until you feel refreshed'. All the household jobs must be attended to slowly and perfectly at ease. There is no hurry, for there is no worry. Nothing is done haphazardly, at random or without thought. Remember it is for you the day of mindfulness. 'Enjoy the tasks, and be one with them'.

'Drink your tea slowly and reverentially as if it were the axis on which the earth revolves'. Go about 'slowly, evenly, without rushing towards the future. Don't be attached to the future. Don't worry about things you have to do'. The author promises that in three months there will be a marked change in your life. The effect of this one day of

mindfulness will be felt on all other days of the week; it will begin to penetrate into all your activities on all other days.

Likewise, if you can manage a month's retreat in a year when you can retire to a village and live there quietly, it will be helpful. The week long practice of mindfulness in a congenial surrounding will be deeper and more effective, and its effect long-lasting and pervasive. This will also make the meditator understand that mindfulness is not a practice confined to the sessions of meditation, or to the demanding situations (to relieve oneself of mental disturbances or to develop the power of concentration), but that mindfulness can be as persistent and pervasive as breathing itself. It can be an undercurrent all through life and in whatever one does. It can confer an aura of peace and serenity to the person in any walk of life.



## VIPASSANĀ

During my years of study at the sacred feet of my master, Nārada-mahā-thera of Vajirārāmaya, Colombo (Ceylon), I had numerous occasions to learn of the vipassanā school that developed in Burma. One of the schools prescribed a method of meditation known as the Mingoan method. It was so named because it was popularized by the master, Mingoan-sayadaw (the abbot of the Mingoan monastery). In reality, it was his disciple Mahā-si sayadaw (U Sobhana-mahā-thera) that popularized this method. He directed two-month courses of concentrated Vipassanā, with a hundred pupils at a time, in his Vipassanā-centre at Rangoon. I met one of his disciples, Sithu U Ba Khin (who was at that time President of the Patipatti sub-committee of the Vipassanā Research Association, Rangoon) in Bangalore, and learnt more about the Mingoan method.

Vipassanā merely means 'serene observation', to see directly, vividly and penetratingly. It refers to the ultimate reality, (Saccha in Pāli, Satya in Skt), which is nameless, formless, devoid of attributes and bereft of specifications and individuality. This is observed (barely and without mental constructs) in this method of meditation. This method, stylized and popularized by the Mahasi Sayadaw, is not specifically mentioned in any of the classical Pāli texts of Tripitaka, nor in Buddhaghosha's *Visuddhi-magga* (the Path of Purification, which is a compendium in Pāli of all practical methods of enlightenment taught or suggested by the

Buddha). But the classical texts do contain 'ānāpāna-sati' (mindfulness in or of, breathing) as a method; and Buddhaghosha devotes an entire section for this method. Mahāsi-sayadaw based his own Mingoona-method on this, but developed it, adapted it, crystallized the methodology and made it available to the people.

The purpose of Vipassanā is of course the attainment of the traditional triad: mindfulness (*sati* in Pāli, skt *smṛti*), meditative absorption (*samādhi*), and liberating wisdom (*nāṇa* in Pāli, skt. *Jñāna*). The method of vipassanā now developed, focussed attention on the breath-movement (in-breathing and out-breathing, 'āna' and 'apāna') but skipped the classical transcendental (*lokuttara*) stages of meditative absorption, as also the finer details of the *jhāna* (skt. *dhyāna*). In the method of Mahāsi-sayadaw, it is not only the breath-movement that is observed, but all thoughts and feelings that emerge during the breathing process are taken note of, without however involving oneself in them in any way.

Importance is attached to the formation of a habit of becoming aware of every single mental process as it occurs in the mind, appearing (rising) and disappearing (falling). An object in the outside world perceived or sensed, a memory, or an imagination is without fail observed with full concentration. This is known as 'the knowledge (viz. becoming aware) of the rise and fall' (*udaya-byaya-jāṇa*).

Mindfulness is likened unto "a man in a dark and gloomy night, at the sudden flash of lightning, may with his eye clearly recognize the objects"; "even so one may, through deep insight, perceive all things

as they are". This method recognizes mindfulness as what enables one to improve his memory and powers of concentration, and brings one to tranquillity and serenity. Further, it helps the understanding of the individual as composed of many bits and pieces, all of which are fragmentary, evanescent and therefore unreal. The individual is called 'puggala' (skt. pudgala), meaning something that is brought together and separated. Likewise the breath is not one undivided whole, but consists of in-breathing and out-breathing, each of which 'rises' and 'falls'.

In this method, the focus of attention is on the 'rising' and 'falling' of the breaths, observed at the nostrils, in the chest or in the belly. As each breath 'rises', it is just noted; as it 'falls', it is just noted. There is no further mental process associated with the breath or its 'rising' and 'falling'. The breath is merely observed or reflected upon, with no other thought or feeling. And along with the inbreaths and outbreaths if there are any thoughts, they are also just noted (without criticism or judgment) when they appear and when they disappear.

If, however, the mindfulness of breathing happens to be discontinuous, the breaks between the movements of 'rising' and 'falling' are also noted. No interruption (gap, break, pause) is allowed to pass unnoticed. If you are seated while meditating (viz. mindfully watching the breaths), and slip to notice inbreathing or outbreathing, attend to the fact that you are sitting. Observe, just observe, mentally, your sitting posture. Take note of it, and allow no other thought to intrude:

Rises-falls-sitting-rises-falls and so on.



It is important not to exert while noting; it is bare mindfulness, without involving any effort. If it tires you, if it seems difficult, give up the practice for the time being. You may take it up again after a while. During the practice, it is important to ignore what your eyes see, your ears hear, or any other organ perceives. Try to focuss your attention on the breathing process (the 'rising' and 'falling'), and keep every thought out. To the extent you are able to observe your breathing uninterruptedly for a stretch of time, you are progressing in the practice.

When there are interruptions (breaks) in your observing the 'rising' and 'falling' of the breaths, note mentally that there is an interruption. But do not allow your thoughts to get diverted to what caused the interruption, why it was caused, how the interruption was effected and so on. Just the fact that your observation of breath was interrupted is to be noted, barely noted. For instance, it was suggested that when the 'rising' and 'falling' escapes ones observation for a while, one may take note of his sitting posture. Here, one must just observe that he is seated, and not allow thoughts like "sitting on a chair" and "sitting in a room" to intervene. Such thoughts lead the mind away from mindfulness. The texts describe these intervening and interrupting thoughts as 'defilements' of mind (*Kilesa*, skt. *Kleśa*).

Or again, the interruption may be due to momentary mindlessness, forgetting to be mindful. And this may become apparent later. When it does become apparent, observe that you 'forgot'. Take note of forgetting, and allow no other thought or feeling to accompany it. Return immediately to the observation of 'rising' and 'falling' of the breath.

There are times when, during practice, the breathing becomes slow, subtle and imperceptible. When this happens, turn the mind to observing your posture ("sitting", "erect"), or your bodily contact with outside objects (like the dress you are wearing, the position of your hands, and the contact with the ground). Even there, nothing other than bare observation is indicated.

It may happen that sensations of pain in any part of the body (mostly in the legs, hands, neck or back) are felt during the practice. These may merely be phantoms of pain, which will disappear on their own after a minute or two. When they do appear, they must be observed ("painful", "smarting", "hurting", "itching" and so on), but no further thought being allowed to intervene. Immediately on noting the pain-sensation, attention must be reverted to mindfully watching the breathing ("rising" and "falling"). There are individual differences in the appearance of pain-sensations. For some people, it may indicate progress in the practice.

During practice, it is usual that one gets into a state like trance; one may momentarily lose consciousness, or rather seem to lose consciousness. It is neither trance nor loss of consciousness. The mind will be fatigued after observing earnestly a subtle process like breathing. The mind will recover by diverting the attention to a grosser, more solid object, like some part of the body or floor on which one is seated. When, so diverting, care must be taken not to dwell on any organ or object, beyond noting the mere presence of that organ or object (like

“hand”, “right hand”, “left hand”, “floor”, “feet on the floor”, “bottom on the earth” and so on). When consciousness gets back its agility, revert to the mindfulness of breathing (“rising” and “falling”).

If one feels sometimes too indolent to watch the breathing process, he may divert his attention to that very fact: he may note mentally “lazy”, and direct his observation to breathing. On waking up in the morning, one should be mindful of the fact of waking up. He notes mentally “awakening”. Before going to sleep, one should be mindful of each activity by way of preparation to fall asleep; he notes “sleepy”.

In the beginning, the practice may be only for about fifteen minutes. As one progresses, the period may be gradually extended to hours, days and weeks. The practice will become in due course constant: one will be mindful of whatever he does or whatever happens to him from the moment he gets up in the morning till he falls asleep at night. No incident, event or activity will escape his attention; and the attention will be in the nature of serene reflection, with no thoughts jostling about. There will be no discursive thoughts, no comments, no judgements, no reviews, no criticism.

Mindfulness is not rational appraisal of thoughts and events. It is mere observation, just watching; but attentive observation, deliberate watching. The contents or quality of thoughts and happenings are altogether ignored, or sidelined. The appearance and disappearance of the thoughts and events are all that are attended to.



Mindfulness thus becomes the gateway to tranquillity, pacification of the mind (samatha), and purification of thoughts and feelings (visuddhi), and thereby it leads to the sure insight into the nature of reality (vipassanā). It is this that will put a stop to the distresses in life (dukkhassanta).

(As a preliminary to this practice, one is advised to attend to his physical purity, assume a comfortable position, and clear his mind of all preoccupations, plans and programmes. He should be seated with eyes closed, so that that outside world is physically at least shut off. Then he should recite the following formulae of adoration, resolution and submission to the Buddha who showed this path, as indicated by Mahāsi Sayadaw :

- १) नमो तस्स भगवतो अरहतो सम्मा सम्बुद्धस्स ॥
- २) पञ्चसीलं अहं अरक्खामि ॥

This is a vow to practice the five-fold conduct advocated by the Buddha: not to kill, not to steal, not to utter a lie, not to take what is not given to you and not to possess more than what you need.

- ३) भगवतो अत्तानं परिच्चजामि ।  
धम्मस्य अत्तानं परिच्चजामि ।  
संघस्स अत्तानं परिच्चजामि ॥

“I submit myself to the Buddha, to the Dhamma and to the Sangha”

परिच्चत्तो येव मे अत्ता । परिच्चत्तं मे जीवितम् ॥

“I have given myself up (to the Buddha and his Dhamma); I have offered my whole life (to this cause)”

जीवित परियन्तिकं बुद्धं सरणं गच्छामि ।

बुद्धो मे सरणम् लेणं ताणं ति ॥

“I seek refuge in the Buddha as long as life lasts. The Buddha is my refuge, shelter and protection”

४) इमाहं आचरियं अत्तभवं तुम्हाकं परिच्चजामि ॥

“O my master (teacher), I offer to you this my personal life”.)

## THE ESSENCE OF MIND

In China, during the rule of the Tang dynasty (700-906 A.D.) the meditation-movement (Ch'an or Zen) became popular and prevalent. The most important meditation-master during this period was Hui-Neng (or Wei-Lang, 637-713 A.D.), who was the sixth and the last patriarch in China in the line of the Indian master Bodhidharma, and the thirty-third patriarch from Mahākāśyapa (the direct disciple of the Buddha). Hui-Neng was a contemporary of Huen-tsang, who visited India. Even as a boy, Hui-Neng was initiated into the esoteric study of the canonical text, *Vajrachchedikā-sūtrā*, and became enlightened when he was just nine years old. He had no master to guide; his accomplishment was all his own. He was selected by the patriarch Hung-jen (601-675 A.D.) to succeed him in the monastery of the Yellow Plum Mountain (Wang-mei Shan) in the present day Hupeh. The monastery had five hundred monks under Hung-jen. After Hui-Neng, the meditation-movement spread and proliferated. Of his five prominent disciples, Hui-jang (died 775 A.D.) was the most eminent. It was with his inspiration that the Soto and Rinzai schools of Zen developed. His disciple, Ma-Tsu (died 788 A.D.), made Zen lively. The body of Hui-Neng, embalmed and preserved, can still be seen in the monastery of T'sao-Chi in South China.

The ecstatic song (gāthā) that came out of him spontaneously when he received the transmission is as follows:

"The mind-ground holds the (flower) seeds

Which sprout when falls the all-pervading rain

The wisdom-flower of instantaneous awakening  
cannot fail to bear the bodhi-fruit"

This was in response to the song of his master, Hung-jen (the fifth patriarch), at the time of transmission:

"The seed sown by a sentient being  
In causal ground will soon bear fruit  
Without sentience there is no seed  
And no fruit without nature"

In Hui-Neng's song, the flower is the Buddha-hood. The fruit, the bodhi or enlightenment, the seeds of which are already in the mind's essence. The all-pervading rain is the dharma taught by the Buddha. Here is a reference to the significance of the arrival of the first patriarch in China, Bodhi dharma. And the song contains the essential teaching of Bodhidharma which impressed upon Hui-Neng.

The major work containing his teachings is entitled *The Sutra of Wei-Lang*. It has been translated into English by Wong Mou-Lam, and I had the privilege of parts of the book being explained by a student of this translator. He was also a Chinese, but I have forgotten his name. He was conversant with the practice of Ch'an (Zen) as well as with the texts on which Hui-Neng (Wei-Lang) based his teachings : *Vajrachchedikā-Sūtra*, *Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā*, *Vimala-Kīrti-nirdeśa-Sūtra* and *Bodhisattva-śīla-sūtra* (in Chinese translations). Later, I studied these



texts in their Sanskrit original, excepting the last one (the Sanskrit original of which has been lost, but a Tibetan translation was available).

Wei-Lang focusses attention on the implications of the ancient formula, which is the corner-stone for Mahā-yāna:

“The wisdom of enlightenment (*bodhi-prajñā*) is inherent in everyone of us. It is because of the delusion under which our minds work, we fail to realize it ourselves”.

And Hui-Neng perceived Bodhidharma's teachings as emphasizing the role of the essence of mind in enlightenment: “For him who does not know his own mind, there is no use in learning Buddhism. On the other hand, if he knows his own mind and sees intuitively his own nature, he is a hero (jina), a teacher of gods and men (satthā), a Buddha”. This is the teaching that Bodhidharma transmitted from heart to heart. Hui-Neng, backed by this heart-teaching, makes bold to say, “What mind is, the Buddha is”.

To understand what Hui-Neng means by mind, we must take note of his imagery which again is Indian. The physical body is like a city. The sense-organs (eyes, ears, nose and tongue) are the gates of this city; they are external gates. The sensations from these organs, together with the meaningful apprehensions, constitute the inner gate; we may call it ideation. Mind is the ground on which the city is raised. It is fundamental to the entire complex of the body, sense-organs, sense-functions and ideations. If this is mind, there is also the ‘essence of



mind' which is likened to the monarch who resides in the domain of mind. When this mind essence is there, our bodies and mind exist; when it is not there the body and mind decay and die.

This essence of mind is unchanging and self-sufficient as it is beyond the transactional time and space. There is no becoming for it, nor annihilation. It does not need to depend on anything outside it. In fact, all things are only manifestations of this essence of mind. It pervades the entire existence, the *dharma-dhātu*. It is pure, unsullied, incorruptible and uninvolved. It is everything, but by itself it is nothing. It is Void (*śūnya*).

But Hui-Neng stresses the great capacity of this essence of mind. When we use it, we can know something of everything; and when we use it to its full capacity, we shall know all. It is because Gotama used it fully that he became perfectly enlightened (*samyak-sambuddha*). When the mind works without hindrance, and is at liberty to 'come' or to 'go', it is called wisdom (*prajñā*), a state of mind in which there is complete freedom, in which there are no pressures or constraints. This wisdom comes not from any external source, but from the essence of mind itself.

This essence of mind is what the Mahāyāna texts describe as self-nature (*tathatā*), the seed of enlightenment (*bodhi-bīja*), the wisdom of enlightenment (*bodhi-prajñā*). *Bodhi-sattva-sīla-sūtra* says:

"Our essence of mind is intrinsically pure, and if we knew our mind and realized what our nature is, all of us would attain Buddhahood".

One can work towards enlightenment (*bodhi*), only through the essence of mind; and it is important to recognize that it is in ourselves, and not anywhere outside us. An ordinary person is not aware of this; he is ignorant of the essence of mind. He uses only his mind, which functions on the basis of the sense-organs. When, however, one goes beyond this (*pāramitā*) and reaches the farther shore of the essence of mind (*prajñā*), he becomes the Buddha. We call him enlightened.

Hui-Neng uses frequently the two expressions, *samādhi* (meditative absorption) and *prajñā* (wisdom). The attainment of these two is termed liberation, enlightenment (*mukti*, *sambodhi*). But the two are inseparable. Meditative absorption is the quintessence of wisdom, and wisdom is the activity involved in meditative absorption. It is not correct to think that one leads to the other. Both signify 'thoughtlessness', mind that is free from all thought-processes, ideas and emotions, desires and feelings, and importantly free from attachments. To perceive (see) and understand (know) all things with a mind free from attachment is to put one's own self-nature (*tathatā*) into operation. This is indicated by an attitude that is at once devoid of indifference and attachment.

To reach the essence of mind from the ordinary mind, one practices dhyāna. But it is not sitting quietly with a blank mind. It is an error, says Hui-Neng, to suppress our minds from thinking; to give up all exertion of the mind is impossible. One can not keep a watch over the mind so that no thought arises; it will be counter-productive. Dhyāna, according to him, is only to be free from attachment to all outer objects.

When you are attached to the external objects, your inner peace will be disturbed. Samādhi (meditative absorption) is a matter of inner peace, a state of mind inclined in the direction of the essence of mind. Non-attachment is the fundamental principle in dhyāna.

It is not the tranquil or calm mind that is sought to be attained in meditation. It is the non-grasping mind that is important. Common people attach themselves to objects outside, owing to the illusions that are external in origination. But they lead to delusions that are within. To be free from illusions and delusions, meditative absorption and wisdom (insight into the nature of things) are together pressed to advantage. Hui-Neng says:

“When our essence of mind is free from impurity, infatuations and disturbances, when we introspect from moment to moment with prajñā and when we do not cling to things in phenomenal objects, we are free and liberated”.

The essence of mind, according to him, is an expedient. It becomes ‘virtue’ (*śīla*) when it is freed from impurities; it is ‘meditation’ (*dhyāna*) when freed from disturbances; and it is adamantive (*vajra*) when it is free from all changes, increase and decrease, rise and fall, loss and gain. This going beyond the dualities is *pāramitā* (*pāram ita*, “gone to the other shore”). This shore, the shore on which we are, is characterized by clinging to objects, and experiencing thereby ups and downs (“like the billowy sea”, as Hui-Neng puts it), pleasures and pains, existences



and non-existences. But the other shore is beyond all this; it is "smoothly running water".

Hui-Neng suggests that the practice of the essence of mind should be settled on three props: idealessness (as the objective), non-objectivity (as our basis) and non-attachment (as our fundamental principle).

(1) When you are exercising your mental faculties, do not be carried away by any particular idea. When an idea arises, do not comment, criticize, judge, accept, or reject. The idea will then disappear on its own, leaving no trace and bringing forth no further idea. This is idealessness. The counsel given by Hui-Neng is to keep the mind from defilement in all circumstances. "Our mind should stand aloof from circumstances; they should not influence the function of our mind". We must not be carried away by circumstances, but keep our minds unperturbed, irrespective of circumstances and their pressures. In fact, meditation is meant to train ourselves not to be perturbed by whatever happens. Hui-Neng quotes Chuang-tzu :

"The perfect man employs his mind like  
a mirror. It grasps nothing. It refuses  
nothing. It receives, but does not keep".

And he explains that the meditator must intend gaining absolute freedom and being mentally unperturbed in all outward circumstances, be they good or otherwise. We should be indifferent to the faults of others or merits of others. We must be the same in good or evil, pleasure or pain, gain or loss.

The fifth patriarch (Hung Jen) had two principal disciples : Shen-hsiu who emphasized dhyāna and Hui-Neng who emphasized prajñā, which was identical with dhyānā. Their gāthas bring out the difference in their approaches :

Shen-hsiu's song:

"Our body is the bodhi-tree  
And our mind is the mirror bright  
Carefully we wipe it hour by hour.  
And let no dust alight on it"

Hui-Neng's song, in reply to the above :

"There is no bodhi tree  
Nor stands a mirror bright  
Since all is void  
where can dust alight ?"

Hui-Neng's call was not to get attached to mind or to purity. Meditation must make one outwardly free from the notion of form and inwardly not disturbed. Truth is understood by the mind (hsin) and not by 'sitting' in meditation (ts'o).

(2) In ordinary life, we are in contact with objects (persons, events). We are likely to be absorbed with the objects we are in contact with. We begin to think about them, and lose ourselves in the bargain. This



will render the mind outward-oriented, it will move far from the essence of mind. This is objectivity. During meditation, this error must be avoided.

(3) Meditation is returning to our essence of mind, which is our self-nature (tathatā). It is pure, undefiled and incorruptible. To realize this, attachment must be avoided. Hui-Neng advises :

“Treat all things as void. Even in dispute or quarrel, treat intimates and enemies as equal. There should be no retaliation. In the exercise of our thinking faculty, let the past be dead. If we allow our thoughts, past, present and future, to link up in a series, we put ourselves in restraint”.

One must practice non-attachment, by not dwelling on the mind or on the purity of the mind.

“In all circumstances, we should free ourselves from attachment to objects. Our attitude towards them should be neutral and indifferent. Let neither success nor failure, neither profit nor loss, worry us. Let us be calm and serene, modest and accommodating, simple and dispassionate”

Enlightenment (bodhi) is nothing more than a thought that frees one from attachment.

This is described as the final instruction offered by the master. The second part of this instruction is as follows:

“On all occasions, whether we are standing,  
walking, sitting or reclining, let us be absolutely  
straight-forward. Then remaining  
in our sanctuary, and without the least movement,  
we shall virtually be in the Kingdom of Pure Land”.

Hui-Neng identifies the essence of mind with void. He describes mind as the manifestation of all phenomena, while the Buddha is freedom from all forms (viz., void). He advises “Mind must be in a state of illimitable void. Let it function freely. Whether you are in activity or in rest, let your mind abide nowhere”. When the mind is left for itself, it functions spontaneously and in an integrated manner. Thereby it develops power, which is creative, spontaneous and natural.

Hui-Neng is in favour of Taoist notion of spontaneity, and naturally he is averse to prescribing formal methods and techniques, which would block spontaneity. He would approve this Taoist poem :

“The centipede was happy-quite,  
until a toad in fun  
said, ‘Pray, which leg goes after which?’  
This worked his mind to such a pitch  
He lay distracted in a ditch  
considering how to run”.

The twin ideas of *dhyāna* (practice of meditation) and *prajña* (right understanding) were mentioned earlier. They have a special significance in the thought developed by Hui-Neng. They are for him like the lamp

and its light. If there is lamp, there is light; if there is no lamp, there is no light. Lamp is the body of light; and light is the use of the lamp. But dhyāna is not dust-wiping meditation, not a "practice of keeping watch over the purity of mind" and "gazing at the purity of mind". This is the type of meditation advocated by Shen-hsieu. It insists on a gradual movement from *mayoi* (standing at the cross-roads, not knowing which way to go) to *satori* (Wu, right understanding, enlightenment). Hui-Neng, points out that there is no "seeing of self-nature (or the void)" in this movement; it is merely making the mind tranquil, and no movement towards understanding the void-nature of mind (viz., no-mind, or self-mind), which is the essence of mind.

He lays emphasis of *prajña*. The movement from *mayoi* (standing at the cross-roads) to *satori* (right understanding of the void) is both instantaneous and discontinuous. One unexpectedly and suddenly as it were comes face to face with *śūnyatā* (void, no-mind). There is no logic or reasoning involved in it. The understanding flashes forth, even as light from the lamp. It is not built up in gradual measures!

Hui-Neng notes that this void (no-mind, no-thought, *wu-nien* or *wu-hsin*) is self-nature; it is 'suchness' (*tathatā*). It is distinguished from the normal mind involved in transactions, which is made up of thoughts (*nien*). The latter is this side of experience, while no-mind (self-nature) is the other side. The turn from thoughts to no-thought is abrupt. The awakening is instantaneous. But this awakening is pervasive. *Prajñā* means both having thoughts and not having them; to be in forms and also being detached from them; allowing the mind to function normally with



regard to the objects of the surrounding world but at the same time not getting stained by such functioning. Hui-Neng says that the source of our distress is generating thoughts about the objects outside and imagining false values. Thoughtlessness is “seeing all things, and yet keeping the mind free from stain and attachment”.

Prajñā is direct and correct understanding of the void-nature of mind (śūnyatā). There is vision here, but no stirring of any sort. There is “seeing”, but there is nothing that is “seen”; and the “seeing” does not leave any trace. “He who understands the idea of no-thoughtness”, says Hui-Neng, “has a perfect thoroughfare in the world of multiplicity”. He explains :

“Prajñā, when used, pervades everywhere, and yet shows no attachment anywhere. Only keep your original Mind pure, and let the six senses run out of the six portals into the six dusts (the sense-objects of the world). Free from stain, free from confusion, the mind is master of itself in its going and coming. The functioning of Prajñā knows no pause. This is the samādhi of Prajñā, the seed of nothingness. When Prajñā is entirely directed towards self-nature, and its other direction is ignored, the mind extricates itself. The mind becomes no-mind (wu-nien)”.

## SITTING QUIETLY, DOING NOTHING

Zazen (ts'o-ch'an in Chinese) is the practice of dhyāna (Zen) where the very act of sitting (Za) assumes importance. However, it is sitting, not lazily and indifferently, but with a quiet, full awareness, thoughtlessness and mindfulness, allowing no deliberation on the part of mind by way of comments, criticisms or reviews of the thoughts that arise on their own. The memories of the past and aspirations for the future are alike pushed out; only the present is the object of awareness. Whatever is happening within oneself and the immediate surrounding is attended to, but without any difference or evaluation. It is sitting erect and alert, without however any objective, end, purpose, goal or result in the mind. It is just sitting; it is the end in itself, and not a means to an end.

Hui-Neng said that to sit in meditation is to "gain absolute freedom and to be mentally unperturbed in all outward circumstances, be they good or otherwise", while the meditation itself is "to realize inwardly the imperturbability of the essence of mind". According to him, the meditator sits in meditation "to be free from attachment to all outer objects" (which is really dhyāna) and "to attain inner peace (samadhi)" (*The Sūtra of Wei-Lang*). When there is attachment to the objects outside, the mind within is disturbed. It is only non-attachment that leads to peace.

Sitting in Zazen is not to sit and reflect, but to sit quietly, spontaneously, sincerely and naturally. As Yen-men said :



“In walking, just walk  
In sitting, just sit  
Above all, don't wobble !”

The physical posture and breathing are important considerations in zazen. The posture of sitting should be firm but not stiff, erect but not tensed. The breathing must be slow, easy and natural. It must be from the belly, and attention being given to breathing out. It works on the mind, for prāna and manas are intimately related. This makes for firmness of posture, especially when the body is still and doing nothing. Counting of breaths is done to help sitting without mental talk or comments in the mind. One gets used to being still and doing nothing. It is thus that Zazen is described as “the gateway to total liberation”. It achieves emptiness of mind, realizes the void-nature of mind, reaches the original mind (mind that is untainted, unsullied, incorruptible and without limits).

The practice of Zazen is associated with the name of the Japanese monk Dogen (1200-1253 A.D.). He studied under Eisai (1141-1215 A.D.) who had brought Lin-chi ( Rinzai) School from China to Japan. In the lineage of Bodhidharma (470-543 A.D), the sixth patriarch, Hui-Neng (638-713 A.D.) had several influential disciples. One of them, Huai-Jang ( died 740 A.D.) had a disciple Ma-Tsu (died 788 A.D.). His disciple Pai-Chang had five disciples each of whom started a Zen School of his own (Lin-Chi, Tsao-Tung, I-Yang, Yun-men, and Fa-Yen). These were later consolidated into two schools Tsao-Tung (Soto in Japan) and Lin-chi (Rin Zai). These are the only two Zen schools that have survived. A student of Hui-Neng, Ugan (Japanese name), had a student Tosan,

whose student Wanshi was a well-known Zen master of the Soto school. He favoured what was called Mokusho - Zen (*Mok* means silent gazing at the wall, which Bodhidharma did), in which sitting became important to obtain an insight into the void. He disliked the use of Koans, that were popularized by Engo in the Twelfth Century and by Daie-Soko.

After his study under Eisai in Japan, Dogen went to China when he was 24, and served Wanshi for four years. He said that he did not learn much in China, excepting 'gentleness of spirit'. Then he returned to Japan and started the Zazen Movement. Dogen was a remarkable man. He lived in the Mountains, and steadfastly avoided royal courts and politics. He wrote many books, like *Shobo-genzo* ("The Eye of the True Law", parts of which were read out and explained to me in English by my master, Rev. Nakagawa) and trained many meditators.

He held that faith was a significant prerequisite in Zazen practice: faith that there is already Buddhahood in every one. Zazen, according to him, is not merely means to an end; it is an end in itself. Sitting in meditation, with no desires, expectations or benefits in mind, is in fact a way of living in one's own true self (Void or no-mind). Dogen advised "to live daily in the spirit of meditation, whether you are working, resting or playing". There is Buddha within each of us; to realize this, one must turn inward. Giving up external observances is helpful in this. But purity in conduct (*Śīla*) and development of compassion (*karuṇa*) are necessary preparations. He said:

"Only one detail is required. Free yourself from the bondage of mind and body alike, by putting the Buddha's own seal upon yourself.

If you do this as you sit in earnest meditation, the entire World will itself turn into enlightenment. This is what I call the Buddha's seal"

He explained that sitting in this manner will incorporate in itself moral training as well as the Buddha's enlightenment. These three constitute aspects of one principle. Zazen increases the inner awareness.

Hakuin (1685-1768 A.D.), who is hailed as the "patriarch who revived Zen" and "the greatest sage in 500 Years" is another name associated with Zazen. He entered the Zen monastery when he was only 15, and he practised Zazen for twenty-four years. When the bell announcing dawn rang on one morning after this period, he became 'awakened' all of a sudden.

The most beneficial place in which Zazen is practised is in a room, where there is not too much light or which is completely dark; a room which is not cluttered with furniture; and a room which is free from noise and stench. The room should afford privacy and seclusion. The best time to practice is early morning, preferably at dawn, or late in the night, just before going to bed. But any time of the day or night, when the mind inclines towards meditation and is not preoccupied with other concerns, would be suitable. The seat for Zazen meditation must be placed facing a blank wall or a plain curtain. Stimulations from the surroundings will then be minimal, if not absent. It is not advisable to have the seat too close to the wall, or far removed from it. Two or three feet away would be the suitable distance. For practising Zazen meditation, a quiet spot needs to be chosen. One must assume cross-legged squatting posture (lotus-like, padmāsana), and this is important.



It is preferable to sit comfortably on a soft mattress or on a cushion firmly padded. The legs must be crossed, with soles of the feet resting on the thighs and facing upward. Both Knees must have contact with the seat (mattress or cushion). The body must be perfectly stable, altogether immobile. The back must be erect, but not stressed in ram-rod fashion. This will prevent the pressure and interference of the internal organs when the body slumps. Bend forward, thrust the buttocks back and bring the trunk slowly to the erect posture. Head is to be held straight, ears in line with the shoulders and the tip of the nose in line with the navel. Take care to maintain the body above the waist to be weightless, that is to say with no pressure or strain, although the backbone is held erect.

The position of the hands is important. The two hands rest on the lap in front of the navel, with palms upward. The right hand (palm) is first placed, and over it the left hand (palm). The tips of the thumbs of the two hands must be brought together, touching each other, so that a slightly flattened circle is formed by the palms and the thumbs. This is the conventional Buddha posture.

The eyes are as important. They must not be fully closed or fully open. Both are strains: thoughts rushing about when closed, and external stimulations streaming in when open. Lower the gaze, without however, looking at anything in particular. The mind is said to be quietest when the eyes are lowered, neither closed nor open. It is then free from strain, fatigue, restlessness and drowsiness.

Thus the body is maintained in a stable but not stiff condition, which is helpful for the mind to get involved in meditation. To achieve



this posture, it is suggested that one must bend the body first to the right as far as it can go, and to the left as far as it can go, and that this must be repeated seven times. The bending of the body must gradually be in decreasing arcs, until the trunk comes to rest at the centre naturally. Then the proper balance of the body is achieved, as also erectness.

Sitting in this Buddha-like posture helps the mind to be alert and tranquil; the thoughts are not generated or activated by bodily movements, sensations or pressures. For preventing unnecessary thoughts welling up, it is suggested that the tongue in the mouth (which should be closed) is bent upward and backward so that it touches the upper part of the inside of the mouth. The tongue is used in articulating words, which correspond to thoughts. In yoga, the tongue is tied up (bandha), to prevent thoughts from getting formed.

Now must begin watching the breaths. Preliminarily, take a deep breath (pūraka), retain it for a while (kumbhaka), and then slowly breathe out (rechaka). Repeat this three or five times so that you begin to breathe naturally. Then the actual practice begins. Here breathing is accompanied by watchfulness through counting. Each breath that comes in or goes out is watched and counted. Start with counting (while also watching) the breath that comes in (inhalation) as "one", and the breath that goes out (exhalation) as "two", and so on till the count "ten" (or "twelve") is reached. After that, get back to "one" and continue till "ten" (or twelve").

In the next stage, counting the breaths is different. It is only after the breath goes out (exhalation), the count "one" begins. Inhalations

are not counted. The full breath (inhalation and exhalation) becomes one count. Again each counting series is upto "ten" (or "twelve"). Later, counting is again changed. Counting begins with the inhalation (as "one") and proceeds with "two" for the next inhalation; exhalations are not counted here. This is more difficult than the earlier stage, for all mental activities (as also mental processes) are done while exhalations are on.

Any one session in whatever stage should not be more than about forty minutes. Although the meditator sits quietly "doing nothing", his body that is held erect is likely to become taut after this length of time; and the mind will also become tired after continuous watching and counting of the breaths. If however one desires to continue the Zazen practice for longer periods, then an exercise known as 'Kinhin' is advised. This is described as "walking Zazen", for the manner of mindfulness continues, but the sitting posture is changed to walking. Before getting up from one session of 'sitting Zazen', one should swing his body to the sides in a rocking fashion, six times (first small swings and then larger ones). One should not get up abruptly. He should do so slowly, quietly and gently.

The 'Kinhin' practice is done while walking firmly, deliberately, steadily and calmly, with poise, composure and dignity. One is advised to begin walking with the left foot, and "walk so that the foot sinks into the floor, first the heel and then the toes". While walking, the body should be erect (as in sitting Zazen) and balanced; the arms should be in a line, the elbows must be at right angles, and the hands held on the chest. The thumb is tucked inside the right hand, which is placed on

the chest, and over it is placed the left hand, with the thumb similarly inside the hand. As in sitting Zazen, the eyes must be half-closed, the gaze resting upon a point about two yards in front of the feet. And while walking, the inhalations and exhalations are watched and counted. The walk may stretch to about five or ten minutes. (For details, *The Three Pillars of Zen*, compiled and edited by Philip Kapleau may be consulted).

If one wishes to continue with the 'sitting Zazen', he may return to it after 'Kinhin'. Sitting or walking, it is important to avoid thinking, reasoning, reviewing, remembering or anticipating. No effort, however, is expended in this direction. There is no attempt at checking out or expelling the thoughts that have arisen. But one does not cling to them, does not attach himself to them, does not evaluate them, does not bother about them in any way, beyond merely observing them, and counting the breaths. Zazen, in the words of Alan Watts, "is simply a quiet awareness, without comment, of whatever happens to be here and now". It is not just 'sitting with a blank mind excluding all impressions of inner and outer senses'.

At first, the practice of Zazen provides an experience of the void-nature of the mind (no-mind), but this experience is quite shallow, fleeting and distant. Yasutami Roshi provides an illustration. Suppose there is a frosted glass pane which separates us from reality. We are on this side of the glass pane; living in a world of multiplicity and transaction full of thoughts, feelings, desires, aspirations, frustrations, pleasures and pains. On the other side is the reality, oneness, the void, the essence



of mind, no-mind. As a result of the initial practice of Zazen, there comes into being a tiny spot on the frosted glass pane which becomes transparent, allowing us to see what is on the other side in a very limited way. But it is enlightenment alright, a satori. However, for this peep-hole to enlarge one must continue the practice. The Buddha's enlightenment is a complete circle, affording a full picture of what is on the other side of the frosted glass pane; the experience is not only wide in range, but vivid, deep and enduring.

Roshi also says that an essential prerequisite for success in the practice of Zazen is faith, great faith (in Japanese, *dai shinkon*, the terminal *Kon* meaning "root", signifying firmness). "All men are in their essential nature Buddhas. We are all in our essential nature perfect and flawless". This faith leads to an equally great 'doubt' (*dai gidan*), regarding why we are involved in transactional and transmigratory existence (*samsāra*). And this 'doubt' (which is synonymous with *jijñāsā*) will lead to great 'determination' (*dai funshin*) to break through this doubt-mass, to expend all of one's energy towards this end. The end is to realize the essential Buddhahood and the essential perfection of human nature.

In Zazen, the practice is not different from the goal (viz., enlightenment), the realization of one's essential, innate nature. Dogen says:

"In Buddhism, practice and enlightenment are one and the same. Since practice has its basis in enlightenment, the practice



even of a beginner contains the whole of original enlightenment. Thus, while giving direction as to the exercise, the Zen master warns him not to await enlightenment apart from the exercise, because this exercise points directly to original enlightenment; it has no beginning''

There is another word 'Shikan-Taza' (which means "Just to sit") for the practice like Zazen, in which the mind is intensely involved in just sitting. Here the emphasis is on the mind not getting hurried, but composed firmly; it is alert, but stretched. The meditator here is neither tense nor is in a hurry; but he is not slack, but is in a concentrated state of attention. Because of this, the meditator is said to sweat after even less than half an hour of meditation. So one is not advised to sit in this meditation for more than half-hour at a time; after this session of sitting, he should get up and do 'Kinhin' (already explained).

## DISCOURSES ON SELF-MIND

The mission of Bodhidharma (470-543) when he arrived in China in 520 or 526 A.D. was to help people attain enlightenment with their own resources, in their own minds, by discovering the no-mind in their minds. In the words of Fu-Ta-Shih : "When I pass over the bridge, the bridge, but not the water, flows!". This was the subject-matter of Ch'an (or Zen), which was crystallised in the transmission-line of Bodhidharma, principally by Hui-Neng (638-713 A.D.), the sixth patriarch after Bodhidharma. After him, the most eloquent master, Tsung-Kao (1089-1163), made significant contributions to the practice of Ch'an (Zen). He is known for his innovation in the Koan-exercises (to be explained later). He had numerous eminent disciples. The discourses that he gave to each of them have become celebrated. Some of these have been translated into English. My teacher, Rev. Nakagawa, had a small collection of these discourses in English translation, which he kindly made available to me. He also explained to me some of the points raised in these discourses.

Spiritual practice cannot be like the ordinary practice to acquire physical fitness, mental prowess or vocational competence. You cannot set a time-limit and hurry through. The progress here does not depend upon your effort or speed; it can only be spontaneous. What matters is not application but ability to let go and allow things to happen. Tsung-Kao says (in his discourse to Yung Mao Shih):

“If you have made up your mind to practice Ch’an (Zen), the first and most important thing is: Do not hurry! If you hurry, you will only be delayed. Nor should you be lax, for then you will be lazy. The work should be carried out as a musician adjusts the strings of his harp—neither too tightly nor too loosely”

One who plans out what he must do and how the practice must be done is likely to end up in a network of thoughts and ideas. When the original and pure mind (same as no-mind or self-mind), devoid of transactional taints and contents, is sought after, he says that “conceptualization is a deadly hindrance to Zen-Yogis, more injurious than poisonous snakes or fierce beasts” (in his talk with Hsu-Tun Li). Intelligent people, earnest and hardworking, according to him, always “live in the cave of conceptualization, their minds never getting away from its activities”. How can no-mind, which is altogether non-graspable, come within the reach of the grasping mind? The grasping mind it is that thinks, plans, calculates and decides. The no-mind is what we in India describe as ‘unmana’, and it is characterized by the absence of all mental activity (*amanasikāra*). Therefore, Tsung-Kao advises : “Throw the mind into an abyss, where thoughts cannot reach it” The advice corresponds with the admonition in *Bhagavad-gītā* : “na Kimchid api chintayet” (“stop thinking of anything”).

But it is not as easy as it seems : it is exceedingly difficult for the mind not to have thoughts. Tsu-Kao is aware of this:



“People always abide in the cave of thought and intellection. As soon as they hear me say ‘Get rid of thinking’, they are dazed and lost; they do not know where to go!”

(Discourse to Hsu-Tun Li)

He told Huang Po Cheng : when I speak of no-mind, it is not like a lump of clay or dead wood or a block of stone. It is not lifeless or devoid of consciousness. Nor does it mean that mind will stand still, divorced from all transaction and without any reaction to the stimulations. It is the nature of the mind to be active and responsive. When I speak of no-mind, it is not the negation of mind, not the disappearance of mind, not the stoppage of mental activities. But no-mind is mind that is natural and spontaneous at all times and in all circumstances. It is not dead-void, but fully alive.

Awareness is another word for it. The practice of no-mind means the development of mere awareness. In his discourse to Yung-Mao Shih, Tsung-Kao said:

“What you should do is to look at that which understands and makes decisions and judgements. Just look at it all the time in your daily round. With great determination in your heart, try to find out from whence all these mental activities come.

By looking at it here and there, now and then, the things with which you are familiar and you are in the habit of doing



gradually become unfamiliar, and the things with which you are not familiar (viz., the Zen work) gradually become familiar.

When you find your work coming easily, you are doing very well. And by the same token, whenever the work is done very well, you will feel it is easy for you. A critical stage is thus reached”.

All mental activities are like murals painted on a wall. Without the wall, there can be no paintings; but the paintings hide the wall, cover it up, and make it disappear from view. The wall for the mental activities is awareness (*prajñā*), mere awareness, utterly free from all thoughts and feelings. This is the original mind, the no-mind or self-mind. To get back to this state of ‘mindlessness’ (which in reality is mindfulness, *smṛti*) is the goal of Zen practice. This is what Bodhidharma also taught. Tsung-Kao in his discourse to Hsiung Hsu Yu said:

“If in all your activities and contacts, you can keep your awareness, or do away with that which is ‘unaware’, gradually, as days and months go by, your mind will become naturally smoothed out into one continuous, whole piece.”

The ordinary mind is fragmented, thoughts are scattered, feelings are disconnected. Time and place take their toll. We are confused and stressed. We are working at the level of the murals (in the example given above), and do not reach the wall (viz., awareness). Once we reach the wall, the abyss into which the mind has been thrown, we

find "tranquillity, natural at all times and in all activities". This digging into the mind results in the 'right realization'. Tsung-Kao says :

"When working at Zen, you should dig into it with all your mind and heart."

And while so doing, anything, anytime can be an opportunity for the right realization, also called 'self-awakening'. Tsung-Kao told Chen Chi Jen :

"When involved in turmoils and excitements, which you have no way of avoiding or eschewing, you should know that this is the best time to work at Zen. If, instead, you make an effort to suppress or correct your thought, you are getting far away from Zen."

Another Zen master, who walked in the footsteps of Tsung-Kao was Hsuan-Sha, who was also known for his discourses. In one of his discourses, this is what he has to say:

"Some begin to collect their thoughts, suppress their minds, and merge all things into the emptiness. They close their eyelids and hide their eyeballs. As soon as distracting thoughts arise, they push them away. Even when the subtlest thought rises, they immediately suppress it.

This kind of practice and understanding constitute the very trap of the dead-void heretics. Such practitioners are living

dead men. They become callous, impassive, senseless and torpid. They resemble stupid thieves who try to steal a bell by stuffing their ears!"

Zen does not advocate special effort of any kind. One must be just ordinary, natural and unaffected. There is a stress on spontaneity and naturalness:

"Sitting quietly, doing nothing  
spring comes and the grass grows by itself"

A Zen master Yuan-men gave this counsel :

"In walking, just walk,  
In sitting, just sit,  
Above all, don't wobble!"

While being natural, one should not try to be natural; it would then be only affectation, far removed from naturalness. Tilopa, the Indian ascetic whose influence has been most profound in Tibet through his student Naropa (the inspiration for Milarepa), also sang:

"Without making an effort  
But remaining loose and natural  
One can break the yoke  
Thus gaining liberation."

There are two aspects that are involved in Zen practice. One is to develop the right view, and the other is to adopt the right course

of action. The former is like climbing to the top of the mountain and looking from there (Chien, or sāmkhya). The other aspect is like going down to the bottom of the sea, and start walking from there (hsing, or yoga). The right view is of course the more important of the two aspects. It is in fact enlightenment (wu or satori). But the latter aspect is a necessary one. Tsung-Kao suggested Koan as an expedient, which combines both aspects.

Koan (Kung-an in Chinese) evolved in the 9th century and reformed in the 11th is a dialogue or event that takes place between a Zen master and his student. It is in the nature of a problem, a Zen problem, which does not call for a solution or answer. In fact, the problem here has no solution or answer. It cannot be solved; the student has to dissolve it. In problems posed before a student like "What is the sound of one hand clapping?", "Has a dog the Buddha-nature?", "What was your real face before you were born?" and "Who is repeating the Buddha's name?," "All things return to the one", the master introduces some key-words on which the student has to meditate : like 'What', 'No', 'Who' and 'One'. Koan is described as a 'complete mind', for when the mind is complete no Koan presents a problem. It is likened to the use of a fish-hook : when the fish is full, it does not bite the hook. It is also compared to a stone which is used to knock at the door; when the door is opened, the stone is thrown away. Koan is used for obtaining enlightenment.

A Koan is meant to generate "the sensation of doubt-mass" (i ching or gizo). The Zen student does not try to obtain answers for the koan



problem intellectually; the doubt is not an ordinary one. It is doubt without content; it is a mere doubt, like "Where did I come from before my birth, and where shall I go after my death?". One does not know the solution to a problem like this; there is no way of getting an answer. But it should create an intense sensation, a strong feeling, a load on the mind. The suggestion is that one should stick this doubt-mass on his forehead day and night, and keep it there until you can neither drive away nor put it down, even if you want to.

Koans are of two kinds : (1) gen-jo-koans, which are natural, problems are chosen from all details of daily life; and (2) Kosaku-koans, which are verbal formulations. There are about 1,700 Koans in currency.

Po shan, who follows the lead of Tsung-Kao, tells us that because of this intolerable load of doubt-mass, "the whole world is turned to a muddy vortex; without and within the body and mind, nothing exists but this burden of doubt-sensation; when he looks up, he does not see the sky and when he looks down he does not see the earth; walking or sitting, he is not aware of doing so". Mountains are not mountains, and rivers are not rivers, Tension is built up during meditation, and thought is pushed to its dead end. It is then that the meditator bursts through the thought-barrier.

There is an account of how this happens. There are two significant expressions in Chinese in this connection. The first one is *hua t'ou*, which means "head of a word or thought"; it signifies the state of the mind before a thought arises or word is uttered. The head is what comes

out first in birth. It represents the reality which is devoid of forms. The second word is *hua wei*, which means "tail of the word or thought". It is the state of the mind in which a thought has already fully arisen, a word is already articulated completely. This represents the world of common living experience, which turns out to be a world of illusions like sky-talk, dead log, wooden horse, stone girl. It is the world of seeming reality, but lacking in substance or life.

The Zen master tells his student: "Observe and look into your *hua-t'ou*". To observe here is to look backwards, or rather inward. One turns his back on the ordinary world of transactions, and starts on a journey into his own interior. To look means to put ones mind penetratingly into the abyss. Observation and looking are to become aware or watch the state of the mind before a thought arises, or a word gets uttered. There can be no thought without a verbal form, and so the Chinese word *hua* means both thought and word (sentence, talk). *Hua wei* is the thought-barrier. Observing and looking into ones *hua t'ou* are intended to break this thought-barrier, to get out of the world of illusions. The mind then becomes void, and the doubt-mass drops away by itself, giving room to enlightenment (*wu* or *satori*). The meditator then returns to the normal world of transactions, but bereft of clinging to anything. For him, the mountains are again mountains and the rivers are once again rivers.

Po shan warns : "Merely to arouse the doubt-sensation is not enough. You must also break through it. Put forth all your strength, and strain every nerve of yours. Do not stop until this doubt-mass is

broken up". Involvement in Koan-exercise and the consequent generation of the doubt-sensation are intended to unravel the reality of no-mind (or self-mind, mind in itself and by itself). This is regarded as effort, as work. But it is Zen work, unlike any other work in the context of the transactional world. It is not work in the common sense of the word. But it is work nevertheless for it leads one to a goal. As the Zen master says:

"When working at zen, one should not just await the coming of enlightenment with an expectant mind. This is like a traveller who sits idly by the road and expects his home to come to him. He will never reach home this way. He must walk to get there."

Work in the Zen context is putting all one's effort to turning the thoughts on self-nature. Te-Shan described this work thus : "Only when you have no thing on your mind, and no mind in things are you vacant and spiritual, empty and marvellous" or as Dogen advised : "Put the mind on your palm, and concentrate on it".

Han Shan, the Zen master describes Zen as an instrument to crush the clingings that infect human thought. Habitual thinking involves clingings, attachments; and when thoughts flow, the clinging continues and deepens. But this clinging is for shadows, for there is nothing outside mind:

“If suddenly the surging thoughts stop,  
one sees clearly that one’s self-mind  
is originally pure, genuine, vast, perfect,  
illuminating and devoid of objects. This seeing  
is wu (or satori, enlightenment)”.

The original mind is called the self-mind, the mind by itself, the mind’s own and inalienable nature, which is pure, clear and bright. This is of the nature of void; the mind does not exist as thoughts and feelings. Thoughts and feelings are devoid of substance; they are only shadow-like, within the mind.

The Zen practitioner ignores all understandings and all knowledge which are only thoughts that flow; he concentrates only on the self-mind, which is no-mind, clear and bright. Han Shan advises :

“Search out the point where your thoughts arise and disappear. See where a thought appears and disappears. Keep this point in mind, and try to break right through it. Become aware of this point, for it is like a sharp sword. Hold this awareness and crush the thoughts. Push your mind to the very end; just push it on and on. The thoughts will break to pieces. They will dissolve and vanish away instantaneously. It is then that the self-mind flashes forth. It will be like the emergence of a clear, limpid pond when mists hiding it are lifted. One feels comfortable and joyful. The whole earth becomes suddenly complete, lacking in nothing. But do not be deceived, for just



as quickly a thought may arise in the mind, and the mist is drawn before you, veiling your body and mind - It was but a trap!"

The working of the doubt-mass is illustrated here. One must valiantly go on with the practice until the doubt-sensation fully breaks up. There are traps on the way, and one must be wary. Conceptualized understanding, rationalization, supernormal visions, lights and aura, feelings of joy and satisfaction are all traps. Or again, the experiences in meditation may appear flat and tasteless, and one gives up the practice. He does not reach the goal; he takes the path "below the cliff of decaying trees". These are all traps, shadows, tricks played by the doubt-mass.

Enlightenment (satori, wu) may be merely conceptualized (Chih-wu); the nature of mind may be understood intellectually by reading books and listening to sermons. This is not the real enlightenment, although it may resemble enlightenment, as illustrated above. The real enlightenment is a matter of realization (cheng-wu), as a result of steadfast practice. All thoughts suddenly disappear here, and the doubt-mass is completely crushed. This is like the *jīvanmukti* state in Vedāntā. The mind merges with all conditions of life. So we are told.

## DEITY-YOGA

The Mahāyanā Buddhism prevalent in Tibet not only preserved but resuscitated many Indian practices that had disappeared from the country. One of them is the exercise of mind's intrinsic nature of vacuity (śūnyatā-bhāvanā), included in what is known as Mantra-yāna. This is the teaching contained in Ratnākara-sānti's treatise entitled *Guhya-samājā-maṇḍala-vidhi-ṭīkā*, the Sanskrit original of which is lost, but the Tibetan translation of which is preserved. I was privileged to get access to this text with the help of a Tibetan disciple (in the monastery of Gurupura in Karnataka) of the well-known Lama Kang-Ko (the author of *The Essentials of Mahāmudrā Practice*.)

Ratnākara-sānti's work developed out of Maitreya's *Abhisamayālankāra*, which laid the foundations of Mantra-yāna that flourished in Tibet. This ideology insists on the combination (yuganaddha) of pacification of mind (śamatha) and insight into reality (vipaśyanā). The notion of pacification involves the bodily catharsis (Kāya-praśrabdhi) as well as mental catharsis (chitta-praśrabdhi). This is achieved by the visualization of a deity (devatā-yoga) as the prop for realizing the void-nature of mind.

A deity's form is evoked in mind in the first stage known as the stage of development or production (utpatti-krama, the path known in Tibetan as bsKyed-rim), where the purification of body and speech and

mind are accomplished by the exercise of maṇḍalas and mantras. This is followed by the second and final stage known as the stage of completion (Sampanna-krama, also called nishpanna-krama, rdzogs-rim), where voidness is realized. The idea of voidness-realization (śūnyatā-bhāvanā) is common to all practical disciplines of Mahāyāna. But the deity-yoga (visualization) as a means to it is the unique contribution of Ratnākara-śānti. This is the essence of mantra-yāna, its distinguishing feature.

The deity-yoga, however, by itself does not lead to the Buddhahood (enlightenment); nor does the voidness-realization by itself. The two must be combined. The latter will focus attention on the intrinsic and inalienable nature of reality (dharma-kāya), while the former emphasizes the form which that reality assumes to lead one to the latter (rūpa-kāya).

The deity-yoga is a matter of creation, production, generation. The voidness, however, is not created when it is realized; it is always there; it is the reality.

It is not to be imagined that deity-yoga in mantra-yāna (as taught by Ratnākara-śānti and as practised in Tibet) as the formal worship of an iconic form. It is intent contemplation on the icon. Tsong-kha-pa, the eminent authority on the Tibetan rendition of Indian teachings, says:

“Some place an icon in front, and view it with eye, make a quick contemplation. This is not good. Because, samādhi

is not accomplished by what the senses are aware of. It is accomplished by what the mind is aware of.”

It is no doubt helpful to keep an icon in front; the eyes will have an object to concentrate upon. And the icon should be beautiful and impressive. It should please the eye, and encourage attention. It should also be symbolic, so that the mind is also involved. The deity yoga is essentially creative imagination, and the deity (icon) is but a prop for meditation. The presence of a physical object in front for meditation is a fact; but it should be transformed completely to an imaginative replica in the mind. The distinction between fact and imagination is of utmost importance. The physical details of the meditative object (like the parts of the icon's body, posture, size, expressions on the face and the objects held in the hands) as well as the ideational contents (the significance of the details conjured up in the mind in accordance with the suggestions contained in the dhyāna-slokas and prayers) constitute the deity-yoga. The deity (icon) is integrated in the mind, conjoined with thoughts, yoked to imagination and this is what yoga means.

Tsong-kha-pa makes a distinction between the first stage, where the mind makes a reflected image of the external icon (a replica in metal casting or a painting, or a maṇḍala or yantra) and the second and more advanced stage, where there is a vivid recollection of that image as naturally present in the mind. In the second stage, the physical characteristics of the icon are entirely pushed aside, the external object is thrust into oblivion and ignored. The icon now becomes vivid and alive in the mind. This is bhāvanā, making become something that was



not there earlier. The fact of an icon as a meditative object is transformed into imagination.

Now the meditator is in a position to recognize that the form of the icon that he now perceives in his mind is but an appearance caused by the predispositions established in the previous practice of gazing at the external icon. It has no substance; it is of the nature of void (*śūnya*). There are tiny treatises in Tibetan (called *Rin LHa*n collections corresponding to the *sādhana-mālā* in Sanskrit), which tell us about the void nature of the deity. They also prescribe mantras for incantation during the practice of imaginative evocation of the deity. The mantra emerges out of the void (from *ākāśa*), beyond matter, and grows out of a seed-syllable (*bījākshara*). The mantra in the context is what “protects the mind”; it not only preserves the vividness of the deity imagined, but makes it different from ordinary imagination, makes it alive. In fact, the iconic form that is objective, physical and sensorily perceived is now apprehended as but a ‘sportive’ form (*līlā-vigraha*) of the deity which has been evoked in the mind by the power of the mantra.

The purpose of deity-yoga is to help in the meditation of void. The idea of void is the negation of all that confirms form, all that constricts reality into a time-space mould, all that limits and binds. It is tantamount to vastness (the Upanishadic *bhūmā*, *virāt*, *ākāśa*). Tsong-KHa-Pa describes abandonment as the “imprint of *sūnyatā-bhāvanā*”. It cleanses the mind from all taints and defilements. The opposite of void is clinging. It is clinging that brings into existence the idea of “I” (ego, self), reifies it (viz., makes it appear real, although it is unreal),

and involves the individual in transactions. The teaching of śūnyatā is to recover the vastness that has been lost by the idea of ego or self.

Tsong-KHa-Pa says that without this experience of vastness, no amount of meditation on selflessness will enable one to reach the Buddhahood. Selflessness should really take the form of being of help to others, and of resolving to bring about the welfare of all beings. This is what Tsong-KHa-Pa calls the "imprint of void". The deity-visualization (viz., the deity-yoga) involves the recognition of vastness in which the deity is evoked to appear. The deity is empty, and becomes vast. It is evoked in the mind as a wave in the sea (as rūpa-kāya in dharma-kāya). It assumes a form (without, however, substance), and it is withdrawn into the mind. It emerges out of void, and merges again into void.

The Mahāmudrā-practice, according to the Lama Kong-Ka, seeks to recognize "the illuminating void-awareness of ones own self-mind". This awareness is devoid of contents. It lifts the mind out of the transactional involvements, distinctions and attachments. The deity-yoga is a step in the direction of this contentless awareness. While practising the deity-yoga, one is advised to stop discriminating, to abandon the habitual thoughts of acceptance and rejection, and to develop the "core triad". The three details of practice that are regarded as essential are (1) Equilibrium (viz., not to cling, not to rely on anything external, and to keep a balance of body, speech and mind), (2) Relaxation (viz., not to hold, to loosen the mind, and let everything go; to strip the mind of all thoughts), and (3) Naturalness (viz., not to make any effort, not to take anything or leave anything, to be spontaneous).

The ego which is the strongest adversary to void-awareness is sought to be "cut off" (gcHod) by the deity-yoga, making way for the cultivation of śūnyatā-bhāvanā. In the practice of deity-yoga, one rests in effortless one-pointedness of mind, which will eventually unfold the original vacuity of mind, what Tsong-KHa-Pa calls "the luminosity of emptiness"; the Upanishads describe it as 'jyoti' (light). The spontaneous arising of the deity-visualization is emphasized. It is not contrived by the mind; it is not a function of the ego; there is no subject-object duality involved in it. It is an indication of the vastness and purity of the mind that is being realized. For here the deity visualized is also identical with oneself, with one's own mind. The gross form is transformed into a subtle form; and the subtle form is transformed into formlessness.

The deity-yoga is also related to the six-limbed yoga (shāḍaṅga-yoga) in Tibet. Pratyāhāra (or withdrawal of oneself from all stimulations of the external world) is attending to the physical icon kept in front, but ignoring the distractions (traī-dhātuka-bimba-darśanam). Dhyāna (contemplation) is unintermittent and intent concentration on the icon (bimbe sthira-chittah). Prāṇāyāma is shifting the attention from the gross body to the vital currents working within it; and to project the deity in the retention of the breath (kumbhaka). Dhāraṇā is to retain the iconic form in the mind, without interruption, distraction or diversion (ekalolatā). Anusmṛti (mindfulness) is embracing the iconic form with the entirety of one's mind (bimbālinganam chittasya). Samādhi is elimination of the duality of the mind in terms of grasper and the grasped object, and the consequently uniform and blissful flow of consciousness; it is one-pointedness in the deity that is one with the mind (jñāna-bimbe samādhih).

## NO-THOUGHT-CREATION

Huang-Po (died 850 A.D.) was a lively Zen master, whose discourses on the "transmission of Mind" contain an unusual insight into the principles and practice of dhyāna. His main thesis is : "Mind is the Buddha, while the cessation of thoughts is the Way". He focussed all his attention on the mind (which in reality is no-mind, no-thought), and the most frequently studied among his writings is "*The essentials of Mind doctrine*". He was a disciple of Po-Chang (720-814) (Hukujo, in Japanese), who was a disciple of Hui-jang's successor, Ma-Tsu (Baso, died 788 A.D.). An interesting anecdote has been recorded. This occurred when Ma-Tsu was practising Zazen in the monastery of Ch'uan-fa :

Hui-Jang: "What is your objective in the practice?"

Ma-Tsu : "To become a Buddha"

Hui-Jang thereupon picked up a floor-tile that was lying there, and began polishing it on a rock. Ma-Tsu inquired what he was doing. Hui-Jang replied that he was making the floor-tile a mirror. Ma-Tsu was surprised and asked : "How could polishing a tile make a mirror?". Hui-Jang countered : "How can sitting in meditation make a Buddha?". Ma-Tsu's approach then was totally transformed. His disciple Po-Chang gave importance to manual labour as a meditative exercise, and advocated an active life for a monk. The famous rule "A day of no working is a day of no eating" is his. When his master Ma-Tsu shouted in his



ear so that he was deaf for three days, he became enlightened. He gave this wonderful advice :

“When hungry, eat  
when tired, sleep!”

He was against a deliberate seeking for the Buddha-nature by sitting in meditation. He likened it to “going out riding on an ox in search of that ox”. The disciple of this remarkable master was Huang-Po.

His disciple again was a remarkable master. Lin Chi (died 850 A.D.), better known by his Japanese name Rinzai, is best known for his development of the Koan (Kung-an) school of meditation, known as “the anecdote-observing Zen” (K’an-hua zen). His main teaching was that the Buddhahood cannot be obtained by effort. His counsel was: “Be normal, natural, ordinary and unaffected. Do nothing special to become a Buddha”. The Buddhahood is real; it can never be undone or brought in. It is like a mountain hidden by mist. Allow the mist to clear, and the mountain is seen. There is nothing else to be done.

There are people who set out to perceive their mind. They are unable to perceive it, although it is there all the while and for all to perceive, because worldly cares and concerns prevent them from turning their eyes inward. Then they try to keep the worldly cares and concerns out; they seek to escape from the stimulations of the surrounding. They imagine that they can still their minds by doing so. They are mistaken. When you try to keep out the worldly worries, you are employing your

mind. You are only substituting one concern by another concern: the mind is never stilled that way. Besides, the mind is now stressed. It has to divide against itself: one part of mind controlling or checking another part of mind. Hung-Po asks us not to employ mind in this perverted way.

“ Just let your minds become void, and environmental phenomena will void themselves”

He is also aware that this is not easily done. Many people who do want to still their minds are “afraid to empty their minds, lest they may plunge into the void”. By mind they mean thoughts. Emptying the mind would be to avoid or eliminate thoughts altogether. They are scared of this. They would rather give up the objects of the outside world than abandon thoughts. They do not know that the essential nature of the mind itself is void. The mind would not be destroyed by giving up thoughts; indeed it would recover its own original nature. One should give up thoughts, but not the objects of the outside world.

But what should one do with the objects of the world if he is not to have thoughts? Huang-Po advises: “Observe things as they are”. And he adds: “Pay no attention to other people. Some people are like mad dogs, barking at everything that moves, even at the wind that stirs among the grass and leaves”. The best that one can do is to rid himself of all thoughts. Ch'ing-Ming sang:

“Just spread out a mat  
For reclining quite flat-  
When thought's tied to a bed  
Like a sick man growing worse.  
All Karma will cease  
And all fancies disperse.  
That's what is meant by Bodhi!”

Bodhi is a sanskrit word meaning “awakening”, “enlightenment”. Huang-Po speaks of ‘Bodhi-maṇḍala’, the realm of awakening, the sphere of enlightenment. The expression ‘maṇḍala’ has a significance of its own: it connotes mystic space, sacred sphere that is at once tranquil and powerful. It is everywhere and nowhere. ‘Maṇḍa’ is the essence, and the locus of this essence is ‘maṇḍala’. It is the map of reality. The essence or the real is the mind; its void nature is its map. The well-known saying of Huang-Po is “Mind is the Buddha, while the cessation of conceptual thought is the Way”. This is the maṇḍala of bodhi, the realm of enlightenment, which is synonymous with thoughtlessness.

Huang-Po explains: “A Bodhi-maṇḍala is a state where no concepts arise, and in which one awakens to the intrinsic voidness of phenomena”. It is also described as the source from which all phenomena arise, the source from which the suchness of phenomena also is realized. The texts call it ‘Tathāgata-garbha’, the womb of the Buddha who arrived here with suchness (void) being his nature. Bodhi is being awakened into this void, returning to the source of all phenomena. Huang-Po further explains ‘sitting in Bodhi-Maṇḍala’: it is “knowing that in truth not a



single thing exists which can be attained". In other words, it is understanding that void is the real.

*Bodhi* (awakening or enlightenment) however is not to be mistaken for a state or condition in which one can abide or to which one can rise and reach. To say that the Buddha became enlightened (or attained to bodhi) is only figurative, for he was never bereft of it. In fact, no sentient being is ever lacking in this bodhi. It is not something that can be "reached with the body nor sought with the mind". Huang-Po holds that "all sentient beings are already of one form with Bodhi".

Bodhi is nothing more than eliminating all thoughts, realizing that mind in its essential nature is void. Here is what Huang-Po says:

"If you were to remain quiet, tranquil, quiescent, and to refrain from the minutest mental activity, the substance or essence of mind would be seen as a void. It is devoid of form, substance and location. It does not fall into any known category of existence; nor can it be viewed as non-existence. It cannot be perceived as we normally perceive objects. That is why Bodhidharma said: 'your real nature is mind, which was not born, nor will it die. It is the womb of all phenomena. It transforms itself into phenomena, in responses to circumstances'."

We call it mind, because it is convenient to do so. How else can we describe something that responds to circumstances? But when it is



not responding to circumstances, when it is not involved in phenomena, it is only void, beyond both existence and non-existence. It cannot then be called Mind. It becomes Mind when it is the source (womb, *garbha*) of all phenomena. Huang-Po called it 'Tathāgata-garbha'. The void transforms itself into phenomena, without however abandoning its void nature. This is the significance of the expression 'tathāgata' ("coming into phenomena with the original nature intact"). It is the womb in the sense of being the source of all phenomena. The true mind, the void, is never lost even when phenomena appear. In normal transactional life, moments of delusions are strung together. But even then the void nature (or the true mind) is not lost, for it is eternal and incorruptible. One cannot say that this void arises when one is enlightened. It has been there all along, but only the phenomenal mind was not aware of it. Enlightenment is nothing but gaining awareness of the essential nature of mind, the voidness. Huang-Po describes it as 'bhūta-tathatā': "being such always", despite the delusions and the phenomena appearing and disappearing.

Thoughts and images, impressions and memories, desires and distresses constitute a continuous flow. Whenever they arise, 'karma' is occasioned. It is a power to move away from original nature, invent dualities and invite rebirth. Freedom from thoughts will put an end to the arousal of 'karma'. To be free from thoughts and images, impressions and memories, desires and distresses is to make the mind pure and passionless. When the minutest mental process is eliminated from the mind, when the mind becomes thoughtless, not a particle of karma gets

formed. It forestals rebirth into the duality of phenomena (subject-object duality). You may be living amidst the phenomenal objects and occurrences, you may have a body that is physical and material. But you are liberated, you are enlightened. You have become aware of the void nature of your mind. The void now fills everywhere.

Huang-Po advocates the practice of "keeping your mind motionless at all times, walking, sitting, standing or lying down". This means, according to him, concentrating entirely on "the goal of no-thought-creation, no duality, no reliance on others, no attachment". Forming thoughts involves attachment to things and objects and persons in the outside world. And attachment makes you respond to stimulations and react to the phenomena. You become alive to appearances; and loose your awareness of your own essential mind. That is what is called 'duality', and it is this that causes agitation, anxiety, anguish and stress. The root of all this is the formation of thoughts.

Huang-Po calls on us to make our minds "like unto a block of stone", impervious and insensitive, unmoving and unmoved. "Just allow things to take their course the whole day long, as though you were too ill to bother". But you are not passive, you are not a slave to the passing phenomena nor subject to passions. You are in perfect control of all your faculties, physical and mental. The mind has become perfectly unified, brought to one point so that even that one point disappears into a void.

## SIX STEPS

*Saddharma-puṇḍarīka* (the Lotus-sūtra) is an important Mahāyāna work which was popular among the Chinese Buddhists from the fifth century to about the fourteenth. The celebrated 'translator', Kumārajīva (344-413 A.D.) considered it the last sermon of the Buddha, and hence its importance. Hui-Yüan (334-416) was mainly responsible for its popularity, although he was himself a devotee of *Sukhāvatī-vyūha-sūtra* (the Pure-Land-Sūtra in China). The Lotus sūtra was theistic in its inclination, and spoke about the awakening of the Buddha-nature that is latent in every human being. It advocated the "gradual" method of enlightenment rather than the "sudden" method which caught the fancy of the Ch'an (Zen) votaries (especially the Linchi or Rinzai sect).

My Japanese master, the Rev. Nakagawa, drew my attention to a passage from Hui-Yüan, which he thought was significant, although he was a zen master himself. I quote below excerpts from this passage:

"Each person has within him a heart that attaches to things, and it is there that delusions are born. If these delusions are not cut off, the attachments which strive to maintain life become gradually stronger and stronger.

Therefore, in Buddhism, since it is based on such an origin, a method of gradual progress is adopted to teach and guide people. Because the habits of man, acquired through endless



generations, cannot be made to be cast aside at once, the Buddha did not preach abrupt and profound principles to all and at once."

Chih-i (538-597), the founder of the T'ien-t'ai school which flourished until the fourteenth century in China and which has the Lotus-sūtra as its guiding text, has presented a picture of what is called the 'periodization' of the Buddha's teachings. The first period is named after Avatamsaka-sūtra, which the Buddha is said to have taught in the very first sermon of his. Here was named Vairochana as the esoteric form of the Buddha, an abstraction of Buddha-hood. The second period began when the Buddha taught his sermon in the deer-park (mṛgadāva) in Vāraṇāsi. The truth of dependent origination of all things (pratitya-samutpada) was taught here. In the next period, Mahāyāna was preached through Vaipulya-sūtras. During eight years in his career, the historic Buddha taught the higher levels of self-realization. The fourth period is known as Prajñāpāramitā, when the Buddha taught for 22 years the supreme doctrine of void nature (śūnyatā), and the identity of the transactional (samvṛti) and transcendental (paramārtha) levels. The last period is marked by his last sermon in the Buddha's earthly career, *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, the teachings being elaborated in *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka* (or the Lotus-sūtra).

Being the final teachings, the sūtra is described as 'subtle', meant only for mature and advanced aspirants. The main teaching is that all can become Buddhas. 'The supreme King of Healing (bhaishajya-rāja), the Buddha, can turn poison (the transactional world) into medicine (the



transcendental truth). He can revive the dead seeds (of Buddhahood in the worldly man), so that all by making themselves devoid of mind, can become Buddhas.

The whole spiritual exercise is directed towards this end: making oneself denuded of mind. The goal is to realize that all is void (*sūnya*). This, however, is not easy, as it becomes evident in the passage of Hui-Yüan, quoted at the beginning. The technique is difficult and elaborate. It cannot be acquired by chance or spontaneity (as believed by the Ch'an devotees). It can only be learnt from a guru, and one needs to be constantly guided by him. The practice must be earnest, intense and graded. In the T'ien-t'ai school, the practice consists of six steps, which will be described here.

Chih-i's master Hui-ssu (515-576) pointed out that the bodhi-sattva ideology was the essential detail in the Lotus-sūtra. A bodhisattva is one who practices without any desire, has the welfare of all beings uppermost in his mind, and has before his mind's eye the correct view of all dharmas. There are three stages generally accepted: those of the śrāvaka (beginner), pratyeka-buddha (the more advanced), and bodhisattva (the most advanced). But there is essential unity of all these stages on the road to Buddhahood. The Lotus-sūtra teaches the essential oneness of salvation, whether it is that of śrāvaka, pratyeka buddha or bodhisattva. The essential element in salvation is absence of thought that dichotomizes (divides into subject and object, into the self and the world), mind that is perfectly neutral (absence of the pairs, good and evil, right and wrong, gain and loss, pleasure and pain), the mind that transcends

all thoughts. Chih-i declared that he had no interest in objective reality, his interest was only in reality as it impinges on the mind. His considered view was that each and everything is a manifestation of the mind in its totality, viz. the Buddha-nature.

The six steps in the meditative exercise that this school suggests are as follows.

### **Step I (Counting the breaths):**

This step is the beginner's. It consists of breathing exercises, with counting the breaths as an important detail. One sits in the usual meditative posture, focusses his attention on his inhalations and exhalations. He counts 'one' after the inhalation or after the exhalation (but never both together), slowly and calmly. He continues till 10. If, while counting, there is an interruption due to any distraction, the counting must go back, and begin with one again.

The practice must continue till the counting of the breaths proceeds uninterrupted by any distracting thought whatever (from one to ten). The mind will be throwing up thoughts without a break, one after another, in free association. And one is not even aware of this. It is this habit of mind that is sought to be curbed in this exercise. There is a close relation between breathing and thinking. If one becomes aware of his breathing, he will also become aware of his thoughts. It is not to control the thoughts that the exercise is undertaken; it is to become aware (to be mindful) of the thoughts.

The first step to become aware of the breathing process is to count the breaths. The breathing must be natural, and the mind will turn its attention to the breaths that come into the nostrils (inhalation) and go out of them (exhalation). Counting the breaths is in order that mindfulness on the breaths may continue; counting is meant to do nothing more. If counting exceeds ten (or twelve), one is likely to miss the counts and hence mindfulness gets lost. Counting in groups of ten (1-10) will help sustain mindfulness on breathing. When one becomes adept at counting, he will notice that his breathing gets subtle, regular and light. More importantly, the thoughts that distract will become increasingly fewer in number, and then disappear almost altogether during the counting session.

It is then that counting of the breaths becomes unnecessary and irrelevant. It may be given up.

## **Step II (Following the Breath) :**

In the second stage of the practice, mindfulness of the breathing process increases so much that the mind seems to have become one with the breaths. Without counting, one easily attends to the breath as it comes in and as it goes out. It would appear that the mind itself comes in (along with the in-breath) and goes out (along with the out-breath). This is the mind following the breath or rather it is like the rider on the horse, not only going wherever the horse goes, without ever getting off the back of the horse, but even guiding it to an extent.



Mindfulness of the breaths will also be continuous, and it becomes easy to watch the breaths. Distracting thoughts will be fewer.

Now, the breath that comes in appears to spread throughout the body. One becomes aware of it. He feels the air that has come in enter the lungs, the head and so on. Alongside this, mind will experience a change: it becomes clear and fresh, calm and serene. At this stage, even following the breath deliberately will become unnecessary. One may as well give it up.

### **Step III (Stopping Practice) :**

The practice now takes a new turn. The breaths that come in and go out are completely ignored. That is to say, the mind is taken away from the breathing process. The saying of Chih-i must be recalled: "I am not interested in the objective reality. I am interested in how it impinges on the mind". The breathing process is not important, nor mindfulness on it. The practice of watching and counting the breaths is only to take hold of the mind, and observe its working.

Now the mind is focussed on the nose-tip, the point where the air comes into the body and becomes a breath, and where the breath goes out of the body and becomes air. The mind 'stops' here : it neither follows the in-breath nor does it follow the out-breath. The mind does not move inside or outside, while the breath continues to do so. The mind is taken away from the breathing process. The act of inhalation



signifies birth, and that of exhalation death. The objective reality is birth and death, origination and cessation, contact and separation. Its impingement on the mind is ascertained by mindful breathing. It is time now to lead the mind to a state beyond the dichotomy of birth and death.

This is a stage of meditation, where the mind will feel not only tranquil, steady and serene, but light and contentless. The mind, when it has thoughts, is also an objective reality, like the body and the breaths. When the mind is denuded of thoughts, it approaches its original nature, mindlessness, void. This in fact is the mind, which is of the nature of Buddhahood. There is a gleam of experience of this mind (void) in this stage: both the body articulated by breaths and the mind moved about by thoughts seem to vanish here. This is what may be called meditation (dhyāna), characterized by a complete cessation of thoughts, both in the mind and of the body. However, this is not the final stage of practice, and practice does not stop here.

#### **Step IV (Observation Practice) :**

The T'ien-t'ai school combines intellectual understanding with contemplative practices. Both Chih-i and his teacher Hui-ssu were brilliant scholars, besides being saintly. They insist that spiritual practice must be augmented by graded development of insight into reality. Accordingly, in this step the understanding of the transient and momentary character of the objective reality (the world, the body and the mind) is attended to. The mind being now subtle and sensitive, devoid of distracting

thoughts, and no longer clinging to objects, it can observe the inner working of the body and the sense-organs. Like thoughts, they are also transient and lacking in self-nature, and a false sense of unity is imposed on discrete and disparate details, owing to the functioning of an ego. An illusory idea of self is thereby occasioned.

“The yogi will realize (with his mind’s eye) at this stage that both physical and psychic existence are within the bounds of misery, transiency and delusion - subject to the illusory idea of the ego”.

The Buddha’s analysis of worldly existence in terms of dissatisfaction, misery and anxiety (duhkha), unstable, impermanent and fleeting character (anitya), and the illusory appearance of ego-self (anātma) is contemplated upon. Its truth is realized at this stage by intensive and repeated observation within one’s own being. He will realize the void nature of a sentient being.

### **Step V (Returning Practice) :**

The thoughts having disappeared, the world’s reality is observed as altogether devoid of self-nature. The practitioner is now prepared to bring the mind back to its original nature, which is void, bereft of thoughts. He takes stock of the steps that he has gone through : (i) watching, following, and counting the breaths, (ii) mindfulness on breathing, (iii) entering into meditative absorption, and (iv) subtle scanning of psychophysical functioning. He observes the gradual refinement of mind, passing from clinging to the objective reality to its

elimination altogether. He realizes that like the mind, everything is of void nature basically. He understands in his very heart, what is meant by śūnyatā; śūnyatā (void nature) of the transactional mind as well as śūnyatā of objective reality.

A further and momentous realization at this stage is that the dichotomy between the subjective mind and the objective reality is also void in its nature. The duality of the experiencing subject and the experienced object is illusory. The void is a whole, it is total. When this is realized, the transactional mind (in its origin as well as termination) will return to the mind that is not in the least transactional. Even the transactional mind is but outer reality, illusorily appearing outside the original mind as if distinctly real.

“Enter into the primordial state by contemplating the non-existence or void nature of mind. If one realizes that ones mind is void by nature, from whence could the dichotomous ‘subject’ and ‘object’ possibly come? The transcendental wisdom suddenly blossoms as he dwells naturally and spontaneously in the primordial state”

The dichotomy is between perception (*darśana-bhāga*) and the perceived object (*nimitta-bhāga*). And this is negated by the observed voidness of the sentient being (step IV) and by the observed voidness of the dharmas (objects of perception, step V). These two steps are meant to bring about intuitive understanding (*prajñā*); they are not so much meditational practices (*dhyāna*).



## Step VI (Purity Practice)

This final step is only the consummation of the two earlier steps (IV and V), which help transcendental wisdom (*prajñā*) dawn. The wisdom that has blossomed within the yogi in these steps is perfected in the final step.

The first step is somewhat like *śrāvaka-yāna* (the beginner's entry into practice); the second and third are like *Pratyeka-buddha-yāna* (the practitioner's involvement in his own perfection); and the last three are like *Bodhi-sattva-yāna* (the achievement of perfection and resolution to help others in their spiritual welfare). The nature of salvation however is one and the same.

Chih-i was influenced by an earlier and well-known saint-scholar, Tao-sheng (about 360-434 A.D.), who relied on *Nirvāṇa-sūtra* and sought to reconcile the two approaches to enlightenment: gradual and sudden. It was Tao-sheng who spoke about the yogic practice to restore the mind to its original quietude, which was beyond attachment and reasoning. He also held the *Mādhyamaka* view that transaction (*samsāra*) was in reality transcendence (*nirvāṇa*). This was justified by him on the ground of the indivisibility of the cosmic order ('*li*' in Chinese, tantamount to the Vedic '*ṛta*'), and its identification with the Buddha as the immutable source of all creation. Chih-i followed Tao-sheng closely, and the six steps of T'ien-t'ai practice reflect this ideology.



## ‘MAHĀPAṆḌITA’

‘Mahāpaṇḍita’ Rāhula Sāṅkṛityāyana (1893-1963), whose impact on my mind has been considerable, was not my ‘guru’ in any sense of the term. He was, however, a sort of guide for me. Not that I ever met him. I only corresponded with him. He replied in Hindi to my letters in English. This began in 1959 and went on for about a year. It was he who advised me to study Tibetan books to understand aright the teachings of the Buddha. He was at that time teaching in Vidyālankāra Pirivena, a Buddhist college in Srilankā. He soon returned to India, and lived in Patna. His health had been shattered; he was smitten by the deadly disease, cancer.

That I should approach him to clear my doubts was a suggestion given by his friend and student, Bhikkhu Jagadīsh Kāshyap (1908-1976) who was on a visit to the Mahabodhi Society (which I was frequenting at one time). He gave me a graphic account of the remarkable personality of Rāhula-Sāṅkṛityāyana. I was duly impressed, and accepted him mentally as my mentor. But Bhikkhu Jagadīsh Kāshyap did not tell me that the Mahāpaṇḍita was also a communist, Marxist, an admirer of Mao, and that he had forsaken the monastic robe to marry a Russian woman. Had I then known about this side of the great savant’s life, his attraction for me would probably have disappeared!

As things happened, my interest in him grew. I read most of the books he had written, all in Hindi. He was a prolific writer; writing was

his passion, also his mission. His books number more than 150. Although he knew several languages, he chose to write only in Hindi. While he was in Srilanka, in the beginning of his career, in his early thirties to study Buddhism in Vidyalankara Pirivena, he learnt Pāli and taught Sanskrit. He was delivering his lectures in Sanskrit. Hindi was another of his passions. His was a big name in Hindi literature. He wrote forcefully, elegantly and charmingly. His prose was magnificent. And he strove hard for the cause of Hindi. He was for years actively associated with All India Hindi Sahitya Sammelan. In fact, he came out (or rather, was sent out) of the communist party, because of his staunch espousal of Hindi. He has an abiding place in the history of this language in recent years.

I liked his books on travel, especially the accounts of his visits to Tibet (like his *Merī Tibbat-Yātra*), which are at once informative and fascinating. He went three times to Tibet, and collected a large number of Sanskrit and Tibetan manuscripts. It is said that he returned to India after fifteen month's stay in Tibet with twenty-two mules loaded with Sanskrit manuscripts from Tibetan monasteries. He took the help of his friend, the reputed indologist, Kasi Prasad Jayaswal in Pātnā, to store them, classify them and identify some of the manuscripts. He himself edited the texts, translated some of them, and wrote commentaries on many of them. Most of the books he brought back had been lost in India, and preserved in Tibet. This literary treasure was his major interest in life. All of his writings pertain to this treasure in one way or another.

His life-saga is interesting and colourful. Kedar Nath Pandey was his name. He was a brahmin who hailed from Uttar Pradesh, but was

involved in the Bihar Peasants movement. His schooling was almost nil, for he ran away from home as a boy only too frequently. He went away to the Himalayan foot-hills and lived there for more than six months, learning *Devi-upāsanā* from a yogi. He returned to *Vāraṇāsi*, and learnt Sanskrit under a Vaishnava saint, Baba Ram-udar Das. He became proficient in the language, and could speak and write in Sanskrit very well. Then he went to Lahore and joined *Ārya Samāj*; here he studied the Vedas. He got also involved in the national movement, inspired by Mahatma Gandhi. And he was in jail for this during 1925-26. It was here that he got acquainted with the Buddha's teachings. He later wrote: "I had given my heart and mind to Arya-Samaj. But I had to take them back when I discovered the Buddha" (recalled in *Dharma-Chakra*, a journal from Pune in 1976).

This was the turning point in his life. As soon as he came out of jail, he travelled straight to Sri-lanka (in 1928), and got admitted to a renowned Buddhist monastic college, *Vidyālankara Pirivena*. Learning Pali on his own, he studied the *Tripitaka* texts in the original. But his constitutional restlessness asserted itself; he returned to India, and headed for Tibet. He visited many monasteries there, met learned lamas, and even got secret initiations. On his return to India, he settled down in Patna for a while, researching into the Sanskrit and Tibetan manuscripts he had brought from Tibetan monasteries. He toyed with the idea of starting an institution for Buddhist studies in Nalanda, which was an ancient university town. This dream of his was realized much later by his student, Rev. Dr. Jagadīsh Kāshyap, who founded the *Nava-Nālanda Mahā Vihāra* (around 1970).

While working on the Buddhist manuscripts in Patna, he met another Buddhist scholar-monk, Ānanda Kauśalyāyana, whom he had known earlier, first in Lahore (in 1923-24) and then in Śrīlanka (in 1928). This man from Lahore had become a zealous Buddhist missionary, after his early Vaishṇava interlude and Ārya Samāja sojourn. He was actively working for the Mahabodhi Society in Calcutta (founded and managed by Śrīlanka Buddhist groups under the leadership of Ven. Dhammapāla). He was asked by the Mahabodhi society to go to England to spread Buddhism. He asked Rāhula-Sāṅkṛityāyana to accompany him. They left for England in 1932 and travelled in Europe for nearly a year and a half. They met with many Buddhist scholars!

The celebrated indologist T. Stcherbatsky, was greatly impressed by the scholarship of Rāhula Sāṅkṛityāyana, and invited him to come to Russia. While in Russia, Rāhula joined the communist Party (around 1938). Probably he gave up his monastic status then. He became a constant traveller. He went to Tibet again, and came back to the Soviet Union (in 1944) for an extended stay of three years. He returned to India, and participated in the peasants' movement. He was now full of Marx, Lenin, Stalin and Mao-tse-tung. He wrote books on them. "It was easier", he said, "for a student of Buddhist Philosophy to understand Marxist Philosophy". Nevertheless, the communist Party expelled him in 1948, after about a decade of his life as a communist.

But his work for the Buddhist cause and Hindi continued unabated. There were three great Buddhist monks from the North, who strove hard to resurrect the glory of Buddhist culture in India. Rāhula-Sāṅkṛityāyana was of course the most important among them. Ānanda-Kauśalyāyana



and Jagadīsh Kāshyap, the other two, were his friends. While they remained monks till their death, Rāhula gave up his monkhood and returned to lay life. He even married twice, first a Russian woman, and later a Nepālī one. Rāhula was a scholar, researcher, writer; he was a free-thinker, and itinerant in habit. In the field of Buddhism, although his early preoccupation was the conservative Therāvada of Śrīlanka, he moved closer to Mahāyāna. He travelled to Penang and to Japan also. The two of his friends, however remained faithful to Therāvada. Their interests lay elsewhere, Ānanda Kauśalyāyana was a regular missionary; he passionately got busy with conversions. Jagadīsh Kāshyap was an indefatigable builder of many religious and educational institutions. He was also busy translating the Pāli Tripiṭaka into Hindi, and was deeply involved in the Nava-Nālandā Mahavihāra. All three of them were devoted to the cause of Hindi, and were creative writers.

But the writing of Rāhula Sāṅkṛityāyana spanned a much wider canvas. His remarkable work 'From Volgā to Gangā' (*Volgāse Gangā* in Hindi) was an attempt to reconstruct early human history. It is a literary adventure. He prepared two huge dictionaries, one Tibetan-Sanskrit, and another Russian-Sanskrit. He also prepared a dictionary of Hindi administrative terms. He has written on archaeological subjects, and on the early phases of Hindi literary tradition. As mentioned earlier, he recounted his travel experiences in Tibet. He collected painstakingly the ecstatic songs (doha) in Apabhramśa of the eccentric and evolved Siddha-saints of Bihar and Bengal; and wrote on them.

He was attracted to the personality and teachings of the Buddha mainly because of the Buddha's advice to the Kālāmas: "Do not accept

my words only because they come from me. Reflect on them, and accept them only if they are then acceptable". He was accordingly fond of advising whoever approached him : "Do not accept scripture or tradition. Accept only what you learn with your own mind and agree with". It is this attitude that made him embrace Ārya-Samāja, Buddhism, Theravāda, Mahāyāna, monasticism, communism and lay life in turn. He was ready to change; he refused to be corrupted by one fixed idea or ideal. He was all for active life. He regarded contemplation (dhyāna) and yoga as suitable only for old people! This to come from a convinced Buddhist sounds rather queer.

Likewise, he approved of conversion of the so-called 'untouchables' to Buddhist faith, when his friend Bhikkhu Jagadīsh Kāshyap was engaged in this work in 1956. He had a word of praise for Dr. Ambedkar when he got converted to Buddhism, instead of to one of the foreign religions. "No one can doubt", he wrote, "the foresight of Dr. Ambedkar. He threw away the unwanted things in Hindu culture, but did not let the original form (of Indian culture) slip from his hands". He was convinced that Buddhism, far from being different from or antagonistic to, Hindu ideas and ideals, was in fact a part and parcel of Hindu culture. It was very much a voice from within the Hindu fold. Conversion to Buddhism was for him not a change from one religion to another alien religion, but from marginal, distorted and superficial Hinduism to original and essential Hinduism. I am reminded of what the great Mīmāṃsaka, Kumārila-bhaṭṭa, (about 620 A.D.) said: "The Buddhist denominations and other faiths are all derived from the Upanishads. And inasmuch as

they advocate the withdrawal of one's excessive attachment to objects of sense-pleasure, they are all authentic and praiseworthy".

विज्ञानमात्र क्षणभंगुरनैरात्म्यादिवादानामपि  
उपनिषत्प्रभवत्वं, विषयेष्वात्यन्तिकं रागं निवर्तयितु -  
मित्युपपन्नं सर्वेषां प्रामाण्यम् ॥

(Tantra-Vārttika)

## ‘THE UNBRIDLED MONK’

A Chinese friend of mine, who lives in Singapore and who studied some Vedānta texts with me, put into my hands a remarkable book, *Wonhyo's Theory of Harmonization*, a doctoral dissertation by young B.Oh, (New York University, 1988). It is a book in Korean language, with a running English translation. The topic of the book is the contribution of the great Korean Buddhist scholar and saint Wonhyo (617-681 A.D.), who wrote many treatises seeking to harmonize the different divergent and disputing sects in Buddhism. There were eighteen sects in India, thirteen in China and twelve in Korea, all trying to interpret the original teachings of the Buddha. Wonhyo's thesis is that notwithstanding the manifold interpretations, the essential teaching is one.

This was after my heart. This applies to all schools of thought, to all religious denominations and to all spiritual enterprises. Harmonization (*samanvaya*) is a powerful word, an effective concept, a supremely significant idea. I have tried to do this with regard to Vedāntic schools of thought. Naturally, the book interested me. As I went through it, it opened up a whole new vista of thought. And Wonhyo's personality greatly impressed me. I became fascinated with this supremely spiritual scholar, of whom I had not known before. Unfortunately, his greatness remains unrecognized by the world outside Korea.



The story of his enlightenment is quite interesting and remarkable. Buddhism entered Korea around 372 A.D., and Wonhyo of Silla became the most popular and highly revered saint, who carved out abiding unity among diverse philosophical schools and religious sects in Buddhism. His contribution has been described as 'unified Buddhism', very much akin to 'original Buddhism'. After Nāgārjuna (1st century A.D.), his attempt is the most profound in unifying 'meditation and doctrine'.

Wonhyo (this was his monastic name, his original name was Sindang) became a monk when he was eighteen, studied under the saint Nangchi of the Banko Temple and wrote his first book significantly called *Discourses on Calming the Body and Observing the Mind*. The eminent hermit Munseon hailed this work thus : He "blew little particles of dust and heightened Mount Young-Chuck, and sprinkled tiny drops of water and swelled the Dragon's Pool". Studying under Nangchi, he developed a desire to go to China in search of enlightenment.

He set out along with a fellow-disciple Chitong (or Ui-sang) by name, in 650 A.D. They arrived at Dang Ju, the harbour, for taking a boat (or ship) to China. Suddenly there was heavy rain. Tsan-ning gives this account:

"To escape the rain Wonhyo and his companion Ui-sang spent the night in what they thought was a mud hut to escape the storm. Next morning, they discovered that they had been sleeping in a tomb with skulls. However, the weather continued so bad that they could not leave the tomb. That night ghosts came suddenly and bothered them. At that moment Wonhyo sighed:

'It was peaceful last night when I thought this was a hut, but tonight there are so many ghosts, after I know this is a tomb'.

Then Wonhyo realized that : 'When a thought arises, various conceptions arise; when a thought ceases, there is no difference between a mud hut and a tomb'.

He recognized that 'the triple world' is only one mind, all phenomena is also based on consciousness only.

'Therefore, outside the mind there is no truth, why do I try to attain truth outside mind? Therefore, I will not go to Tang China'.

Suddenly, he took a knapsack and returned home, while his friend Ui-sang joined the party of a Tang envoy returning to China"

Wonhyo is said to have been about 33, when he was thus enlightened. When he returned home, he was a changed person. "He became eccentric, singing and dancing from village to village all over the country". But then, he was a genius. He wrote commentaries on Buddhist scriptures. His writings extend to over two hundred volumes on the hundred sections of the Buddhist scriptures. And he was a dhyāna (Zen, Seon in Korean) master, meditating frequently in the mountains and by the rivers. He gave up his monastic status, and returned to lay life. He had also a love-affair with a widowed princess living in Yoseok Palace and had a son (Seol chong) by her. But he was an itinerant beggar all his life, and a happy one at that.

He died in 686 A.D. when he was seventy in Hyol Sa Temple. But it was only in 1101 A.D., four hundred years later, that he was

recognized as a saint, a National Teacher and the Harmonizer of All Disputes by King Sook Chong of Korea. He was remembered by the National Teacher Dae Gak Guksa (1055-1101):

“Writing śāstras based on the sūtras, which elucidate great thought, his achievement is the same as Aśvaghoṣa and Nāgārjuna. At present, to those who are lazy in studies and without knowledge, he is like Confucius of the East”.

Among the large number of his works, his *Treatise on the Harmonization of All Disputes in Ten Aspects* in classical Chinese is regarded as the master-piece. Unfortunately, most of his works are lost, and even this *Treatise* was recovered in fragments only in 1937 in the Hae-In Temple. The wooden printing blocks of the Korean *Trīpīṭaka* (84,000 texts), stored in the Hae-In Temple also included Wonhyo's works. This was burnt by the Mongolian invaders in 1232 A.D. Only five fragments of this *Treatise* have somehow survived. But there have been citations from this work and also annotations in later Chinese, Korean and Japanese works. And the inscription in Koseon Temple provides valuable information about this treatise.

Wonhyo relies on the logic of Doctrine and Essence. He means by the former expression, development of one into many : the unfolding of the truth into infinite and endless aspects (viz., various doctrines). So when the truth unfolds, it is called the doctrine. It is the *Utpāda* (the rising aspect of dharma). The essence refers to folding (sealing up) aspect of truth. The truth when it folds up, it is one mind with two gates: one is *tathatā* or suchness, and the other is the phenomena (birth

and destruction). Within this essence (viz., two gates) “myriad aspects are embraced without confusion”. This is Vyaya (the ceasing aspect).

He pointed out that the One mind is the ultimate reality, and everything is created by this mind (doctrine). But the mind in its nature is devoid of discrimination, and altogether free from thought. It cognizes the world as empty (śūnya) and as illustrating the notion of dependent origination (pratitya-samutpāda). It is like the mirror which reflects myriad forms. Wonhyo said: “parted waters will perfectly commingle, once they are brought back together”. This is the essence. Therefore, there can be interpretations in truth, and also unity.

All the debates in religion concern words and not meaning. They are like utilizing a finger to show the moon, and mistaking the finger itself for the moon. “Therefore, the better your debates, the farther you are from the goal (viz., truth)”. Wonhyo sought to harmonize or reconcile all schools and sects, and took care not to start his own school or sect.

He relied heavily upon *Mahāyāna-śraddhotpāda-śāstra* of Aśvagoshā (which he called the patriarchal text) and *Mādhyamaka-Kārika* of Nāgārjuna. And he discovered in his own contemplations the harmonization or unity of existence (‘sat’, being, form) and emptiness (‘śūnyatā’, non-being, essence, formlessness).

In his *Treatise*, Wonhyo followed the principle of ‘giving’ (providing) without ‘taking away’ (rejecting). He speaks of the objects in space being taken away. A small object when taken away provides a small space, a big object big space; a curved object curved space. But space itself



is neither small nor big, neither curved nor straight. And space fills whatever is left when objects are taken away. It gives opportunity for objects to be, and rejects no object. It does not grieve (become broken), when objects are taken away. Wonhyo points out that this is so because in reality objects and space, they are not different as we commonly assume. Emptiness of space (*śūnyata*) is in fact the Buddha-nature.

He accepts the ancient duality of viewpoints : transactional (*samvṛti* or *vyavahāra*) and transcendental (*paramārtha*). The former concerns what arises and ceases, while the latter refers to emptiness. The former is illustrated by different objects in space (the 'giving' principle); and the latter by objects being identical with space (the 'not taking away' principle). He says :

“The minds of human beings are different in the north and the south. But the Buddha's dharma is identical from the past to the present. Without destroying the truth, one clarifies the secular (viz., transactional). On the contrary, from the cause of phenomena (viz., transactional) could be recognized the noumena (viz., transcendental).

Exploring the mysterious is the only way to extinguishing the illusory images; abandoning opinion is the same as an innocent child. Having attachments creates disputes. If you are free from disputes naturally you can be penetrated”.

Although his fundamental and guiding ideology was that 'all sentient-beings have Buddha nature', and that 'all are capable of attaining Buddhahood', he recognized that 'the idea of suchness (*tathatā*) or Buddha nature has an aspect of tainted when it is not really tainted'. The tainted

mind, however, cannot sustain its original nature. It participates in samsara; yet, it retains what Wonhyo calls 'mysterious wisdom'. So it will not lose its ability finally to return to the 'original' mind.

For all practical purposes, there are these contradictory categories : 'li', the universal principle (nirvāṇa) and 'shih' the particular phenomena (samsāra) : emptiness and form, enlightenment and ignorance, contemplation and action, one and many. But this contradiction is resolved by recognizing the relation that obtains between them. One is the essence, it is internal and imperceptible dimension of reality, and the other is only its correlate function, representing external and perceptible aspect of the same reality. The two aspects are indeed inseparable from one another. The pair of dialectical opposites, when analysed and viewed properly, are really a 'pair', 'two in one'. This is where, for Wonhyo, Nāgārjuna becomes relevant.

His counsel is of universal and abiding significance, for all academic, intellectual and practical contentions :

"Disputes originate in ignorance. One sees only one side of an issue and clings to it. In order to eliminate ignorance, one must re-examine the postulate to which one is so strongly attached, to see whether the position hitherto neglected or rejected may be admitted. Through this process, my position and the opposing position begin to seem inseparable. At this level of understanding, previous conflicts are no longer conflicts. The two sides of the arguments are seen to be mutually dependent" (p.441).

## VARIOUS VIEWPOINTS

In the mid-sixties of the last century, I had the unique good fortune of meeting with the renowned scholar in Tantrik Buddhism, Prof. Chintaharana Chakravarti. He was at that time working on a Sanskrit commentary entitled 'Pradīpodyatana' by Chandrakīrti on the Tantrik Buddhist text, *Guhya-samāja-tantra*. He was keeping indifferent health, but his intense zeal in editing this text was truly remarkable. This work was later (in 1984) brought out by the Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Institute of Patna, with an introduction by Dr. Suniti Kumar Pathak (Prof. Chakravarti's student) whom also I had met in Santiniketan. I procured a copy of this remarkable book, owing to the courtesy of Dr. J.S. Jha of Patna.

This book was based on one of the Sanskrit manuscripts brought by Rāhula Sāṅkṛtyāyana from the Tibetan monasteries, and subsequently stored in the Bihar Research Society ('Rāhul Collection'). The author of this commentary was Chandrakīrti, who is the celebrated disciple of Nāgārjuna of the first century A.D. Chandrakīrti has also written a commentary on Nāgārjuna's *Mūla-Mādhyamaka-Kārikā*, which is the first important treatise on harmonization of doctrines and meditation. Whether it is the same Chandrakīrti or a different one that commented on *Guhyasamājā-tantra* is a matter of some dispute. I am inclined to think that it is the same. Be that as it may, the *Pradīpodyatana-ṭīkā* is an

important one, as it gives an insight into what is generally known as esoteric Buddhism.

I was impressed by the author's prelude to the commentary, bearing on the six methods of interpreting a text of importance to the spiritual aspirants. This is a significant and original approach, and it is but right that the commentary itself is called *Shaṭ-koṭi-vyākhyā* commentary based on six viewpoints. This is another way of achieving harmonization, which Nāgārjuna undertook to achieve through dialectical reasoning. Even the Veda (especially *Rgveda*) is reputed to have a ritualistic meaning (*yājñika*), a historical import involving gods and sages (*aitihāsika*) and an esoteric significance (*adhyātma*). It is the last that is considered as most valuable. As I was familiar with this approach by Yāska (in his *Nirukta*), I was naturally interested in what Chandrakīrti called 'shaṭ-koṭi'.

What are these six viewpoints, on the basis of which a text of esoteric significance like *Guhya-samāja-tantra*, is to be interpreted? No one viewpoint can be said to be correct or even proper. Reality has two aspects: one transactional and the other transcendental. The former is provisional, while the latter is ultimate. We employ our sense-organs, observe and interpret what appears before us. But this can not be described as veridical or as objective. It is how it appears to us, in fact to each of us separately. There must be an aspect beyond our sense-prehension and intellection. We now know that the world as it appears to us is largely our own construction. What appears as a public reality is in fact our private world. It is made up of ideas, ambitions and imaginations. The present is augmented by the past and the future. It is what is described as 'vikalpa' (world made up of mental constructs).



The texts call it 'samvṛti' (well-constructed, out of ones choice, imagination and impulses). Our wakefulness, dreams and even sleep are conditioned by this principle of 'samvṛti' or concealment of the real. This is the world of our common sense, of the normal transactions, where the dichotomy betwixt 'I' and 'this' (aham and idam), subject and object, and the consequent multiplicity (dvaita, nānātva) prevail. Contrarily, there is the reality which is beyond our normal apprehension and mental constructions (Paramārtha). This is ultimate in the sense that the yogins who have gone beyond the transactional world experience it. If the tree which is seen to spread far and wide is 'samvṛti', the invisible roots that are hidden under the ground is 'paramārtha'.

These are the two 'truths' (satya-dvaya), in the sense that both (transaction and transcendence) are true, and equally true. The invisible roots are doubtless present in the visible tree, otherwise the tree cannot be alive; and the visible tree is in the invisible roots. They are inseparable. The dichotomy is only notional. This is why Nāgārjuna said "Samsāra is nirvāṇa; and nirvāṇa is samsāra. Nirvāṇa perseveres in samsāra, *and not to recognize it is ignorance (avidyā)*. And Samsāra persists in Nirvāṇa, for concern for the welfare of all sentient beings (upāya) is a necessary adjunct to wisdom (prajñā). The two constitute a whole (yuganaddha). If chitta (mind) is one aspect of reality, the samvṛti aspect, bodhi (enlightenment) is the other aspect, the paramārtha aspect. Indeed, if the Buddha as a historical person illustrates the samvṛti aspect of truth, the Dharma that he taught represents the paramārtha aspect.

The teachings therefore must be addressed to the common people (wholly contained within the samvṛti) as well as to those who are

intellectually, temperamentally and instinctively oriented to go beyond the samvṛti and want to reach the paramārtha. And the samvṛti and paramārtha being one and the same, there cannot be two sets of teachings, one for those enmeshed in samvṛti, and the other for those free from it. The same teachings must therefore be interpreted at two different levels.

Further, paramārtha is one while samvṛti is multiple. People differ at the samvṛti level. It is even like individuals being various in wakefulness while they are all one in sleep. This text (*Pradīpodyatana*) suggests five types of individuals for whom the teachings become relevant. It is somewhat similar to the Leśyā-classification of the Jaina thinkers. The types are as follows:

(1) Utpala-pudgala (the personality known after the blue water-lily, *Nymphaea caerulea*) : he listens to the teachings, but not carefully or completely; he can indeed attend to what he hears, but forgets it the next moment. He soon lapses into the vortex of transaction.

अश्रुत्वा वस्तु निखिलं धारणायां विचक्षणाः ।

क्षाणाद्विस्मरणं याति प्रख्यामोत्पल शुद्दलः ॥

(2) Puṇḍarīka-pudgala (the personality known after the white lotus flower, *Nymphaea Alba*) : he hears much (about the teachings), but cannot give expression to what he has intellectually appreciated in daily life. He is like one who holds water in a pot or like a piece of cloth that can absorb water.

ग्राह्यां श्रुत्वाधिकं भूरि न शक्नोति प्रकाशितुम् ।

कुण्डी कर्पासवद् भूयः पुण्डरीकाख्यपुद्गलः ॥

(3) Padma-pudgala (the personality known after the lotus that closes towards evening, *Nelumbium Speciosum*) : he has faith and is compassionate towards people; he has a large heart, and can absorb spiritual teachings. He is like a flute devoid of joints.

श्रद्धावान् ननकारुण्य विकासहृदयश्रुतेः ।

निष्पर्ववेणुवच्छ्रुवा पद्माविख्यातपुद्गलः ॥

(4) Chandana-pudgala (the personality known after the sandal tree, *sirium myrtifolium*) : he listens to the teachings little, and is arrogant, talks much without need or sense; it is impossible for him to trust or have faith.

अल्पश्रुतिरहंकरि निर्मूलं बहुभाषिते ।

न शक्नोत्यनुग्रहं कर्तुं चन्दनाख्यात पुद्गलः ॥

(5) Ratna-pudgala (the personality known after the gem or jewel, which attracts attention): he is good-mannered, clear in his dealings, efficient, wise and quick to absorb the teaching; he listens and also puts into practice what he has heard.

सुशीलो विशदो दक्षः प्रज्ञावानेकसन्धिकः ।

श्रुत्वा प्रकाशयेत् सम्यक् प्रख्यातो रत्न पुद्गलः ॥

The text advises the teacher to examine the suitability of the type of teaching and the personality-type.

पात्रापात्रं परीक्ष्यैवं पुद्गलज्ञानभेदतः ।

व्याख्यानं विविधं कुर्याद्वज्रत्राचार्यो विचक्षणः ॥

Thus the teaching admits of several modes of interpretation in accordance with the listeners who are eager to know the dharma. It is only the 'ratna-pudgala' (the fifth type of personality) that comes to listen with an intense desire to become the Buddha. He is eager to go beyond samvṛti. Others are bound to the samvṛti, and their desire to listen to the teaching is not accompanied by an effort to go beyond samvṛti. Teaching, however, cannot be withheld from them. They also come to listen, and so the teaching must be in accordance with their personality-type. It is here that Chandrakīrti's scheme of six-fold interpretations (ṣaṭ-koṭi-vyākhyā) becomes relevant.

सन्धायभाषा नोसन्ध्या नेयनीतार्थभेदतः ।

यथारूतं च नरूतं षट्कोटिरिति कीर्तिनम् ॥

The six interpretations are meant to awaken the hidden import of the text (mudritārtha-prabodhanah), especially belonging to the yoga and tantra variety (yoga-tantra-nayoddishṭah). The order given in the above verse is changed in the explanatory verses that follow. I follow the latter order:

### I. Sandhāya-bhāṣhā (also called Sandhyā-bhāṣhā)

It is usually described as 'twilight language'. The intended import is not perfectly clear, nor is it altogether understood. The language involves contradictions (apparent, however), and to reconcile them, effort is needed. The expression 'sandhāya' is used in the sense of 'fixing



the arrow in the bow'. It involves deliberation. Texts are interpreted to the listeners who are already conversant with the subject-matter, who are familiar with the terminology and the issues, and who are advanced students. The symbolism that is employed to highlight the significance of the passages is readily understood by them.

विशिष्टरूचिस्त्वानां धर्मतत्त्वप्रकाशनम् ।  
विरूद्धालापयोगेन यत्तत् सन्धायभाषितम् ॥

## II Nāsandhyā :

The style used here is not intricate, involved or obscure, as in the above, but easily understood by all. The words do not have hidden shades of meaning; they are plain and explicit. The language is meant to be easily and clearly apprehended, for it is addressed to the simple folk with limited powers of understanding.

मृद्विन्द्रियाणां सत्त्वानां प्रबोधार्थमतिस्फुटं ।  
तत्त्वस्य कथनं व्यक्तं नासन्ध्या समुदाहृतम् ॥

## III Neyārtha :

The expression 'neya' refers to what is guided and brought to focus. The passage does not have the correct meaning right on the surface; what is apparent is not the right import. The listener has to exercise his imagination, reasoning skill and logical effort to get at the intended meaning, which is camouflaged and made difficult to guess.

प्रच्छन्न दुर्भगानां च नेयार्थं भाषते जिनः ॥

#### IV Nītārtha :

The passages here have plain meaning, clearly understood. Unlike the previous type of interpretation, which is meant for those with sharp intellects, this type makes use of logic and reveals the import step by step. There is nothing hidden or left abstract. The subject-matter is explained in clear words, and the import is made explicit.

सद्भूतार्थ प्रकाशाय नीतार्थ भाषते जिनः ॥

#### V Yathāruta :

The āgama texts have divisions like kriyā (public conduct), charyā (esoteric manners) and yoga (spiritual practices). All these, especially the charyā division, involve the use of mystic diagrams (maṇḍalas), mystical formulae (mantra) and mystical postures (mudrā). These are explained on the basis of authoritative citations (yathā rutam, as articulated or taught earlier by masters).

मण्डलादिप्रकल्पेषु चर्यायां च यथायथम् ।

उत्तान मर्थकथनं तद्यथारूत भाषितम् ॥

#### VI Aruta :

The word 'aruta' means "not articulated"; it refers to silence, where explanations are not possible, or are not indicated, as the subject-matter is the ultimate, extreme and sublime (koṭi), not within the comprehension

of either common people or the learned treatises. A famous example is the silence of the Buddha when he was asked questions concerning supramundane matters.

कोटाख्यकादयः शब्दा लोकशास्त्रबहिष्कृताः ।

नभागतानां सङ्केता नरूतं तत्प्रकीर्तितम् ॥

## MAHĀ-MUDRĀ

My late lamented friend, K.P. Chakravarti (who was killed in a road-accident a year ago), owned a book-shop, especially of old books of Buddhist interest. He not only provided me with Pāli and English books that I needed but also brought to me Buddhist scholars and monks from Śrī-lankā and Burma. It was he who introduced me to venerable Nārada mahā-thera of Vajirārāmaya (Colombo), and Ven. Soma Thera of Abhayagiri-Vihāra.

Almost the first book that he put into my hands was the *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, edited by W.Y. Evans-Wentz (Oxford University Press, London, second edition 1958). But I put it by, for then my interest was Thera-vāda Buddhism. The book acquired significance for me only a decade later, when I began to study Tibetan, at the suggestion of Rāhula Sāṅkṛityāyana. The book made a lot of meaning to me much later still, when I had acquired some Tibetan texts, and could compare this translation with the original texts. I could then see the limitations of the translations and errors in many of the details of meditational practices.

Notwithstanding this, the contribution of Evans-wentz to the study of Tibetan Buddhism is immense and remarkable. His editions of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, *Tibet's great Yogi Milarepa* and this book constitute a trilogy that is indispensable for getting an insight into Tibetan



Buddhism. He is full of understanding, sympathy and appreciation in all esoteric matters. And he has been assisted by the erudite translator of Tibetan into English, Lama Kazi Dawa-samdup of Sikkim, who was his 'Tibetan guru'.

Evans-Wentz was a student of Social Anthropology in Stanford University of California, before he came to Oxford. He was interested in the 'religious experiences of mankind'. His work on 'The Fairy-Faith in Celtic countries' fetched him a doctorate from the University of Rennes, and later from Oxford (1911). It concerned the folklore of Europe, especially celtic faith in the fairies. Being scientific in temperament, he was also sympathetic to the what the sophisticated describe as "primitive credulity". He did not believe in the notion of "old world irrationality". In the words of Prof. R.R. Marett, who was his mentor in Oxford :

"He meant to do his best to look through the window without being baffled by his own reflection in the glass".

To do this work in right earnest, he wandered about often in Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, Brittany and the Isle of Man. It was an extensive and intensive field-study for him, and he took it seriously. After this work was completed, he went to Egypt and the Near East, interested in the native wisdom of the so-called uncivilized folk. From Egypt, he arrived in India (1917).

This was a sort of home-coming for him. Mysticism, in which he was always interested, was here wide-spread and sincere. It prevailed in all sections of society when he looked around. He climbed the

Himālayan heights literally and metaphorically, and worshipped in the cave-shrine of Amarnath. He went to Haridvar, and lived there like a sādhu in a grass-hut. He spent his days meditating in jungle retreats. This deepened his love and admiration for the so-called 'irrational India'. He took earnestly to the study of Sanskrit and to the practice of yoga. Needless to say he acquired proficiency in study as well as practice.

It so happened that he came to Sikkim, and got acquainted with its ruler Sidkyong-tulku. Sikkim is a Tibetan Buddhist country within the Indian subcontinent. The ruler was both spiritual and political. The expression 'tulku' signifies a lama who is incarnate, heir to enlightenment even at birth. Naturally, the interest of Evans-Wentz turned to Tibetan Buddhism, which in fact was an extension of Indian mysticism. He learnt Tibetan, and studied the texts that were available in Sikkim.

He also got introduced to a learned lāma, who was a friend of the ruler of Sikkim. This gentleman, Lāma Kazi Dawa-Samdup (1868-1922), became the guru of Evans-Wentz, and translated for him many Tibetan texts "for the benefit of the non-Tibetan peoples of the world". He was a disciple of the celebrated Hermit-Lāma Norbu (1838-1916) of Buyaduar, Bhūtān, and he received not only textual instruction but oral transmission from this master, while he was stationed in Bhūtān during 1887-1893, as interpreter to the British Government. In 1903, he was invited by the Sikkim ruler to be the headmaster of Bhutia Boarding School, a Sikkimese state institution. Unfortunately for Evans-Wentz, the guru Lama Kazi died in 1922, the association between them lasting only for three years.

There was another master who became a sort of mentor and guide to Evans-Wentz : Chen-Chi-Chang. He was a Chinese scholar, who studied under the head of the Kong-ka monastery, who was regarded as a living Buddha. He had practised the Chinese Ch'an (Japanese Zen) as well as the Tibetan mahāmudrā. He had a profound acquaintance with Tibetan texts, and was engaged in translating some of the mystic texts into Chinese. His translation of Milarepa's *Gur-Bum* (One Hundred Songs) into English (Bollingen Foundation) is famous. He has been persuaded by Evans-Wentz to write a 'Yogic Commentary' by way of introduction to the *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines* (pp. xxvii-x/ii).

The Kong-ka monastery where Chen-Chi-Chang studied belongs to the Kargyutpa sect of Tibetan Buddhism. And this sect has a direct Indian background. The most famous Tibetan poet-saint, Milarepa (1052-1135), has made this Kargyutpa sect celebrated. His guru Marpa came to India several times, and translated many Sanskrit texts into Tibetan. He was therefore known as Marpa the Translator. His guru was the renowned Indian siddha, Nāropa (Nāḍa-pāda), who was a paṇḍita at the Nālānda University. And his guru in turn was Tilopa (Taila-pāda), another great Siddha. Tilopa received instruction in the Mahāmudrā doctrine and initiation from Vajra-dhara (in Tibetan, Dorje-Chang), who is regarded as Ādi-Buddha by the Kargyutpa order. He was the founder of the Mahāmudrā lineage.

Chen-Chi-Chang belonged to this lineage, and communicated the details of the theory and practice of Mahāmudrā to Evans-Wentz. Evans-Wentz has focussed on this teaching in the trilogy that he has edited

(after getting the Tibetan texts bearing on it translated by Lāma Kāzi Dawa-Samdup). I propose giving here a brief account of mahāmudrā as described in the Yogic commentary by Chen-Chi-Chang in the *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines* (first published in 1935). My interest in doing so stems from my own involvement in the theory and practice of mahāmudrā, having received some oral tradition from a Kargyutpa lāma myself. This is also partly why the works of Evans-Wentz have interested me enormously. Further, Evans-Wentz sat at the feet of Ramana Maharshi of Tiruvannamalai for several weeks during the early part of 1936.

The teaching known as mahā-mudrā (in Tibetan, Phyag-Ch'en, pronounced Ch'ag-Ch'en) was prevalent in India from ancient times. It was so called because it provided highest happiness. It is what was taught by Saraha-pāda, an early Siddha of the Magadha country, to his disciple Nāgārjuna the great Madhayamaka thinker in the first century A.D. The roots of this doctrine are to be found in Prajñāpāramitā śāstra. Later, Tilopa, another Siddha of celebrity, acquired this teaching and transmitted it to the renowned Siddha Naropa, as mentioned earlier. Thus it became the core-concept of the Kargyutpa sect of Tibetan Buddhism.

There are four types of tantras, passed on to Tibet from India: (i) Kriyā-tantra, dealing with external rites and outer conduct, (ii) charyā-tantra, dealing with internal rites and mental behaviour, (iii) yoga-tantra, concerned with practices to train the mind to one-pointedness (ekāgratā), as a means to achieve insight into enlightenment, and (iv) anuttara yoga-tantra, where the adamant nature of body, mind and speech (kaya-vāk-chitta-vajras) is realized. The two are meant for beginners, while the other two are for advanced practitioners.



Further, there are two paths, one with form (rūpa) and the other 'without form' (arūpa). The former is more practical, tangible (and hence known in Tibetan as Hdsin-lam), and includes all ordinary yogic exercises, especially the six yogas (Heat, Clear Light, Dream-state, Illusory Body, Bardo state and conscious-transference), which are difficult to practice, although they involve energy of the normal psychophysical constitution. The practices here are designed to produce special prowesses. The path without form (in Tibetan, Tar-lam) is what is known as anuttarā-yoga-tantra. There are, strictly speaking, no practices here like those in the other three tantras. It is described as 'the highest division of the esoteric teaching'. Hence it is called 'anuttara' (without a higher stage, itself being supreme).

Tantra as theory and practice looks upon mind or consciousness (prajñā) and energy (prāṇa) not as antithetical but as complementary. Consciousness is empty (śūnya), while energy has form (rūpa). One has the potentiality to manifest as the other. They are not two, but identical. However, in practical terms, the sādhanā assumes two forms : the practice of mind or consciousness (anuttara-yoga) and the practice of energy (other yogas). Both lead to the same goal, perfect enlightenment (sambodhi). For mind and prāṇa are in essence one. Mind represents the transcendental aspect of reality (paramārtha-satya), and prāṇa is illustrated in the transactional aspect (samvṛti-satya). The former is nirvāṇa, and the latter saṃsāra.

The fundamental Mahāyāna position is that saṃsāra is nirvāṇa; the mind in transaction and as energy is the mind in transcendence and

as empty. The essence of the mind (*chitta-mātra*) is both transactional and transcendental. However, the understanding of the essence of the mind is what is described as enlightenment (*bodhi*). It is achieved not by suppressing the transactional mind (*samvṛti-chitta*), nor by abandoning the transactional activities, nor yet by rejecting the *prāṇa* (energy), but by transforming the transactional mind into the transcendental mind.

Mahāyāna is distinguished by its triple-body theory (*tri-kāya*): the historical Buddha, the Śākya-muni, is the incarnated body (*nirmāṇa-kāya*); the divine glory of enlightenment of the Buddha and of the bodhisattvas is the body of enjoyment (*sambhoga-kāya*); and the body of supreme truth or reality as such (*dharma-kāya*). The Dharma as ultimate reality appears as the abstract principle of Bodhi, which in turn manifests as the Buddha in human form. The kargyutpa sect regards the essence of mind (the emptiness, *śūnyatā*) as the *dharma-kāya*, the luminous aspect thereof (*prabhāsvara*) as the *Sambhoga kāya*, and the thoughts that arise in the mind as the *Nirmāṇa-kāya*. Mahamudra is therefore called the Mind-doctrine (*sem-nao-pa* in Tibetan). Mind (*chitta*) is the sole reality. Both *samsārā* and *nirvāṇa* are contained within it. In this, it follows the *yogāchāra* ideology. It can be described as neither *samsāra* nor *nirvāṇa*; it is neither empty nor non-empty. In this, it follows the *Mādhyamaka*-path (*ümai-lam*): it avoids all extremes, all antithetical constructs.

Mahā-mudrā literally signifies the great (viz., unlimited) seal or symbol, which represents reality that is vacuity (*śūnyatā*), and which is achieved by the yoga of one-pointed-ness (*ekāgratā*). The expression suggests the cultivation of mystical insight into the real nature of existence. The yoga adopted here is that of grasping the true nature

of mind, understanding the original mind. In this, Mahāmudrā is not different from Zen. But unlike the Japanese Zen, the Tibetan Mahāmudrā offers step-by-step guidance to the final goal in conformity with Indian tradition.

Chen-Chi-Chang suggests rightly that even Ch'an or Zen, from Bodhidharma (about 520 A.D.) to Hui-neng (637-713), preserved the Indian character and tradition. It was then very much like mahāmudrā, which retains its Indian character even when it was transplanted into Tibet. The Kargyutpa sect, which is woven round the mahāmudrā ideology remains faithful to its Indian background to this day.

And this is what made me take to the teachings of the Kargyutpa sect with perfect rapport. Milarepa for instance was for me a typical avadhuta and siddha. His songs can enter into the Indian's heart directly and swiftly. The way his kleśas (sorrows and sins) were transformed into bodhi (enlightenment) has a characteristic Indian flavour. The writings of his disciple Gampopa (Dvagpo-Lharje, 1077-1152) read like Indian books on upanishadic truths. He wrote on Mahāmudrā. Rechung-Dorje-Tagpa, the well-known biographer of Milarepa, lived like his master, an avadhuta and siddha.

## PART TWO

# THE INDIAN SEARCH FOR QUIET

## I

### THE QUEST FOR CALM

A concern today is being universally felt by all sensitive and discerning spirits, a concern that has been occasioned by the mad manner in which man is rushing through his destiny at this point of time. I am not so much bothered about the destiny of man: it is not my business and therefore not my worry, nor can I do anything about it even if it is my worry. I am not even concerned anxiously about the discontents of our civilization and the dangerous forces that are being let loose by them. I am very selfishly preoccupied with my own predicament as a human being capable of some thinking and some feeling. And I have made bold to talk about it because most of you are likewise caught up in a similar predicament.

What is this predicament that I am talking about? We all know it, although many of us do not know that we know it, and some of us do not want to believe that we know it. Let me explain. Our lives today are packed with scientific achievements and technological gadgets. And we have moved so far away from our simple, unsophisticated ancestors that we do not recognise our own humble origins, nor appreciate the prime motivations that prompted us to



move away. We are now animals with a big difference. Our instincts are more or less the same, our appetites are not dissimilar, and our attitudes have changed but little over these million years that have marked our career here.

But our capacity to worry and inclination to tension have increased enormously. And this is precisely because of our ability to invent and achieve. The stresses are on the rise, consistently, continuously and progressively. The more we invent and the more we achieve, the less secure we feel and the more tense we are.

There appears to be some curious paradox here. We design, we invent, we fabricate both ideas and things so that we may solve our problems; we have more so that we may live better. We create a counter-world of society and culture, lest nature should deal with us rudely and pounce upon us unawares. We have devised a thousand ways of saving labour and enhancing pleasure. If you looked at the world today with its magnificent structures and elaborate constructions, abstracting of course the human problems they involve, you would duly be impressed by the powerful intellect of man and his indefatigable spirit. But then consider his poor satisfactions, steadily growing discontent, the clumsy manner in which the problems of living are being handled, and the closeness to collective disaster that we have moved to. The picture is not only gloomy but puzzling.

One need not, however, be unduly pessimistic, for the instinct of self-preservation, which man shares in common with all other animals, will ultimately prevail and drive sense into him. But it is important to

recognize that the discomfiture and discontent are as real as his splendid achievements. They are real because they have effects. And what are real do not disappear merely because we choose to ignore them. On the other hand, their effectivity increases in proportion to our non-perception. The more we ignore, the more involved in fact we become. Not to know is to forsake the power over the object of knowledge: our ignorance lends power to an otherwise innocuous thing. Even *avidyā* is a *śakti*.

A good part of the human predicament can be ascribed to this refusal to recognize reality. We live so continually and committedly in the worlds of our own making that the world as it is hardly ever rises into our view. The Czetck theologist Comenius cried out: "The whole human race is so miserable and above all so blind that it is not conscious of its own miseries." Consider for instance the phenomenon of noise. There is so much noise in the world today made by men and machines that we shudder at solitude and stillness. We believe - and noisily too - that a noiseless world is most unnatural and unfit to live in, and that noise and existence have necessarily to go together. We equate progress with noise. We are so used to noise that we are disturbed when we are still. You have heard of the character in *Mahābhārata*, the fisher-girl Matsyagandhi who was uncomfortable in the absence of the fish-stench.

The ceaseless preoccupation of the modern man with noise has naturally resulted in an inner atmosphere as noisy as the outer one,

in fact noisier. Our thoughts and feelings, hopes and fears, urges and aversions tumble on one another with a tumultuous roar - if we can only hear them. They are so loud, so rapid and so compelling that we want the noise outside to be louder, more rapid and more compelling so the inner noise may be drowned. Most of the times most of us do succeed in this. The 'active life', which has for us a positive and prized value, is understood only in terms of unremitting involvement in the activities outside, some made for us by others and some made for others by us. We consider the time well spent when we stimulate others and respond to the stimulations of others, when we manipulate the things and allow things to manipulate us.

But man's ability to create and promote a deafening noise outside is indeed limited. Collective production of noise may be more lasting, but at the individual level one is sooner or later worn out. And when he is no longer able to defend himself with a din around him, the noise within is suddenly perceived with all its sharpness, in all its poignancy and confusion. This sudden confrontation with the uproarious interior can be a terrifying experience. This may happen to a person in his declining years, or when caught up in a crisis, or again in the case of a classical religious 'conversion'. In all these instances, the common feature is that the individual is driven to his wit's end, and can no longer rely on what he all along regarded as reality.

One may recall that the Zen koans are intended to do precisely this. The surrender (*prapatti*) of the theists necessarily

involves this. The realisation of the insubstantiality of the world for an advaitin practically means this. The individual is shocked out of his dependence upon the world, and is convinced - albeit abruptly and rudely - that he has after all to settle down in himself. The Upanishad presents the imagery of the bird tied to a post flying hither and thither and not finding rest anywhere getting back to where it is tied. Padmasambhava, the Indian master who spread Vajrayana school of Buddhism in Tibet, altered the image slightly: "The realisation is likened to that of a crow, which although already in possession of a pond, flies off elsewhere to quench its thirst, and finding no other drinking place returns to the pond."

Flight from the outer world be easy, and may be achieved by various contrivances. Sometimes it is forced on the individual, however unwilling he be; or pressures of circumstances may drive him to this state, without his being ready or eager for it. But this is only a negative phase, may be a preparatory one but incomplete by itself. Settling down, which is really the final phase, is not so easily achieved, certainly not involuntarily, nor by accident. It requires besides resolve, skill and guidance. That is why the Upanishad describes the path as very difficult, 'sharp like a razor's edge.'

Adverting to oneself, the sight of the confusion within can be unnerving and maddening, more so when the props of the outer world die away. It is not difficult to suppress the noise that belongs to the world; but to overpower the noise within is a task of tremendous difficulty. Jalal-ud'din-Rumi said:



It is easy to break the idol, very easy;

To regard the self as easy to subdue is folly, folly.

Why is settling down within oneself so difficult ? Because one does not know what there is within, having lived almost wholly outside. One is truly a stranger unto oneself. He has, in the words of Chang-Po'tuan, deserted his own home to live elsewhere. But more important than this reason is that we would have, unknown to ourselves, cultivated certain basic and powerful aversions to an inward peep. There is an illumining analysis in the ancient Buddhist texts which provide an insight into the common man's deep disinclination to tranquillity. The individual has a natural proclivity for enjoyment of objects and events that reach him through the five sense functions (*pañcakāma-guṇi-karāga*). And this proclivity is two-fold: desire for possession of objects that titillate and please the sense organs (*vatthukāma*); and craving for experiencing them (*kilesakāma*). Arising out of this desire and this craving, which are both directed outward like arms stretching into the world outside us, there develops in the individual a subjective framework known as the ego (*attā*), thus providing a prop for the experiences and integrating them.

It must be mentioned that this ego is not to be confused with the essence of the being (for which also the Buddhist texts employ the expression *attā*, although in a different sense), which is likened to the ocean, deep and still. The ego, comprising our desires and cravings, are like the waves of that ocean: they incessantly reach out and recede. The ocean and its waves are alike water. But the ocean

is calm and unmoving, deep and self-contained, while the waves roar and foam, rise and fall, toss and tumble. Our ego is verily a motely host of appearances and uprisings, furiously dashing towards the world of objects and enjoyments, making assaults and receiving impacts. All our experiences are steadily poured into this cauldron, and this explains the confusion and noise that confront one who flies from the world.

This ego then is a bundle of desires and cravings, urges and approaches. When, however, it gets formed, it seeks to get firmly fixed. This is what we call the instinct of self-preservation. Besides the activities and processes that constitute the ego, there arises an inner world peopled by ideas and feelings reflecting the objects and enjoyments in the phenomenal world. This world, which is described as 'belonging to the ego' (*attaniya*), is private to each person, entirely subjective and in that sense owned by him; but it results from the interaction between the ego and the world outside. This world within nourishes the ego, gives it a sense of security and defends it against the forces that seek to disrupt it.

The ego has to maintain its identity and individuality in the face of the constant flux both of the phenomenal world and the individual. Strengthening the ego is the individual's defence against the world. And any attempt to weaken the ego is therefore strongly resented. Aversion to tranquillity is explained thus. Maintenance of this aversion becomes a continuous exercise in life. We read in *The Book of Job*: 'The life of man upon earth is a warfare.' It is a struggle, a strife, a

light. This truth has been recognised in all religions. The conflict between *śreyas* and *preyas* in the Upanishads, the victory of the Buddha over Māra, the victory achieved by Mahāvīra which made him Jina, the struggle of the Son of Man with Satan all illustrate this antagonism in life. Why, religion itself has to fight this battle with materialists, skeptics, obscurantists, scientists and the totalitarian political structure. And within religion mystics who plead for tranquillity have to contend against ritualists who revel in trappings.

But unless the ego is weakened and ultimately eliminated, one can never discover and reach the essence of being. This is what the mystics mean when they insist that 'the Kingdom of God is for none but the thoroughly dead' (Eckhart), or that 'those who cling to life die, and those who defy death live' (Uyesugi Kenshin), or that 'true philosophers are always occupied in the practice of dying' (Plato). "While living", said Bunan Zengi, "be a dead man." The German mystic poet Daniel von Czepko referring to a Christian saint wrote: "She can not die, for she died before her death, in order to be living when she died." The *Īśa-Upanishad* calls upon us to know both becoming (*sambhūti*) and passing away (*vināśa*), for by passing away one overcomes death and becoming one reaches deathlessness.

Religion in reality is a practice in dying. But dying is not a mere flight from the world, although this latter, as was said earlier, is for most of us a necessary prerequisite. In a sense it is true, as James the Mystic said, "friendship with the world is enmity with God." But turning one's back upon the world is but a means, and when the end

is reached one is again friendly with the world, without of course being an enemy of God. No doubt the perspective alters, but the confrontation with the world does not disappear. I am reminded of a fine statement by Ch'iung-yuan: "Before a man studies Zen, to him mountains are mountains and waters are waters. After he gets into the spirit of Zen, to him mountains are mountains and waters are waters. After he gets into the spirit of Zen, the mountains to him are not mountains and waters are not waters. After this, when he attains to the abode of rest, mountains are once more mountains and waters are waters".

This brings me to a concept current in India which concedes the necessity of normal living but emphasises the emancipated attitude. I refer to the idea of *jīvanmukti*, emancipation while yet alive. I shall not enter into a discussion of this very interesting concept here. Let me only point out that this idea, which originated in the ancient Tantrik nucleus which preceded even the Vedic times, entered significantly into Yoga, Samkhya, Buddhism, Jainism and Advaita Vedanta, not to mention the Tantrik Siddha system. Among the many involvements of the expression, the simplest and also the most fundamental is that it is possible for a person to transact with the world without getting committed to it. In other words, one lives on, actively and cheerfully, amidst the noise and confusion of the world without letting his ego reflect them. His moorings in phenomenal world have all withered, and his ego folded up. His instinct of self-preservation and his security trappings would be rigorously minimised so that he operates at the level of the 'essence of being', which in the rest of us is veiled by the ego hushed by its noise.



The important point is that he is perfectly alive to the only essential thing in life, namely the source of life or, in the Zen terminology, the center of being. The real world does not disappear for him: it continues not only to exist but reach him also. But he having gone to his source looks upon the world totally abstracted from ego-involvements. His ego no longer distorts or projects; it neither clings nor fights. It is now dry: the Buddhist meditation in the Southern schools speaks of 'dry outlook' (*sukkhavipassanā*). Such a person does not rest in the world, but rests in himself. Karlfried van Durkheim, the celebrated author of the remarkable books *Hara* and *The Japanese Cult of Tranquillity*, noticed how a Japanese sitting on a chair or a bench would appear as though he were resting on himself rather than on the furniture. He points out that this is the result of a basic attitude of being 'upright, firm and collected', known in Japanese as *hara*. It signifies that the person has found his primal center, and there is no more hurry or flurry for him. Al-Kalabadhi defined a Sūfī as one who neither possesses nor is possessed.

The interesting aspect of this is that it is not out of the way or extraordinary; there is nothing transcendental about it. There is nothing in it that a normal person cannot achieve, provided he has the will and he makes efforts. It is true that the Buddhist expression for one in this condition is 'lokuttara' and the Saivite-Tantrik expression is 'viśvottīrṇa', both meaning 'gone beyond the world'. But this is only metaphorical. What really is signified is the total transformation of the being from outward engagement to inward rest, from dependence upon subjective and objective trappings to freedom

from them. The Greeks too have a word for it: *metonia*, and in the Christian tradition Marsilio Fecino defines it as 'converting to the contrary'. But it is within normal reach, although not without extraordinary effort.

The ideas of *Jīvanmukti* further implies that what we call emancipation has little significance apart from life here and now. It is not a state that can exist or occur independently of the individual and can descend on him when he becomes fit for it. It is in no sense an acquisition of a quality or a condition that one does not already possess. It is only a discovery or recovery of one's own essential nature. When Mahāyāna Buddhism teaches that enlightenment cannot be sought outside the domain of mind and that Buddhahood is inherent in mind, the old idea is reflected. When mind stops flowing out, it turns on itself and gets to the inner core. Both departure and homecoming are alike in mind. To borrow an image of Laotze: "Walls with doors and windows form the house, but the house is actually the space they enclose." We are normally acquainted with thoughts and feelings which constitute the form and content of the mind, but the essence of mind, like space enclosed by the walls with windows and doors, goes unnoticed. The purpose of meditation is to realize this aspect of mind, to "think the no-thought" as Dogen said.

To deplete the mind of its teeming content is the only way to make it quiet and still; and it is only the quiet and still mind that can perceive its own essential nature, its own center, its own core. Let me again quote from Chung-tse: "A man does not seek to see

himself in running water, but in still water." This is the quest for calm: how to still the mind that is always running. And the quest involves a combat, a combat with the natural inclination of mind to think and feel, to judge and value, to idle and enjoy. It is only when the mind is not mounted on the body that it develops wings and can fly in the direction of calm; and to pull the mind out of its moorings in the body and through the body in the phenomenal world requires effort and energy.

It is not achieved by mere learning or reasoning. The intellect has its own snares and traps, and is not a reliable guide in this quest. And intellect here would be out of place, for we do not seek to improve our involvement with the world at all, nor do we attach importance to practical efficiency. What we strive for is tranquillity, and in this, intellect would probably be a liability. This is the reason why Zen is opposed to books and sermons, words and ideas. Knowledge should confine its function to preparing the individual to work, to indicate to him the highways and the byways, to communicate the actual instructions by adepts (which incidentally are by far the more important guides). The call for lamp will not dispel darkness; the thing must be brought in.

Contemplation is the actual help in the quest. Constant practice of contentment, progressive withdrawal from involvements, and strenuous exercise in the development of the inner vision or what is figuratively called the third eye are prescribed in the religions with a meditative bias. "Killing the activities and stilling the faculties"



(Eckhart), that is to say, quieting the body and calming the mind are necessarily involved in contemplation. Yoga and Zen underline their role.

You would not of course expect me to go into details concerning the methods of quieting and calming. I am neither competent to do it, nor can it be done by a competent person in so impersonal a way as this. But let me close my talk with what I consider a very precise but clear enunciation of the central teaching in the cult of tranquillity. This is from Padma-Karpo, the famous Tibetan Guru of the Bkaḥ-rgud-pa sect:

“Whatever thoughts, or concepts, or obscuring passions arise are neither to be abandoned nor allowed to control one. They are to be allowed to arise without one’s trying to direct or shape them. If one does no more than merely recognize them as soon as they arise, and persist in so doing, they will come to be realized (or to dawn) in their true (or void) form through not being abandoned. The yogi will then look on, mentally unperturbed, at the interminable flow of thoughts as though he were tranquilly resting on the shore of a river, watching the water flow past.”

I regret I have disturbed your calm by my talk. I have been for some time concerned very deeply with the quest; and I thought it may interest some of you to share my thoughts on this subject. I am very well aware of what the Chinese Zen master Wang Yang-ming meant when he said “To know and yet not to do is in fact not to know.”



## II

### THE WORLDS WITHIN

We are acquainted, or so we imagine, with the world outside, consisting of things, places and persons. But we seldom recognize that there is a world, in fact many worlds, within each one of us. I am not referring to the physical world of atoms and molecules of the human body, nor to the world of nerves and neurones, nor yet to that of the cells and tissues, nor even to the respiratory, circulatory digestive and other systems. I am concerned here with the world within the brain and the world beyond it. Psychologists, especially Freudians and Jungians, have recognized these worlds and have attempted to explore them. Their contributions are well known but by no means unanimous or unchallenged. Let me leave them aside. Mystics of all ages and countries have frequently been impressed by their discovery of the worlds within, not only the worlds of temptations and distractions but also the worlds of unknowing and unbecoming. It is not easy to climb with them to the hazy and dizzy heights; it would not be necessary either, at any rate here. The worlds that I refer to here are the worlds within our normal experience but beyond our normal recognition.

It was Meister Eckhart the German mystic who said, "The more we have the less we know." Indeed every individual has an interior which is a vast expanse but most of which is altogether uncharted. Not that we do not move in this region and frequent its highways

and byways, but we do so unwittingly. We are so busily engaged all through our lives with the world outside that we have little leisure and less inclination to turn the attention away from it, to see what is within. In fact, this outward attention is both natural and necessary for living in the world; we have an Upanishadic explanation :-

“The self-existent one made the senses face outward,  
And therefore one looks outside and not within”

(*Katha Up*)

But why were the senses made to face outward? So that one may become many, even as a seed beomes a plant, a tree. The analogy is an apt one. While the seed grows the spreading branches that we see, it also grows the diving roots that we do not see; and the unseen roots are what sustain the seen branches. The roots dive deep so that the branches may spread out and rise high. Cut the roots, the branches wither away. The mind and senses no doubt go out and create for us a world to live in, to move about, to engage ourselves in; but they also go in and fix the framework for this world outside. The whole structure that is exterior to us depends on this inner framework and foundation.

Even as the roots and branches constitute a continuum, the worlds within and the world outside are laid on the same axis. The objects and events outside us, the sensations that are stimulated by them in our body and the experiences that are engendered thereby are occurrences closely connected with each other, rendering one

meaningless without the other. The outward orientation, however, brings about an appearance of cleavage between the two dimensions, exterior and interior and makes the exterior alone seem real and tangible; the interior sinks below the threshold, lost to us unless we look for it. And we do not normally look for it, because the exterior so aggressively engages us and monopolises our attention with its multiplicity and plenitude. The interior withdraws and hides: the lack of solid substantiality is the reason.

This 'as-if duality' (*dvaitam iva bhavati*) is spoken of in the Upanishads as responsible for the frustrations and misery of human existence. It is as if the individual is cut into two halves, one half being stuffed while the other is starved. Imbalance, failure at accommodation, absence of synthesis, lop-sided and partial existence - this is what misery really means. We are not ourselves completely and enduringly. We are, and are not; we live at our own expense; we eat up a part of ourselves so that the other part may survive. And the strain it involves, not to speak of the utterly hopeless end it entails, breaks us down. We are continually striving to be successful with the world, and naturally we take care not to lose our hold on it, not realizing all the while that it is the world that has its hold on us. This puts us into an anxiety for we cannot keep up this false front for ever. As Goethe said, "Man cannot stay long in the conscious state; he has to plunge back into the unconscious, for that is where his living roots are." Facing reality is unavoidable, but we are frightened at the prospects: to have to return to our roots makes us uneasy and agitated. Caught between necessity and anxiety, we

attempt, vainly though, to fly from ourselves and deepen our involvement in the world outside.

Possessions and pleasures, passions and pastimes are in fact defense mechanisms to safeguard the individual's involvement in the world. However, they fail to leave the individual content and carefree, because of the continued confrontation with the interior. The more he tries to sidetrack or push back the interior the more insistent becomes its call. One who has had any sort of what is vaguely called a spiritual crisis knows that it is not easy to ignore this call and be indifferent to it. One has either to yield to it or deliberately suppress it. Those who yield to it are likely to become so entirely wrapped up with it, so possessed by it that the outside may appear to them illusory and worthy only of their apathy. And those who strive to suppress it are driven to a firm covenant with the world, which can be a strenuous and constantly anxious undertaking - like the classical riding on the tiger's back; you cannot get off its back and live on. Whether you fly from the world into yourself or jump out of yourself into the world, it is alike a withdrawal from reality, for reality has really two arms, the exterior and the interior, both equally valid and equally real. And this withdrawal from reality is unnatural in the sense that it requires effort, and is a stress situation in that it takes hold of the individual.

The truth is that the normal man lives an unnatural life and is a stranger to relaxation. The essence of naturalness, Tibetan yoga has it, is not to make any effort, and the essence of relaxation is not to



hold. Making effort and holding are the two major responses of most of us in our attempt to deal with ourselves in relation to reality. And these reactions deprive us of the equilibrium both in the body and in the mind: the essence of equilibrium is, according to Tibetan yoga, not to cling. We cling, and that is the chief work of life. By holding onto the details of the outside world, by clinging to the images thereof within ourselves, and by constantly doing and believing we drown ourselves in the exterior aspect of reality; the interior appears as a void, as unreal.

It is to emphasize that the interior is in fact more real (as the roots are in the plant) than the world outside that Vedānta invented the explanation of *māyā* or phenomenal insubstantiality. The 'spreading out' (what the expression *pra-pañca* for the world really means) is utterly dependent upon the framework within, and not vice versa. The normal man imagines that he depends on the world when in actuality the world depends on him; within him is the substance the shadow of which is cast outside. This mistaking of the shadow for the substance and of the substance for the shadow is the inexplicable magic or miracle that is connoted by the expression *māyā*. It is important to note that the word *māyā* has a purpose to fulfil, and that is to drive home the fact that the interior is not a void but a solid reality. This recognition comes usually by dispossessing our minds of an excessive faith in the outside as the only reality; we need to be shocked out of it. The expression *Māyā* in this sense functions like a Japanese Zen mondo. *Māyā* does not signify that the world is unreal; it only denies that the world exists as an independent reality, independent of the

interior; it seeks to emphasize that the phenomenal world is merely an extension of the worlds within, even as the spreading branches are extensions of the roots.

Disgust with worldly life, renunciation, understanding of the ephemeral character of the world, turning one's back on normal life and other techniques of dispassion are all intended to serve as means for recognizing the reality of the worlds within. We normally withdraw from the inner reality; we need to withdraw from the outer reality to engage ourselves with the inner. Detachment and renunciation have no more value in religious life than as working orientations; they are only instrumental. Holding on to them for ever would be wearisome. We need to sit in a boat to cross the river, but we also need to get up and go out of it when the other shore is reached. Most of us when we live religious lives, are content to continue to sit in the boat; the more pretentious among us would carry the boats on their back and strut about.

The more important thing is not only to reach the interior but to explore its regions. Religious literature describes this as a path, a way, a pilgrimage, a journey; and one who embarks on this must be adequately prepared. One of the initial preparations is freedom from the habits of thought inherited from our worldly involvement; it is a new world that we are entering into and we must wait to get personally acquainted with it. Freedom is otherwise known as relaxation, letting the holds go; this is indispensable for fruitful experience. Meditation or contemplation is essentially a method of

getting free, a technique of shaking off the fog of normal living; it is a training procedure, a preparation. What the senses are for outward orientation, that mind is for this inward orientation. Meditation takes hold of mind and loosens it from all its fixtures of conceptions, beliefs, imaginations, expectations, fears and bothers. That is why good meditation is always profoundly relaxing.

Mind has a two-fold function : it works with the sense-organs and apprehends objects and meanings that belong to the outer world (*vimarśa*), and it rests in the interior only barely being aware of the objects and meanings that reach it from afar (*prakāśa*). The former is characterized by agitation while the latter is in comparison composed and peaceful. Both functions are present in our normal life, only one more dynamic than the other. Meditation is an attempt to convert us to the contrary. The non-involved mind is not only free and light, but it can expand and grapple with the experiences within; it can become a power. When the mind becomes powerful it develops a vision into the interior, not a mere physical apparatus to apprehend details but a tool furnishing a thorough insight into the worlds within. The mystics of the East describe it as the 'third eye', 'the divine eye', 'the piercing wisdom'.

Insofar as this vision breaks down the normal barriers of the mind and tears the 'veil' that hides the interior, it is likened to a sword. The Zennist meditation halls know the sword of Manjushri, the whacking from which is said to hasten enlightenment. This vision is not got for the asking. As Kenneth Walker put it, "One is not

presented with a ticket to the inner kingdom of Heaven, but must win it by dint of hard work and persistent effort." The sword signifies not only hard work but sharp cutting edge: it resolutely cuts down the barriers that prevent the development of insight into oneself. This is what is incorrectly but persistently called 'mind expansion'; the expression has become widely current because of the popularity of the drugs that are supposed to achieve this state. That is another story, but it must be pointed out that what we are talking about here is not so much the expansion of mind as the deepening of it. The break-down of the barriers will no doubt free the mind, but then the mind will not merely spread out but will undergo a qualitative change, a mutation as it were, whereby its inward orientation is activated and strengthened. Not mere passive perception but a wholesome understanding is what is sought from the development of insight. That is why it demands persistent effort.

Outward orientation must markedly weaken if not cease before the inward orientation may begin to operate. And this means hard work, and exceedingly difficult endeavour, because it involves running cross-current, going against the inclinations of the body and the habits of the mind. But there is hardly an alternative to this. And this is the reason why very few ever even try to look at the other side and fewer ever succeed in reaching there. Incentives are therefore important; motivations matter much; and critical upheavals play their part. Mere curiosity here would not, as it does in the case of drugs, support us and lead us on; it fails after the initial flutter. More sustaining would be the continual contact with, and guidance from, an



expert (very loosely called a *guru*), acquaintance with the living examples who strike us as worthy of emulation, deeply distressing situations which shake the roots of one's being, and sudden 'conversions' for which no normal explanation may be forthcoming. The confrontation with the interior would then be real and lasting.

### III

## ESCAPE AND ADVENTURE

The early phase of religion all over the world is tied up with occasional, uncanny experiences, which of course were neither uniform nor regular. They were confined to persons, places and situations, which, as religion got sophisticated and institutionalized, were singled out as specially suitable for such experiences. We have therefore priests and shamans, sacred groves and mystic caves, ceremonies and rituals. Man's need for security, for overcoming the dread (which is almost congenital), and for formalizing his relations with the unseen and the uncanny expressed itself as God-seeking.

Religion as a social institution necessarily discourages original experiences: it seeks to achieve conformity by setting up moulds and models. The tabus associated with religious beliefs and behaviour are patently inimical to the unsettling experiences which not only perplex the individual having them but frees him from the do-as-you-are-told sort of religion. Like calamities and conversions, getting perplexed too has a function to fulfil in truly religious life. But formal religion smothers it under a load of explanations and expectations. Affiliation is a means of survival of the group, and the individual's freedom is to that extent curtailed.

Instead of getting perplexed, the social being is obliged to seek God in the standard way; instead of being free he is asked to follow

the prevailing forms of the religion to which he belongs. Both God and religion occur to him in well-defined stereotypes, stylized in tradition and communicated by custom. A large majority of individuals would welcome this as a measure that saves considerable uncertainty and the trouble of independent thinking: it facilitates their aspiration and satisfies all their needs.

For the normal man, the things of the society provide the framework within which his satisfactions are secured. Religion is for him only a matter of views and actions inherited or acquired; God or the hereafter or the essence of existence does not actually bother him, for his existence is bound with a plan that appears to be altogether independent of God or the hereafter or the essence. His religion would merely axiomatically assume the existence of God, and arbitrarily project on that existence a benevolent concern for his own welfare. God is no more than an idea for him; and he does not expect at any time now or hereafter to be actually confronted with God.

'God is in his heaven, and all is right with the world'; and we may add, 'And the twain shall never meet'. The world may of course discuss God, and encourage its philosophers to develop views about Him; but any serious experiential involvement with God would not do ! Thus our prevailing religions give us ideas about God and instruct us in the matter of benefitting by those ideas, all the while keeping God as far away from us as is necessary for social living. Religion turns our head, and even our heart, towards God but our being is

severely wrapped up in symbols and rites meant only for life in society.

This is the successful failure of the sign-situation. We stand beneath the sign-post that not only tells us that Mysore is 86 miles away but also indicates the direction in which the city lies. And we know what road to take and how far to go. But unless we move away from the sign-post we are not likely to reach Mysore ever! Holding on to the symbol would thwart our movement towards what is symbolised, and this is the failure of the sign - situation. Religion is essentially a sign. God, the hereafter, the essence of things, transcendental ego, the image of God and so on are all symbols that tell us what to look for and where. They are merely prods for depth-experience which in fact is the real purport of religion. But how many of us dare to leave these symbols behind and move ahead ? We do not dare, because the society makes us wary. Symbols become not doors but walls for most of us.

Every society, and every age, will, however, contain individuals, no doubt few, who dare to leave the accustomed path and forge ahead. Their social affiliations, at any rate in areas concerning their ultimate values, would be slender and frail. They would rather seek direct experiences than clever explanations; and they would not allow themselves to be bogged up in second-hand symbols and stale stereo types. They feel intensely that they are not cut out for normal life; they 'transform' themselves and seek to 'transcend'. Their concern with society and involvement with the approved



community processes would, if at all, be minimal. They lend themselves to be characterized as asocial, if not antisocial.

If we believe with Emile Durkheim that society represents 'the soul of religion' and that religion 'symbolises society', then the God-seekers who answer to the above description bring about a dissociation between society and religion. Their religion thrives not on social sanctions but on private motivations. Intellectual apprehension has little value in this context: the adventure of experience is what provides the key for them. Saints and mystics have always relied on their instinct, otherwise called intuition, and not on their understanding.

This explains why society often finds it difficult to understand and tolerate its saints and mystics. The social being and the saint do not speak the same language; nor do they function at the same level of reality. God-seeking and conventional living do not go together. That is why the priests and shamans in primitive societies were segregated and unfavourably treated: they were sources of fear and objects of aversion. They were desired and abhorred, sought after and kept away, honoured and punished. This ambivalent attitude on the part of society emphasizes the anxiety that any one who being merely human tastes of the divine was potentially dangerous to normal life.

God-seeking had therefore to be done in secret, in the woodland retreats, burial grounds, and seclusion of caves. When people

discovered a God-seeker they praised him and profitted by him, but took care to keep him at a safe distance. People evolved the concept of renunciation and approved it as a way of life, only to safeguard their own interests. In order to renounce, one had to have not only fervour but fortitude, for it was a point of no return so far as normal social life was concerned. One had literally to 'burn his boats'.

The interesting fact is that despite such heavy social restrictions and extreme reservations, there have always been individuals who dare to break loose. God seeking is after all an adventure that brooks neither compromise nor delay. And one on whom the spirit of adventure sits makes light of social security or conventional acceptance; he just 'goes forth' leaving the world behind.

It is true that India assigned a special value for these 'goers forth' for their earnestness and perseverance were altogether uncommon. This favourable valuation was in fact an incentive for indolent and aberrant folk to take cover under this concession. But mere 'going forth' was regarded as futile and wearisome unless there was also a 'struggle', a firm and tenacious grappling with the interior. India expects the 'goer forth' to return at some point of time and tell others about his findings and gains before he finally 'goes away'. It is the purposeful 'going forth' that is valued: it is but an instrumental value. One goes out to learn about the most important aspect of our life, an aspect that is all too obscure for most of us, and we long for information about the experience we are ourselves too timid to have.

God thus becomes an object of adventure. No serious - minded seeker would expect to meet with God as a person or as a form; nor would he expect to find God in any thing or away from all these things. God is in fact nowhere to be found, and is not something to be acquired or possessed by effort or fortune. He is by definition everything and everywhere, including the seeker and his situation. Further, God is no mystery to be resolved like a cross-word puzzle; nor he is like a mathematical problem needing to be solved and proven. No one can *know* Him as we know the things around us or inside us; and there is nothing like knowing Him better. He is the ground of all things, the totality, and more significantly the essence of one's own being. God *is*, because I *am*, and conversely I *am* because God is.

Seeking God would therefore necessarily mean a withdrawal into oneself, a search within oneself for the essentials. This withdrawal and this search are both negative and positive; they involve isolation as well as involvement, inactivity as well as effort, a break-down as well as a push-through. The balancing of the opposites makes this adventure more complex and less enticing. Success therein would depend on abilities that normal living does not foster or encourage. The travel in the interior has to be done without the aid of maps and guides.

And it is an adventure that is a poke in the perfect dark; the seeker has no means of guessing what he is likely to find, or when. He knows about it only when he actually gets it; and this suspense



scares all but the bravest away. We are normally confronted by what we know, and like children we get anxious about what is unfamiliar. We are indeed afraid of God, scared to reach or meet Him, because he can never be *known* as things of the world or of mind are known to us. This is how most of us shy from this adventure, and are content to sustain ourselves on second-hand tit-bits of information doled out to us by the more vocal of the adventurers.

There is an element here of what Festinger calls 'cognitive dissonance'. The social man feels he needs religion, but he also feels he is not quite up to it; he desires it but also shields himself from it. Society seeks to reduce this dissonance by providing him with a tame, harmless, if also an indirect and ineffectual, religion. This religion makes us constantly think of God but keeps Him out of our reach; it prescribes procedures which render us more social and to that extent less original. Freud called religion an illusion. An illusion it surely is, although not in the sense in which Freud viewed it. It not only hides reality from us, but projects an unreal something which we readily mistake for reality.

The animal ancestry of man makes him adventurous and hardy: nature designed him as a bad weather animal. But culture as the refinement of his tools makes him comfort-seeking and timid. Easy living is alien to basic animal nature; it spoils the mettle and diminishes the efficiency. Man was never meant for it. Civilization with all its benefits for corporate living robs us of our initiative and adventure, freedom and free thinking. It not only provides us with



comfort but sets in us a craving for it and a dependence on it: it can make us addicts. Its strangling hold on us is tightened by our own feelings of inadequacy, fear and anxiety.

That it is repressive in its function can be inferred from the history of man on earth: with progress in the contents and forms of civilization neurotic symptoms like parochialism, patriotism, prejudice, conflict, war, unrest, and uncertainty have only aggravated. Man was never before so harassed by his own inventions and imaginations as he is now. His capacity for destruction has increased enormously over years, and now civilization itself is threatened with an imminent explosion. This is the price we paying for collectivity, originally a method for survival of the species but later a stifling social reality.

It is small wonder that in recorded history we find individuals who rebelled against the softening and deluding influences of social living. Their love of adventure made it difficult for them to rest in comfort in the luxuriant sidewings of civilization. They were responding to the true instincts of human nature which blazed in them with abandon and urgency. They courted disapproval, hardships, punishments and rejection. But then they were adventurers: they neither regretted, nor did they seek to mollify and retract. Saints as well as sinners are to be included in this rebel group; no doubt an odd assortment, but not without justification. It is also true that society effectively silences them and upholds the normal curve. Mediocrity and submission have remarkable survival value in human society.

## IV

### ARE DRUGS THE ANSWER?

Like there being a method or rather methods in madness, there can be discernible trends in adventure. Those who seek to be free from the social reality which for them is oppressive follow courses determined by their genetical make-up, constitutional peculiarities, situational pressures and psychological needs. Individual differences are a solid reality here, as elsewhere. Numerous are the escape hatches, and manifold are the purposes served by them. Some go berserk, some turn insane, some violate the law, some indulge in drugs, some become alcoholics, some take to yoga, some get involved in art, and others remain mere eccentrics.

There is no doubt an individual predisposition for each approach of escape. It could be merely isolation and withdrawal or it could be more constructive and positive. The expression 'escape' need not embarrass us: there is nothing shameful or unmanly about it. It would be perfectly natural, and completely justifiable, if you attempt to escape from an advancing tiger, from a raging fire, or from a falling tree. There are things against which your prowess and craft are powerless, and escape you must. The world could sometimes be relentless and oppressive, and all the intelligence, integrity and efficiency one may possess would be utterly useless. The alternative to escape would be unbroken misery or a fierce callousness.

While the wisdom of escape is not questionable, what you do with yourself when you escape is what matters. Escape is not a goal, it is but a preparation. Do you want to dissolve yourself and disappear? Do you want to drown your cares and troubles in spasms of insensibility? Do you want to fly into the comfort of insanity? Do you get reckless and fight your way through? These are clearly negative approaches. Your escape means nothing to you, and it may commit others around you to worry, trouble and sorrow. Do you seek to sidetrack and strive for alternate satisfactions? You may be a scientist, artist, writer, playwright, dancer or musician. Your escape would then involve a reconstruction of yourself, and your expressions and creations would not only hold you together but would provide satisfactions and stimulations for others that come into contact with you. The escape here is partial and purposeful. You not only survive the escape but show the way of escape for others. Symbiosis is a law of life.

Taking to drugs must engage our attention in some detail here. There is currently a controversy about the merit of drugs, especially those that are described as psychedelic. There are drugs that are sedatives (like cocaine, morphine, alcohol), there are drugs that are hallucinogens (like cannabis, LSD, mescaline). A drug like heroin, opium or morphine is severely addicting; one feels lost and helpless without it, there is an urgent and irresistible craving for it, there is in other words an increased dependence on it. The individual starts on it because it helps him escape from an unpleasant, annoying or otherwise disagreeable state of existence; but when it begins to act,



it grows on him both physiologically and psychologically. What came to him as an escape hatch now dominates his psyche; he is nobody without the drug. The drug is not for him; he is for the drug.

The adventure here ends up in a blind-alley: he no doubt escapes from the hard reality outside him, but it leads him nowhere. It is not a cure for it does not build him up; in fact it breaks him down. When one escapes from the world outside, the inner worlds must brighten up; there must be ease and poise, and this is the fulfilment of escaping. But the drugs mentioned above do not light up the interior: they cloud and deaden it. It is an escape not only from painful reality but from oneself as well. There is no adventure involved here; from the frying pan he has only jumped into fire.

The other type of drugs appears more hopeful. I mean drugs like the Kava-pava, psilocybin, marijuana, LSD, mescaline, hashish, bannisteria caapi, synhexyl, bhāṅg, gānja and caras - drugs which are not tranquillizers but energisers. Stanley Krippner called them psychedelic in the sense of mind-manifesting or mind-expanding; they are in this sense described as psychoactive. But the primitive users of these drugs (Waika Indians of North Brazil using *epena*, Piaroa Indians of South Venezuela using *parica*, Western Andean tribes using *ayahuasca*, Polynesians using *Kava*, Amazonian jungle tribes using *yage*, Mexicans using *marijuana* or *ololiqui*, the Middle East natives using *hashish-el-kif*, Indian hermits using *bhang* or *ganja*) always described them as mind-altering drugs.



Whether mind-manifesting, mind-expanding or mind-altering, these drugs are certainly not sedatives or tranquillizers; they are not addicting either. Although used sometimes as analgesics, their function is not pain killing; not are they merely euphorogenic. Along with relief from tension and anxiety and a consequent sense of physical well-being, these drugs are reported to generate an unprecedented zest for life. The euphoric effect of exhilaration is incidental to the new confidence that the individual is said to experience. Here is a happy combination of escape and adventure. It is not surprising therefore that the young dissenters of the modern world took avidly to these drugs in the mid-twentieth century.

It is important to note that the use of these drugs is by no means a modern phenomenon. The psychedelic movement, spearheaded a few decades ago by the ethnomycologist Robert Wasson, was in fact inspired by his discovery of the 'magic' mushrooms and the cactuses ingested religiously by the Mexican mountain tribes for centuries. The Waika Indians of North Brazil, a naked nomadic and entirely primitive tribe, use *epena*, a strong hallucinatory snuff which is said to induce a trip faster than LSD. Several similar tribes in the Western Andean slopes drink *ayahuasca*, a potent herbal preparation. The Vedic Aryans drank *soma* (perhaps the same as *amanita muscaria*) which induced heavenly visions. The tribal shamans in the Amazonian jungles prepare the psychoactive brew from the *yage* vine. The *bhang* group in India, the *kif* of Algeria, the *dagga* in South Africa, the *liamba* in Brazil, the *grifa* in Mexico, *djoma* in Central Africa, the *takrouri* in Tunisia, the *Kabak* in

Turkey, and the *hashish* in the Middle East are all time-worn preparations of the hemp. It is on record that the Chinese used *mahuang* (ephedrine) about 2737 B.C. The Chinese and the Indians knew as early as 800 B.C., that cannabis was the "poor man's heaven," "the delight-giver," "the heavenly guide" and "the soother of grief." And history tells us that the words *hashish* and *assassin* alike were derived from the adventurer Hashishin (Hasan-i-Sabbah) of Alamut near Baghdad who around 1090 impressed the first the first Christian crusaders with his technique of secret murder. These preparations have been in use since very ancient times as aids to meditation.

The last mentioned use makes them especially significant in the religious context. The Tantrik adepts, Tibetan mystics, Harmetists, Rosicrucians, Kabalists, Waika shamans, alchemists and mediums depended on drugs such as these for macropsia (enormous magnification of everything including oneself), trips to heavenly mansions and realms, libidinal depression, relief from psychic sufferings, transformation of levels of consciousness, and creative imagination. Dissociation from the common world of conventions is a necessary prelude to the enhancement of the powers of the spirit. Figuratively it is spoken of as 'death' by the mystics of the world; but one rises from this death, he transcends, he journeys forth. The adventure begins here. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* is a remarkable document in this context; it has been hailed as a marvellous psychedelic adventure book.

In fact, the myths and legends of primitive folk are considered the results of the ingestion of such drugs. The integrated study of the plant-induced visions and mythology belongs to a special discipline that has raised its head in recent years, 'theobotony'. Robert Wasson, Roger Heim and R.E. Schultes have contributed considerably towards the definition of this discipline. If Carl Jung's study of *mandalas* and folklore myths indicated a new dimension to the depth study of man, the theobotonists have now added a further dimension to the same study. The relations between archetypal processes and the drug-induced visionary worlds have yet to be worked out.

A third approach, which appears to hold the key for unlocking the inner worlds of man, is to explore the contents of yogic states of transcendence, levels and stages in meditational sessions, conditions of trance, and descriptions of enlightenment and conversion. The modern man's involvement with psychedelic agents and expressions has underlined the importance of this approach. And it is a vital problem to decide which brings about the transcendence genuinely and more lastingly, drugs or yogic practices.

The old-time psychedelic drugs, when they were discovered, and the new chemicals when they were prepared, held out a peculiar charm, understandably enough, for the creative folk: novelists, artists, poets and architects. Charles Baudelaire's hashish intoxicated *Seraphic Theatre*, Aldous Huxley's mescaline-occasioned *Doors of Perception*, William Burroughs's heroin-based *Naked Lunch*,

Allen Ginsberg's marijuana-inspired poetry, Timothy Leary's *Psychedelic Prayers*, and the psychedelic paintings of Allen Atwell, Abdoul Mati Klarwein and Isaac Abrams are some of the better known illustrations of what drugs can do to genius. The first professional people to be interested in the psychotomimetic study were of course the psychiatrists, although they soon came to develop a strong prejudice against the drugs, especially LSD, which according to them brought about only psychotic disintegration. Claudio Naranjo's employment of *yage* in psychotherapy, George Stockings' studies of euphoriant drugs on depressive mental states, Allentuck's and Bowman's work on the psychiatric aspects of Marijuana intoxication are important contributions in this field.

Timothy Leary's persistent efforts to focuss scientific interest in the drug effect resulted principally in the International Federation for Internal Freedom (IFIF), which moved from Harvard to Zihuatanejo, Mexico, and International Foundation for Advanced Studies (IFAS) of the Menlo Park group. The latter in particular ran a medical clinic for guided therapy. One of the many experiments conducted here concerns the possibility of trips with carbogen (carbondioxide 30 per cent and oxygen 70 per cent) : the trips were in the nature of brief ecstatic states involving the surrender phenomenon. The interest became widespread although the study was desultory.

The use of these drugs in the meantime became menacingly popular and the American government had to impose stringent restrictions on their use: the Drug Abuse Control Amendments of



1965 (DACA). Restriction by the established law has sometimes an uncanny way of enticing more people to clandestinely violate the law. It was reported in 1967 that as much as one-fifth of the population of San Francisco had taken LSD. It appeared that mushrooms and chemicals had come to stay in the world, and had taken their roots rather firmly.

Controversies raged on the harm and benefits of several psychedelic drugs, especially marijuana. The famous *Marihuana Papers* edited by David Solomon is an eloquent testimony of the intellectual unrest occasioned by this controversy. Whatever the scientific and clinical judgements, the absence of adequate alternatives to these drugs for escape and adventure was a major factor in the growing popularity of these drugs. It was not sufficiently recognized that India experimented with some of these drugs (in particular of the *Cannabis* group) a couple of thousands of years ago, but discovered better alternatives for transcendental experience. The drugs were not only dropped from refined religious repertoire, but came in for severe condemnation. The triumph of the Vedic tradition over the diffuse Tantrik cults bear witness to this.

India was acquainted with *cannabis* preparations (bhāṅg, gānja and caras) as early as 800 B.C. Perhaps they were borrowed from China, where they were used as analgesics in surgery. Indians used them not only for their medicinal and aphrodisiac values, but also as intoxicants and as aids for keeping awake for long stretches. Their hallucinogenic properties were not unknown, but curiously they were

neither relied upon nor pursued with any seriousness. Even Indian medicine minimised their employment. Their use was confined to certain warrior classes, rustic epicureans here and there, low-grade mendicants, and brothel-birds. It may appear strange that in this country which was the home of these drugs, the variety of literature styled as psychedelic is entirely absent. Recently, however, the fascination for these drugs is spreading in some sections of our sophisticated youth, but this is incidental to the passing phase of American acculturation.

But the fact that all the world over these mushrooms, morning glories and chemicals have been used in the early stages of man's religious development cannot be brushed aside as insignificant. Its implications for understanding the inner working of the psyche are of considerable value. Let us consider an example. We have referred to *epena*, a snuff prepared by the Waika Indians of North Brazil from the bark of the *epena (ama asita)* trees and administered through a blow-pipe. The first reaction is reeling as a result of the blast, but soon the person feels not only alright, but 'slaps' his thighs in Self-esteem! Everything is magnified for him; he feels himself thousands of feet tall, his head clearly above the clouds. In this state, he reports later, he conversed with *hakula*, the great spirits residing in the heavenly regions.

This is of course described as a hallucination; but hallucination is a description and not an explanation. What is the relation between bloated self-esteem and macropsia? Between these

two and communing with angels? There is a feeling of absolute well-being and it results in refined and heightened perception: the animals, plants, houses and birds around appear gigantic because the perceiver is in ecstasy. Is it a perceptual distortion or a perceptual reinforcement? Indian Yoga also speaks of micropsia (*aṇimā*) and macropsia (*garimā*), which are alterations not of the mind but of its coordinates. The coordinates are psychical but physiologically based. Normal reality involves a shared complex of coordinates; perceptions are stylised and experiences are pressed for communication. But the drug or yogic practice induces what Walter de la Mare called 'an extravagant sense of isolation.'

This isolation makes the individual independent of conventional reality. Among the effects of *bhāṅg* also are listed sensory hyperesthesia and coenesthesia (with sights and sound unusually vivid, and extraordinarily meaningful), distortion of time-sense and space sense, and loss of judgement; the transient euphoric state would induce an enormous feeling of superiority, which after some hours would be replaced by a trance-like state. But this superiority is a felt one; it is neither real nor enduring. As long as the feeling lasts, freedom and adventure continue; and then lapse.

It has also been recorded that while this feeling lasts there is a strong urge to communicate; one is eager to extend his experience to others, to share it with others around. While this is true of drugs, it is not true in the case of yogic practices. The acute

awareness that is incidental to felt freedom does not lead in the latter case to feelings of superiority; the sense of isolation is unbroken. This explains why the yogic achievement is not a transient state like the euphoric experience resulting from drug intake; and also why we know so little about what actually is experienced by a yogi.

The drug actually works in a physical way; its impact is primarily on the body and on that part of the mind dependent upon the body. The active ingredient in *cannabis* is said to be tetrahydrocannabinol (about eighty derivatives of which have been synthesised), the chemistry of which is as yet little understood. The phenomenon of hallucination is ascribed to this source. But the content thereof is clearly derived from the personality factors (like motivation, attitudes, aspiration, experiential mass, perception pattern and value system) and not from chemical action. What one sees is precisely what one has already: it is not a transformation of consciousness but merely a manifestation of it with perhaps an element of expansion. "One's gaze is synonymous with the direction of one's living" (Eckartsberg). In Mexico, 'the morning glory' (*Ipomoea rubro Coerulea*) is a 'diabolical seed' for some, and for others 'a divine messenger'. In Western Andean slopes, ayuhuasca can be a 'tiger drug' or a mere 'jungle drug'. The cannabis preparations 'cool' in India, but 'burn' in Morocco.

Bernard Aaronson discovered in his experiments in Princeton that a kind of psychedelic experience could be induced without



drugs, by hypnotically altering the perception of space and time. Religious visions in Tibet, hallucinations prevalent in many groups of Indian ascetics and the 'heavenly sights' seen in Christian monastic settlements support Aaronson's claim; severe privations, ascetic rigour, auto-hypnotic spells and submission to the Guru can and do bring about extraordinary hallucinations. Then what do the drugs do?

And there are drugs that do not induce hallucinations. The Polynesian *Kava* (*Piper methysticum*) and Synhexyl (synthetic hexyl analogue) are examples. Among the Indian *cannabis* preparations, *caras* is more hallucinogenic than *gānja*, and *gānja* more than *bhāṅg*. *Kava* provides for detached contemplation, Synhexyl induces a quiet confidence, and *bhāṅg* 'merely clears the head and stimulates the brain to think'. Even when, as under the influence of LSD and mescaline, the hallucinations are picturesque and intense, this phase of excitement is said to be soon succeeded by placid and lethargic ecstasy.

The significant effect of the drug appears to be the destruction of the will to act. This has been reported consistently by the users of *bhāṅg*, marijuana, hashish, *parica* (apsychoactive snuff used by the primitive Piaroa Indians of Southern Venezuela), *fly agaric* (*amanita muscaria*, a mushroom of Northern Europe), LSD, mescaline and Synhexyl. Whatever the intermediary stages, (excitement, elation, ecstasy, intoxication and exhilaration) the end-state is always described as trance-like,

where physical effort seems impossible. Although there may be no depressing effect on the nervous system, a sort of stupefaction is what ultimately results from the drug. The feeling of 'quiet ecstasy' that is usually reported means only this. The drug session invariably ends in a few hours of deep sleep.

When, however, there is an overdose of the drug, nightmarish experiences supervene. The increased awareness that the drug brings about will also emphasise the unpleasant symptoms, and anxiety results. On the physical side, some drugs like hashish end up in making the person ravenously hungry and exceedingly irritable. What the kif-smokers of Morocco say of kif applies to all drugs: "Like fire, a little of kif warms, a lot burns."

## V

## YOGA AS AN APPROACH

It may readily be seen how ill-informed Aldous Huxley was when he compared his mescaline experiences with yogic experiences. The claim is frequently made that drugs induce definite mystic states of consciousness. Walter Clark was 'shaken to the foundation' by LSD; he had "no doubt of the essentially religious nature of the experience." Reverend Mary Hart, the lady protestant Minister, had during an LSD session the vision of Christ and the crucifixion. The theologian John Robertson experienced with the help of a psilocybin derivative what Otto had called *mysterium tremendum*. The Judaistic thinker Rabbi Zalman Schachter obtained under the influence of LSD the vision of 'the conscious ascent of the soul'. Others, like Alan Watts, who claim to be conversant with the Eastern religious mysticism at once identify psychedelic experience with yogic states.

The claims are undoubtedly absurd. If drugs could induce genuine mystic states, prophets and messiahs, saints and seers would be in every home and on every road; and no religion would have bothered itself with scriptures and practices. If some drug-users did indeed have authentic religious experiences, their own personality predilections were responsible, for a hallucinogen will merely manifest what elements are already there within the man readily available for

manifestation : no drug can really 'convert' or transform. It is not even true to say that a drug will afford an insight into one's own inner unexplored regions.

From the foregoing analysis it should be clear that the drug action is essentially negative. The psychedelic drug is of course not a sedative, for it triggers off direct sensations and awareness becomes acute. Nevertheless its value is only in providing an escape from conventional reality for some time. It may not be an addicting drug, for one would not feel increasingly dependent on it. But its effect is surely temporary and its impact is by no means lasting. The level at which it works is strictly physical, and the changes it involves are but chemical.

Yoga, by any definition, works at a different level altogether. Even the Hatha-Yoga, which presumably works with the physical constitution really works with nothing grosser than breath and the vital current. The control of breath (*prāṇāyāma*), which many Yogic schools prescribe is not intended to bring about any effect comparable to drug action. It is true that visions are reported in the course of *sādhana*, but they are not in the nature of hallucinations. The individual can retain here his subjectivity independent of all projections; and the individual is all the while aware that the visions are his own creations, and can withdraw them at will. This is not possible under the influence of drugs, where the individual is a hapless victim to the hallucinations. And the purpose of all yoga, whether the Patanjali type or the Natha cult, the Tibetan Vajrayāna or



the esoteric Nādayoga, is to render the mind utterly passive, to disposses it and relax it, to loosen it from all thought-activity. Psychedelic drugs do exactly the opposite.

Consciousness during the state of *samādhi* is described as extraordinarily clear, and as immediately intuitive. The vividness of psychedelic hallucinations is sometimes mistaken for this experience. But senses do not at all function in the former case, whereas in the psychedelic experience the senses are extraordinarily active in their organizational function (albeit their receptive function is greatly limited). Yoga makes use of an expression '*pratibhā*' (flash of light, illumination) which means a phenomenological shift in the very essence of one's being; the 'illumination' that occurs by the drug intake however is merely a shift in one's perceptual field. LSD and mescaline are reported to produce sometimes the feeling that one's limbs suddenly break loose from the body and stay outside. This is only a boundary shift in the awareness, and the body-awareness does not in any way get disturbed or dissolved. Yogic illumination, on the other hand, eliminates the body awareness altogether, for without this detachment the 'highest purity' of mind in perfect concentration (*dharmamegha Samādhi*) is not achieved. A mere distortion of spatio-temporal perception should not be mistaken for revelation of reality or what the yoga styles as *ritambhara*.

In fact, Yogic literature is acquainted with the possibility of hallucinations that liberate the mind from convention for the time being; and we are warned not to mistake them for the liberation of

mind from all thought. The word *vikalpa* suggests that mind is unusually and abnormally active, that there are perceptions that do not involve objects and meanings (*śabdārtha*) : this activity is discursive, expansive, indiscriminate and confusing. Memory here plays a trick by piecing together odd bits and imposing on them a false notion of continuity and objectivity (*smṛtisāṅkarya*). Hallucinations thus are only extensions of normal knowledge; the two do not differ in quality, whatever the objective frame of reference. They are by no means 'experiences of transcendence' as the drug-votaries claim.

They appear naturally enough during the course of *sādhana* to distract the yogi from the goal of total liberation which he has set himself to achieve. Several Yogic systems, including the Nātha-siddha, the Śakta and the Tibetan Vajrayāna, have classified such hallucination as types of resistances from the mind. The yogi should ignore them and push ahead; if he dwells and revels in these experiences he plays himself into the hands of the spirits of distraction, Śakini, Dakini and others, and comes to grief. Euphoria and ecstasy are especially the experiences one must guard oneself against: the Siddha mysticism describes them as 'worst enemies' and as 'sugar-covered poisons'.

Even if we concede that drugs not only manifest but expand the individual's consciousness, that one does indeed get acquainted with some of the unexplored regions thereof, and that this is not without value, we must remember that the consciousness that is manifested and expanded is after all the normal one. It has been recognised by

drug-researchers (like Bernard Aaronson) as well as by Yoga writers (like Jayanta-bhaṭṭa) that this experience may happen even without the instrumentation of drugs. Jayanta, for instance, mentions in his *Nyāyamañjarī* that sudden flashes of such illumination occur even to ordinary persons, usually women, at rare and lucid intervals. But he distinguishes this illumination from the one that is constant and obtained by intense concentration. It is small gain that the normal consciousness gets manifested or expanded, without a depth experience and without the dissolution of the phenomenal ego. The levels and layers of consciousness beyond the normal are not reached by mere physical and chemical changes.

What yoga seeks to achieve is a total and irreversible transformation of the being in the direction of depth and unity.' The Tantrik thinkers have described the goal as the revelation of 'the one unmanifest great void' which is the nucleus of the being. We do not get glimpses of the goal when at times even when we are awake mind becomes insentient as in sleep or when the mind sinks below the threshold under pressure of quick and crowded succession of images. The heightening of sense-activity and acuteness of awareness which the ingestion of drugs involves, make consciousness many-pronged and multi-faceted; it is a movement away from the core of the being and the normal tendency for projection and involvement is only strengthened and reinforced. The drug therefore cannot be expected to liberate the mind, as yoga seeks to do.

The psychedelic experience is characterised by an intense zest for life, that is to say that normal life, with experiential coordinates

pleasantly distorted. Yoga, on the other hand, sets high store on withdrawal and quiet detachment: it sees no merit in adding new dimensions to normal consciousness. Yogic experience does not involve either alteration or distortion of normal experiential coordinates; it is their suspension that is envisaged. Unless the mutable, dynamic aspect of consciousness is arrested, the immutable and static aspect that is identical with the essence of one's being is not reached. Ramana Maharshi called it 'the thinning of the mind.'

Consciousness has to get completely weaned off the mind and the senses, and fully deconditioned from conventional moorings. This is an important achievement in yoga, and is not in that way of thinking treated lightly. Every yogic system insists that it is difficult and impossible of attainment without persistent and strenuous effort. Traditional yoga does not compromise with quick results and easy success: there is no room in it for 'instant nirvana' or 'chemical emancipation'; no one expects to be transformed in a jiffy. The two watch-words in yoga are 'continuous practice' (*abhyāsa*) and 'progressive detachment' (*vairāgya*). There seems to be no scope for short cuts or 'made easies'.

Merely because the age we live in is fast and sophisticated, it is ridiculous to expect the law of life to accommodate itself to our present requirements. The plants grow exactly as they have always grown; the mountains and the oceans, the clouds and the wind are what they have always been. Human nature basically remains the same, and follows the principles of fulfilment as it has always done.



Science and technology, imagination and invention, skill and knowledge have no doubt put man in possession of numerous and helpful gadgets, both mechanical and mental; and life has been made easier, although also more uncertain. But all this is by far insignificant when we consider nature in her own right; human nature has not altered its course for all our trappings of civilization.

Yoga is a technique of grappling with this basic and unchanging human nature, and it relies on the natural endowments and normal equipment. It works with mind and directly through the mind. Consciousness changes neither by chemical means nor by physical exercise. It follows its own logic, in its bondage as well as in its freedom; and yoga has attempted to understand this logic. Its prescriptions naturally are not pharmacological but psychological.

## VI

### THOUGHTS ON MEDICAL ETHICS

#### (THE TRADITIONAL INDIAN OUTLOOK)

##### 1. Preamble

1.1 Medicine is undoubtedly an ancient calling. It has developed with the human race throughout its career on this planet. Its origins may perhaps be found in the shamanistic cults of all countries; the medicine - man filled an important role in tribal society, his business was not only to relieve the member of the tribe of his distress but to secure the well-being of the tribe as a whole. He was a healer, family counsellor and the tribal priest, all at the same time. Such is the background of the medical profession.

That this was the proper context for the practitioner of the art of healing has been suggested by Sir William Osler when he said that "the physician must be friend, philosopher, well-wisher and guide of the patient and the family under his care". The physician is a member of the society before he becomes the member of his profession; and his obligations include willingness to 'consecrate his life to the service of humanity', and to refrain from 'using his medical knowledge and skill contrary to the laws of humanity'. (The World Medical Assembly at Geneva, 1948). He is expected further to

‘practice with conscience and dignity’ and to ‘maintain the honour and noble tradition of his profession’.

1.2 Medicine in comparatively recent times has sought to formulate its own code of conduct spelling out the physician’s duties to the patient and his obligations to the society. The Hippocratic oath (around 450 B.C.) was probably the earliest attempt in the western world to institute a normative code of conduct for the practising physicians. Its acceptance, albeit in broad principles and not in actual practice, was around the fourth century A.D. The medical world thought it fit to formulate the code of conduct afresh in 1948 (The WMA, Geneva Declaration), and this was amended several times (Helsinki 1964, Tokyo 1975, Venice 1983 and so on).

However, the Hippocratic oath had a quaint, almost spiritual, flavour of its own, despite the impracticability of many of its provisions, and thus continues to be relevant by and large, at any rate as an ideal to be known and cherished. For instance, the injunctions to “maintain absolutely confidentiality of all personal information, and to refrain from using the doctor-patient relationship for sexual advantage”, to “apply dietetic measures for the benefit for the sick according to my ability and judgement”, and to “keep them (the patients) from harm and injustice” are valid for all time. Similarly, the provisions for the oath: “In purity and holiness, I will guard my life and my art”; “I will neither give a deadly drug to

anybody if asked for it, nor will I make a suggestion to this effect"; "If I fulfil this oath and do not violate it, may it be granted to me to enjoy life and art, being honoured with fame among all men for all time to come; if I transgress it and swear falsely, may the opposite of all this be my lot" are of enduring importance.

1.3 Ethics is a normative discipline, designed to secure orderliness in the lives of people and effectivity in collective action. It seeks to restrain the usual sources of degradation, viz. greed, cruelty, selfishness, impetuosity and perversions of all types. The individual as a member of a society and his rights, duties, commitments, obligations, judgments and actions come within the purview of ethics. There are naturally ethical implications which are specific to the medical profession; moral principles which constitute the essential part of the healing art. This was deemed necessary because the knowledge and skill of the doctor may possibly be abused owing to conflicting loyalties and distorted sense of values.

There were constitutional provisions, statutory restrictions, safeguards relevant to the medical professional, included in the laws of the land. And there were also medical guilds and councils which enunciated the professional code of conduct to maintain the dignity of the professional and to promote the usefulness of the profession. Professional misconduct was indicted by the latter, while it was brought under disciplinary proceedings by the former. However, the concept of medical ethics is different from both these compulsions.



Ethical behaviour is a matter of conscience and personal judgment. It pertains to the character of the doctor, and to his appreciation of the dignity of the profession. Legal restrictions and restraints imposed by the medical councils are strictly not valid here.

## 2. THE PRESENT CONTEXT

2.1 Like all human endeavour, medical practice also has undergone enormous changes over the years. Science and technology have brought about revolutionary improvements in diagnosis and treatment. Science is basically concerned with understanding the phenomena of nature, while technology is interested in exploiting the resources of nature for satisfying man's needs (like those for food, shelter and protection). Normally, science and technology are expected to co-operate in the welfare of mankind, but it often happens that the co-ordination is absent or meagre. Medical research and drug-manufacture, for instance, do not always go hand in hand. Drug industry all too often loses the perspective of healing the sick; hospitals and nursing homes with high technology tend to become business houses.

2.2 The doctor today is a scientist, technologist and healer at the same time. His training is a long-drawn one, and comprehends a large number of specialized disciplines. It prepares him to become a general practitioner, specialist or consultant, specifying his area of contact with the patients and their ailments. Medical science aims to

provide an education which would facilitate the aspiring doctor to know the patient as a person, and to best judge the kind of service the patient really needs, and also to provide this service himself. However, medical technology which is at cross purposes forces him to an increasing employment of tailor-made drugs like sulphanomides, antibiotics, oral contraceptives, tranquillizers, and anti-cancer agents, which are all effective and for the same reason dangerous.

This attaches a greater responsibility on the doctor, which responsibility he is not trained to undertake. His wisdom, knowledge, discretion, judgment and integrity are involved in his practice. Especially is he bogged down by the technological pressures and constraints which are enormous and many-sided. It is here that ethics becomes a more important issue than ever. Man is born to be healthy; the laws of nature tend to make him healthy. But diseases do occur, and they are to be removed. But health as seen by the present-day science is not a mere absence of disease; it is a natural feeling of well-being, contentment, peace within and harmony. It is a total co-ordination of the physical, mental, social and spiritual aspects.

2.3 The growth of specialists and consultants, which removes the doctor from the general run of patients and increases intra-discipline interaction, is another dimension in the medical field today which has created problems. This has been caused by technology more than by science. There is now an entirely new approach to the 'business' of handling disease, owing to the explosive growth of medical

technology; it splits medicine into an ever-enlarging number of specialities, amidst which interaction appears to be rather minimal.

Added to this is the ever-increasing number of people who aspire to take to this profession. They come from different backgrounds, have varying equipments, and cherish widely different values of life. They shape into a variegated group of assorted doctors, whose education and training do not emphasize, if they include at all, the obligations, responsibilities and commitments natural to the medical profession.

How hollow would the words sound when we read the declaration of the tenth World Medical Assembly in Havana during 1956: "The primary obligation of the physician is his professional duty; in performing his professional duty, the physician's supreme guide is his conscience". Does the medical education imparted today touch the mysterious 'conscience' in any palpable way? The talk of medical ethics should revolve round this 'conscience', which is increasingly becoming the 'grin of the Cheshire cat'.

2.4 Unfortunately for the medical technology, there are now several hurdles which the 'conscience' of the medical practitioner should cross or circumvent, to maintain the so-called professional dignity: what his judgment would be in cases like euthanasia, iatrogenic diseases, medicolegal responsibilities, pregnancy tests, artificial insemination, organ transplantation, invitro-sterilization,

embryo-transfer technology, genetic engineering, use of cadaver or dying patients for their organ, and even blood transfusion (which is objected by many religious groups including the Jehova's Witnesses). These are issues which are vitally ethical in character and import.

The problems of the medical practitioner are compounded by the expectations of the patients from the doctors, from the ancillary staff and from the hospitals; the growing need for out door examination, admission to the ward, rehabilitation and so on. The modern patient demands an insight into his illness, and talks of medical negligence and dereliction of duty. He expects good hospital care with special arrangements for specific illnesses and for emergency treatment. High technology is like the Aladin's Lamp, which raises an ugly monster the moment it is rubbed.

These are some of the problems which pertain to the medical profession now and which involve ethical consideration in addition to the medical. We have moved far away from the Hippocratic context. The ethics germane to the medical profession cannot be simple or uniform. Nor is the ethics simply a matter between the doctor and the patient; the society (with all its economic and political dimensions) is involved in a much bigger way. The doctor's integrity is related now to the drugs, drug manufacturers, medical representatives, law, the patient's family, organized medicare services (like nursing homes, hightech hospitals, blood-banks and kidney centres) and the doctor's own standards of living.



What Dr. H. Mahler of WHO said about the ethics of prolonging life applies to several other issues in the field: "The terminally ill need peace, comfort and dignity, but advanced technology often deprives them of these things, in the misdirected effort to prolong the obfuscation of the borderline between life and death". He called our attention to the "sophisticated medical and surgical technology being easily abused". This is a reflection which underlines the need for a fresh reappraisal of medical ethics, independent of the technological advance in the field of medicine.

### 3. THE ENDURING VALUES

3.1 In the welter of all this confounding issues, certain basic considerations still become relevant. These were also touched by Hippocrates (assuming that he really existed and that he was the one who gave the Oath bearing his name) more than two thousand years ago, as well as by the ancient Indian medical writers like Charaka, Suśruta and Vagbhāṭa. The Indian texts prescribe elaborately how a physician must train himself to be an effective healer, and how he must conduct himself in society and with the patient.

It is high time we realized that ethics is an important part of the healing art. Medical ethics must focus attention on the proper and also effective therapeutic relation between the doctor and the patient founded on several factors like mutual consent, rapport, co-operation and reciprocity of responsibility. Ethical values need to be emphasized because they are likely to be easily sidelined and quickly ignored in

the present state of the medicare systems where technology, industry, business and vested interests have a large say.

3.2 The traditional Indian approach to the problem is indeed a simple one. But it deals with the core of the problem. That the approach does not envisage the technological advance of more recent times or the population explosion, does not take away from the merit of the approach, which concerns itself with the essential values of the healing art. Disease is largely regarded as due to our errors of judgment (prajñāparādha) and it is sought to be remedied by self-discipline (like personal hygiene, dietary restrictions, periodical fasts, exercise and rules of conduct, dina-charya and rtu-charya), home remedies (for preventive as well as curative purposes) and herbal medicines.

Health is not merely the absence of disease. It is a positive concept. In the words of Charaka, the earliest Indian medical writer who lived centuries before the Christian era, sickness prevents a person from pursuing his values of life, the 'puruṣārthas': satisfying the normal desires and having the usual pleasures of life (Kāma), acquiring wealth and securing financial comfort (artha), leading a life of virtue and social usefulness (dharma). The group of three values (known as trivarga) characterizes normal human life. The person who is sick is unable to lead a normal life, pursuing this triad, and to this extent he threatens the society in which he lives and of which he is a part.

There is a statement in *Skanda-Purāṇa* to the effect that inasmuch the values of life are fulfilled only by a healthy person, the

physician who restores the health of the person will indeed gift him with the values of life:

धर्मार्थकाममोक्षाणामारोग्यं साधनं यतः ।

तस्मादारोग्यदानेन तद्वत्तं स्याच्चतुष्टयम् ॥

The physician as a professional aims at bringing back the errant individual into the mainstream of social life. Herein lies his sense of obligation to society. The professional with his sense of duty and responsibility naturally evolves an ethics which comprehends his privileges and commitments. The context of this ethics is the suffering individual (viz. the patient, atura) as well as the social group in which the physician and the patient coexist. The patient includes the family to which he belongs, and the social group includes the economic and social factors which contribute to the well-being of the group.

3.3 Four are the gifts praised in society: providing defence for the weak and helpless, feeding the hungry, teaching those who want to learn, and treating the sick, and the best among them is the providing of health to the sick.

भीतेभ्यश्चाभयं देयं व्याधितेभ्यस्तथौषधम् ।

देया विद्यार्थिने विद्या देयमन्नं क्षुधातुरे ॥

न हि जीवितदानाद्विदानमन्यद्वशिष्यते ।

The Smṛti texts, which define the dimensions and prescribe the norms of the social organization in the country, are found to regard



the physician in an exceptional light: the usual disabilities and restrictions of caste, status and so on do not apply to the physician, because what he does no one else in the society can do:

चिकित्सको यत्कुरुते तदन्येन न शक्यते ।

तस्माच्चिकित्सकः स्पर्शं शुद्धो भवति नित्यशः ॥

This was said by Mitākshara, the commentator of the famous law-giver Manu, who held that the physician was always pure, and among the elite. Charaka says that a physician is superior to a twice-born, for he is a thrice-born one: he acquires the third birth after he completes his medical education:

विद्यासमाप्तौ भिषजस्तृतीया जनिरुच्यते ।

3.4 Charaka, however, classifies physicians into two categories: the right ones and the wrong ones. The former remove diseases and assure life, while the latter produce illnesses and remove life itself (Sutra 29,5). He also explains that the former hail from respectable families, are adequately educated, have served diligently competent and elderly physicians as apprentices and are themselves competent and sincere. They have self control, are well-equipped, and are free from defects. They look upon every patient as their own mother, father, brother or other relative. They are essentially kind-hearted, and are solely interested in relieving the patients of their suffering.

द्विविधास्तु भिषजो भवन्त्यग्निवेश प्राणानामेकेऽभिसराः हन्तारो

रोगाणां, रोगाणामेकेऽभिसराः हन्तारो प्राणानामपि ॥



There were quacks and fakes even in the ancient times. They have been termed 'prati-rupakas', 'Ku-Vaīdyas', 'bhishak-chhadma-dharas'. Even the law of the land laid a heavy hand on them. Manu, the law-giver, enjoins that a fake-physician must be severely punished:

चिकित्सकानां सर्वेषां मिथ्यां प्रचरतां दमः ।

दुश्चिकित्सां कुर्वतां दण्डः कर्तव्यः ॥ (Manvārtha-Muktāvali)

*Yājñavalkya-Smṛti* lays down that a quack is to be fined heavily;

भिषङ् मिथ्या चरन् दण्डचः ।

Kautilya's *Artha-Śāstra*, which is both normative and descriptive concerning the social life and polity of ancient India, suggests that the punishment (*sahasa-danda*) meted out to a false physician must be mild or severe according to the damage that he has caused and the suffering that the patient has experienced because of his treatment:

भिषजः प्राणाबाधिकमनाख्यायोपक्रममाणस्य विपत्तौ पूर्वः साहसदण्डः

कर्मोपरोधेन विपत्तौ मध्यमः मर्मवैगुण्यकरणे दण्डपारुष्यं विद्यात् ।

The false physicians have their eyes on the fees: they are greedy and exploit the gullible folk with their tall claims and superior air. The well-known literary work *Visva-gunādarsa*, describes how the charlatans pretend to be competent physicians, administer drugs about which they do not know anything, and make a big show of their expertise, all only to fill their own enormous belly:

मिथ्यौषधैर्हन्त मृषाकषायै  
 रसहालेह्यैरयार्थतैलैः ।  
 वैद्या इमे वञ्चितरुग्णवर्गाः  
 पिचण्डभाण्डं परिपूरयन्ति ॥

Sometimes quacks do succeed in their sham treatment; the patient does get better and recover his health. But the cure has been effected not at all by the medicine given but by the fast and other healthy procedures which the patient follows. The quack however rushes forward to take the credit and extract a large fee.

कषायैरुपवासैश्च कृताप्युल्लाघतां नृणाम् ।  
 निजौषधिकृतां वैदो निवेद्य हरते धनम् ॥

Charaka blames the administration for the presence of such dishonest physicians and quacks: and "Such are the pretenders who masquerade as efficient physicians and roam about the country, as veritably thorns, owing to the negligence of the administrators" (Sutra, 29,8). The quacks are not in fact physicians at all, although they pretend to practice medicine. They are self-seekers, and value only monetary rewards. They are entirely devoid of ethics in their lives as in their practice. They have no commitment to cure and have no obligations to the patient. They are by no means kind-hearted, sincere or honest as a true physician should be.

Charaka mentions another class of charlatans along with the quacks mentioned above. They are the ones who practice medicine

on very slender and improper credentials. They would have acquired some celebrity owing to factors not connected with medicine at all. Charaka calls them 'siddha-sadhita', or those who exploit patients on the basis of their ill-gotten reputes and false claims. They may be eminent in some other calling, but they enter the field of medicine to make money. They would not really be interested in healing the suffering folk, nor for that matter capable of doing so.

Charaka also warns that some of the cures effected by these quacks and charlatans should not mislead us, "The quack who cures accidentally some patient who is destined to live longer, may soon kill many patients whose longevity is not previously determined!" (Sutra 9,17). He comes down heavily on the physicians who take a casual attitude while treating patients (ibid 11, 126-1333), and on those who take to the profession only as a means of livelihood, for according to him, the great sages gave us this art of healing not to make money but to do good to the people.

धर्मार्थं नार्थकामार्थमायुर्वेदो महार्षिभिः ।

प्रकाशितो धर्मपरैरिच्छद्भिः स्थानमक्षरम् ॥

3.5 Since very early times, and until our own day, medical profession has been lucrative; the art of healing and the science of curing have been easy avenues to acquire wealth and celebrity. A verse in Rigveda admonishes, ten thousand years ago, the physician who sets out to sell his precious magical gem of wish-fulfilment



(Chintāmani), viz. his medical expertise, for but a few trinkets of trash (viz. money) (RV, 10,97). The Buddha also chides the physician who is keen on monetary gains.

The physician should be a benefactor, according to Charaka, inasmuch as he facilitates people to attend to the three main objectives of life, viz. virtuous living(dharma), wealth and security (artha) and pleasures of life(Kāma), for all the three depend on health. The physician in this sense is looked upon as a 'donor'(dāta), for he gifts bodily health and wellbeing. He lends a helping hand to those who are sinking in the guagmire of disease; what other service could be more valuable? *Yogaratnākara*, a medieval work on medicinal preparations, says that the physician is most virtuous on this account, and worthy of all honour:

रोगपङ्कणवे मग्नं यः समुद्धरते नरम् ।

कस्तेन न कृतो धर्मः का च पूजां न सोऽर्हति ॥

As we all know, monetary considerations play an increasingly important and enormous role in modern society. A large number of young and brilliant aspirants take to medical practice only for the rich rewards that it entails. And the social fabric has become so complicated and tangled that one does not readily distinguish the competent and honest doctor from the commereial minded doctor who merely puts on airs. Ethics in this context gets terribly out of gear. The old and honoured concepts of service, propriety, efficiency, integrity, honesty, commitment and sincerity in medicine do not seem



to be applicable to the modern times. The code of conduct, even when one has a notion of it, seems impracticable. It is economics, and not ethics, that seems to rule the roost.

#### 4. IDEALS TO BE PURSUED

4.1 But an inquiry into what constitutes the best physician is not only relevant but necessary at any time. An ethical consideration cannot be avoided and the ideals must always be kept before us, however difficult they are to be achieved. According to Charaka, "one who wants to become a physician must previously become thoroughly knowledgeable and cultivate virtues. He must work hard, for he is a saver of lives (pranada) of human beings. A good physician is one who frees patients from their distress" (9,134). It is only the serious-minded and knowledgeable physician that can restore the lost health of the patient and bring him back to an active and purposeful normalcy.

Vagbhata's Ashtāṅga-Saṃgraha suggests that the physician must regard all his patients as his own dear children who need his attention, and that he must proceed to treat them in the light of his wisdom and being aware of the virtuous path.

भिषगत्यातुरान् सर्वान् स्वसुतानिव यत्नवान् ।

अबाधेभ्योऽभिसंरक्षेत् ज्ञानं धर्ममनुस्मरन् ॥

Mahābhārata, the great Indian epic, tells us that we must cultivate the physician who is wise, virtuous, pleasant, friendly, honest and compassionate.

प्रज्ञोपसेविनं वैद्यं धार्मिकं प्रियदर्शनम् ।  
मित्रवन्तं सुवाक्यं च सुहृदं परपालयेत् ॥

4.2 Adequate medical education is no doubt “a light (jyoti or pradipa)” that will extend the horizon of ones vision and refine ones native talent. The education, according to Charaka, should enable the student of medicine to hold this light and enter into the inner life of the patient, so that he can treat him effectively; otherwise the education is wasted.

ज्ञानप्रदीपेन यो नाविशति योगवित् ।  
आतुरस्यान्तरात्मानं न स रोगांश्चिकित्सति ॥

Charaka describes this ability as an intuitional and spiritual approach, a ‘Yoga’. But this is not a supernatural or magical skill: it can be acquired during the course of medical education and training. So says Charaka himself, and he points out that this ability will enable the physician to treat each patient as an independent entity. Treatment must necessarily be individual oriented.

योगमासां तु यो विद्योद्देशकालोपपादितम् ।  
पुरुषं पुरुषं वीक्ष्य स ज्ञेयो भिषगुत्तमः ॥

The above citation brings out the fact that in traditional Indian medicine (which alas very few practice today), the individual is more important than the disease he may be suffering from. The patient is not merely a case or illustration of a specific disease category; he is a person to whom a disease has occurred. Charaka points out that the

same disease will appear in different patients differently: hence the expression “purusham purusham vikshya”.

It is important that study of texts should go hand in hand with practice; otherwise competence will elude the prospective physician. And besides the medical knowledge and skill, Charaka speaks of an intuitional understanding of the patient-and-the-disease as a total picture, and he calls it ‘vijñana’. This is basic to all effective treatment.

प्रयोगज्ञानविज्ञानसिद्धिसिद्धाः सुखप्रदाः ।

जीविताभिसैरास्ते स्युर्वैद्यत्वं तेष्ववस्थितम् ॥

4.3 Sushruta insists that the physician should not confine his studies to the medical field only, but must get acquainted with several other disciplines. This will make his mind open and alert, and his approach will be broadbased. He need not be proficient in other disciplines; proficiency must be aimed at in his own field, but he must not be a stranger to other branches of knowledge. Medical knowledge alone will not give him the expertise that the physician needs to have, nor the renown that he aspires to acquire:

एकं शास्त्रमधीयानो न विद्यच्छास्त्रनिश्चयम् ।

तस्माद् बहुश्रुतः शास्त्रं विजानीयाच्चिकित्सकः ॥

स्वतन्त्रकुशलोऽन्येषु शास्त्रार्थेष्वबहिष्कृतः ।

वैदो ध्वज इवाभाति नृप तद्विद्यपूजितः ॥

44. In the medical curriculum must be included medical ethics, not as a normative discipline but as a practical course with its own

problems and considerations. The role of ethics is certainly vast and varied, from treating a common cold to the controversy on euthanasia, from the simple obligations of a family doctor (grha-  
vaidya) to the specialist services in the high-cost and high-technology  
medicare units that are springing up in our cities. The medical  
programmes are now in the nature of an elaborate and sophisticated  
industries and sharp business enterprises. Ethical considerations  
become all the more urgent and relevant; also more difficult and  
almost utopian.

However, all ethical considerations are essentially human in  
orientation, and need to be accorded a place of importance in the  
medicare services. The Indian writers on medicine (like Charaka,  
Śushruta and Vāgbhata) uniformly indicate that the physician must  
cultivate the qualities of friendliness (maitri), kindness for the suffering  
folk ('karunyam ārteshu'), and eagerness to do his best to alleviate  
the suffering ('śakye pritiḥ') (Charaka, 9,26).

Śushruta adds that the physician acquires just renown when his  
instructions are clear and firm (ajna), when he is ready to sacrifice  
for the sake of the patient's well-being (tyāga), when he is patient  
and forgiving (kshama), when he is steadfast when confronted with  
difficulties (dhairya) and when he is uncommonly courageous  
(vikrama) (Sutra, 34,10).

Vagbhata's *Asṭāṅga-saṃgraha* indicates that an efficient doctor is  
friendly towards all, compassionate to the patients, happy when he



sees healthy people, and composed when he finds that his patient is unlikely to be saved; his good conduct is what distinguishes him.

सर्वत्र मैत्री करुणाऽऽतुरेषु  
निरामदेहेषु नृषु प्रमोदः ।  
मनस्युपेक्षाऽपकृतिं व्रजत्सु  
वैद्यस्य सद्गुत्तमलं तनोति ॥

4.5 Finally, the advice given by Charaka may be pertinent for the practitioners even today: “He who practices not for money nor for caprice, but out of compassion for living beings (bhuta-daya) is best among all physicians. The physicians who set out to sell their skill like merchandise only lose sight of the gold and acquire heaps of dirt. Hard is to find a conferer of spiritual blessings comparable to the physician who snaps the snares of death for his patients and proffers renewed lease of life for them. The physician who regards compassion for living beings as his highest religion fulfils his mission in life and obtains the highest happiness” (Sutra, 1,58, ff).

सर्वत्र सुखिनः सन्तु सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।  
सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु मा कश्चिद्दुःखयाग्भवेत् ॥

“May all beings be happy; may all beings be free from ailments;

May all good occur to all people; and may no one be troubled with misery”.

### NOTE

*Charaka-samhita*, which is a text prepared nearly a thousand years before Christ, was in fact a redaction of an earlier classic, viz. *Agniveśa-tantra*. This *Charaka samhita* was redacted in turn by Patanjali in the second century B.C. The present form of the text is traced to 175 B.C.

If Charaka is famous as a physician. Śushruta is celebrated as a surgeon. His Samhita is referred to in a work called *Katyāyana-vārtika* in the 4th century B.C. According to Hoernle, the samhita was prepared about 600 B.C. The present form of the text is ascribed to the century preceding the Christian era.

Vagbhata, the author of *Ashtānga Samgraha* is said to have lived in the fifth century A.D. (according to Gananatha Sen).

## VII

### CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

#### (ANCIENT INDIAN OUTLOOK)

Punishment for offences is an important topic in ancient and medieval books on polity and administration like Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra*, *Manu-dharma-śāstra*, *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* and *Kamandakiya-nīti-sāra*; there are discussions about this issue in Mahabharata (*Rājadharmaparva* section in *Śānti-parva*) and in *Agni-purāṇa* and *Matsya-purāṇa* also.

This is generally regarded as the fourth and final expedient in cases of violation of law or justice that the ruler or administrator is enjoined to adopt, when the other three failed. Called 'upāyās', the expedients are 'sāma' (pacific procedures, counselling), 'dāna' (promises of gifts, material comforts and liberty), 'bheda' (causing dissensions and quarrels among allies and friends) and 'danḍa' (administering punishments).

Punishment is recommended mainly as a corrective device, and the administrator is warned that there should be perfect justice and maintenance of law as its purpose.

विना दण्डं कथं राज्यं करोति जनकः किल ।

धर्मो न वर्तते लोके दण्डश्चेन्न भवेद्यदि ॥

Kulluka-bhaṭṭa, commentator of Manu, includes the administration of justice (danḍa-nīti) in the 'triad' (trayi), which comprehends rational investigation (anvikshiki) and public affairs and economy (varta) as the other two components (Manu, 7, 43). And Mitakshara (2, 212) warns that administration of punishment should never be excessive or cruel (danḍa-parushya), and should avoid as far as possible injury to the body by beating, kicking or use of weapons.

परगात्रेष्वभिद्रोहो हस्तपादायुधादिभिः।

In works like Amara-Kosha (-tika), three are said to be the accepted methods of punishment; 'artha-grahaṇa' (levying fines, appropriation of the culprit's property and wealth), 'bandhana-taḍaṇa', (imprisonment, physical torture), and 'vadha' (capital punishment, killing of the culprit). The books on polity (artha-śāstras) speak of 'vāgdanḍa' (verbal, public condemnation), 'mano-danḍa' (causing agony of mind, anxiety and fear; threats and harassment), and 'kaya-danḍa' (physical torture and death penalty).

Among the offences for which punishments are imposed are enumerated: bearing false-witness (koota-sakshya), abusing a person in public (vak-parushya), theft and robbery (chaurya), abduction and rape (para-dārā-haraṇa), marrying off a defective daughter and so on. And among the motivations for committing an offence (in violation of the established law of the country) are counted: fear (bhaya), greed (lobha), confusion (moha), anger (krodha) and ignorance (ajñāna).



Punishment meted out should be mild or severe, in accordance with the motivation behind the crime and the actual crime:

अपराधानुरूपो दण्डः ।

Kautilya's *Artha-śāstra* recognizes the problems involved in administering punishment: if the punishment is very severe, it causes undue fear among the subjects: and if the punishment is mild, then it does not serve as a deterrent at all. Therefore, the text admonishes, care must be taken to match the punishment with the gravity of the crime.

तीक्ष्णदण्डो हि भूतानामुद्वेजनीयः । मूढदण्डः  
परिभूयते । यथार्हदण्डः पूज्यः ॥

For after all, the administration of punishment is meant to prevent violation of the laws and to promote peace and well-being in the land:

दण्डकराजानो हि प्रजानां किल्बिषं हरन्ति,  
योगक्षेमवहाश्च भवन्ति ॥

The administration of punishment is also to be subject to scrutiny. If the administering authority awards the punishment which is unjust and excessive (*danda-parushya*), then the authority itself should be punished. Cruelty in punishment (like dismemberment of body, cutting off the arms for theft, cutting off the legs for kicking an

officer, branding of the body with red-hot iron for causing injury to beasts, getting the spy or conspirator crushed under an elephant's legs etc.) are frowned upon (*Yukti-kalpa-taru*, *Dharma-sarvasva*).

अधर्म्यदण्डनं लोके यशोघ्नं कीर्तिनाशनम् ।

अखर्ग्यं च परत्रापि तस्मात्तत्तु विवर्जयेत् ॥

Punishment also must take the course which begins with mild measures and ends with the severe. For small or great offences, the first punishment should be verbal (*vāg-danḍa*): if the offender does not correct himself, then he must be made liable to public columny (*dhig-danḍa*); then he should be fined (*dhana-danḍa*); if the offender persists, physical punishment (imprisonment, lashes, etc.) or *kaya-danḍa* may be imposed. In the extreme case of utter intractability, banishment (*pravasana*) and capital punishment (*vadha-danḍa*) may be meted out.

Torture as an aspect of punishment and a corrective technique is an old practice, perhaps prevalent in India also. But the texts prescribe it in an extreme case, and do not generally favour it. Torture for political reasons is certainly condemned. Punishment is meant to instil fear and warning in the minds of people not to transgress the laws.

राजदण्डभयाल्लोका पापाः पापं न कुर्वते ।

But the offenders must be treated with due justice; even if the offender is devoid of kindness and finer feelings, the administrator cannot afford to be without compassion; he must set an example:

अधर्मव्यवस्थितान् न्यायवृत्तेन वारयेत् ।  
निर्दयस्यापि दया कर्तव्या । मर्यादा स्थापयेत् ।

The purpose of administration is to suppress the wicked folk who cause trouble to the law-abiding citizens, and to protect the good folk who are not capable of defending themselves otherwise -

दुष्टनिग्रहं कुर्यात् शिष्टपरिपालनं च ।

The ruler must first inform the offender what is right and proper, and educate him. If the person who offends the law persists, the ruler must try and pacify his motivations. If even that fails to bring him back to the mainstream of law and justice, then he must be threatened and afforded a chance to correct himself. As the next courses, the criminal may be imprisoned (physically isolated from others), fettered (preventing free movement), set to engage himself in activities in isolation, and finally driven out of the country (*Arthaśāstra*, *Vinayādhikārika*, section 1)

धर्ममथं चोपादिशेत् अविनीतं सान्त्वयेत्  
त्रासयेत् भेदयेत् बध्नीयात् कर्मान्तेषु  
योजयेत् प्रवासयेद्वा ॥

While punishment is awarded, the time, place, the nature of the crime, circumstances, severity and other factors must be duly considered (ibid., *dharma-sthiyam*, section 3):

तेषां देशकालविषयसाधनाद्यानुगुण्येन  
दण्डं विदध्यात् ।

The offenders must be punished in accordance with their offences: but wandering mendicants, ascetics, those who are ill and ailing, those who are hungry and tired, those who are very poor and those who are already severely punished must be shown compassion (ibid.,).

दुष्टानां यथादोषं दण्डं विदध्यात् । तीर्थकरः तपस्वी  
व्याधितः क्षुत्पिपासाध्वक्लान्तः निरोजनपदः दण्डखेदी  
निष्किञ्चनश्चानुग्रहाः ॥



## VIII

### THE PROBLEM OF INDIAN MEDICINE

Little does the world know today that India has her own system of medicine, and less does it know that this system had reached a fairly high degree of development several centuries before the Christian era. It is not generally known that Indian medicine is an elaborate discipline comprehending all aspects including surgery. The reasons for this ignorance are many. One of them, and perhaps the chief of them, is the cultivated indifference of Indians themselves for several centuries now. The source of this indifference may largely be traced to the cultural shocks that India has experienced in her recent history.

The first one was when the adventurous Mughals overran the country and established their suzerainty around 1527 A.D. It was followed by a widespread shake-up in the traditional Indian society, and measure of uncertainty in the daily life of the people. Peaceful pursuit of academic disciplines (including medicine) became difficult in the wake of increased forced or preferred political involvement of intellectuals. Traditional callings were compelled to be neglected. The time-honoured vocational organisation in the rural set-up was disturbed. Scholars and practitioners of indigenous medicine could no longer expect to obtain royal patronage or encouragement from the nobility, in the atmosphere of increasing political instability.

The more talented among the indigenous physicians had to take to other vocations to prove their worth and earn their living. Medical expertise that was for centuries contained within the family-fold was abandoned, and the old values got mixed up and changed. The shock was felt initially only in the northern regions of the country, and it spread to the South in due course and in leisurely measures. This is how traditional callings could continue in the South for a longer period of time, and many aspects of Indian culture (including medicine) could be preserved in greater purity.

The second shock, however, affected the entire country uniformly, and it was more devastating in its effect. It was experienced when the British made an inroad into the country's economy and administration around 1790, and eventually inaugurated their empire. It was the case of a business enterprise leading to political fortunes. With the air of a superior race of people, destined to uplift the barbarian heathens, the English administrators undertook patronisingly to educate and civilize the Indian masses, along their own line of thinking, and of course, in their own interest.

In 1813 the East India Company's Charter was renewed for the express purpose of "improving and encouraging the learned natives of India", and for "the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of British territories of India". The Court of Directors "ordered that steps should be taken to induce the people to adopt modern improvements in sciences." Twenty years later, the Indian response to this offer of Western education was so

encouraging that Macaulay was emboldened to describe Indian arts and sciences as "false history, false astronomy, false metaphysics, which attended their false religion". And Lord William Bentinck as Governor-General of the country directed that "all the funds appropriated for education would be best employed on English education alone."

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Even the early Indologists thought poorly of the texts on Indian medicine. Sir William Jones, for instance, wrote, notwithstanding his appreciation of Indian pharmacopea : "..... we cannot expect to acquire many valuable truths from an examination of Eastern books on the science of medicine" (The Works of Sir William Jones, Vol. 1, 1799, p. 12). It is therefore that this area of Indology was largely left unexplored, and generally European scholars contributed little towards the world's appreciation of Indian medicine, despite the laudable efforts of savants like Royle, Jolly, Zimmer, and Filliozat. The general impression conveyed to the modern student of medicine was that "its proper literature of medicine (Indian medicine) is by no means ancient" (Whitney : Sanskrit Grammar, p. xxii). And not being ancient, the argument was that it did not have even the antiquarian value.

Nevertheless a certain amount of interest was aroused among the Western physicians. The 'Charaka Club' was started as early as 1898 "by the members of the medical profession in New York interested in



the literary, artistic and historical aspects of medicine. It is called after Charaka author of the oldest extant work on Indian medicine" (BMJ, April 1905 p. 728, c. in G.N. Mukhopadhyaya, History of Indian Medicine Vol. 1, p. 30). But this interest was not sustained.

The renaissance in India, which followed in the wake of the discoveries and writings mainly of European Indologists, provided the Indians with an intention to understand things Indian, chiefly literary and philosophical. Indian medicine appears not to have been looked upon as a relevant aspect of Indian culture. It should be remembered that the leaders of the renaissance who were admirers of the European spirit of reason and reform were in fact ambivalent in their approach to Indian culture. They were convinced that the culture of this country was superior while the people here were inferior! They had clamoured for English education, and what came naturally with that education was a certain spirit of social reform and improved ways of living. Modern medicine (that is to say, the medicine that was prevalent in the European countries) came with the package deal.

The general opinion, shared by the omnipotent government as well as by the enlightened 'natives' of those days, was that Indian indigenous medicine was irrelevant to the preset-day Indians. Even by then, the indigenous medicine had the disadvantage of discontinuity in its tradition, especially in the northern regions of the country. It was now widely believed that it was in the interest of the 'inferior',



Indians themselves to imitate their 'superior' administrators and mentors, and acquire their skills and methods, manners and styles.

When the Sanskrit College was established in Calcutta In 1824, the resolution of the Government had been: "The Committee will bear in mind that the immediate object of the institution is the cultivation of Hindu literature. Yet it is in the judgement of his Lordship in Council a purpose of deeper interest to seek every practical means of effecting the gradual diffusion of European knowledge" (1821). In order to train ordinary Indian apothecaries to act as assistants to the European physicians and surgeons, the Government started in 1922 the Native Medical Institution with Jameison as Superintendent and Breton and Tytler as teachers.

This brought into being the tribe of 'Native Doctors', many of whom were employed in army and civil stations. Ayurveda was included in the curriculum and instruction was imparted in Bengali and Urdu. Tytler of this institution began teaching European medicine in the Sanskrit College in 1826, and next year Ayurveda was also included as a subject of study in that College. This combined teaching continued till 1834, when the Surgeon Grant committee recommended the abolition of Ayurvedic studies in the college. The reason given for this recommendation was that the native opinion was in favour of education in the European system of medicine.

In 1835, the Medical College was established in Calcutta with Bramely as superintendent, and the Native Medical Institution was abolished. This College taught European Medicine in English, and attracted large numbers of Anglo-Indian and anglicized Indian students. Not only was Ayurvedic education at this level entirely abandoned, but the Bengali practitioners who ran the traditional 'tols' (home schools) were severely handicapped. Medicine became more and more 'English'. Even the patriotic and scholarly Ayurvedic physician, Girindranath Mukhopadhyaya, suggested the switch over to English as medium of instruction "because students liked it better. Really the students find that the English books are easier to learn and the Bengali synonyms of scientific terms are very difficult sometimes" (*History of Indian Medicine*, 1926, Vol 11, p. 48). English as well as 'English' medicine were enthusiastically received by the people, as effective and superior alternatives to vernacular and Ayurveda.

This attitude held the field not only for a hundred and odd years till India became independent, but has survived the subsequent years also. Even Mahatma Gandhi appeared to have shared this attitude, In a letter dated 1939 to the renowned Ayurvedic physician A. Lakshmipati (quoted in the Editor's note to his book *Pancha Karmas*, "A textbook of Ayurveda" Vol V. Section 11, 1947), the Father of the Indian Nation wrote that "he has prepared to accept that there were some very good medicines in Ayurveda, but that he was unable to follow the scientific basis of Ayurveda or of the Tridosha theory" ! Like Gandhiji, hundreds of leaders, whose claim to talk on science or

medicine from pulpits was questionable, hurled stones at the already bruised indigenous medicine.

The faith in the superiority of European science and technology was built up among the Indian masses so steadily and skilfully during the days of our political dependence that it has become almost impossible to doubt this claim of superiority even after independence. Indians, therefore, have not made adequate or serious efforts to recapture or reconstruct, much less revitalize, the spirit of indigenous sciences and technology that was pralapsed nearly five hundred years ago. Indians themselves have been slow to recognise that this system of medicine has a peculiar but significant relevance to the Indian masses. The spohisticated folk, lay as well as educated, is still suspicious of, if not averse to, the claim of Ayurveda to be a satisfactory or complete system of medicine.

The suspicion or aversion that the people entertain towards indigenous medicine appears to be somewhat justified by the very practitioners of this system. These practitioners who have become victims of a certain feeling of inferiority endeavour to imitate their 'more fortunate' counterparts not only in the matter of diagnostic and clinical methods and drug prescriptions but even in their dress and demeanour. Their loyalty to Indian medicine is more often motivated by necessity than by any real understanding or appreciation of the spirit of that system.



The Ayurvedic physicians during the early stages of introduction of European medicine were so disorganised and apathetic that the Governing Body of the National Ayurvedic College (Calcutta) had resolve in 1925 (March 14) that āconsidering the present state of Ayurvedic, this Council is of opinion that all kavirajas should leave aside all personal and sectarian interests and devote their energies for the uplift of Ayurvedaā.

The present educational pattern of Indian medicine which has evolved rather haphazardly is like wise a creature of thoughtless imitation, and has mostly been successful in producing medical graduates whose links with the traditional India medicine are but feeble and desultory. An example may explain The Ayurvedic enthusiasts of Bengal clamoured as early as 1918 for the establishment of medical schools and colleges for Ayurveda. Till then, all over the country medicine was learnt by the student directly from a competent physician in the old gurukula style. Collection of herbs, preparation of drugs, diagnosis of ailments, prescriptions of medicine, and administration of medical operations were learnt by the student who lived with his teacher and studied the texts in the practical context. In Bengal such institutions were known as 'tols', and the medium of instruction in them was mostly Sanskrit.

The presiding physicians ('kavirajas' as they were called) suddenly discovered inadequacies in the old system of education and began to dream about their 'tols' becoming schools. Some physicians closed down their ātolsâ and started 'schools' with a small dispensary



attached to them. Such 'schools' were collective enterprises, with several physicians coming together to run them. Medicine was taught in these schools in Bengali, and the study of traditional texts became secondary. More prosperous of these schools introduced advanced courses, and included Physics and Chemistry as subjects of study; and these were styled colleges, with inpatient and outpatient hospitals attached to them.

When, owing to the untiring efforts of Ayurvedic luminaries like Gananath Sen, the Government of Bengal condescended in 1937 to establish a General Council and State Faculty of Ayurvedic Medicine, four colleges, three schools and twelve 'tols' were recognized as suitable educational institutions for indigenous medicine. While the College could award the diploma (*Vaidya siromani*), the School could offer a lesser certificate (*Vaidyabhushana*), and the 'tol' a mere license (*Vaidyasastri*). The examination at the College level was in English, at the School level in Bengali and at the 'tol' level in Sanskrit. There was thus a gradation of felt superiority woven into the system.

Needless to add that the Colleges which were patterned more after the Kar Medical College (which taught European medicine) than after the old *âtolsâ* became more popular and the 'tols' gradually had little alternative but to disappear; the schools tended to become inferior versions of Colleges. In fact, the Chairman of the First Ayurvedic Committee that was formed in 1921 was the Principal of

the Kar Medical College (Dr. B. N. Banerjee); and the Secretary was an army surgeon (Col. Sir Ramnath Chopra). The Ayrvedic physicians had to seek the help and secure the sympathy of doctors of the Western system. In fact, the Committee appointed in 1833 to revise medical education in Bengal under the Chairmanship of Surgeon J. Grant included only one Indian (Ramcomal Sen), and he was not an Ayurvedic physician!

Or take the case of Madras. The government appointed in 1921 a commission under the Chairmanship of Sir Mohammed Usman to report on how indigenous medicine could be recognized and encouraged. In 1924, the Indian, Medical School and Hospital were established. In the training programme that was instituted here, two years had to be spent on learning about Western medicine ! and among the 'natives' who pleaded for the encouragement of Ayurveda, the two most prominent (Col. G. Srinivasa Murti and Dr. Lakshmipati) were physicians trained in the Western system.

Medical Colleges meant to train Indians in Western medicine had been started in Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and Lahore as early as 1857, and were being manned mainly by Englishmen. The Calcutta University Senate had thirty eight members of whom only six were Indians, the Bombay University had twenty-nine of whom five were Indians; and the Madras University forty members of whom only three were Indians. Medical Colleges were managed by the Universities. One may easily imagine the pattern of medical education that provided the model in the country.

It is interesting that the Calcutta University Commission (1926) made the observation: "There is an obvious and promising desire at the present moment among the numerous adherents of these (indigenous) systems of closer touch with modern scientific methods. In time, no doubt, they will be able to make available for the practitioners of Western medicine, the traditional knowledge which is of real value and will reject, as Western medicine continually rejects, those theories which are mere survivals, and cannot stand the test of experiments. The distinction between Indian and Western systems of medicine will then disappear".

There were educational institutions to teach Ayurveda in almost all areas of the country as early as 1922, but they were all private enterprises or collective efforts of public-spirited men. The Chennapuri Ayurveda Kalasala of Madras, Praphu Ram Ayurvedic College of Bombay, Ayurveda Vidyapitha of Rishikula (Hardwar), Kalikamblewala Ayurvedic College of Rishikesh, Lalit Hari Ayurveda College of Pilighit, Kangri Gurukul Ayurvedic College, Ayurvedic and Yunani Tibbi College of Delhi, Ayurvedic Colleges of Jagannathpur and Muzzafarpur (Bihar), Ashtanga Ayurvedalaya., Vaidya-Sastra-Pitha and Govinda-Sundari Ayurveda Vidyalaya of Calcutta, and Lanka Ayurveda Medical College in Jaffna (Ceylon) were outstanding examples. The 'native' states also had Ayurvedic schools which claimed royal patronage: Jaipur, Gwalior, Alwar, Mysore Patiala, Travancore, Baroda, Gondal, and Bharatpur. But the institutions uniformly failed to propogate or revitalize the Moribund indigenous medicine.



Karnataka provides a more interesting illustration indigenous medicine was in a state of excellent preserve in the erstwhile princely state of Mysore, during the rule of the early rulers (Wodeyars). But during the inter-regnum of Hyderali and Tipu Sultan (1761-1799) it suffered a setback, and lost the royal patronage to the rival Yunani system. Krishnaraja Wodeyar III ascended the throne in 1799, thanks to the courtesy of the British army which killed Tipu Sultan in the battle at Srirangapatna. The King had an additional reason to be grateful to the British benefactors, for during the epidemic of 1806 the intended bride of the King was 'saved' by vaccination which was done at the instance of the Resident Col. Wilks. Lord William Bentinck, the Governor of Madras, proclaimed that this event of royal vaccination "to all persons" in India as interesting and illustration of the safety with which that practice may be extended.

The royal family of Mysore was thus committed to the advance of Western medical practices, although the King was personally a pious patron of traditional culture, and was favorably disposed towards Ayurveda. In 1832 was established the Palace Dispensary' where the drugs of Western medicine were dispensed to the people of the city. The previous year, the King had 'agreed' to the mandate of Lord William Bentinck to "transfer the entire administration of the country into the hands of the British officers." During the rule of the Commission (1831-1881), the King pursued his literary interests and harmless religious devotions; policy matters were beyond his reach.



When around 1880, the Rendition was effected, the young prince Chamaraja Wodeyar was under the tutelage and general guidance of Lieut. Col. G. Haines. When the prince was installed on the throne in 1880 nineteen hospitals of the Western type were established in the State to mark the occasion. During the prince's rather short reign of thirteen years, the number of hospitals rose to one hundred and sixteen.

Not that the King neglected the old custom of having some Ayurvedic physicians in his Court, but these physicians had little chance of testing their skill on the royal household. The *áDurbar Physician* was not drawn from this group. The annals of the royal family mentions some well-known Ayurvedic physicians in the city of Mysore during this time, but they do not number more than five or six. And the royal recognition of their merit depended more on their literary abilities than on their medical competence !

It is interesting that one of them, Pandita Bhima Rao (who has been officially described as 'Physician to the Maharaja' but who appears to have had no occasion to function as such) complained to the British Government in 1880 about the decay of the old Hindu science of medicine and the evil consequence arising from quack practices and recommended that "none should be allowed to practice until he has passed a certain examination in native medicine". It is obvious that the physician, who had himself passed no such examination, was influenced by the European practice of medical

examinations, diplomas, certificates and registrations that had already come to stay here.

However, the Secretary to the Government, T.A Heines, replied on April 13, 1880 that "the Government, were unable to take the steps he proposes." That is to say, the Government were not interested in checking the decay of the Indian system of medicine, or in discouraging quackery. They expected a natural death for that system and its eventual disappearance from popular favour. That was their well-trying policy concerning many issues in the country.

Probably it was at the insistence and agitation of this Bhima Rao, who appears to have been a forceful personality, if also eager to fight, that the Maharaja agreed to include Ayurveda as a subject to be taught in the Sanskrit College that he had founded in 1866. Another physician, who was an 'ornament' to the royal court, Agaram puttaswami Sastri (who incidentally was an eminent physician also) began teaching the traditional texts in Ayurveda to students in the Sanskrit College in 1894.

The teaching of Ayurveda as an independent discipline had to wait for years until a building for the purpose was got constructed in 1930 by the voluntary and handsome donation of another eminent physician of those days, Lakshmanacharya of the Gundlu-Pandit family. It is to be noted that the Government took care not to take the initiative in the matter. It is also to be noted that the Ayurvedic

education was, under Government dispensation, the concern of the Muzari department (the department that managed the temples and Charitable institutions in the State) until 1950! And when the School of Indian Medicine in Mysore became a college, the Government thought it proper that a physician trained in Western medicine should head it, irrespective of his acquaintance with, or even interest in, Ayurveda.

The fortunes of Indigenous medicine are to some extent linked up with the general medical policy of the prevailing administration. The present position of Ayurveda is due not only to the survival in spirit of old policies of the Mughal emperors, their vassals in different parts of the country, the British successors of the Mughal emperors, and their subordinates in the States, but to the continuation of the British policy by the national governments that came to power after independence. There has been little evidence of enthusiasm to actively encourage Indian, medicine in a big way. The commitment to modern medicine, like the commitment to heavy industries, has been persistent and deep-seated.

And justifiably so, for the people themselves do not seem to clamour for it. In a democratic set-up, it is the cry of the populace that is heard. The attitudes of the democratic governments that paved the way for a political shake-up. The old attitudes die hard. The urban folk have learnt to rely on Western medicine almost to the



total exclusion of indigenous medicine. The situation is largely due to the ineffectual practice of indigenous medicine itself, which may in turn be due to the defective educational patterns that prevail in the field of indigenous medicine as well as to the altered values of life in the present century.

However, it is remarkable that indigenous methods of diagnosis and cure have managed to survive in the rural context all over the country, although the cult of modern medicine is gradually but surely making a headway even there. Competent Ayurvedic and Yunani physicians can still be found scattered in villages. But their tribe will soon become extinct, unable to fight the rush of urban fashion. Among the evils of increased urbanization is to be counted the diluted, truncated and thoroughly inadequate medical service (modern) that is being doled out in villages. But the traditional medical practitioner has little scope to mobilize his lot even in this situation. He is rather low in the social ladder.

During this long period of cultivated neglect, much of the medical literature in India, both in Sanskrit and in the regional languages, have been lost irretrievably. The available references suggest that about five hundred years ago there were more than three thousand medical works available, comprehending digests, lexicons, glossaries, repertories and practitioners guides. Physicians to kings and wealthy noblemen used to prepare digest and manuals. Even Albrecht



Weber notice that the number of medical works and authors in Sanskrit was extraordinarily large (*History of Indian Literature*, p. 269). Now we can have access not even to about three hundred of them in all !

It is curious that this loss of relevant literature has gone in our country from very early times. Even in the distant past there were several medical traditions in India, each having its core-texts, besides those of Charaka, Sushruta, and Bhela that have come down to us (the last in fragments). But the traditions disappeared, and along with them the texts have got lost, with the result that we are now left with a remarkably meagre core-literature. The reason for this loss is not clear. It is possible that the medical traditions that have disappeared were not as practical, comprehensive and adaptable as the ones that survived. It is unfortunate that the systems that have somehow survived have not survived in their entirety. There are gaps in the two medical traditions (the therapeutic and the surgical) that have come down to us, and the gaps are both historical and conceptual. It would be difficult, therefore, to reconstruct the total context in which the present mutilated medical texts acquire significance.

With the extant texts as aids, it is impossible to have a vision of the medical world in which Charaka and Sushruta lived and worked, wrote and practised. But the texts (especially Charak-Samhita) do

suggest that there were frequent medical discussions all over the country, conferences and seminars in which eminent men of medicine participated. Discussions centered not only around diseases and drugs, but around the philosophical imports and implications which constituted the frame of reference for human life needing medical relief and reinforcement.

It is this frame of reference that needs to be recovered. For unless we appreciate that this frame of reference related to the totality of human experiences, including health, hygiene, preventive medicine, public health, the actual ailments and the intended measures of relief, the textual fragments that have survived would hardly seem relevant or meaningful. To derive an insight into the structure of this central frame of reference would be the main problem of Indian medicine today.

It is unfortunate that during the centuries that have goneby, the practitioners of Indian medicine have largely tended to move away from this central frame of reference. They have projected Ayurveda as a mere matter of diagnosis and description of diseases, preparation, classification and prescription of drugs, and not as a testment of life and health (which is the actual meaning of the Sanskrit word). They have increasingly ignored even the core texts and have come to depend more and more on simplified digests, repertories and manuals prepared in recent years. Their acquaintance now even with this secondary literature is meagre and non-interpretative. The textual

tradition and the present day practitioners seem to be moving apart with increasing speed !

Indian medicine is a conceptual system. It has a philosophy that bind the practice with theory, that relates ailment to constitution, and that integrates human health with nature around. It deals with life in all its aspects: bodily, mental and spiritual. And the three aspects are sought to be integrated in a total perspective. That is why Ayurveda was, in the old curriculum, studied along with philosophical systems and religious disciplines. Ayurveda is not so much concerned with the sick as preventing the healthy from falling sick. It is not generally recognized that the most valid aspects of Ayurveda are Svasta-vrtta, dina- charya, ritu-charya, and pathya. Ayurveda is more than a medical system; it is a guide to good and safe living. That is why we have as áfringe medicineâ nature-cure and yoga, necessarily associated with Ayurveda. The three constitute one complex.

When this integrated approach weakened, or was lost sight of, Indian medicine naturally withered. By the time Indian medicine began to make an impact on neighbouring countries during the early centuries of this era, this approach was already fading: it was fast becoming a collection of recipes and therapeutic tit-bits. The vision of total health had already become dim. And later, under the Mughal and the British rule, it almost completely disappeared. Ayurveda, left entirely to the mercy of petty practitioners, lacking the vigour of vision contained in the early texts, became little more than a small



stack of drugs meant for common illnesses. The strength of the system had gone, and naturally it could not survive the unequal pressure from western medicine, that had an additional advantage of being associated with the ruling, and therefore enlightened, community.

A mood of helpless or enthusiastic acceptance of the new system of medicine has been created in the public mind. And there was a ready and willing acceptance of the new system by the more sophisticated and better educated classes who were inclined to regard Indian as barbaric and irrelevant to the present. And the new system was essentially curative and gave quick results. Indian medicine, on the contrary was basically preventive, and sought to treat the individual when he fell ill in his total context rather than his specific ailment. In the days of its degeneration this could hardly be satisfactorily or quickly accomplished. Ailing people preferred quick cures to changing their life-styles! Therefore, what little of Ayurveda could survive, had to be smart with its drugs and treatment-procedures (like panchakarma). Imitating modern medicine in these matters was like straw to the sinking man. And assimilation not only of modern methods of diagnosis and examination but even drugs and treatment techniques of modern medicine is being avidly attempted by the ambitious Ayurvedic practitioners.

There has been a clamour in some quarters for 'intergated medicine' which in effect is an incoherent concoction of diluted modern and distorted Ayurvedic ideas. This is tantamount to a



confession that Ayurveda is neither comprehensive nor adequate; and it can stand

only when supported by modern medicine. The bogey of emergency is raised, and Ayurveda is made to appear impotent to handle the situation. The truth, is that Ayurveda is a completely self-contained and comprehensively self-sufficient structure founded upon a conceptual system. It is itself an integrated approach. And its alliance with modern medicine (which conspicuously lacks systemic unity or an integrated thought structure) should in fact benefit the latter.

However, for this to happen the Indian medicine must first recover its spirit and this is the urgent task to which our Ayurvedic enthusiasts must apply themselves.

