

A PROJECT ON BHARATIYA-SAMSKRITI-SARVASA-KOSHA



॥ नमस्ते जगदीश्वर ॥

Kalpatharu Research Academy Publication

Chief Editor : DAIVAJNA K.N. SOMAYAJI

DARŚANODAYA

EARLY INDIAN THOUGHT



By

S.K. RAMACHANDRA RAO

KALPATHARU RESEARCH ACADEMY

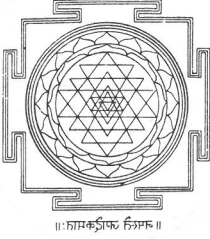
(A DIVISION OF SRI SRINGERI SHARADA PEETHAM)

NO. 1, SHANKARMUTT, SHANKARAPURAM, BANGALORE - 560 004



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PREFACE

Kalpatharu Research Academy, which was established in 1981, has made a mark in the world of Indological studies by Research & Publishing more than Seventy books of lasting value for students and scholars in the field. These Publications pertain to the traditional wisdom of Veda and Agama. Besides, an independent series of volumes on Rgveda-Darsana (four volumes of which have already been brought out), several volumes under the broad title Bharatiya-Sanskriti-Sarvasva-Kosha are also being prepared, some of them having already appeared. The Academy has reason to be gratified, for all these books are being very well received.

The present volume deals with the origin of Indian thought in the Upanishads. It has been given the title Darsanodaya, for it gives an account of how philosophical systems in India developed. This is a valuable contribution to the field of Indian Philosophy. The Academy is grateful to Vidyalkara, Sastra-Chudamani, Sangita-Kalarathna, Prof. S.K. Ramachandra Rao for having kindly prepared this volume, as he has done the other volumes of the Academy. His help to the Academy has been invaluable.

We are beholden to the great and saintly personality of Sri Sri Sri Bharati-Tirtha-Mahaswamiji, the Jagadguru of Sri Sringeri Sharada Peetham and the Chief Patron of the Academy. His blessings have been our good fortune and treasure. We are also grateful to Sri V.R. Gowrishankar, the Administrator of Sri Sringeri Sarada Peetham and Chairman of Kalpatharu Research Academy, for his constant interest in our work.

We are deeply indebted to the authorities of the Ministry of Human Resources Development, Govt. of India, for their generous financial assistance. We also thank the Govt. of Karnataka for their support in our endeavor.

We thank the Omkar Offset Printers, Bangalore, for producing this volume neatly and expeditiously, as they have done the other publications of the Academy.

Bangalore
Chandramana Ugadi
18th March 1999

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 Patashalas in Guru-Kula system.
- * Running of Oriental Libraries (Prachya-Granthalaya).
- * Collection, Preservation and Publication of Old Manuscripts.

INTRODUCTION

The present book deals with the early philosophical speculations in the Indian subcontinent. The early thought-structure is founded on the Upanishads; and it developed in the earliest of the Indian systems of philosophy, Samkhya and Yoga, which were also offshoots of the Upanishads. The metaphysical and psychological orientations of the Upanishads on the basis of spiritual absorption and experience have been the focus of attention in this book. The medicinal philosophy as crystallized in Ayurveda has emerged from the Samkhya-Yoga complex. A detailed account of this early line of thought has also been included here.

The Author is indebted to Shri Daivajna K.N. Somayaji, Director of the Kalpatharu Research Academy, Bangalore for having persuaded me to prepare this book for publication by the said Academy. He acknowledges the assistance willingly given by the Printers of the Book. He is also grateful to the Chief Patron of the Academy and the Head of Sri Sarada Peetham, Sri Sri Sri Bharati-Tirtha Maha Swamiji and to the Chairman of the Academy, Shri V.R. Gowrishankar, (Administrator of Sri Sringeri Sarada Peetham).

S.K. RAMACHANDRA RAO

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नमस्ते जगदेक मातः
चतुर्भुजे चन्द्रकलावतंसे
कुचोन्नते कुङ्कुमरागशोणे ।
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥



H.H. Sri Sri BHARATI THEERTA MAHASWAMIJI

HUMBLE DEDICATION TO OUR CHIEF PATRON

भारतीकरुणापात्रं
भारतीपदभूषणम् ।
भारतीपदमारूढं



॥ श्री शृङ्गेरी श्रीजगद्गुरुमहासंस्थानम् ॥

श्रीमत्परमहंसपरिव्राजकाचार्यवर्य पदवाक्यप्रमाणपारावारपारीण
यमनियमासनप्रणायामप्रत्याहारधारणाध्यानसमाध्यष्टाङ्गयोगानुष्ठाननिष्ठ
तपश्चक्रवर्त्यनाद्यविच्छिन्न श्रीशङ्कराचार्यगुरुपरम्पराप्राप्त षड्दर्शनस्थापनाचार्य
व्याख्यानसिंहासनाधीश्वर सकलनिगमागमसारहृदय सांख्यद्रव्यप्रतिपादक वैदिकमार्गप्रवर्तक
सर्वतन्त्रस्वतन्त्रादिराजधानी विद्यानगरमहाराजधानी कर्णाटकसिंहासनप्रतिष्ठापनाचार्य
श्रीमद्राजाधिराजगुरुभूमण्डलाचार्य ऋष्यशृङ्गपुरवराधीश्वर तुङ्गभद्रातीरवासि
श्रीमद्विद्याशङ्करपादपदाराधक श्रीजगद्गुरु श्रीमदभिनवविद्यातीर्थस्वामिगुरुकरकमलसञ्जात

॥ श्री जगद्गुरु शृङ्गेरी श्रीमद्भारतीतीर्थमहास्वामिभिः ॥

अस्मदत्यन्तप्रियशिष्य श्री नरसिंह सोमयाजि विषये नारायणस्मरणपूर्वकं विरचिता
आशिषस्समुल्लसन्तु ।

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

शृङ्गगिरि जगद्गुरु महासंस्थाने पारम्परिकीं भक्तिमास्थितवतो भवतो मनसि संस्थामेनां शृङ्गगिरि 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 इतोधिक श्रेयः परम्पराभिः समभिवर्धतामिति चाशास्महे ।

शृङ्गगिरिः

ईश्वर भाद्रपदशुद्धदशमी भार्गववासरः

12.9.1997

इति नारायणस्मरणम्

CHAPTER ONE

SĀṂKHYA-YOGA



Sage Kapila - (Relief in Rock, Isurumuniya-vihāra, Sri-lanka)

It is hard to identify the period when thought in this country began to be systematised. The Vedas (about 8,000 B.C.) already betray this tendency. But the Upanishads which are the concluding portions of the Vedic corpus, represent conclusions arrived at in conferences following

the Vedic tradition. There were, however, non-conformists and protestants even during the earliest of periods, even among the Vedic philosophers themselves. And there were thinkers and leaders who were altogether outside the Vedic fold, and who belonged probably to a pre-

Vedic, and pre-historical, tradition. These were collectively designated as 'Vrātyas,' today an expression of uncertain meaning. But included in this group were magicians, medicine-men, physicians, shamans, mystics, materialists, mendicants, wandering madmen, fire-eaters, nomadic tribes, poison-swallowers, libidinous pleasure-seekers as well as austere ascetics.

Such groups ('vrātas') are frequently mentioned even in the Rgvedic corpus (e.g. 3,26,6; 5,53,11; 5,75,9; 9,14,2 where five groups are collectively designated as 'pañcha-vrāta', and 10,34,12). *Atharva-Veda* (15th Kāṇḍa) has an entire hymn known as 'vrātya-sūkta'. *Tāṇḍya-* and *Jaiminīya-brāhmaṇas* (belonging to *Sāma-veda*) describe a sacrifice called Vrātya-stoma; the

latter text (2,222) describes the Vrātya ascetics as roaming about, beside themselves and intoxicated ('muhyantīva vā ete ye vrātyām dhāvayanti'), while the former text (24,18) mentions a group of 'divine' vrātyas ('daivā vai vrātyāh'). They seem to have been devotees or ascetics living under strange religious vows (vrata).

Hauer sought to identify them with sāmkhya-yoga ascetics; He describes them as wild ecstasies and ancestors of the yogins. Roth and Böhlingk conjecture that they were the roving bands, vagrants and tribals who were nomadic (like Bhīllas, Pulindas and Śabarās). According to Carpentier, they were the forerunners of the Śaiva devotees. D.R. Bhandarkar, who agrees with this

view, places them in ancient Magadha, and guesses that they emigrated from Śaka-dvīpa. *Vishṇu-purāṇa* (2,4, 69-70) says:

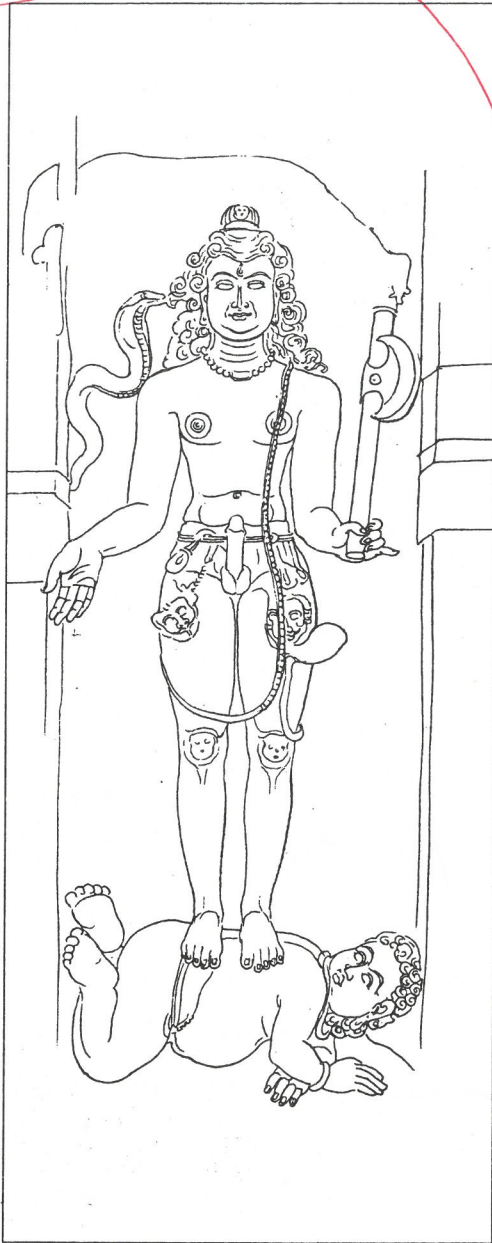
मगाश्च मागधाश्चैव मानसा मन्दगास्तथा ।
मगा ब्राह्मणभूयिष्ठा मागधाः क्षत्रियास्तु ते ॥

They were called, according to this source, 'magas'. They were distinguished by their peculiar outfit consisting of a black turban on the head ('kṛshṇam ushṇīṣham dhārayanti'), two round ornaments for the ears (pravartau), a jewel in the neck (maṇi), sandals for the feet (upānahau), two deer-skins tied together for garment (dvi-samhitānyajināni) and so on. They did not engage themselves in agriculture (na kṛshim) or in trade (na vāṇijyam); nor did they attach

importance to celibacy ('na hi brahma-charyam charanti') or to initiations (adīkshitāh). They behaved as if they had become possessed (gandharva-grhītāh) or driven mad. They wore their hair long, and hence were known as 'keśis' (cf. Keśi-sūkta in *Rgveda*, 10,13,6). In *Vājasaneyi-samhitā*, they are referred to as physicians and as guardians of divine truth. They had their peculiar seats (āsandi). It is interesting that Śiva-Rudra is described as 'eka-vrātya'.

The Vrātya comprehends a multiplicity of local traditions and regional cults that resisted, or were more or less unaffected by, the Vedic impact. Some of them were monstrous and primitive, violent and erotic, and others sophisticated and refined, evolved and austere. The

the necessity of



Eka-Vrātya

great tradition known as the Tantra, with its almost infinite ramifications all over the country, is a survival of this Vrātya culture. Although it came to be associated rather closely with the Vedic tradition in course of time, it was recognised widely and consistently as non-Vedic, if not in fact as anti-Vedic. The Tāntric tradition must have been so widely spread and so deeply rooted that the new culture could not brush it aside, much less wipe it out; the co-existence prompted not only recognition but assimilation.

It would appear that while Vrātya was the folk nomenclature, Tantra was the cult-word. Tantra connoted not only a characteristic way of thinking and knowing, but signified a set of practices and

exercises. There are indications that this religious philosophy, broad-based and multi-faceted, was current when the Upanishads were being composed, perhaps in a different, region but within the zone of contact.

There has been much speculation as to who the Vrātyas were. J.H. Hauer has hazarded a guess that the Vrātyas were the fore-runners of the latter-day yogis. Gough thought that Yoga was derived from the 'ecstatic rites of savages.' S.K. Belvalkar and R. D. Ranade, who agreed with him, described these savages as 'wandering swarms of ascetics'. These were no doubt clever conjectures, and although convincing evidence came much later and from other sources, they were responsible for the general belief that the origins

of the Yoga system, far from being bound with Patañjali (about 200 B.C), were lost in remote antiquity, stretching anterior to the Vedic period. Patañjali, as is well known, was only an editor and a redactor, not the founder of the system (even according to his own admission and his commentators).

The Yoga that we are acquainted with today, that is to say the Yoga that was accepted and sanctified by the Vedic tradition, is clearly a late arrival, a modification of the earlier one, with a strong theistic bias. *Vyāsa-bhāshya* on Patañjali's *Sūtras* (about 400 A.D.) it was that gave the Yoga the present outlook and attitude. Vāchaspati, Vijñāna-bhikshu and Bhoja followed his lead and made Yoga acceptable

to the Vedānta. This is a development which began around the tenth century and reached its completion in the sixteenth century i.e., the period of Vijñāna-bhikṣu, the author of *Yoga-vārttika*, which fully reconciled the Yoga ideology with the Vedāntic standpoint. The process took several centuries and had a background of several thousands of years, during which period there was a shift even of the major premises with a view to achieving conformity (however artificial) with the Vedic tradition.

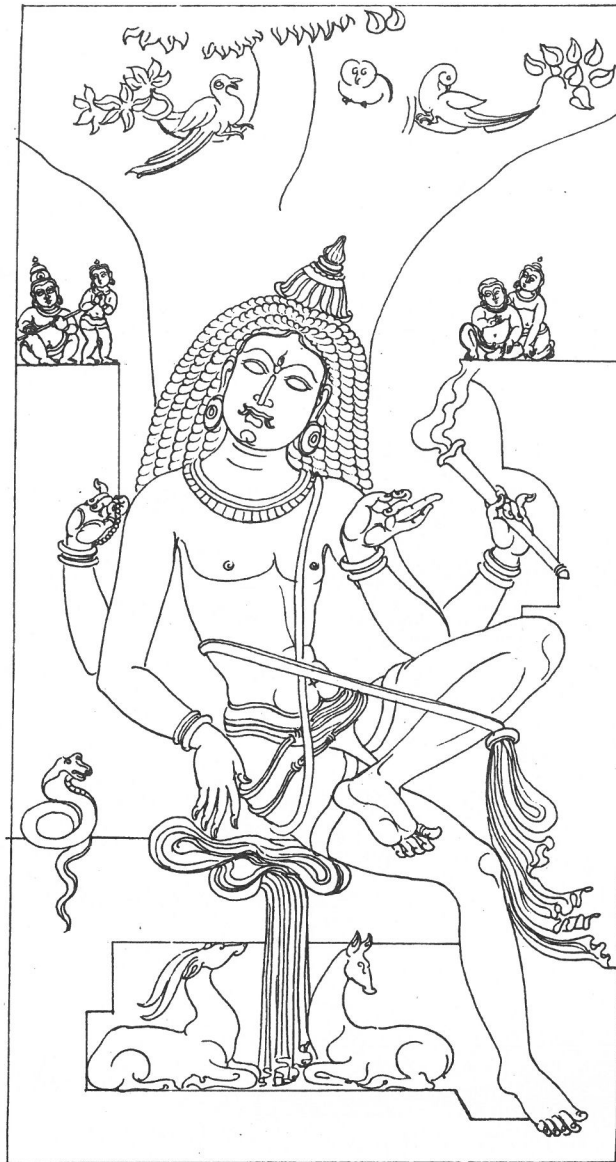
If Yoga in its early phase represented the ascetic and ecstatic practices of the Vrātyas, its theoretical groundwork was supplied by the Sāṃkhya. Parallel to the transformation of Yoga from primitive, atheistic, heterodox

practices to the sophisticated, theistic orthodox system, was the development of the original materialistic Sāṃkhya of the *Mahābhārata* and *Bhagavad-Gītā*. Īśvara-kṛṣṇa's Sāṃkhya (about 200 A.D.) marked a significant stage in the systematisation of this viewpoint, even as Patañjali's Yoga was in the systematisation of Yoga. The Sāṃkhya that the Vedic tradition found somewhat acceptable (however unwillingly) is the work of Īśvara-kṛṣṇa; but the unknown author of *Kapila-sūtras* (about 1400 A.D.) and his commentators Aniruddha (15th century) and Vijñāna-bhikṣu (16th century) worked out fully its reconciliation with Vedānta, involving a theistic orientation.

Both Sāṃkhya and Yoga have been regarded since the sixteenth century as orthodox (*āstika*) systems, that is to say systems within the Vedic tradition, in contradistinction to the Lokāyata or Chārvāka, Jainism and Buddhism which were dubbed as heterodox (*nāstika*) systems. But if one considers the fervour with which the *Brahma-sūtra* (about second century B.C.) and the great commentators like Śaṃkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva attack Sāṃkhya, and the suspicion with which Śaṃkara looks upon Yoga, the acceptance of Sāṃkhya and Yoga within the orthodox fold seems rather strained, and was but with reservations. Even if the two systems were not hostile to the Vedic tradition (*veda-viruddha*, as Śaṃkara makes out in the case of Sāṃkhya), they

were at least non-Vedic in their origin and early development. They were probably rooted in the Vṛātya-Tantra culture of the pre-Vedic period.

The relation of Sāṃkhya-Yoga to the two other heterodox systems, Buddhism and Jainism, is too obvious to be ignored, and too intimate to be regarded as accidental. One may not agree with Emilé Senart's contention that Buddhism is a branch of Yoga; but the Buddha is certainly a Yogi-type, and his teachings have heavily incorporated the old Yoga particulars of askesis, control, restraint, release and freedom. Early Buddhism preserved the yogi-ideal of 'nirvāṇa'. In fact, the expression Yoga is really an equivalent of 'samādhi' (from the root 'yuj samādhau', absorption,



Yogi - Ideal

undifferentiated consciousness) which is described as 'soullessness' (*nirātmakatvam*), a detail which received great consideration in Buddhist philosophy. Likewise, Sāṃkhya entered into Buddhism in a significant way; in fact, the teacher of Gotama the Buddha, Ārāḍa-Kālāma, was a Sāṃkhyan master.

And Jainism based its theory almost entirely on the Sāṃkhya, and practice on the Yoga. The Sāṃkhya-Yoga ideal of 'isolation' (*kaivalya*) was destined to play an important role in Jaina thought. It was a variant of 'cessation' (*nirvāṇa*) or 'absolute inner quiet' (*moksha*), terms signifying alike the withdrawal of the individual spirit from all hindrance and extraneous matter. The Sāṃkhya dualism, pluralism and realism

provided the groundwork for Jaina ideology; and, in the Jaina thought, the goal is to be achieved by a severe programme of askesis and self-torture, more so than in later Yoga and early Buddhism.

In the historical perspective Sāṃkhya-Yoga and Jainism-Buddhism were derived from a common nucleus that was probably outside the Vedic tradition, at any rate in its early phase. It does not, however, mean that these ways of thinking developed entirely independent of the Vedic tradition. No; there was in fact a series of successful contacts between the Upanishads and these systems. The Sāṃkhya and Yoga ideas can be discovered in the Upanishads, and the Upanishadic impact can be seen

on Buddhism and Jainism. While there is some truth in the argument of Max-Müller and Garbe that the Sāṃkhya system emerged as a reaction against the monistic idealism of the Upanishads, it is possible, as Anima Sen Gupta has shown¹, to trace the beginnings of the classical system in the Upanishads themselves. Jennings has demonstrated that Buddhist thought is heavily indebted to the Upanishads.

In fact, we have it on the authority of no other person than Kumārila-bhaṭṭa (about 620 A.D) that the Buddhist schools were all authoritative, inasmuch as they were derived from the Upanishads (*Tantra-vārtika*)

विज्ञानमात्रक्षणभङ्गनैरात्मादिवादानामपि
उपनिषद्प्रभवत्वं विषयेष्वात्यन्तिकं रागं
निवर्तयितुं इत्युपपन्नं सर्वेषां प्रामाण्यम् ॥

The Upanishads, in fact, may be regarded as the most productive and highly significant period in the Vedic tradition; it provided the inspiration for all systems of thought in the country, orthodox or heterodox. But the systems as they were structured in course of time were vastly different from their beginnings. And the beginnings of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga and Jainism-Buddhism were different from what they came to be as a result of reconstructions, redactions and systematisation. The stimulus for systematisation, along with the direction, perhaps came from the Upanishadic phase of the Vedic tradition.

The nucleus which in course of time developed as Sāṃkhya-Yoga and Buddhism-Jainism was

distinguished by an absolute reliance on human effort. Man is the focal interest; his striving is what matters, and the goal of his striving is within the human framework. Gods were kept out, and grace was dispensed with. The four great ways of thinking that we are concerned with here either rejected or minimised the involvement of supernatural principles; they were uncompromisingly realistic and pragmatic. Those who were committed to these ways concerned themselves with elimination, reduction, tranquillity, withdrawal, isolation, release from distractions and hindrances.

The basic ingredients of this nucleus were of course the Sāṃkhya and Yoga. There is hardly any doubt

that the two had a joint career from the earliest of times, and even when the two were independently systematised, they retained their close relationship. Even in a late compendium like Mādhava's *Sarva-darśana-saṅgraha*, Yoga is described as a Sāṃkhya, 'seśvara-sāṃkhya' or 'pātañjala-sāṃkhya'.² In terms of chronology, it is probable that Sāṃkhya as a system was older than Yoga as a discipline, and that is why it is frequently asserted that the Yoga was directly indebted to the Sāṃkhya for its theoretical framework. But Yoga as askesis must indeed be of much greater antiquity, as it was based on the most primitive urges and inclinations.

It is hard indeed to determine the exact period or circumstance of

this interdependence. Even the *Mahābhārata* contents itself by describing them as 'the immemorial twins' (*sanātane dve*). The Yoga ideal of isolation or emancipation as a human achievement by human effort must have prompted the exploration into human nature, the understanding of its dimensions and potentialities, and the appreciation of its limitations. It is in this context that understanding or knowledge (*jñāna*, gnosis) becomes essential for the work of askesis (*karma*). While Yoga concerned itself with the latter, Sāṃkhya sought to specialise in the former. It was inevitable thus that the two systems had to function as twins, as equally valid, and as interdependent.

The expression 'tantra', applied to Sāṃkhya as well as to Yoga, in

fact comprehends both the aspects: knowledge and askesis. The image of threads being mounted on the loom, resulting in uninterrupted weaving, was in the background of this expression. The derivative meaning of the word 'tantra' stands for 'extension', 'continuity', 'propagation', ('*tan vistāre*') or more simply 'knowledge'. But it also signifies an esoteric under-current of magical rites and practices. It is no accident that an early Sāṃkhya text, now however lost, was called *Śashṭhi-tantra*; and Śaṃkara explicitly mentions that Sāṃkhya is called a 'tantra' (*tantrākhyā*).³ It is well-known that Yoga went usually by the name of 'Pātañjala-tantra'. The Tāntric involvement of the feminine aspect was indeed responsible for the 'pradhāna-vāda'

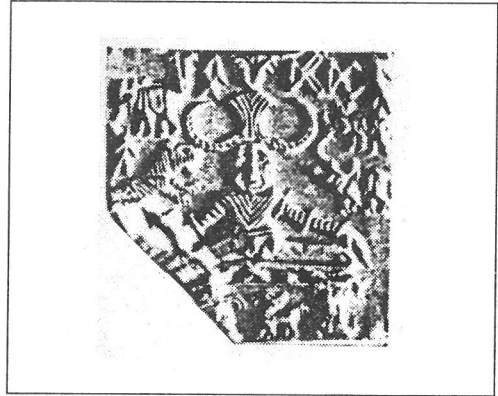


Tantra-Yogi

(doctrine of the productive Mother Nature) of the Sāṃkhya, and the intriguingly helpless rôle played by the male *purusha* in it. Again, the preoccupation of the 'tantra' with human constitution, and especially the body, is to be seen in the Yoga. Sāṃkhya-Yoga thus continued the Tāntric interest in understanding human nature, and in effecting improvements in it.

The scene for consistent practical and therapeutic speculations in India was set when, from the nucleus of amorphous Tāntric perceptions and practices, Sāṃkhya and Yoga emerged as a theory-practice complex, with little theistic preoccupation and religious involvement. The Upanishads were infected with this interest; and when

this happened, it marked a significant stage in the development of the Vedic tradition.



THE SĀMKHYA IDEOLOGY

It is hard at this point of time to identify the presuppositions of the early Tāntric cults. Probably, the usual involvements of magic, animism, shamanism agricultural rituals, fertility cults, emphasis on the feminine, worship of the mother-goddess figures, and possession-



intoxication complex were all there. R. P. Chanda, J. Marshall and K. N. Sastri have dis-covered some of these involvements in the Indus Valley finds. It is possible to read these elements in Rgvedic references to the religion prevailing among the masses in those days. *Atharva-veda* is especially full of descriptive material concerning regional and tribal beliefs and practices answering to Tāntric ideology. The mediaeval Tāntric cults in the eastern regions of India and the Himālayan ranges probably represent a continuation of the older tāntric cults. Many of the elements of Tāntricism have survived to this day in the rural and tribal religions of the land. But the Tantra as systematised and as contained in the classical and the so-called Buddhist Tāntric texts cannot be

credited with great antiquity; it bears a clear impact of Vadāntic ideas. Many of the cults were so corrupt and so brimming with antinomian ideas that no serious philosophical system would care to own them; they survived merely as regional perversities.

The characteristic features of the Tāntric tradition, however, is its reliance on the ultimacy of the feminine principle and on the mediacy of intoxication. It is this that distinguishes this tradition from its Vedic counterpart with its heavily masculine orientation. The *Brahma-sūtra* upheld the *brahma-vāda* (or doctrine of the Spirit) in contradistinction to the *pradhāna-vāda* (or doctrine of Nature) of the Sāṃkhyan thinkers. Nature is

essentially the creative principle, it is inevitably linked up with evolutionary change (*pariṇāma*). We are reminded of the Tāntric view that the entire cosmos evolves out of the primal sounds (*mātrkā*), the sounds themselves undergoing changes to become mystic formulae (*mantra*) and mystic diagrams (*yantra*). The Vadāntic view as propounded by the *Brahma-sūtra* and as interpreted by Śaṁkara favoured the transfiguration-view (*vivarta-vāda*), and criticised the evolutionary theory of the Sāṁkhya school (*pariṇāma-vāda*). It also emphasised the rôle of *puruṣa* (the Male), which in Vadānta stood for Brahman, in bringing about the phenomenal world. Even when the Sāṁkhyans conceded the existence of theistic *puruṣa* (or rather *puruṣas*) it was

but secondary in importance (*apradhāna*).

Based on the Tāntric foundation, Sāṁkhya emerged as a strong protagonist of the materialistic, naturalistic and pluralistic viewpoints. Having these viewpoints, and not perhaps being excessively preoccupied with religious practices, it could develop easily into a psychocosmological system. And the psychological orientation formed so early in the history of Indian thought was bound to leave its clear impress on the subsequent ways of thinking. It is not unlikely that the Upanishads themselves were indebted to an extent to the proto-Sāṁkhya outlook, the crystallisation of which was in all probability contemporaneous with

the Upanishadic thought. It is undoubtedly the Sāṃkhyan orientation that inspired the early Buddhist psychocosmology and influenced the Jain speculations in this field.

It is difficult at this point of time to reconstruct the Sāṃkhya thought. There is a persistent belief that the beginnings of the Sāṃkhya system can be traced in the Upanishads themselves⁴. And attempts have been made to recover the Sāṃkhya ideology in *Kaṭha* and *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣads*. Sāṃkhya as a system, of course, became well known even in orthodox circles from the days of the *Kārikas* of Īśvara-kṛṣṇa, which according to S.N. Dasgupta were composed only around 200 A.D.⁵ Mention is made

of two ancient texts,⁶ now however no longer extant: *Māṭhara-bhāṣya* and *Ātreya-Tāntra* which were in importance only next to the celebrated *Śaṣṭhi-tantra*, a work also lost.⁷ *Charaka-saṃhitā* (earlier than 78 A.D) contains an account of Sāṃkhya, very different from the account of Sāṃkhya in Īśvara-kṛṣṇa's *Kārikā*; and Charaka continued the tradition of Ātreya-Punarvasu, probably the Ātreya of the lost *Sāṃkhya-Tāntra* mentioned above. *Ahīrbudhnya-saṃhitā*, *Mahābhārata* and *Bhagavad-Gītā* contain Sāṃkhya accounts. Several *purāṇas* including *Bhāgavata* find occasion to mention and explain the Sāṃkhya thought. These accounts are not only not identical, but contain significant variations, despite the protestations of *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*

(11. 22) to the contrary. The claim of the commentators about the unbroken continuity of the Sāṃkhya tradition is hard to maintain. The *Mahābhārata* itself mentions three distinct schools of Sāṃkhya,⁸ one postulating twenty-four categories (*tattvas*) which are all material, leaving no room for the spirit, the other enumerating twenty-five categories including the *purusha* as the spirit or conscious self, and the third listing twenty-six categories including God as supreme being, Purushottama. The last mentioned school is identified with the classical dualistic Sāṃkhya, propounded by Īśvara-kṛṣṇa and attacked by orthodoxy. The first school appears to have been the original version, materialistic and atheistic, the

ideology ascribed to Pañchaśikha and represented in *Charaka-saṃhitā*.

The Sāṃkhya tradition ascribes its first formulation to sage Kapila who communicated the doctrines to his disciple Āsuri, who in turn taught them to Pañchaśikha. Not much is known about Kapila or Āsuri. There are sūtras in the classical style ascribed to Kapila, but they are clearly of late origin. If we may judge from the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* account of Kapila's Sāṃkhya, it was theistic in orientation.⁹ There is an argument¹⁰ that Sāṃkhya was originally theistic and that it was Pañchaśikha that gave the atheistic slant to it. The argument, however, is based on accounts occurring in avowedly theistic works like

Mahābhārata, *Bhāgavata*, *Ahīrbudhnya-saṁhitā* and the *Purāṇas*. It appears more probable, as already noted, that the tradition was originally atheistic, and continued to be so during the day of *Pañchaśikha* and *Charaka*, until *Īśvara-kṛṣṇa* (200 A.D.) carved out what is known as classical *Sāṁkhya* by the introduction of a quasi-theistic element.¹¹

It has not been sufficiently appreciated that *Pañchaśikha*, who is said to have lived contemporaneously with early Buddhism, was a brilliant academician who gave *Sāṁkhya* its characteristic outlook. *Mahābhārata* (12.219) contains an account of *Pañchaśikha*'s *Sāṁkhya*.¹² *Hariharānanda-Āraṇya* has edited

and annotated the *Sāṁkhya-sūtras* of *Pañchaśikha*.¹³ One may glean from these accounts that he it was that set the scene for psychocosmological speculations in our country. It was but natural that the earliest of medical writers, *Charaka*, relied heavily on his analysis and explanations. *Āyurveda* as a practical discipline naturally profited much by adopting the *Sāṁkhya* ideology of *Pañchaśikha*. We shall consider the basic ideas of *Āyurveda* in a later section and note its indebtedness to *Sāṁkhya*.

Pañchaśikha and *Charaka* retained the relationship with the *Tāntric* tradition by subscribing to the primacy of the body-principle (*deha-tattva*). Unlike the *Lokāyatas* or the early Buddhists, they believed

in the existence of soul or self (or *person, purusha*); and they even admitted that the soul or self could occur as the transcendental self or *purusha*, uncaused and eternal, unmanifest and beyond comprehension. But more important in their system was the empirical or the phenomenal self (sometimes called *jīvātmā* or embodied self, in contradistinction to the transcendental *purusha*, called *paramātmā*). The expression *purusha* here comprehends both these aspects or rather states. And *purusha* is not a principle of consciousness, as it is in the other systems of thought. Not that Pañchaśikha and Charaka brush aside consciousness as merely an expression, or as a mere accidental occurrence; the principle plays a

very important rôle in their system. But consciousness is an emergent phenomenon, arising out of the mind-body complex that is alive; the phenomenal self merely upholds it. We shall return to this discussion a little later.

For Pañchaśikha and Charaka, human constitution is of great interest and pragmatic value, for emancipation (*apavarga*) as well as for health (*ārogya*). They recognise in man's constitution several elements, organised meaningfully and purposefully. The elements entering into this organization are technically known as 'categories' (*tattvas*). And they are counted as twenty-four, in two groups, *prakṛti* (nature, in the sense of causative factors) and *vikāras* (modifications thereof, in the



sense of effects). Included in the former are eight categories - five subtle elements, consciousness-stuff (*buddhi*), egoity (*ahamkāra*) and the unmanifest (*avyakta*). The latter group consists of sixteen factors: five gross elements with specific characteristics, five organs of knowledge, five organs of action, and mind. What we call man is only a conglomeration (a heap, *rāśi*), a *gestalt*, a configuration, a pattern composed of discrete but interrelated items. It is a body-mind complex. While the soul partaking of the nature of divine spirit or of the nature of an inner controller is not acceptable to this school of Sāṃkhya, they do accept the phenomenal self, which is the real experiencer. The expression 'heap-person' (*rāśi-purusha*), which these thinkers employ, is an

interesting one. It is psychologically suggestive and significant.

The phenomenal self is not pure consciousness, the reflection of which is caught up in the consciousness-stuff (*buddhi*), as some schools of Sāṃkhya hold. The self somehow¹⁴ gets related in a characteristic manner with the elements mentioned above, and renders them organised, integrated, enlivened, and patterned. And consciousness emerges *sui generis* from this organisation, which is described as the phenomenal self or the 'heap-person'. Consciousness belongs to this organised heap, but is in no sense the essential nature (*svarūpa*) of the Self. In its transcendental aspect, there is no consciousness. Consciousness is a quality that emerges incidental to the

involvement of Self in the phenomenal mass. Pañchaśikha holds that consciousness continues only as long as one is alive; at death it ceases. In this sense, it may be said to belong to the Self, to be founded on the Self. It is likened to a light that radiates all around. The entire body-mind complex becomes aglow with consciousness.

The phenomenal self in this way becomes aware of the world outside and feelings within, because of the involvements of sense-organs and mind. Experiences occur within this framework; knowledge, feeling and action as also pleasures and pains are events that occur only here. The ancient Sāṃkhyan thinkers coined a remarkably modern expression, 'field' (*kshetra*). The

psychophysical complex that we call man represents essentially a field wherein the body, senses, mind, ego and the elements operate as forces; all the dimensions of experience are to be located in this field and are explained as due to the operation of the field forces. However, both Pañchaśikha and Charaka recognise that the field, the forces of which are in an incessant flux, retains continuity and identity as long as the phenomenal self is involved in it, and that consciousness which occurs as a general field-quality has a source or core on which it is founded, but which does not become manifest, or get committed to the field in an absolute manner. This unmanifest (*avyakta*) aspect of the field is its necessary background and support. This is figuratively spoken of as 'the

field-knower' (*kshetrajña*). But knowledge here does not involve the instrumentality of the senses and mind, or of the ego : it is mere awareness. There is an intriguing statement ascribed to Pañchaśikha¹⁵, wherein he refers to "the fourth principle of unconditioned awareness" which does not mutate and which is an unconcerned witness, (the three other principles being the *guṇas* which constitute the fabric of phenomenal existence). The commentator explains¹⁶ that consciousness of the details of the phenomenal world (*samvedana*) is possible only because of the subliminal awareness which is inverted on itself (*prati-samvedana*). This latter is called pure self-consciousness or mere I-feeling, different from the ego but basic to

it. This inverted process of awareness itself is styled consciousness-stuff (*buddhi-tattva*). It is dynamic, being composed of the three *guṇas*. But the subject of this awareness, static and beyond the influence of the modes of being or *guṇas*, is the unconditioned person (*purusha*). Pañchaśikha and Charaka regard the ultimate truth as 'the unmanifest in the state of person' (*purushāvasthamavyaktam*): it is a unified category, comprehending both nature (*prakṛti*) and spirit or person (*purusha*). We do not find in their thought the absolute dualism that we find in the later classical Sāṃkhya; and their conception of the 'unmanifest' also is characteristically different. Nature involves the spirit in an unmanifest condition; it is therefore that

Charaka groups the categories only into nature (*prakṛti*) and the modifications thereof (*vikāras*). This is brought about by the inverted awareness (*prati-samvedana*).

The relationship between the psychological 'field' (*kshetra*) and the unmanifest 'field-knower' (*kshetrajña*) constituted an important issue in the later Sāṃkhya discussions. The field-knower was identified in the epic Sāṃkhya as an independent category, the twenty-fifth, the 'unmanifest', being made a corporate part of the field (in the sense of original nature). It was the living principle within the body-mind complex. The Field-knower functions as the foundation (*adhiṣṭhāna*) for the field, as water for the fish. But this thought is a later development, necessary for a theistic interpretation;

but early Sāṃkhya explains the relationship on the basis of inverted awareness, as mentioned above.

THE YOGA ADAPTATION



PATAÑJALI (from Chidambaram temple)

Vyāsa cites an unidentified authority: "The phenomenal process on the part of the primal material is

for the purpose of self-expression.”¹⁷ And it is explained that self-expression is twofold: involvement of the static and unconditioned self in the phenomenal existence (experience, *bhoga*), and realisation that the self is in fact distinct from phenomenal existence (discrimination, *viveka*, or isolation, *kaivalya*). The former expression results in evolution (*sarga*) while the latter is spoken of as involution or dissociation of the Self from phenomena (*apavarga*). Both modes of self-expression involve ceaseless and continuous change from one state to another, one projected plane (*āyatana*) to another. This change or mutation is technically termed ‘evolution’ (*pariṇāma*), and is of great significance in the Sāṃkhya-Yoga thought. The progressive involvement

in phenomenal existence comes in for discussion in the Sāṃkhya, while Yoga is especially interested in the progressive disengagement of the self from phenomenal involvement.

The basic propositions of early Sāṃkhya were really simple. The world that we experience is real; it is evolved, and is subject to incessant change. There are subjects of experience (*purusha*), objects of experience (*artha*) and instruments of experience (*indriya*). The subjects are numerous, each distinguished by a psychophysical complex called ‘body’ (*deha*). For evolution, or for experience, these subjects are not really important; they do not materially matter. What matters is nature, and that is really important (*pradhāna*). The expression

pradhāna, almost an equivalent of *prakṛti* (nature in the sense of primal constituent or essential materiality) acquired great significance in the Sāṃkhya thought, so much indeed that the system came to be known as *Pradhāna-vāda*.

Nature, in contradistinction to the unmanifest spirit, is productive (*prasava-dharmī*) and this is so because of the *guṇas* that constitute it. *Guṇas* are objective, ultimate, constituent elements of experience; they are the modes of being. They are infinite in number, but are, for the sake of understanding, grouped into three types according to perceptibility (*sattva*), mutability or activity (*rajas*), and inertness (*tamas*). The *guṇa* theory in Sāṃkhya, was developed into an elaborate doctrine. *Guṇas* are

frequently substituted for the expression *prakṛti*¹⁸; the real dualism is between the *guṇas* (becoming) and *puruṣa* (being). Even Pāṇchaśikha the early teacher, spoke of *guṇas* as real doers (*kartāraḥ*) as opposed to the inactive *puruṣa*¹⁹. They are actors in the sense of productive agents; they are the factors that are responsible for evolution as well as involution. They coöperate, interact and act together; they also strive for survival and dominance. The Sāṃkhya theory regards the phenomenal world as a restless network of substances and activities; and as a tangled scene of the primal constituents, each struggling for expression and ascendancy.

These constituents patterned in one manner become responsible for

the material world of physical objects and events. Patterned in another manner, they result in the mental world of perceptions, feelings, thoughts and desires. These are two different lines of development, but the stuff of development is the same, and the source is a common one. Physics and psychology thus have a common origin and the fundamental laws are the same, although the lines of development are necessarily different.

It is interesting that the Sāṃkhya thinkers again strike a modern note when they postulate that all evolution starts from the disturbance of an original state of equilibrium (*sāmyāvasthā*), wherein the primal constituents (*guṇas*) are all perfectly balanced. But then

somehow²⁰ there is disturbance, and consequently the struggle for ascendancy is instituted among the primal constituents. Like the Lokāyatas, Sāṃkhyans in keeping with the Tāntric tradition, hold that the natural laws (*svabhāva*) are responsible for evolution; they do not think it necessary to posit any cause beyond nature (*nimittātara-nirapeksha*). As a result of this disturbance, *mahat* takes shape; from the general ground of the unmanifest, as a figure emerges this 'great one' (for that is what *mahat* means). The ground-figure analogy is a perfect one: the unmanifest, like the ground, is without characteristics (*alīnga*), while the *mahat*, like a figure, is really a sign that stands out, or a symbol that is perceived (*līnga*). And the former is static and stays in the

background, while the latter is dynamic and moves forward. It is called 'the great one' (*mahat*) because of its universality. The root of the word is 'maghash' (meaning 'to spring forth', 'to spread out', 'to become apparent'), and among the synonyms of the word are 'pr̥thu' (widely spread out), 'viśāla' (extensive) 'uru' (great), 'bṛhat' (large), 'bradhna' (root of tree), and 'gabhīra' (deep). It is also indicated by the words 'buddhi' (consciousness), 'prajñā' (knowledge) and 'upalabdhī' (experience). It is a detail that is common to all persons, somewhat like the 'common human archetype', and is therefore responsible for the objective character of the world for all of us alike. Experiential reality for all is projected from this source

within each one of us. In its public or world aspect it is called *mahat* ('the great one'), and in its private or individual aspect it is called *buddhi* (consciousness-stuff). The former aspect is cosmic, while the latter is personal. But in reality it is but one category (*buddhi-tattva*).

Mahat or *buddhi* is the primary phenomenon or evolute; it is the very first category to appear above the threshold of manifestation. And it is made up of the primal reals, viz., *guṇas*, the equipoise of which gets disturbed, and therefore each of which starts struggling for ascendancy; and the *sattva* prevails here over the other two. This represents the real first phase of evolution. It is, for this reason, described as the 'seed of the phenomenal extension' (*prapañcha-*

bīja). It is determinate, with ascribable qualities and identifiable function. Pañchādhikaraṇa, a Sāṃkhya teacher who came after Pañchaśikha but before classical Sāṃkhya, held that out of the womb of the unmanifest *pradhāna* emerges a category which is altogether indeterminate and without any specificity whatsoever, prior to the formation of *mahat*.²¹ Shall we call this the urge for expression coming closely on the heels of disturbance, or is it a homeostatic impulse, projecting and programming the entire series of evolution so that the creation (*sarga*) will ultimately bring about the elimination of the disturbing factor (*apavarga*)? In a sense, Sāṃkhya considers evolution and elimination as complementary to each other. It is important to

remember that the emergence of phenomena is not only a cosmic affair; more significantly, it is an individual affair. The Sāṃkhya thought recognises a sort of psychophenomenology (*pratyaya-sarga*) which is a descriptive analysis of subjective processes: eight primary mental dispositions and their derivative dispositions, all answering to a four-dimensional psychic model, the dimensions being misperceptions (*viparyaya*), inadequacies (*aśakti*), satisfactions (*tushṭi*) and achievements (*siddhi*).²²

The 'mahat' is obviously exceedingly subtle: it is not extended in space, and cannot be perceived by senses or mind. It is 'great' in the sense of being the recipient of knowledge of all things. It has no



limitations as regards comprehension, and in fact, it is fundamental to knowledge of whatever kind. Pañchaśikha and Charaka take it in the sense of mere 'I-ness' (*asmīti-mātra*); it is the subjective counterpart of the objective 'mere is-ness' (*tan-mātra*) of things.²³ Functionally, this is the linking factor between the objective particulars and the 'self' (*purusha*), which are otherwise totally and

mutually exclusive. According to Vāchaspati's interpretation, it is so transparent and so dominantly *sāttvic*, that the reflection of the 'Self' is caught in it, and, when this is done, the process acquires the quality of consciousness. The changes that occur in the *buddhi* are necessarily, though erroneously, ascribed to the Self, and they are construed as the Self's experiences. In reality, however, the self is neither the agent of action nor its locus. The apparent identification of the self with the consciousness-stuff is responsible for all phenomenal existence. The Sāṃkhya speaks of the emergence of a 'phenomenal self' (*pratibimba-purusha*) which is in the nature of an image of the Self caught in consciousness-stuff; it is a reflex image that forms the core of

individual existence, and becomes involved in all experiences, subjective and objective.

The *buddhi* being the link between the Self and nature, partakes of the nature of both. It 'knows' as well as 'works'. It is mere awareness and also an inclination for phenomenal involvement; there is in it an activity-orientation, although it is primarily *sāttvic* in constitution. It is interesting that in this system of thought life-force (*prāṇa*) is looked upon as an aspect of this principle. If *buddhi* emphasises the consciousness aspect of the mahat category, *prāṇa* symbolises its power as activity. Vijñāna-bhikṣu, a later authority, regards the five-fold vital currents (*vāyu*) as merely different functions of the *mahat* in an extended sense.

Arising from the consciousness-stuff (*buddhi*) and projected from it, is the egoity (*ahaṁkāra*), the dynamic principle of specific individuation. This projection is said to be necessitated by a stress condition (disturbance) within the consciousness-stuff. The mere I-ness of it has within itself a preparedness, or set, in favour of more determinate, that is to say better structured, figure, viz., the egoity. The function of this egoity, which is characterised by awareness of phenomenal involvement, is to produce a self-regarding, sentiment or what is known as 'self-assertion' (*abhimāna*), or 'self-love'. If *buddhi* is predominantly *sāttvic*, egoity is *rājasic*; it consists of activities of continual adjustment to the changing situational involvements. It would be

wrong to regard egoity as purely a subjective affair. The subject-object distinction of the experiential world is necessary for the functioning of the *buddhi*. This involves phenomenological structuring, which is an achievement of egoity. The 'mere I-ness' in the prior state is undifferentiated subjectivity, while in egoity the objectivity-extension is provided for it, so that there comes about a well-defined sense of individuality, an ego-sense in the context of the objective world of events and experiences. This egoity is functionally an urge for self-preservation, not only for the survival of individuality, but for its continuous growth in relation to the changing situational involvements. Egoity in Sāṃkhya is not looked upon as a substance, but as a process (*vṛtti*),

a ceaseless process as long as life continues in the body.

Contrary to the modern viewpoint that ego is a growth incidental to maturation, the Sāṃkhya theorists hold that egoity is an equipment even at birth, and it is because of this dynamic principle that individuation takes place and is completed. Individuation is acquirement of characteristics (*liṅga*), when associated with the body. Charaka includes the body composed of five elements (air, ākāśa, water, fire, earth) in the category of eight-fold nature (*prakṛti*) alongside consciousness-stuff and egoity. This is, according to him, the fundamenal psychophysical equipment. The senses and the mind belong to a different category: they are agents

of knowledge and action. Each sense-organ is a product of the five elements; it is a physiological structure. It achieves its fulfilment only when mind works along with it: otherwise, knowledge or action is impossible. The senses thus constitute further differentiation within the individualised field for purposes of communication and self-expression. Vāchaspati prefers to consider the senses and mind as evolved from the *sāttvic* aspect of egoity, incidental to individuation; Vijñāna-bhikṣu, on the other hand, takes only mind as an evolute of the *sāttvic* aspect of egoity, senses being evolutes of the other two aspects. Both, however, agree with the general Sāṃkhya position that mind and senses work together, and that both senses and mind are evolutes

from egoity. Structuring of the individualised field is the import of this position.

The three internal organs, consciousness-stuff (*buddhi*), egoity (*ahamkāra*) and the mind (*manas*) together constitute a continuum, a psychological field that is both subjective and individualised. They are the aspects or phases of one 'internal instrument' (*antaḥkaraṇa*), and represent a movement towards greater specificity and particularity, better structuring, and more efficient transaction with the world (or in other words, greater pheno-menological involvements). It is significant that the Sāṃkhya school regards the five-fold life-force that preserves and upholds the psychophysical constitution as signifying the joint operation of these

three phases or aspects of the internal instrument. The biomotor force (*prāṇa*), it follows, is essentially psychological energy. The three aspects of this energy are said to contain within themselves the power to open and close the 'field' (*kshetra*). The analogy of the birds in the cage by their conjoint flight lifting up the cage, and carrying it away, has been given by the commentators.

Consciousness-stuff, egoity and mind constitute the human personality (*saṁyogi-purusha*), and its natural inclination is for involvement in the phenomenal world. The Sāṁkhya theorists as well as Yoga teachers regard this inclination as pain-provoking (*klišṭa*), as an impairment or disturbance of the original state of equipoise (in the pre-*mahat* state),

as a perversion leading to errors in knowledge and action. Five such disturbances have been listed: 'lack of correct insight' (*avidyā*), 'ego-dominance' (*asmitā*), 'attachments' (*rāga*), 'aversions' (*dvesha*), and 'love of life' (*abhiniveśa*). The first among these is of course the foundation for others: the utterly isolate character of the Self and its essential non-involvement with the psychophysical constitution, or with the phenomenally presented world, is lost sight of in the progressive process of individuation. What in reality is a mere conglomeration (*rāśi*) of categories comes to be projected as an integrated field of experience and action with ego as the core. Approach-tendencies (*rāga*) and withdrawal-urges (*dvesha*) constitute the twin processes of involvements and disengagement, of

construction and destruction, of love and hate, of building-up and breaking-down. As a result of this involvement, there is a certain clinging to life, and urge to preserve oneself against odds, to persevere in the involvement, and to dread isolation. This is no doubt an accurate statement of the basic dimension of man's personality; this is also a statement of his problems of aspiration, anxiety and frustration.

This thorough-going analysis of human constitution distinguished the Sāṃkhya system. There was also an attempt within the Sāṃkhya fold to formulate a method whereby the pain-provoking conditions could be eliminated. The well-known methodology in Yoga and Āyurveda deals with the statement concerning the painful condition (*heyam*), the

diagnostic formulation of the causative factors thereof and the attendant conditions (*heya-hetuḥ*), the statement concerning the elimination of the painful condition (*hānam*), and the prescription of a curative procedure, whereby the elimination is achieved (*hānopāyaḥ*). This methodology is to be ascribed to the early Sāṃkhyan thinkers like Pañchaśikha.

Contact (*saṃyoga*) between the self and the phenomenal appearances, between being and becoming, between existence and occurrences is the real source of the world, our involvement in it and our continued participation in its persistence. Elimination of this contact, and the consequent isolation (*kaivalya*) of the self are held out as the goal of human life. This is what

is called 'detachment', 'unburdening', release, liberation, freedom (*moksha*). The systematic and progressive undoing of the evolutionary process (that is to say, the work of the senses, mind and egoity) so as to regress into the original state of mere I-ness (*asmīti-mātra*), undifferentiated, unconditioned, unqualified and non-particular is the method prescribed. Evolution is an onward process of increased ramification, greater and more complex structuring, multiplication of co-ordinates and dimensions, projection of further planes of experience; it is a 'spreading out' (*pra-pāñcha*). The method that the Sāṃkhya indicated, and the Yoga developed, is an involution, a backward process of attenuation, closing in, and turning back of the consciousness into an

undifferentiated mass (*samādhi*). The world then becomes a mere 'is', and the individual a bare 'am'.

This being the goal, the aspirant is advised naturally to remove himself as completely as possible from all involvements with the phenomenal world, to exercise control over the senses, to discipline the mind and to starve egoity. The eight-fold Yoga is a systematisation of this prescription in course of time. It is remarkable that Indian thought, in all its manifold schools, accepted the fundamental theoretical position of the Sāṃkhya and the basic discipline of Yoga. The Sāṃkhya-Yoga provided the framework for all philosophy and askesis in this subcontinent; that it was heavily psychologically oriented was an immense advantage.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Anima Sen Gupta, *The Evolution of the Sāṃkhya School of Thought*, 1959 Patna, p. 11f.
2. *Sarva-darśana-saṃgraha*
3. Śaṃkara, *Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya*, 2,1,1
4. Anima Sen Gupta, *op. cit.*
5. S.N.Dasgupta, *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol.I
6. By Guṇaratna (14th cent.) in his comm. on *Haribhadra's Shaḍ-darśana-samuchchaya*.
7. An account of this work attributed to Kapila occurs in *Ahīrbudhnya-saṃhitā* ('Tattva-samāsa' section). But we cannot be sure if this was the same as the ancient *Shashṭi-tantra*.
8. *Mahābhārata*, 12,318
9. S.N. Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p.36. Also Anima Sen Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

10. cf. Anima Sen Gupta, *op. cit.*
11. A.K. Majumdar argues tht classical Sāṃkhya was theistic. See his *Sāṃkhya Theory of Personality*, Calcutta. But tradition does not concede this claim.
12. Summarised in S.N.Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, Vol I, pp. 216f.
13. Apart from Charaka's account being an elaboration of Pañchaśikha's Sāṃkhya, Vyāsa's *Sāṃkhya-pravachana-bhāṣhya* has preserved twelve statements ascribed to Pañchaśikha, and these have been collected and annotated by Hariharānanda-Āraṇya, *The Sāṃkhya Sūtras of Pañcaśikha and other Ancient Sages*, Calcutta, 1934.
14. By will, aversion, ignorance and action.
15. In Vyāsa's *Sāṃkhya-pravachana-bhāṣhya*, 2,18, अकर्तरि च पुरुषे ... चतुर्थे क्रियासंक्षिप्तिः.)
16. Hariharānanda-Āraṇya, *op. cit.*, P. 97 (सापि अस्मीतिरूपा आत्मबुद्धिः येन प्रतिसंविदिता भवति स पुरुषः)
17. In *Sāṃkhya-pravachana-bhāṣhya*, 2, 23 (प्रधानस्यात्मख्यापनार्थप्रवृत्तिः)
18. As, for instance, in the expression गुणपुरुषसंयोगात् सर्गः.

19. Cited in Vyāsa's *Sāṃkhya-pravachana-bhāṣya*, 3, 18 (अयं तु खलु त्रिषु कर्तृषु अकर्तरि च पुरुषः). It is to be noted, however, that for Charaka the three *guṇas* are merely three different mental states.
20. There is no extraneous reason for this disturbance (निमित्तान्तरनिरपेक्षः); the explanation is that the disturbance is natural (*svabhāva*). Contact with *purusha* is sometimes given as the reason, such contact resulting in *avidyā*.
21. Pañchādhikaraṇa's view is described in *Prapañchasāra-tantra-vyākhyāna*, 1st paṭala, verse 94. His name figures prominently in the list of *Sāṃkhya* teachers given in *Yuktidīpikā-Kārikā*, 71.
22. *Sāṃkhya-Kārikā*, 44-52
23. cf. Pañchaśikha's aphorism quoted in Vyāsa's *Sāṃkhya-pravachana-bhāṣya*, 1, 36 (तमणुमात्रमात्मानमनुविद्याऽस्मीत्येव तावत् सम्प्रजानीते)

CHAPTER TWO

UPANISHADIC SOURCES



The ultimate recorded source of all Indian wisdom is the hymnal mass collectively known as the Veda, the earliest of human documents anywhere on earth. It consists of praises and prayers, myths and legends (*Samhitā*), sacrificial formula

and ritualistic tracts (*Brāhmaṇa*), and finally philosophical speculations and psychological inquiries (*Upanishads*). The Vedic poets and seers were impressed not only with the vastness of the universe but by the orderliness involved in the cosmos (*ṛta*). While

they conjured up a multiplicity of divinities connected with magico-religious functions, physical phenomena and social and economic activities, they also had an intuitive understanding of the One Real (*ekam sat*), of whom these divinities were but aspects or expressions. The One Real was the spirit enlivening the entire universe, as also the essence of individuality in every being.

It is small wonder therefore that the emphasis soon shifted from rituals to abstract contemplation, from the knowledge of the world around to the understanding of one's own self within. The Upanishads mark this shift. Formally appended to the Veda and recognised as its culmination and therefore called *Vedānta*, they were nevertheless

independent tracts based on direct experience and inspired intuition. They contain philosophical speculations and psychological inquiries, laying emphasis on the individual, on the analysis of human personality, on contemplation and tranquillity rather than worldly competence and success. They were in the nature of confidential documents of mystic wisdom, revealed only to the earnest and the adept.

While the Upanishads, the ten principal ones which are also of great antiquity, may not contain any consistent or uniform teaching, they have, all of them, a distinctive and characteristic flavour: inward achievement of unshakable equanimity by releasing the self from

all mundane preoccupations and phenomenal limitations. They all alike speak of the Self as the principal aspect of ultimate reality, if not the ultimate reality itself: the Self whose nature is everlasting, pure, and undifferentiated consciousness. The world around was viewed as a cloud that sits upon, and hides the Self from itself; and the dissipation of this cloud was sought to be achieved by abstract contemplation. The Upanishadic emphasis on the liberating wisdom instead of mere observance of ceremonials cleared the way for the emergence of new ideologies like Vedānta and Buddhism.

The Upanishads are no doubt remarkable treatises containing profound reflections. But their

diversity of approach, multiplicity of concepts, and apparent inconsistency necessitated an attempt at reconciliation and harmony (*samanvaya*); and this was provided by the celebrated *Vedānta-sūtra*, also called *Brahma-sūtra* (after the subject-matter) and *Bādarāyaṇa-sūtra* (after the editor, Bādarāyaṇa-Vyāsa). This short work of four books, each comprising of four chapters, each of which contains a number of topics (*adhikaraṇas*) for discussion in the form of cryptic aphorisms (*sūtras*), sought not only to condense the Upanishadic teachings, but to resolve the apparent inconsistencies in them. Brahman, according to this work, is the ultimate reality: source of the world, it is also the goal of all gnosis.

The work made a profound impact on the subsequent thought pattern in the country; utterly divergent viewpoints were foisted on this self-same work because this work not only stimulated inquiry, but was regarded as endowed with scriptural authority. Of the many interpretations, those by Śaṅkara (632-664 A.D.), Rāmānuja (1017-1137) and Madhva (1197-1276) are important, inasmuch as they came to be defended by three philosophical schools represented by three large sects in the country.

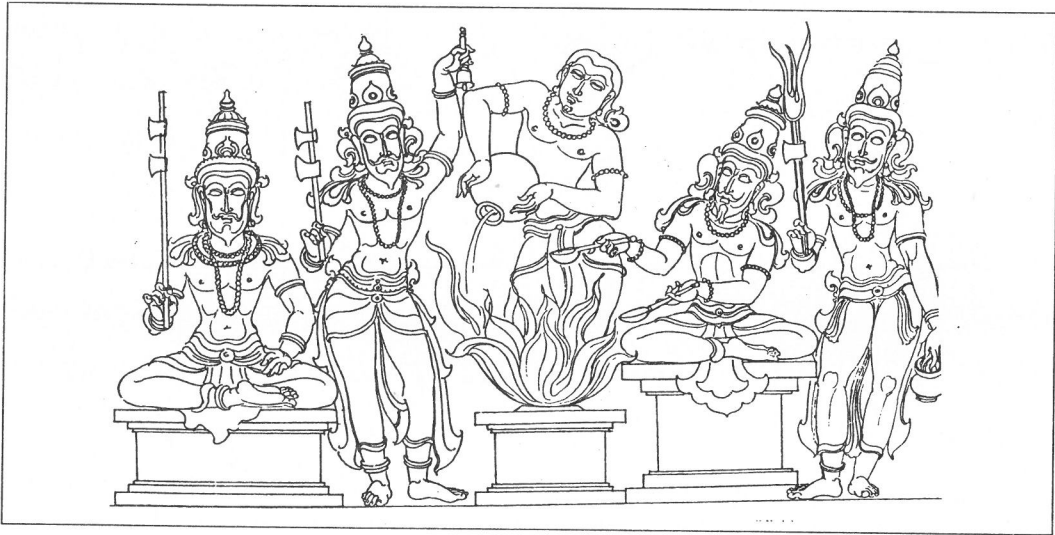
These three interpretations gave rise in due course to a mass of philosophical literature, especially in South India. The three Āchāryas mentioned above have not only written commentaries on the

Vedānta-sūtras ascribed to Bādarāyaṇa, but have sought to strengthen their positions by writing commentaries on the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, a scriptural text of immense religious and philosophical significance in this country. Two of them (Śaṅkara and Madhva) have commented on the principal Upanishadic texts also. The three works together, the *Upanishads*, *Brahma-sūtras* and the *Gītā*, constitute what is known as the 'triple source-literature' (*prasthāna-trayī*).

The *Gītā*, formally incorporated into the great epic *Mahābhārata* but operating essentially as an independent text, claims to be the quintessence of the Upanishadic teaching; it is in fact itself described as an *Upanishad*. There can be no doubt that coming closely on the

heels of the classical Upanishads, the *Gītā* contains the Upanishadic tradition, but assimilates the Sāṃkhya, Yoga and Buddhist teachings which were in their turn indebted to the Upanishads. It is this synthetic character of the *Gītā* that has made it the most popular text in the country. It is a curious but effective link between the Vedic traditionalism and the later thought systems.

Thus, the triple source-literature for the traditional philosophical systems in this country is mainly Upanishadic; the *Brahma-sūtra* as well as the *Gītā* have drawn heavily on the Upanishads for their content as well as attitude. We have therefore, to turn to the Upanishads for the basic concepts in all the philosophical schools that have developed in our country.



BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

Although the Upanishads do not attempt to set forth any consistent philosophical doctrine, although each Upanishad has a thought-structure all its own, all the Upanishads alike seem to have been inspired by certain identifiable assumptions. These assumptions as crystallized by the Upanishads provided the basic framework for all philosophical schools that developed subsequently in this country. The most basic of the assumptions is that reality is essentially spiritual. That it is unknown and undefined does not make its importance any the less for the earnest seeker; in fact, it has a strong attraction for him for this very reason. While the Upanishads are divided on the question of the reality of the material world, they uniformly

emphasise the spiritual essence of it. They also point to the essential unity of this spiritual essence with the essence in the individual that seeks it.

The former is represented by the abstract word '*brahman*' and the latter by '*ātman*'. The *brahman* comes in the Upanishads to be greatly emphasised, not as a god or as the Godhead, but as the basic, universal principle, as an undifferentiated whole, as the very salt of existence. The concrete universe emanates from this abstract principle as 'the web does from the spider.'¹ And this universe of bewildering multiplicity of names and forms again dissolves into the *brahman* even as 'the rivers flow into the sea, losing their individual identities.'²

This is not to be construed as a denial of the historical man or of the physical universe. Although the Upanishads are undoubtedly preoccupied with the ultimate, the universal, the stable, the essential, and the Being, they do not ignore or reject the phenomenon of becoming, of multiplicity, of change. The knowledge that is directed towards 'the effective unity of things' (the expression of Sri Aurobindo) is styled as *vidyā*, while the awareness of, and involvement in, the world of multiplicity is *avidyā*.³ They are no doubt different in their approaches, but they are, as the *Īśa-upanishad* points out, related to each other: unity is underlying and multiplicity is manifest.

The Upanishads do not ignore the individual and the particular.

The word *ātman* is employed as frequently as the word *brahman* in the Upanishadic texts, and is used in its concrete as well as abstract connotations. However, the particularity of it, the discrete identity of it, or the separate individuality of it (*vyakti*) is greatly minimised in preference to its universality (*jāti*). The individual or the particular has no absolute value of its own; it is intimately and inextricably related to the universal.

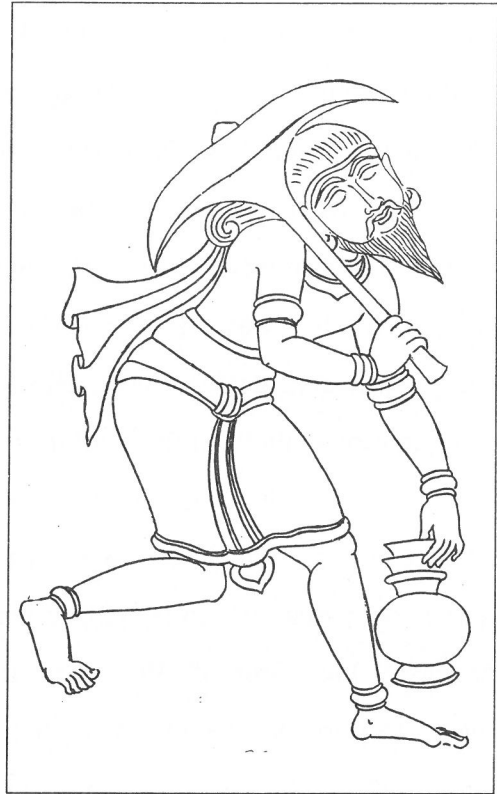
The individual is determinate, is perceived as a concrete being, as differentiated by qualities and qualifications. It is apprehended by sense-organs and mind, by our knowing processes. The world with a multiplicity of particular entities is presented to us, and is

represented by our individual consciousness. We are therefore prone to regard it as real, as ultimate; and we proceed to involve ourselves in it; in the words of *Kaṭha-upanishad*,⁴ it is natural to have an extrovert orientation, for man's instruments of knowing are fashioned that way. It is the world of materiality, sensations, imaginations and volitions that we are interested in, and involved in. We are so engrossed with the particulars that the underlying unity is easily lost sight of. We have, in order to perceive that, to make bold and look within; it is the introvert orientation that will pierce through the unreal, or rather less real, multiplicity, and give us an insight into the effective unity.

We are not concerned here with the psychodynamics of the development of this grand insight, which means for the individual a total and critical transformation of his very being. What is of interest to us is the mental preparation that this transformation necessitates: an analytical rejection of all particulars that are objectively presented and subjectively represented. Nakamura⁵ observes that Indians have a fondness for the negative expression, and he rightly connects it with their stress on the universal: "The Absolute is expressed as the Infinite or the Negative by the Indians." The Upanishads no doubt describe the *brahman* as indescribable, and list all imaginable qualifications only to negate them.

The negative approach assumes a methodological stature in the Vedāntic “Not-this, Nor-that” (*neti, neti*).⁶ The initial formulation of this method is ascribed to Yājñavalkya and the Advaita school of Vedānta relies heavily on it. The method involves systematic calling up to mind of all the differential qualifications of an objective entity or phenomenon, and as systematically rejecting each one of them in connection with *brahman*, which is not only an impersonal principle but indeterminate as well. The Upanishads describe it as ‘indeterminate’ (*anirdeśyam*), ‘incomprehensible’ (*agrāhyam*), ‘imperishable’ (*aksharam*), ‘unborn’ (*ajātam*), ‘uncharacterised’ (*avarṇam*), ‘hidden in the secrecy of the supreme space’ (*nihitam*

guhāyām parame vyoman), and so on.⁷



The method of negation suggested in broad outline in the Upanishads is interesting inasmuch as it appears to have entered into the

very mental make-up of Indians. It has become almost a cultural trait here, and Indian languages abound in negative expressions. Ethical ideals are negatively recommended, as illustrated in expression like 'non-injury' (*ahimsā*), 'non-stealth' (*asteya*), 'non-possession' (*aparigraha*), 'dis-passion' (*virāga*), 'devoid of desire' (*nishkāma*), 'non-interest' (*virati*), 'restraining' (*vīramāṇa*) and so on.

The negative orientation is easily mistaken for escapism, which the Indians have often been accused of. But it should be remembered that the Upanishadic method of negation really points to the attainment of an existence that can never be denied or doubted. The idea is to reject all non-essential particulars of

Becoming so as to arrive at the most positive Being. It is Being and not Becoming that has appealed to the Indian mind; the urge is to seek the real amidst appearances. Reality is reached by negating the appearances.

Another point that is often lost sight of in the Western appraisal of Indian thought is that negating is really overcoming, transcending. When a qualification is negated, the mind does not withdraw, but goes beyond what it negates. It is in this sense that Reality is described as all-comprehensive, all-inclusive and transcendental (*pāramārthika*). While appearances are partial, fragmentary and 'transactional' (*vyāvahārika*), brahman is 'beyond', above (*parā*); and the knowledge that treats of it is higher knowledge (*parā-vidyā*).

And the knowledge that deals only with appearances is lower, or literally 'non-higher' (*aparā*) : it pertains to life, and not to Reality. To reach Reality, normal and ordinary life has to be negated, that is to say, transcended. What makes for this negation is the positive *vidyā*, while what prevents this necessary negation is the negative *avidyā*.

BEING AND BECOMING

With these basic assumptions, the problem before the Upanishads was to explain how the transcendental or real becomes the transactional or appearances. This was of course a theoretical issue, and the Upanishads were more interested in the practical problem of how to resolve the transactional



into the transcendental, and naturally we do not find in the Upanishadic texts any consistent, comprehensive or logical philosophy concerning this theoretical issue. But speculations

have certainly been there. Even in the earliest hymnal literature of *Rgveda*, we find interesting attempts at explanation which provided the ground-work for Upanishadic inquiries.

The earliest of Indian thinkers of importance, Aghamarshaṇa was a Vedic sage whose reflections are contained in a hymn in the tenth Maṇḍala of *Rgveda*; it is well-known as a purificatory hymn. The hymn recognises that the universe is orderly, and that it has a real being. Orderliness (*ṛtam*) and being-ness (*satyam*) emanated from the action of mystic heat (*tapas*); then darkness of the night came into being, from that the oceans, and from the oceans the time-principle (year, *samvatsara*); and the rest of the universe

proceeded by this division of night and day. Mystic heat, for Aghamarshaṇa, was the generative urge, the urge to manifest, multiply and concretise. This urge it was that transformed Being into Becoming, unspeakable and unknown unity into the visible multiplicity that we call our world; and at the back of it all is 'order' (*ṛta*). This was an important discovery: that the universe is founded on 'law' (*ṛta*) and that it evolved in an orderly way.

It was this discovery that minimised the role of the apparently capricious gods of the early Vedic period, and helped India develop not only a philosophy altogether independent of the pantheon, but also an ethics likewise free from theistic influence. The reflection on

the primaeval mystic heat or initial energy as responsible even for Being is intriguing, but its implications are important. There is another hymn in the same Maṇḍala of the *Rgveda*, the so-called 'Hymn of creation' (known to us, however, as 'Nāsadīya-sūkta' after the words with which the hymn commences)⁸ which also reflects on the transformation of Being into Becoming. There was, according to this hymn, 'desire' or 'will' (*kāma*, interpreted by the Vedic commentator Sāyaṇa as *sisṛkshā*, 'desire to create, described here as the 'seed of mind' (*manaso retāḥ*), is located in the undifferentiated watery mass that was unfathomable and mysterious, enveloped in dense darkness. And in the background of this desire is the 'One, breathless, who breathed by its own nature'

(*ānīdavātām svadhayā tad ekam*). The hymn postulates an immanent but obscure energy of nature or Being that provides the motive force for all evolution, for all Becoming. The Being somehow becomes warm with self-consciousness, and then gets involved in Becoming.

There is yet another hymn in *Rgveda*, ascribed to Brahmanaspati, which deals with this problem of Becoming.⁹ This hymn roundly declares Non-Being (*asat*) as productive of Being which in due course transformed itself into Becoming. Non-Being, Sāyaṇa explains, is not non-existence, for that can never function as cause of Being; it is negatively worded only to suggest its being the foundation (*adhishṭhāna*) of, and therefore

distinct from, Being (X, 5-7). It is the indeterminate, infinite, unformed essence of nature (also called *aditi*): it is spoken of as the 'eternal law'. The hymn says that it was from this foundation that the cosmic force (*daksha*) emanated and brought into being all actual and possible (*sachcha asachcha*) particulars. The apparently paradoxical statement that the cosmic force sprang forth from the infinite essence, and that the infinite essence in its turn sprang forth from the cosmic force,¹⁰ emphasises the involvement of Being in Becoming and Becoming in Being.

These and similar reflections in the Vedic hymns provided not only the inspiration but the subject-matter also for the Upanishadic thinkers. However, their general

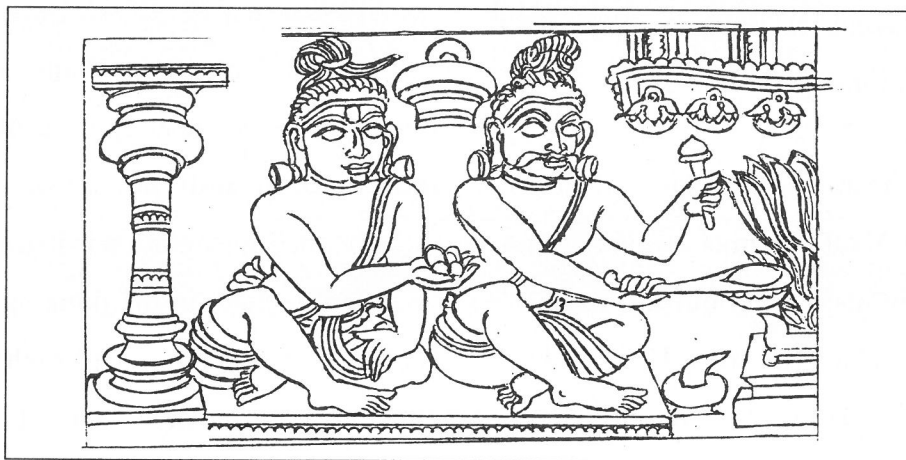
interest was in piercing through the veil of Becoming and experiencing the Being. Becoming with its phenomenal presentation of particulars was regarded by them as less real and as of lesser value than the One Being, something to be set aside or pierced through. Non-involvement with the phenomenal processes was therefore considered essential for reaching the Being: what was important was not the knowledge that merely explains, but the knowledge that liberates, that reveals.

What hides the Being from Becoming is at the very core of the individual's individuation. The phenomenal presentation is ingrained in the individual, in his thinking and feeling; and the Upanishadic expression for the seat of this

thinking-feeling-complex is heart (*hṛt*). It is here that the Being rests, but as if concealed in a cave; and it is from the heart again that the individual meets with the world and transacts with it. In the Upanishadic language, there are 'knots in heart' (*hṛdaya-granthi*) wherein the strings of the world are contained. The Upanishads speak of 'cutting' asunder these 'knots' for liberation.¹¹ The liberation is from the excessive involvement with the tangled web of Becoming, which is described by an

effective expression *samsāra*. And liberation itself is spoken of as *mukti*, *moksha* (release, escape, freedom). What is meant here is that the Being is freed from the stress of Becoming: the Being reveals itself (*ātmā vivṛṇute tanūm svām*) and is not clouded by the phenomenal limitations.

The Upanishadic 'heart' is not the physical organ that we commonly call heart. It is the psychic core of the entire constitution, responsible for all vital functions as well as for



all higher intellectual functions. It is in this sense that the 'heart' is called stability: everything is founded ultimately on the 'heart' and it is foolish to ask on what the 'heart' is founded, for it is nowhere else than ourselves¹². Verily this self is in the heart; it is for this reason that the word means etymologically 'this one is in the heart' (*hr̥di ayam*)¹³.

स वा एष आत्मा हृदि तस्यैतदेव
निरुक्तं हृद्यमिति तस्माद्
हृदयमहरहर्वा एंवित्स्वर्गं लोकमेति ॥

There are a hundred and one channels of the 'heart' connecting man with the whole world. In deep, dreamless sleep one creeps into these channels (*nāḍīṣu sr̥pto bhavati*) and then he does not transact with the world at all. In waking life, all our

actions are made possible by the 'creeping out' of the self through these channels. This is how the self inside the 'heart' can be subtler than the worlds¹⁴. Inside the 'heart' is supposed to be 'a sky' or space (*ākāśa*), which is metaphorically described as a 'cave' (*guhā* or *dahara*); the self is hidden in this cave, concealed in the secret place of the 'heart', dwelling in the depth and extremely subtle and minute¹⁵.

स य एषोऽन्तर्हृदय आकाशः ।

तस्मिन्नयं मनोमयः ।

अमृतो हिरण्मयः ॥

(तैत्तिरीये 5,1 ॥)

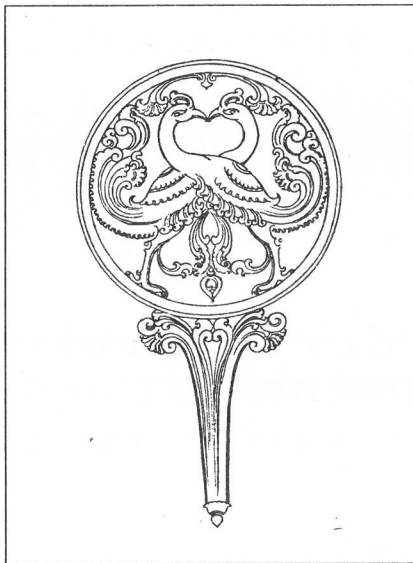
The 'heart' and the subjective space within it are symbolic. The elementary consciousness is known as *buddhi* in Vedānta. It is usual to

translate this Sanskrit word as 'intellect', but with the development of modern psychology, the expression smacks of a mental faculty. The word *buddhi* is intended in the Upanishads to signify a principle that is nearest to Self,¹⁶ that animates mind and the senses, that stirs and makes for the phenomenal world.¹⁷ The meaning of the word *ākāśa*, according to Śaṅkara, is that which shines alround, 'all-pervasive luminosity' (*ā samantāt kāśate prakāśate iti*). This is the stable, still, and deep consciousness that is unaffected by disturbances of differentiation; this is the consciousness that is not broken up into particular perceptions, being beyond the reach of senses and mind.

The 'heart' thus is the principle of individuation, that mediates between the Being and Becoming. It is the meeting place of the Self within and the world outside, There is an Upanishadic expression of intriguing significance: *ātmanvin*, 'an embodied one', one who possesses the Self (*ātmavān*) and therefore is self-conscious¹⁸. This is considered a state wherein the first experience of self-consciousness is had, and which sets into motion the process of individuation, of evolution, of involvement. The commentator Śaṅkara takes the expression to signify the 'deity in the heart', the state of Self as the lord of creation (*prajāpati*), the principle activating the *buddhi*¹⁹. Consciousness cannot go beyond this state, for this is the plank of awareness on which all

conscious states and conscious acts depend. When, at the very beginning, nothing was there, hunger covered it over, and then there was the urge: 'May I have a self'. This, according to an Upanishad, was the first act in the drama of creation. Undifferentiated consciousness turning on itself, got a form, the form of self-consciousness, or personal consciousness, and this subjectivity was the precursor to all other forms in the world.

This, in short, is the Self individuated, embodied and actualised. This is the bridge or dam (setu) that separates and keeps apart the worlds²⁰, the world of phenomenal presentation and the world of the Self that is ultimate and isolated. The universal existence in this way acquires an individual context.



NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad*, 1, 7
2. *Ibid.*, 3, 8
3. *Īśa-up.*
4. *Kaṭha-up.*
5. Nakamura, Hajime, *Ways of Thinking of Eastern People*, Hawaii, 1968, p. 52
6. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 4, 5, 15
7. 'Aghamarshaṇa-Sūkta'
8. 'Nāsadiya-sūkta', *Rgveda*, 10, 129
9. *Rgveda*, 10, 72
10. *Ibid.*, 10, 72, 3 अदितेर्दक्षोऽजायत, दक्षाद् उ अदितिः परि
11. e.g. in *Kaṭha-up.*, 2, 3, 15
12. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 3, 9, 24-25
13. *Chhāndogya-up.*, 8, 3, 3. (Also in *Praśna-up.*, 3, 6 and *Kaṭha-up.*, 12, 17)
14. *Ibid.*, 3, 4, 3
15. *Kaṭha-up.*, 2, 12 (Also *Taittirīya-up.* 1, 6 and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 4, 4, 22)
16. *Ibid.*, 1, 3, 3: 1, 3, 10
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 1, 2, 1, cf. also Śaṅkara's comments :
आत्मवानहमनेनात्मना मनसा मनस्वी स्यामित्यभिप्रायः ।
19. Śaṅkara on *Ibid.*, 2. 1, 13 आत्मनि प्रजापतौ बुद्धौ च हृदि एका देवता । यस्याः आत्मनि
आत्मवानिति विशेषणम् ।
20. *Chhāndogya-up.*, 8, 4, 1

CHAPTER THREE

UPANISHAD - DARŚANA



Concerned as they are with man's welfare, the Upanishads naturally deal with man at length. Human constitution, instruments of knowledge, nature of bondage and factors of freedom have come in for discussion. While some Upanishads do attempt to furnish physiological details and psychological

explanations, the emphasis is on the fundamental nature of man's self (soul or spirit). All the Upanishads appear to agree with Yājñavalkya's proposition - 'Verily, the Self it is that must be seen, heard, reflected upon, pondered over; and when Self is understood everything is understood.'"¹

आत्मा वा अरे विजिज्ञासितव्यः ।

श्रोतव्यो मन्तव्यो निदिध्यासितव्यः ॥

The Upanishads give a general impression that the existence of the Self has been accepted without a question, almost axiomatically. While the texts do recognise the value of axiomatic assumptions, as in *Taittirīya-upanishad* when it says, 'Know that it exists, and then you can know its nature,' ('astīti ched veda, santam enam tato viduh'²) the problem has certainly been raised. For instance, the *Kena-Upanishad* has clearly formulated the question: 'Prompted by whom does the mind go about its task? Yoked first by whom does the vital current move forward? Impelled by whom do we speak at all? What spirit indeed makes the eye see and the ear hear?'"³

केनेषितं पतति प्रेषितं मनः ?

केन प्राणः प्रथमं प्रैति युक्तः ?

केनेषितां वाचमिमां वदन्ति ?

चक्षुः श्रोत्रं क उ देवो युनक्ति ?

It seeks to go behind the senses and mind, and points to a principle that must necessarily be present for the senses to perceive, for the mind to think, for the vital current to function. It is described as the eye of the eye ('chakshushah chakshuh'), ear of the ear ('śratasya śrotram'), mind of the mind, speech of the speech, life of the life ('prāṇasya prāṇah')⁴.

Senses and mind provide us with an awareness of the outside world, and our life seems to be the main plank on which they operate. There is a quaint story in one of the Upanishads about the quarrel among

the senses (*prāṇa-samvāda*)⁵. Once, the senses began disputing who amongst them was the best; and when Brahma was approached, they were told that the sense, which by leaving will render the body useless, was the best. Speech left the body, but the body survived, only as dumb; the eye left, but the body continued, only as a blind one; then the ear left, but the body survived, if as deaf. The mind, in its turn, went off; still the body lived on, stupidly though. When it was the turn of the vital current (or breath) to leave, it 'pulled up all the other senses as a strong Sindhi horse tears away the pegs to which it is tied.' It was, at once, without a murmur, adjudged as the best, for bereft of the vital current senses cannot function, and the body is dead.

Another Upanishad, in a similar vein, mentions that without any of the senses or organs, man can live, but not without the life-principle (*prāṇa*), and adds: 'As from a blazing fire sparks fly in all directions, even so from the Self the life-principle stems forth, and from the life-principle the senses acquire their particular powers, and from these powers spring up the world that we experience.'"⁶

In the Upanishadic thought, senses (including mind) are nothing more than special modifications of the life-principle (*prāṇa*); that is why the senses are frequently called *prāṇas*. The senses have their own specific capacities and domains of operation; each sense thus provides us with a world, like the eye

presenting the visual world, ear the auditory world, and so on. The mind, which is an internal and common sense, organises and configures these several worlds into an interconnected, related, meaningful world that is in our experience. Senses are said to light up the worlds, and it is in this sense that they are called 'devas' or agents of illumination.⁷

While the senses are merely modifications of the life-principle, we find it necessary to recognise the life-principle coeval and identical with life itself (*āyu*), different from the senses. We live on without one or more of the sense-modifications of the life-principle, but we live only as long as the life-principle itself lasts in the body. It is described as

the 'unfailing power in a person, like the unwearying air': the sun might set, fire go out and water dry up, but air moves without rest or a stop. Comparable to air among the elements is the life-principle (*prāṇa*) among the sense-modifications.⁸ It continues all through life in all its states, including deep sleep and swooning.

Mahīdāsa-Aitareya, an Upanishadic sage, regards the body as an organisation, as a system with the life-principle as its potentiality.⁹ Every organ is in its place and the senses discharge their appointed tasks. And, according to him, the life-principle is five-fold in its functions: up-breathing (*prāṇa*) corresponding to the respiratory system, down-breathing (*apāna*)

corresponding to the alimentary system, back-breathing (*samāna*) or the metabolic activities, out-breathing (*udāna*) or the special senses, and finally on-breathing (*vyāna*) corresponding to the circulatory system. This ideology of the five-fold life-principle (*pañcha-prāṇa*) came to be accepted in all the Upanishads.

It is interesting that the fundamental life-principle is identified with general awareness or consciousness (*prajñā*), and it was but a short step to identifying it with the all-pervading self.¹¹ In *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, Yājñavalkya explains to Ushasti-chākrāyaṇa that the self in all things (*ātmā-sarvāntaraḥ*) breathes in when you breathe in, breathes out when you breathe out, and so on for

all the five-fold breathing processes. This Self is the seer of seeing, hearer of hearing, thinker of thinking, understander of understanding; and for the same reason we cannot see it, hear it, think of it or understand it.¹² The sense-modifications and the five-fold breaths have their own distinct domains of function, and cannot go beyond them.

The Upanishads frequently refer to our inability to describe it, or to perceive it. The *Kena Upanishad*, for example, says: 'That which the eye cannot see, but that which makes the eye see, that which the ear cannot hear, but that which makes the ear hear;.... that which the mind cannot think, but that which makes the mind think - know ye that to be the Brahman (or the real).'¹³



यच्चक्षुषा न पश्यति येन चक्षूंषि पश्यति ।
 तेदव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥
 यच्छ्रोत्रेण न श्रुणोति येन श्रोत्रमिदं श्रुतम् ।
 ॥
 यद्वाचाऽनभ्युदितं येन वागभ्युद्यते ।
 ॥
 यन्मनसा न मनुते येनाहुर्मनो मतम् ॥
 ॥

In the same context, the breathing processes are also included as mere figures on a ground that is beyond them. The senses and the mind do not reach this substrate which is indispensable for their existence and function. The Upanishad summarily rejects any possibility of our ever knowing it.¹⁴

Śaṅkara has recorded a dialogue from an Upanishadic source, hitherto unidentified: king Vāshkalīn

goes to the sage Bādhva, and asks him to explain the real nature of Brahman. Bādhva remains silent. The king asks a second time, but Bādhva does not break his silence. When the king repeats his request for the third time, Bādhva replies: 'I have been all the while telling you, but you do not understand'.¹⁵ The real nature of the Self is thus unspeakable: its only description is silence, quiet. This Self, unknown and unknowable, is the groundwork of our being; and our entire constitution with a physical frame, psychological functions, sense activities, mind and understanding, is only this self writ large. Mahīdāsa-aitareya speaks of the expansion of the Self' (*ātmanām āvistaram*);¹⁶ and the commentator Sāyaṇa explains the word 'expansion' as 'special

manifestations' (*atiśayena prakāṣam*). Thus, it is interesting that we do not have in India a dichotomous division of human nature into body and spirit: the two are not two distinct principles at all, but two aspects of the same principle. It is the spirit itself that manifests as body. Human nature is really an organisation of emanations and appearances, at various levels of the one self which is itself formless. The concrete particulars and the abstract ground are like one substance; like waves and the ocean, like the hill and the level ground below.

In *Chhāndogya Upanishad*,¹⁷ the well-known dialogues between Uddālaka - āruṇi and his son Śvetaketu emphasise the oneness of the self and its emanations. Even as

the great fig-tree arises from, and subsists in, the unseen finest essence within the tiny seed, the whole world comes out of, and rests in, the finest essence, the Self.

यं वै सोम्यैतदणिमानं न निभालयस एतस्य वै
सोम्यैषोऽणिम्न एवं महान्न्यग्रोधस्तिष्ठति श्रद्धस्व
सोम्येति ॥ स य एषोऽणिमैतदात्म्यमिदं सर्वं
तत्सत्यं स आत्मा तत्त्वमसि श्वेतकेतो इति ॥

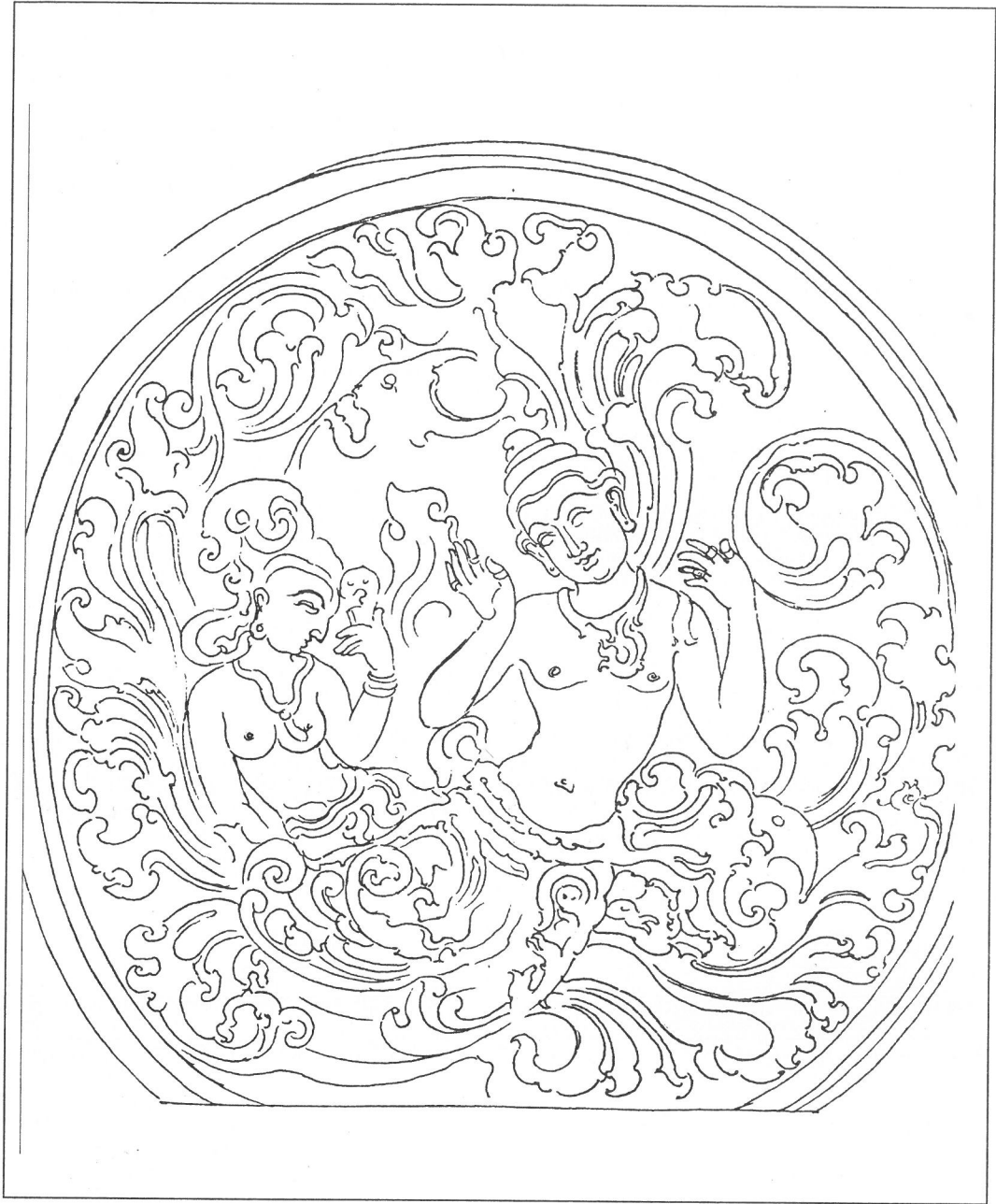
We are again in the realm of Being and Becoming. The Upanishads have an expression for this Becoming: *ātmabhūyam gacchati* (*Aitareya*, 2, 4, 2). We have seen how the Vedic hymns explained the transformation of Being into Becoming. It would be interesting to note that, in the dialogues between the father and his son, mentioned above, there is an explanation by inference. 'Also,

my dear, around a sick man about to die, the relatives gather and ask: 'Do you know me?' 'Can you recognise me?' So long as his speech does not go into his mind, his mind into his breath, and his breath into the warmth, the warmth into the transcendental divinity, so long he knows. Then when his speech goes into his mind, his mind into his breath, and his breath into the warmth, and the warmth into the transcendent divinity, then he knows not."¹⁸ This is an account of death, of transformation of Becoming into Being. Speech here is power of expression; it is the highest stage of Becoming, at once manifold and transient. Mind is the thinking, feeling structure that provides the basis for all expressive activities. And mind is rooted in, or has

emanated from, the life-principle (*prāṇa*), which in its turn has come out of the fundamental warmth (*tejas*). The warmth signifies the urge for manifestation on the part of the transcendent divinity, namely the Self, which is Being. While Being sustains Becoming as distinct from itself, transaction with the world is possible; when once the structure of Becoming is withdrawn into Being, the individuation collapses and transaction ceases.

BEING AND BECOMING

The Upanishads are concerned with the problem of individuation, of how the abstract and formless Self becomes the multi-dimensional psychophysical constitution. In the *Taittirīya Upanishad* we have what is



known as the *Kośa* theory.¹⁹ The Sanskrit word 'kośa' means a sheath, a covering, casing, something meant to conceal and contain. The theory as propounded in the *Taittirīya* mentions five coverings for the Self representing five successive orders of reality. They are termed the food (*annamaya*), the life (*prāṇamaya*), the mind (*manomaya*), the consciousness (*vijñānamaya*) and the Bliss (*ānandamaya*). The Food represents the physical aspect of reality, matter, the material principle. In man, it is the physical body with the physiological functions. This is the outermost sheath or covering (*anna*), the grossest and the most concrete, depending on nutrition (food) for its subsistence. Concealed by this, but activating this, is the life-principle (*prāṇa*) which enlivens

matter and keeps it going. The five-fold breaths mentioned above as well as the senses are comprehended here. Subtler than this, and covered by it, is the mind-sheath (*manas*), composed of psychological processes including thinking and feeling, having their foundation in the data procured by the sense organs. Subtler than this is the sheath of individual consciousness, awareness or understanding (*viññāna*), which in fact is the foundation for all psychological processes. It is not to be confused with the object-consciousness or ego-consciousness which is necessarily involved in our mental activities, but it is the subliminal, incipient or bare consciousness. This is more fundamental than mind, and nearest in evolution to the original nature of

Being. This is also called the *Buddhi*, *Dhī* or *Prajñāna*.

The subtlest covering in the whole group is in the ancient, mystic, language termed Bliss (*ānanda*), not to be mistaken for hedonistic pleasure: it is the state of being undisturbed by the processes of Becoming. If there were not this Bliss, the Upanishad asks, 'Who could breathe in, and who could have the strength to breathe out?'²⁰ And this Bliss is located in the space within the heart (*antarhṛdaye*), the free space within the being, the innermost core of Being. The Bliss is not an experiential category, for it is basic even to consciousness; consciousness in fact conceals it and covers it. The Bliss here is substantially identical with the

warmth or 'urge to manifest', the *kāma* of the 'Nāsadiya-sūkta' and the *tapas* of the 'Aghamarshaṇa-sūkta'. This particular Upanishad elaborates: 'It desired: may I become manifold. It became warm with heat, and then created all this, whatever there is. And, having created it, entered into it. And so, whatever there is is Being only.'"²¹

सोऽकामयत् । बहुं स्यां प्रजायेयेति । स
तपोऽतप्यत् । स तपस्तप्त्वा । इदं सर्वमसृजत् ।
यदिदं किञ्च । तत् सृष्ट्वा । तदेवानु प्राविशत् ।
... यदिदं किञ्च । तत् सत्यमित्याचक्षते ॥

Thus from the Being the progressive grades of manifestation are the urge to manifest, the incipient consciousness, mind, vital functions and the physical forms and activities.

This is true not only on the cosmic plane, but is equally true in the individual context. This is the process of individuation; this is the course of development, of growth, of concretisation. This drama is enacted in every instance of birth, in the emergence of every thought and every feeling. The being that becomes, that assumes a concrete form, is in the language of the Upanishad, *Śārīra-ātmā*, an embodied spirit.

What is of interest to the philosophers here is the thought that despite Becoming, Being remains incorporeal (*anātmya*),²² unsupported (*anilayana*), invisible (*adr̥śya*) and undefined (*anirukta*), in short unaffected in any manner by all the processes and products of

Becoming. As Yājñavalkya puts it, "The eternal greatness of the Being neither increases by these effects, nor decreases."²³ The Being, according to the *Taittirīya Upanishad*, when it transforms itself into Becoming is both actual and an emanation (*sachcha tyachcha*), defined and undefined (*niruktam chāniruktam cha*), both supported and unsupported (*nilayanam chānilayaham cha*), both real and untrue (*satyam chāṇṛtam cha*).²⁴

Let us consider the account of individuation as given in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad*.²⁵ The world in the beginning was unmanifest and undifferentiated (*avyakta*); there was only the Self, and nothing else besides. He 'saw' all round (*anuvīkshya*) and found

only himself. He realised: 'I am.'" As soon as the realisation dawned on him, he got frightened (*abibhet*). Loneliness brings on dread, says the text, but then, why should one be afraid, when there was no one else? Fear therupon departed (*vīyāya*).

सोऽबिभेत्तस्मादेकाकी बिभेति स हायमीक्षां
चक्रे यन्मदन्यन्नास्ति कस्मान्नु बिभेमिति । तत
एवास्य भयं वीयाय । कस्माद्ध्यभैष्यद्
द्वितीयाद्वै भयं भवति ॥

However, the one Self was still lonely, and had no 'delight' (*na reme*); he was in need of company. Then he 'desired' (*so'kāmayata*), and the desire was indeed true and great: he immediately became large as if a man and a woman were locked in embrace. Being great, he split into two pieces, one was male and the

other female. The female hid herself. But the male insisted on getting at her. In this drama of female withdrawal and male aggression, the entire creation came into being.

This is a powerful imagery, symbolically as well as psychologically. The individual in the womb is secure, being covered over by the mother's being; as soon as delivery takes place, the individual becomes all alone. The security of the mother's womb having gone, the new-born infant is frightened, scared, shocked. This is indeed a traumatic experience, not mental or emotional in the differentiated sense, but involving the whole being in a fundamental way. The process of growth dissipates this fear, but 'longing for delight' in company sets

in, and stimulates the process of maturation.

The text not only mentions 'desire' (*kāma*) as an organismic inclination, but suggests that in each individual there is a male aspect as well as a female aspect, an introvert tendency as well as an extravert tendency. Every man is both a cow and a bull, a she-goat and a he-goat,

a woman and a man. All this is for the satisfaction of the Self, for manifestation and differentiation in terms of names and forms. When the self becomes individuated, not only by his body and mind which are forms, but by a variety of psychological processes (names) such as the ego, dread, desire, masculinity and femininity, there will emerge worlds within oneself. The self is said to



make for himself mind (*manas*), speech (*vāk*) and breath (*prāṇa*); and these three are the worlds (*lokāḥ*) of our experience.²⁶ And the self is composed of these three factors, differentiated into these three aspects; and this is all that can be experienced; 'known, to be known, and unknown'.²⁷

PRĀṆA AND PRAJÑĀ

The self thus is regarded as the hub in which all the worlds are like the threads that come out of the spider, or the sparks that come out of the blazing fire.²⁸ The doctrine that the unmanifest self and the manifest, differentiated world are in essence one does not prejudice the Upanishadic inquiry into individuation. But the sage was not



impressed by the manifold details of human constitution, but attempted to comprehend the details in broad universals. The *Āraṇyakas* enumerate as many as a thousand and eight parts of the human body.²⁹ But the Upanishads spoke only of two major manifestations of the Self, namely the living principle or breath (*prāṇa*) and consciousness (*prajñā*).³⁰ In the

former were included the physical body, nutritive functions, sense perceptions and mind. Raikva explains to Jānaśruti in *Chhāndogya Upanishad*³¹ that even as air among elements is a 'snatcher-unto-itself' (*saṁvarga*) so is Breath among the senses.

वायुर्वाव संवर्गो यदि वा अग्निरुद्धातयति
वायुमेवाप्येति यदा सूर्योऽस्तमेति वायुमेवाप्येति
यदा चन्द्रोऽस्तमेति वायुमेवाप्येति ॥

The meaning of 'snatching-unto-oneself' is containing within one's own nature the activities of others, grasping and collecting (*saṁgrahaṇa*), taking on oneself the nature and work of others (*saṁvarjana*), absorbing in oneself the distinctive functions of others. The text explains: 'Breath, verily, is

a snatcher-unto-oneself. When one goes to sleep his speech, eye, ear and mind just go to Breath''.³² They are all snatched up by Breath, contained and retained within Breath.

On waking up, these functions are resumed by specific faculties. Breath therefore is fundamentally the stuff out of which the cognitive and active senses are made; or, as a text describes, it is 'the beam on which the eye, ear, mind etc., rest.'³³ It was Udaṅka-saulbāyana's view that this Breath is Brahman itself: What can one do without it?³⁴ It is in this sense that the Breath is like the wind that never stops or rests while one is alive.

This breath is indeed sometimes equated with the Self, as

for instance in *Kaushītakī*, and mind is said to be its messenger, eye its watchman, ear the announcer and speech the handmaid.³⁵ All the senses (including mind) bring it offerings without its begging for them; that is to say, they procure for the self data from the world, without the Self actively involving itself in such procurement. The faculties are active, and they discharge their functions as if on their own; but their ultimate stimulation is from Breath, and it is the purpose of Breath that they serve. They all pour their matter into it and that is how the Breath, becomes 'all-obtaining' (*sarvāpti*).³⁶

For this Breath, the physical body is the home, where it occupies a central position; all the organs and instruments are located here. Its

covering is said to be the head; breathing (respiration) is the post which sustains it, and food is the rope that holds it.³⁷ The Breath in this description is manifest; it has a concrete form, although not so gross as the forms that senses and mind assume. The identification of Breath with the Self, mentioned above, is rather figurative. Bhṛgu-vāruṇī learns from his father that Breath is Brahman,³⁶ but only in one of five phases: it is only proximate identification. The Upanishad clearly holds that the Self dwells in the breath and is different from it; Breath is Self's body, and is controlled by Self from within, and the Breath cannot reach it, or perceive it.³⁹

We read in *Praśna-upanishad* (2,6) that even as the spokes of a

wheel are centred in the hub, everything is established in prāṇa:

अरा इव रथनाभौ प्राणे सर्वं प्रतिष्ठितम् ॥

The other manifestation of Self is individual consciousness (*prajñā*), which is also referred to as 'conscious individuality' (*prajñātman*).⁴⁰ While this consciousness is coeval, and thus regarded in a way as identical, with the Breath, the special function of consciousness in cognition and deliberation has been noted. Even the Upanishad that identifies them speaks of 'the two together residing in this body, and the two together departing from it (at death).'⁴¹ The Breath is described as the reason for our survival (or 'immortality in this world' in the language of the

Upanishad). While consciousness makes for all 'true conceptions'⁴² or what we should call meaningful experiences, the breath is involved in the physiological functions including sensation. Sensations are processes that occur at specific sense-seats, and these processes are involuntary, spontaneous and unconscious. As soon as there is an object outside, stimulating a sense-organ, sensations occur, provided the sense-organ is not defective. This is the function of Breath. But what is thus prehended by the sense-organ requires another process, by means of which the sensations are transformed into conscious perception or meaning-laden experiences. And this is the function of 'individual consciousness'.



The Upanishad says: 'Devoid of consciousness, the eye cannot perceive any form whatever, nor the ear any sound, the tongue any taste; one would say, 'My mind was elsewhere, I did not see, hear....'⁴³

अन्यत्र मे मनोऽभूत्। नाऽपश्यम्॥

There is also a suggestion that consciousness would *mount* on (*samāruhya*) the Breath-modifications, before the latter can discharge their functions appropriately.⁴⁴ That this consciousness is not to be confused with mind is clearly brought out by the inclusion of mind (as the thinking faculty) in the list of Breath-modifications along with eye, ear, nose, speech, tongue, body-basis of cutaneous sensations, hands, feet

and the generative organs. The forms of the Breath which we recognise as the special senses are said to be outwardly correlated (*parastāt prativihita*) with the physical elements existing in their own right, outside the individual (*bhūtamātra*); each of these senses is an aspect (*ekam āṅgam*) of the individual consciousness insofar as perceptions occur.⁴⁵

The rôle of consciousness becomes clear in the Upanishadic discussion on waking and sleep. When we are awake, the senses are active, and they are specific in their activities; each has its own domain, and its own characteristic modalities. A sense-function will never transgress its specificity, and the

Upanishads call this 'fixed observance' (*vrata*). When, however, the individual sleeps, the senses are no longer active, despite the potentiality. They are no longer correlated outwardly, and the external stimulations fail to be perceived. This is because the aspect of consciousness which makes a sense alert while awake is withdrawn in sleep. 'When a person falls asleep, the individual consciousness takes away consciousness from Breath-modifications and rests in the space inside the heart.'⁴⁶

तद्यत्रैतत्सुप्तः समस्तः सम्प्रसन्नः स्वप्नं न विजानात्यासु तदा नाडीषु सृप्तो भवति तं न कश्चन पाप्मा स्पृशति। तेजसा हि तदा सम्पन्नो भवति॥

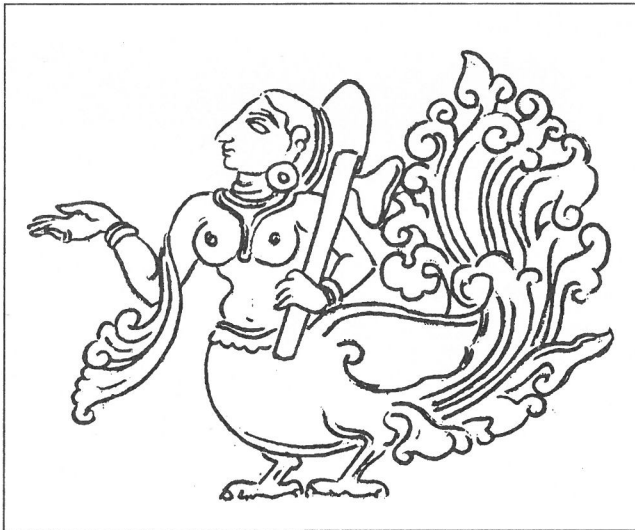
(छान्दोग्ये 5,4,6)

This is how the senses are 'restrained' (*grhṇāti*). The Breath 'snatches up' the sense, while consciousness 'restrains'. The two expressions bring out the physiological and psychological nature of these functions: one provides the core, and the other content; one the ground, and the other figures thereon.

Consciousness here is identified with fundamental 'thought-processes' (*chitta*), and the entire group of thought-processes is said to be interwoven with Breath-modifications.⁴⁷ Breath impressed with consciousness is what in experience is involved as self. Enlivened and stimulated by consciousness, the Breath becomes

differentiated. 'When consciousness (*chitta*) departs from the body, then (as in stupor, or a man weak and about to die) one does not hear, nor see, nor speak, nor think... becomes unitary in Breath.'⁴⁸ This breathing spirit is the conscious self, says an Upanishad.⁴⁹ In another Upanishad, Yājñavalkya is asked by Śākalya, "On what are you and the self based?" and Yājñavalkya replies, "On the breath."⁵⁰ Śaṅkara

commenting on this takes 'you' to mean the body, and the 'self' the 'heart'; the two are founded on the processes of the Breath. Śākalya's problem refers to the conscious and embodied individuality that is experienced by every one as his self. In this individuality, consciousness and the vital processes are inextricably involved. This is what is characterised as phenomenal involvement.



NOTES AND REFERENCES

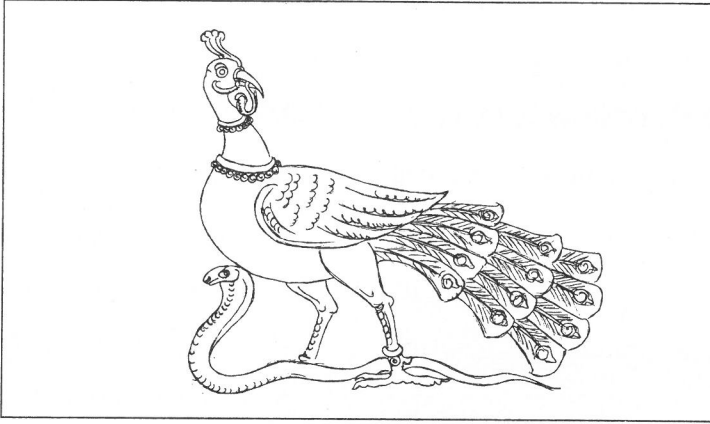
1. *Bṛhadārṇyaka-up.*, 2, 4, 5
2. *Taittirīya-up.*, 2, 6, 1
3. *Kena-up.*, 1, 1
4. *Ibid.*, 1, 2
5. *Bṛhadārṇyaka-up.*, 6, 1, 7 ('prāṇa-saṁvāda'). Elsewhere, there is the following account. The senses started disputing amongst themselves in the matter of superiority. All of them left the body and the body lay, not breathing but dry, like a log of wood. The speech, eye, ear and mind entered it, one after another. These senses became active, but the body did not get up. It is only when Breath entered that the body arose (*Kaushītaki-up.*, 2. 14).
6. *Kaushītaki-up.*, 3, 2.
7. *Ibid.*, 3, 2
8. *Bṛhadārṇyaka-up.*, 1, 5, 22
9. *Aitareya-Āraṇyaka*, 2, 1, 4, 11
10. *Kaushītaki-up.* 3, 3
11. *Bṛhadārṇyaka-up.*, 3, 4, 1
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Kena-up.*, 1, 4, 8

14. *Ibid.*
15. *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya*, 3, 2, 17
16. *Aitareya-up.*, 2, 3, 1, 1
17. *Chhāndogya-up.*, 2nd anuvāka
20. *Ibid.*, 2, 7
21. *Ibid.*, 2, 6
22. *Ibid.*, 2, 7
23. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 4, 4, 23
24. *Taittirīya-up.*, 2, 7
25. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 1st adhyāya, 4th brāhmaṇa
26. *Ibid.*, 1, 5, 3-4
27. *Ibid.*, 1, 5, 8
28. *Ibid.*, 2, 1, 20
29. *Aitareya-Āraṇyaka*, 3, 2, 2, 7
30. *Kaushītaki-up.*, 3, 2
31. *Chhāndogya-up.*, 4, 3, 3
32. *Ibid.*, 4, 2, 3
33. *Aitareya-Āraṇyaka*, 3, 1, 4, 1
34. Cited in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 3, 7, 16

35. *Kaushītaki-up.*, 2, 1
36. *Ibid.*, 3, 4
37. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 2, 2, 1
38. *Taittirīya-up.*, 3, 1-6
39. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 3, 7, 16
40. As in *Kaushītaki-up.*, 3, 3
41. *Ibid.*, 3, 4
42. *Ibid.*, 3, 2
43. *Ibid.*, 3, 7
44. *Ibid.*, 3, 6
45. *Ibid.*, 3, 5
46. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 2, 1, 17
47. *Muṇḍaka-up.*, 3, 1, 9
48. *Kaushītaki-up.*, 3, 3
49. *Ibid.*
50. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 3, 9, 26

CHAPTER FOUR

VIDYĀ FOR VIMUKTI



In the Upanishads we frequently meet with earnest seekers who approach wise men for instruction. Janaka, King of Videha, goes to Yājñavalkya with the request “Please, Sir, instruct me.”¹ Jānaśruti the nobleman approaches Raikva, the man with the cart: “Now Sir, teach me Divinity”.² Satyakāma-jābāla of unknown lineage wants to learn the sacred doctrine at the feet

of Hāridrumata-Gautama³; and Upakosala-kāmalāyana dwelt as a student of the same lore with Satyakāma.⁴ The great householders Prāchīnaśāla-Aupamanyava and others approach Uddālaka-āruṇi, who takes them to Ásvapati-kekaya for instruction in the nature of Self and Spirit.⁵ Nārada goes to Sanatkumāra: “Om, teach me, Sir.”⁶ Bhṛgu-vāruṇi goes to his own father

Varuṇa for being taught about Brahman⁷; Nachiketas, the bold boy goes to Yama himself for instruction.⁸ King Bṛhadratha seeks out Śākāyanya, who was 'aglow like a smokeless fire' and asks to be taught about the true nature of Self.⁹ Sukeśa-Bhāradvāja and others, who were all devoted students, came to Pippalāda for instruction.¹⁰ Not infrequently do we hear of scholars who think they know, but on encounters, settle down as students. Śvetaketu-āruṇeya's encounter with Pravāhaṇa-jaivali, and Gārgya-bālāki's meeting with Ajātaśatru¹² are illustrations.

They all want to *know*, and they all go to the *seers* of celebrity with 'fuel in hand', symbolising devotion and dedication. A few of them, like Nārada and Śvetaketu of

the *Chhāndogya Upanishad*, were proficient in all the branches of sophisticated learning, and could pass in learned assemblies as the very best scholars; but even they had to recognise that their learning was of a lower kind, and altogether inadequate for understanding problems of Being and Becoming. The Upanishads make a distinction between the higher knowledge (*parā-vidyā*) and the lower knowledge (*aparā-vidyā*).¹³ Vedic studies, grammar, rituals, prosody, astrology, ancient lore, mathematics, polity, logic, fine arts and so on (a long list is given in *Chhāndogya Upanishad* 7, 2, 2: Ṛgveda, yajurveda, sāma-veda, ātharvaṇa, itihāsa, purāṇa, pitrya, rāsi, daiva, nidhi, vākovākya, ekāyana, deva-vidyā, brahma-vidyā, bhūta-vidyā, kshattra-vidyā,

nakshatra-vidyā, sarpa-deva-jana-vidyā, etc.) are all included in the lower variety; and they fall short of real knowledge, which enables one not only to know his own self but cross over the sea of sorrowing (*śokasya pāram tārayati*).¹⁴

The Upanishads do not brush this complex of 'lower' knowledge aside as utterly useless, or as irrelevant. On the other hand, these disciplines are recognised as of great merit in the transactional world, although their value in developing the transcendental insight is questioned. The 'lower' knowledge deals with the phenomenal world which is a manifest, presentational aspect of Brahman (*apara-brahman, mūrta-rūpa*), while the higher is concerned with the Brahman in his

transcendental, unmanifest aspect (*para-brahman, amūrta-rūpa*). The former is necessary for success in life, but the skills it involves pertain only to 'this world', outside (*idam*). But the Upanishads are concerned with the world within, organised around the 'I' (*aham*), regulated and covered over by the inner controller (*Īśa*). The realisation that the phenomenal world of objectivity is animated and sustained by an inscrutable principle of transcendental subjectivity is the starting point of Upanishadic inquiry.¹⁵ This is how the higher knowledge acquires value.

To know that self, therefore, is the purpose of Upanishadic knowledge. This is the *leit-motif* of all the discourses and dialogues here.

“Know that one alone, the self, and leave off all other talk!” admonished an Upanishad curtly.¹⁶

तमेकं जानथ आत्मानमन्या
वाचो विमुञ्चथ ॥

And knowledge of the Self is sharply distinguished from other kinds of knowledge; and it is called knowledge only because there is no other word that is as impressive or as meaningful. The expression is more suggestive than denotative. And the knowledge here is not a mere activity of the senses or of the mind, it is sometimes described as a total perception (*dṛshṭi* or *darśana*). Yājñavalkya paraphrases it: “The Self indeed is to be seen, heard, thought of and meditated upon.”¹⁷

आत्मा वा अरे विजिज्ञासितव्यः ।
श्रोतव्यो मन्तव्यो निदिध्यासितव्यः ॥

But it is made amply clear that the Self cannot be apprehended either by the senses or by the mind. The *Kena Upanishad* has an entire section devoted to the task of impressing on us that the eye cannot see the Self (or Brahman), the ear cannot hear it, the voice cannot express it, the mind cannot think of it, and the Breath cannot breathe it; it is because of the Self that the eye sees, the ear hears, the voice expresses, the mind thinks, and the Breath breathes.¹⁸ ‘No one ever perceives it by the eye (etc.),’ Yama tells Nachiketas: ‘Speech comes back without reaching it, along with mind.’¹⁹ Senses, including mind, are designed to give us information about the outside world; they are outward-oriented. It is not in their nature to turn back on themselves, and it is

certainly impossible for them to apprehend the very principle that animates them.²⁰ Yājñavalkya roundly asks, 'Who can know the one by whom everything is known? O, who can know the knower?''²¹

विज्ञातारमरे केन विजानीयात् ?

The eye sees, not only because of the Self, but for the Self; it is an agent, and instrument. This is true of all the senses and of the mind.

That is why the Self is described as the eye of the eye, ear of the ear, mind of the mind, breath of the breath, and speech of the speech.²² "The self indeed is the perceiver, toucher, hearer, thinker, knower and doer."²³

ĀTMA - VIDYĀ

The Self is eternally the subject, and it can never become an object



of knowledge. Whatever is known by the senses and mind is characterized as 'this' (*idam*), non-Self; it pertains to the presentational world. All ordinary knowledge involves necessarily a dichotomy between the knower and the known, which are brought together by the process of knowing. It can be direct (*pratyaksha*), when brought about by the sense-function, and as such it is bound to the presented objects in space and time; or it can be indirect (*paroksha*), when mind (memory, imagination, reasoning etc.) is involved, as in inference or analogy. In either case, the 'known' is the sense-apprehended as external objects or ideas, while the knower is the sense- or mind-conditioned ego; and the 'knowing processes' include sensations, perceptions,

apperceptions, remembrances, ideations, conceptions and evaluations. Thus, the 'known', the 'knower' and the 'knowing processes' are all aspects of the phenomenal world. And they are all alike sustained by the primary consciousness which serves as both background and ground. This Self which is never the object of knowledge is nevertheless involved in every act of knowledge; its presence has to be assumed.²⁴

The Self-knowledge must therefore be different from direct as well as from indirect types of knowledge. The Upanishads employ an expression, 'immediate, non-indirect' (*sākshāt aparoksha*).²⁵ Non-indirect, however, is not the same thing as 'direct'. Direct knowledge

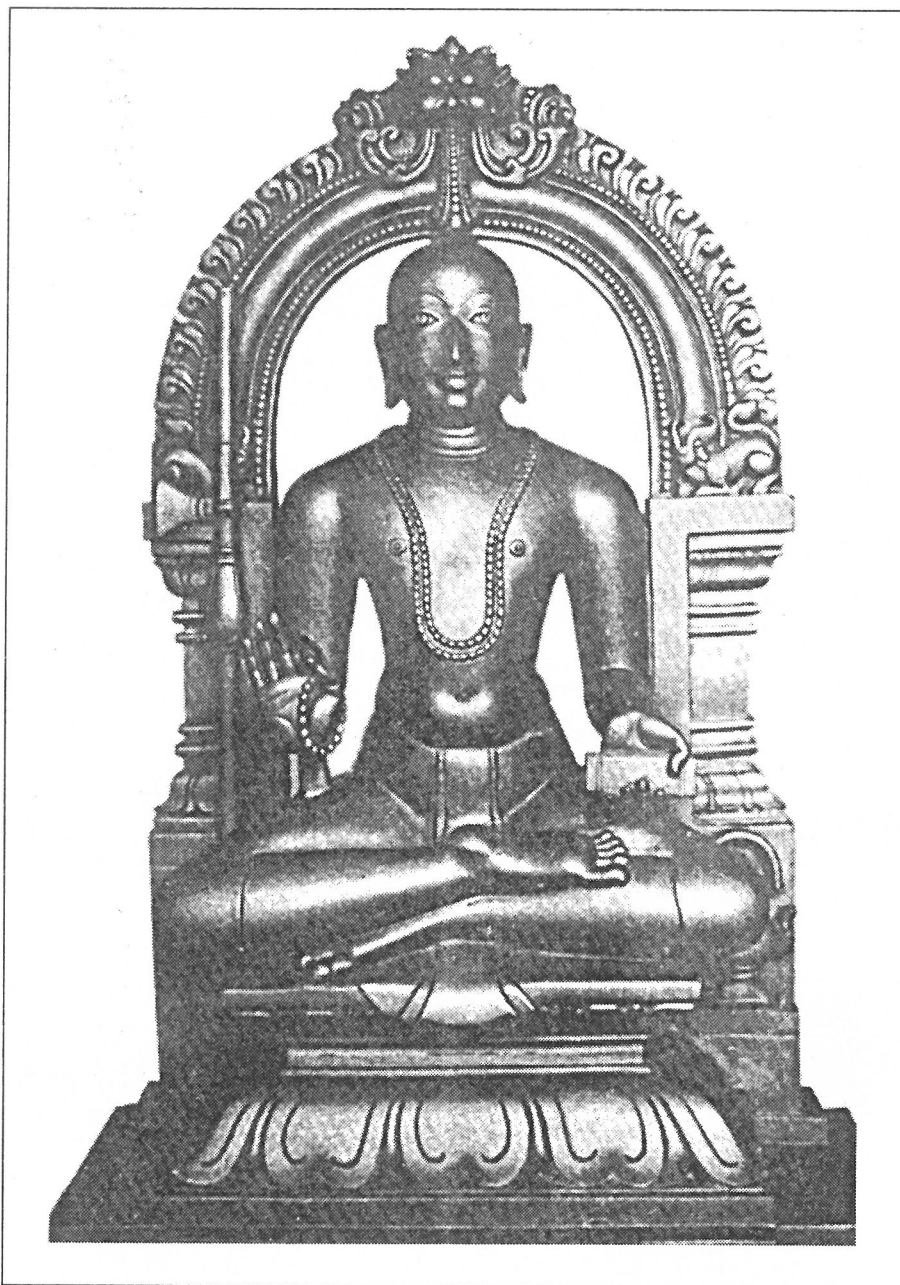
has certain limitations like the availability for senses, presence in time and adequacy of form; it is dependent on the object outside (*vastu-tantra* in later Vedāntic thought). These conditions do not apply to Self-knowledge, because Self is the very principle behind sense-function, it has no recognisable form, and is beyond the normal conception of time; it can in no way be construed as an object. In fact, it is the unfailing subject in all knowledge. And this knowledge does not involve any processes, agent, or medium. It is in this sense that it is described as 'immediate'. The immediacy here is perfect inasmuch as the dichotomy between subject and object is non-existent.

Then how should we approach this Self? The 'immediate, non-

indirect' knowledge does not dawn of its own accord; it must be achieved. That is why the Upanishads insist: 'know!' (*vijijñāśasva*), and the method is described as an extremely difficult one, sharp like the razor's edge, hard of accomplishment, a difficult path indeed'.²⁶

क्षुरस्य धारानिशितं दुरत्ययं
दुर्गं पथस्तत्कवयो वदन्ति ॥

We shall deal with the involvements of the method in a later section, but we should note here that the Upanishads insist on the acquirement of this knowledge by every man, and that they are therefore certain of its possibility. That the knowledge of the Self is a distinct kind of actual knowledge is made clear in the Upanishads.



If Self is the real knower, how can it be known at all? And paradoxically enough, the Upanishads say that it can be known only by the 'mind' and that there is no other way.²⁷ That the expression, Mind, here is employed not in the narrow sense of an 'internal sense-organ' but in the general sense of consciousness (*chetas*) does not make the position any less paradoxical. The Upanishads are aware of this paradox, but plead helpless about it. 'We do not know; we do not understand how one can communicate it. It is different from what is known, and aye, different from what is unknown too! It is not understood by those who understand it, and it is understood by those who do not understand it.'²⁸ The

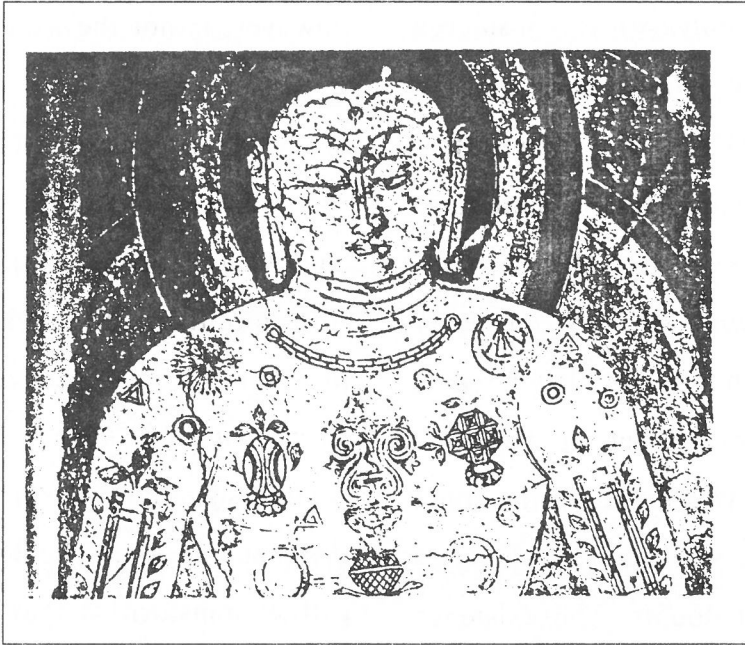
important point here is that it can be known, that it can be understood. And 'how?' is the problem.

There is an interesting dialogue recorded in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad*: Janaka, King of Videha, asks, and the wise Yājñavalkya answers. What is the light (*jyotih*) in which a person lives and moves? The Sun. But when the Sun sets? The Moon. When the moon also sets? Fire. When fire too goes out? Speech. When even speech is hushed? The Self indeed! it is the unfailing light. But what is this Self? Made of knowledge, working through the senses, Self is the light inside the 'heart'; remaining unchanged but transacting with the worlds within and without.²⁹ There can be no light to show up the Self; in fact, Self is

the light which show up everything else. 'There is no sun, moon, stars, lightning or fire there; the Self shining, everything shines after it; all this shines by that light only.'"³⁰ And the description that Self is the smokeless fire³¹ emphasises that this light is independent of conditions (like fuel) and free from changing states (like smoke); it is bright, unchanging, and does not generate states which negate itself. Self is luminous by its very nature and this luminosity remains utterly unaffected by the processes and conditions that obtain in the world.

The Vedāntic expression for the Self-luminosity is *sva-prakāśa*: luminosity is a figurative expression for consciousness. Upanishads have several words to denote

consciousness: *chit*, *chaitanya*, *samvit*, *viñāna*, and *sañjñā*. They all alike signify 'to observe', 'to perceive', 'to know', 'to be aware'; the image of sun, moon, fire or a lamp which lights up the objects is frequently met with in the texts. Consciousness not merely lights up (reveals) the world for us; it is responsible for all our thoughts and actions, itself remaining inactive. The simile of the lamp is pressed here with advantage. But the image of a pure light, not lighting up anything else but lighting up itself, the mere presence of light, uniform and still, formless and all-pervasive, is hard for the mind to conceive. That is why the Upanishad says that the mind turns back from it. There must be some other way of reaching it.



The Upanishads pose the problem : How do we approach the Self, which is pure consciousness? And another problem : Who or what is this Self that we seek to approach?³² The ways of intellect, learning and logic are rejected; for the ordinary man with the transactional consciousness, the Self does not 'shine' at all, although

present in all things hidden.³³ Its presence is not perceived in our normal level of consciousness which is always object-bound. So the first step in the approach, according to the Upanishad, is to know that it exists, that it *is*; there is hardly an alternative to this.³⁴ The Self that is is in fact to be known in terms of 'I am'.³⁵ This consciousness of the

Self (*ātma-pratyaya*) is considered an intuitive, direct knowledge, “ascertainable by the notion that every individual person entertains towards his own Self” (*aham-pratyaya-gamyatvāt*).³⁶ No one ever ‘feels’ that he *is not*; that he *is* is known in every act of cognition (*pratibodha-viditam*). Even the doubt whether one is or is not presupposes the self that doubts. The existence of Self *is not* a matter for reasoning or for intellectual apprehension; it must become the subject of consciousness, a matter for ‘an absolutely direct’ (*param-pratyaksham*) knowledge.

How this kind of knowledge can become reality in one’s experience is the practical issue in the Upanishads. Self-consciousness,

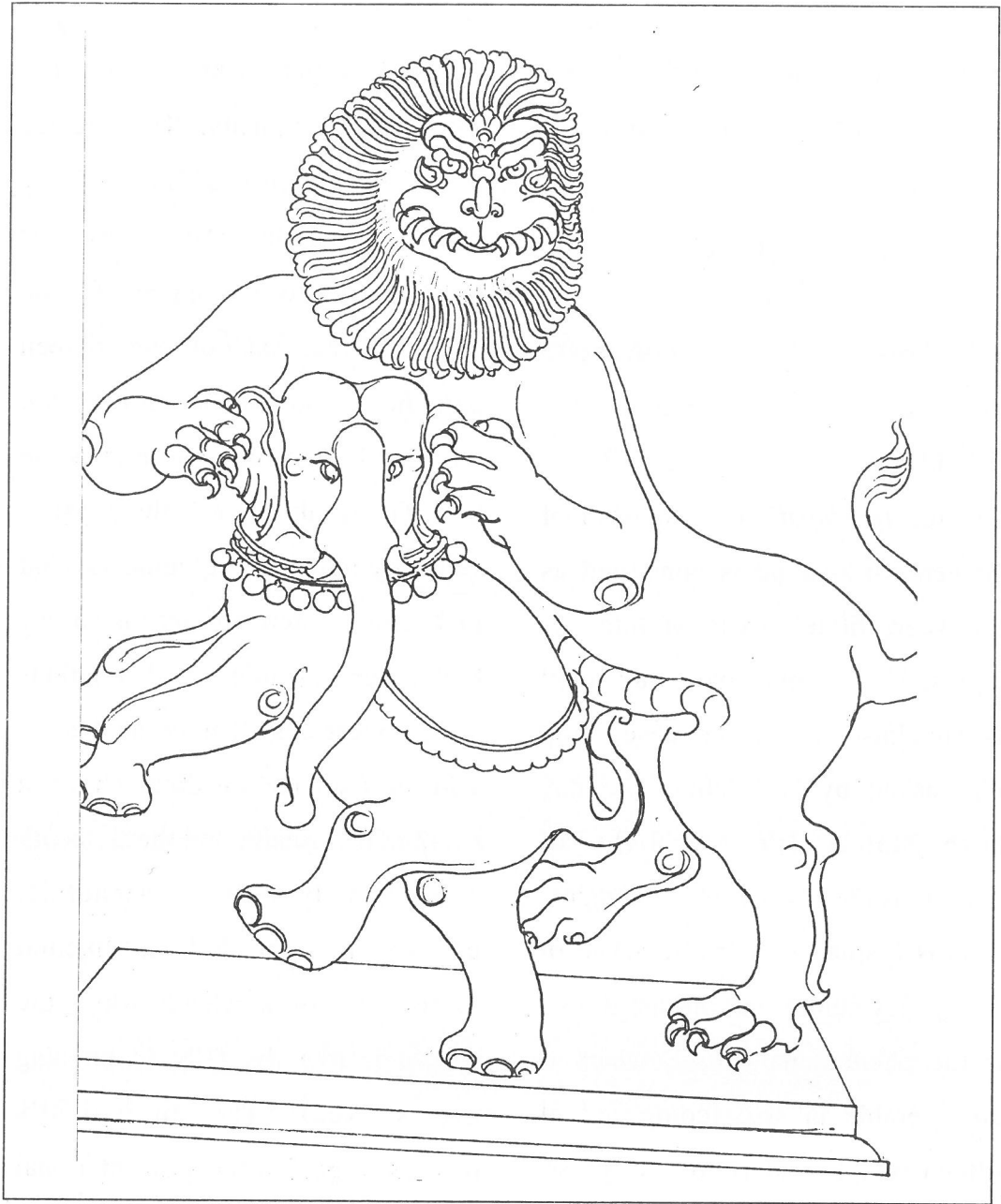
however, is not the achievement of a new state of existence; Self is always Conscious of itself, nay it is itself consciousness. But it is hidden; and what happens in the event of ‘the intuitive, direct knowledge’ mentioned above is that the Self reveals itself.³⁷ This revelation is what is signified by expressions like *dṛshṭi* and *darśana*. The Being, before getting transformed into Becoming, got this consciousness of itself: ‘I am’, and then the whole creation emerged in stages. What was it that the Brahman knew whereby he becomes all this (world)? ‘In the beginning indeed the Brahman alone was there; and it knew only itself: ‘I am Brahman’. Then it was that it became all this.’³⁸ This revelation marks a return to this initial state, so that the individual gets into the

very source, not only of his own being, but of the whole world.

VIDYĀ AND AVIDYĀ

There is a picturesque description of the creator and of the individual in one of the texts.³⁹ The Creator (*prajāpati*) is composed of sixteen parts. If he is construed as the year, fifteen parts of him are nights; his sixteenth part only (day) is steadfast. He is increased and diminished by his nights. The day here stands for the light of consciousness, which is unchanging. This is a small part in the sense of being very subtle. In contrast to this is the phenomenal world, which is considerable in size (composed of fifteen parts), that is to say, gross. The night stands for ignorance

(*avidyā*), which brings about the world of multiplicity. The creator increases (becomes increasingly manifest) and diminishes (becomes hidden) due to the nights. In the individual context, of the sixteen parts he is made of, fifteen parts are the wealth, and only one part is the Self. The wealth here is the physical and physiological equipments that make for all action, that is to say body, senses, mind and relations and possessions. The individual is said to increase or diminish as a result of this wealth, but the sixteenth part, namely Self, is steadfast, unchanging. The Self is likened to the hub of a wheel, while the wealth is like the felly (containing the spokes). The individual's increase signifies the presentational world.



Vidyā and Avidyā

Our ordinary consciousness is on the way of increase, and it is therefore that the subtle and steadfast Self is lost sight of; we are living in the creator's night. 'Many men are drowned in the wealth's way.' This way of increase in phenomenal involvement is termed *avidyā* in the Upanishads, as opposed to *vidyā* which is knowledge of the Self. 'The two, *vidyā* and *avidyā*, are widely divergent in their ends, in fact opposed to each other.'⁴¹

दूरमेते विपरीते विषूची

अविद्या या च विद्येति ज्ञाता ।

Sri Aurobindo in his commentary on the *Īśa Upanishad* explains *vidyā* as the consciousness of unity of things, and *avidyā* as the consciousness of multiplicity: 'Those

who are aware of only the multiplicity of forms and not their reconciling oneness and live in line with that understanding are closed to the light of true knowledge and sink into obscurity.'⁴² The Upanishads point to *Vidyā* as the course open to the earnest seeker: one who would understand reality, or reach the Self, should necessarily diminish his worldly involvement. Austerity, penance, sacrifice and privations involved in what the Upanishads call '*brahmacharyā*' are all intended to diminish the individual's 'wealth component' so that the subtle self would reveal itself, would blaze forth. 'By austerity (*tapas*), Brahman becomes built up,' says a text.⁴³

तपसा चीयते ब्रह्म ॥

The consciousness of unity (*vidyā*) and the consciousness of multiplicity (*avidyā*) although divergent in their ends, and opposed to each other in their direction, are really different grades of the same reality. For the Upanishads, reality is one. Consciousness, whether of the Self or of the presentational world, is one. But there are levels of consciousness, grades of reality. The phenomena in which we are engaged in our normal lives is the coarsest layer of existence; the pure consciousness of the Self ('the smokeless fire') is the subtlest. The transactional level of consciousness is preoccupied with 'this' (*idam*). One who believes that 'this' is everything, and that there is nothing beyond, comes again and again into death's grip, for the 'beyond' does

not occur to him; he is too much engrossed in the 'wealth', and neglects the subtle self.⁴⁴

In a dialogue between Yājñavalkya and Bhujyu-lāhyāyaṇi,⁴⁵ the expressions totality (*samashṭi*) and individuality (*vyashṭi*) are employed; and it is shown how the wind can be a totality (as all-pervading) as well as an individuality (as Breath). This is the prevailing orientation in the Upanishads, and facts of observation are analysed both from the total and individual standpoints. This necessarily involves heavy symbolism. Consider, for instance, the interesting conversation between Gārgya-bālāki and Ajātaśatru.⁴⁶ In answer to Ajātaśatru's question (Who is Brahman?), Gārgya successively lists



sun (āditye), moon (chandre), lightning (vidyuti), space (ākāśe), wind (vāyau), fire (agnau), water (apsu), mirror (ādarśe), sound (śabde), quarters of space (dikshu), shadow (chhāyāyām), and body (ātmani) as containing the person (*purusha*) who is to be regarded as Brahman. These are not to be regarded as merely natural phenomena; the import is essentially

symbolic. The commentator Śaṅkara has related them all to the individual.⁴⁷ Sun, which is preëminent and the head of all living beings really stands for the eye; moon is the *mind*; the brilliant flash of lightning is the *skin* which is spread all over the body; space is the full but non-active space within the 'heart' (*hṛdayākāśa*); wind which is like 'an unconquered army' is the Breath in

man; fire, the vanquisher, is *speech*; water is the *vital fluid* in the body related to sex; mirror, which is bright and shining is the *nature of transparency* (*prasāda-svabhāva*); sound which follows one as he goes is *life* (*asu*); quarters of space represent *ears*; shadow which is described as death is really the 'veiling ignorance' (*āvaraṇātmaka-ajñāna*); and finally the body (*ātman*) signifies individual consciousness. Gārgya stops here. And, while Ajātaśatru agrees that each of these is an aspect of Brahman, he does not think that this is the whole story. 'This is not all,' he tells Gārgya, 'the real of the real (*satyasya satyam*) transcends all that is manifest; it is of the nature of pure consciousness (*viññānamayaḥ*), but enlivens all organs which function in wakefulness

and in sleep withdraws from them into the 'space within the heart' and rests there.'"⁴⁸

यत्रैष एतत्सुप्तोऽभूद्य एष विज्ञानमयः
पुरुषस्तेदषां प्राणानां विज्ञानेन विज्ञानमादाय य
एषोऽन्तर्हृदय आकाशस्तस्मिच्छेते । तानि यदा
गृह्णात्यथ हैतत्पुरुषः स्वपिति नाम ।

The *person* that is referred to in the above dialogue is, according to Śaṅkara, the individual that acts in the world and experiences the world (*kartā bhoktā cha*). The problem thus would be in what part or organ or function of the individual is contained the animating spirit, the Self. Each of the bodily structure - function-complexes enumerated above is a level of consciousness, a degree of reality; but to get at the *real* reality, viz., the Self, one has to

transcend all these levels and degrees. This becomes clear when we examine the very course the Self has taken in its manifestation: the various elements mentioned in the cosmological speculations of the Upanishad, represent different stages in evolution, and the Self has to transcend each stage before he unfolds himself more.

A highly suggestive formulation occurs in the course of a dialogue between king Janaka and the sage Yājñavalkya concerning what is Light for the individual,⁴⁹ where sun, moon, fire, speech and the Self are in a sequence mentioned as lights. The symbolism here is clear. Sun (āditya) represents sense-perception (eye etc.), moon (chandramā) mind, fire (agni) powers of intuitive

understanding, speech (vāk) faculty of reason, and Self (ātmā) pure and free consciousness.

अस्तमित आदित्ये याज्ञवल्क्य
चन्द्रमस्यस्तमिते शान्तेऽग्नौ शान्तायां वाचि
किं ज्योतिरेवायं पुरुष इत्यात्मैवास्य
ज्योतिर्भवतीत्यात्मनेवायं ज्योतिष्ठास्ते पल्ययते
कर्म कुरुते विपल्येतीति ॥

These are different levels of consciousness, each level being transcended by the next, during the course of evolution. From sensations to thinking, from thinking to intuition, from intuition to reasoning and from reasoning, to the total, free consciousness, the development is progressive, the manifestation is gradual and graded. The higher level includes the lower level, and transcends it, so that the highest

level, viz., that of total, free consciousness, includes all the preceding levels. It is in this sense that the Self is described as 'the person composed of mind, with the nature of light, subtle like a grain of rice or barley, ruling over everything and governing the whole universe, whatsoever there is.'⁵⁰

मनोमयोऽयं पुरुषो भाः सत्यस्तस्मिन्नन्तर्हृदये
यथा ब्रीहिर्वा यवो वा स एष सर्वस्येशानः
सर्वस्याधिपतिः सर्वमिदं प्रशास्ति यदिदं
किञ्च ॥

THE KOSHAS

Each of the lights mentioned above is a level of consciousness. Knowledge of the Self must not only include all these levels, but must proceed in that order. Sense-organs provide the individual with knowledge. The sense-organs are called information-procurers (*avarodhini*),⁵¹ or object-apprehenders (*grahas*).⁵² Eye, ear, nose, tongue, skin, and mind are mentioned as cognitive sense-organs;



and they are described as modifications of Breath. Besides the different physiological systems that the five-fold Breath is associated with, different sense-functions are also related with it. *Prāṇa* proper, viz., up-breathing, is represented in the eye; *vyāna* (on-breathing) with the ear; *apāna* (down-breathing) with speech in one text⁵³ and with mind in another;⁵⁴ *udāna* (out-breathing) with skin in one text⁵⁵ and with speech in another; and *samāna* (back-breathing) with mind in one text and touch in another.

Although the sense-organs have their own specific functions and areas of functioning, mind works with all these sense-organs, and is commonly involved in their functioning. But it has its own functions, which are altogether different from those of

any of the senses. The Upanishads enumerate several of these functions: perception (*ājñāna*), intelligence (*prajñāna*), wisdom (*medhas*), conception (*saṁkalpa*), thinking (*mati*), discrimination (*viññāna*), perseverance (*dhṛti*), thoughtfulness (*manīśhā*), purposiveness (*kratu*), desires (*kāma*), will (*vaśa*), memory (*smṛti*), and impulsiveness (*jūti*),^{55a} doubt (*vichikitsā*), faith (*śraddhā*), shame (*hrīḥ*), fear (*bhīḥ*) and meditation (*dhīḥ*).^{55b} Broadly, all these are comprehended under 'thought' (*manas*), the processes that occur within the individual for comprehending and manipulating the data received from the 'procurers' (viz., senses).

It is interesting that in these old texts mind has been intimately

connected with the expressive faculty, namely speech; and their interdependence has been recognised. One of the familiar Upanishadic prayers has: 'May my speech get settled in mind, and may my mind get settled in speech.'⁵⁶

वाङ्मे मनसि प्रतिष्ठिता मनो मे वाचि ॥

Mind is primarily a receptive apparatus and speech an expressive, communicative apparatus; the two together constitute the psychic person who knows, feels and wills. It is interesting too that mind is located in the 'heart'⁵⁷ where also Self is said to reside. This explains the Upanishadic insistence that one knows the self whose form is not to be seen, only by the heart and by the mind.⁵⁸

Reference has here to be made to an account in the *Taittirīya Upanishad*⁵⁹ where the bodily self (*śārīra-ātman*) is described as progressively composed of food (*anna*), breath (*prāṇa*), mind (*manas*), consciousness (*viññāna*) and bliss (*ānanda*). Food represents materialised covering; breath the life-energy; mind the power to cognise objects and control sense-organs; consciousness the knowledge that is not bound by the mind-and-senses but subliminal or supramental awareness; and bliss the free and essential consciousness, aware of its own existence. Each one of these constitutes a 'Person' (*purusha*) : material person, vital person, mental person, consciousness-person and bliss-person. These are also grades of reality in manifestation, the

different tiers of becoming.⁶⁰ And what is of interest to us here is that they represent levels of knowledge.

That these levels are not mutually exclusive fields of action, but that the thread of consciousness runs through them all alike is the position of the Upanishads. Yājñavalkya asks Pātañjala-kāpya: 'What is the thread by which this world (inside man) and the other world (outside) and all things are tied together?', and himself answers: 'Wind'. And 'What is the inner controller who from within controls this world and the other world and all the things?'. The answer is: 'Dwelling in the senses, but other than the senses, whom the senses do not know but whose physical body the senses are, viz., the Self, the

unseen seer, unheard hearer, unthought of thinker, un-understood understander."⁶¹

यः प्राणे तिष्ठन्प्राणादन्तरो यं प्राणो न वेद यस्य प्राणः शरीरं यः प्राणमन्तरो यमयत्येष त आत्माऽन्तर्याम्यमृतः ॥ ... अदृष्टो द्रष्टाऽश्रुतः श्रोतोऽमतो मन्ताऽविज्ञातो विज्ञाता नान्योऽतोऽस्ति द्रष्टा नान्योऽतोऽस्ति श्रोता, नान्योऽतोऽस्ति मन्ता नान्योऽतोऽस्ति विज्ञातैष त आत्माऽन्तर्याम्यमृतः ॥

The wind here is the Breath vitalising the body and senses, but it is itself vitalised and guided by consciousness which is more fundamental and nearer to the Self. The Upanishadic concept of *purusha* (person) is one of totality. Breath is the mechanical aspect thereof, and consciousness is the teleological aspect. Vitalisation and direction are both involved in this concept.



THE AVASTHAS

While the reality of individual experiences and the discrete contents thereof are not denied, the Upanishads seek to emphasise that the underlying reality is one, and that this is Consciousness. It works at different levels according to the materials and media available at these levels, without losing its essential identity. They are modes of knowledge, but basically consciousness or knowledge is without modalities. It is this basic consciousness that Upanishads describe as 'bliss' (*ānanda*).

The nearest approach to this 'bliss' experience is in deep, dreamless sleep, an apparently unconscious state. Sleep is an experience, not an absence of

experience. But it is an experience that does not involve knowledge-modes, dependent upon senses or mind. 'When one is asleep, one knows nothing at all, for he has crept out through the 72,000 heart-veins (*hitā*) into the pericardium (*purītat*) and is resting there'.⁶² The heart-veins are partly mystical and partly physiological; the same text in another context, explains that a vein or channel through which consciousness flows is 'minute, as a hair subdivided a thousand-fold'.⁶³ 'Heart' here is to be taken as the physical organ commonly known as heart,⁶⁴ and pericardium (*purītat*) is a sort of intestine within the heart, or the 'field of heart' (*hṛdaya-pariveshṭanam*), as Śaṅkara explains it. Consciousness flowing out of this heart into the pericardium signifies

the movement from the concrete to the abstract, from the form to the formless, from outward orientation to a withdrawal of it. It is a shift in the levels of consciousness. Then the text continues to describe that when consciousness is withdrawn from the heart into the pericardium, it is, 'beyond desires, free from evil, without fear.... the individual when in complete union with the Self, knows nothing within or without.'⁶⁵ The import is that consciousness has been withdrawn not only from the phenomenal involvement but from individualisation also, so that consciousness is free, without modalities, without dimensions, altogether unrelated. The Sanskrit word for sleep means 'gone to his own' (*svam apītaḥ*), 'has become being' (*satā sampannaḥ*).⁶⁶ That is

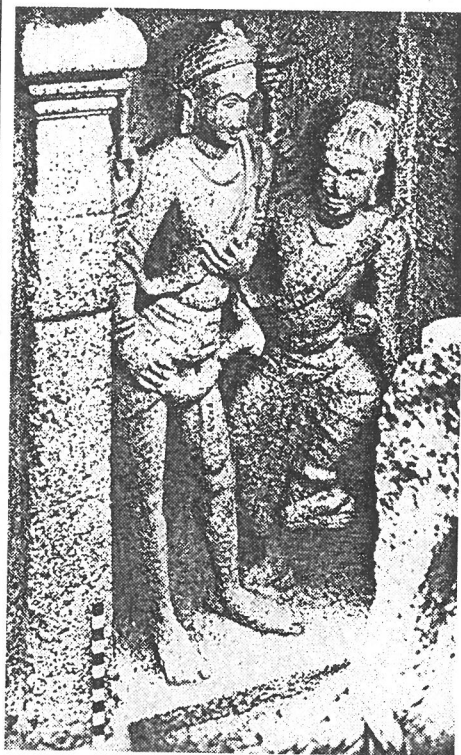
to say, the entire structure of Becoming, which we experience while we are awake, is withdrawn into Being. This is how we are not aware either of the world or of our individuality, when we are asleep. This state is technically termed 'cessation of phenomenal projections and annulment of proliferations' (*prapañchopaśama*) in Vedānta.⁶⁷

The Breath in this state continues without modifications into senses or mind, as a 'snatcher-unto-itself',⁶⁸ and consciousness therefore becomes disconnected with concrete presentations, and remains pure. It will just exist (*sat*), and is therefore 'without fear or desire', that is to say quiet (*śānta*), or in the Upanishadic language, 'in bliss' (*ānanda*); it is beyond cognition.

For the Upanishads, therefore, knowledge in Sleep is undifferentiated mass-knowledge (*prajñāna-ghana*) free from subjective and objective polarities; all other knowledge involves dimensions and modalities. There is in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, an outline of the doctrine known as *Mantha-vidyā*⁶⁹ which suggests that all normal knowledge and action involves a mixture (*mantha*) of elements. Nature itself is a fine mixture of elements: earth (*bhūh*), atmosphere (*bhuvah*), and sky (*svah*). And, in the individual, these factors occur as body, physical Breath, and consciousness. They are inseparably mixed, integrated, configured. Ordinary knowledge reflects this mixture of contents in experience. Each sense is a 'uniting-field'

(*ekāyanam*) of discrete experiences of a kind, mind the 'uniting field' of all intentions (*saṁkalpas*), heart of all knowings (*vidyās*), even as the sea is the uniting field of all rivers.⁷⁰ Physical sensations and practical experiences get mixed up or integrated in what we call knowledge. Senses are instruments of this integration, but the actual integrator is the mind. For when mind is elsewhere, one cannot see or hear; it is in fact with the mind that one sees or hears.⁷¹

Senses are modifications of Breath, but it is the mind that is actually fastened to the Breath. While awake, mind flies here and there, directing the senses and apprehending objects, in search of a resting ground (*āyatanam*), but gets



only strained thereby, even as a bird fastened with a string flies hither and thither and gets tired. Just as the bird at last settles down upon its fastening, mind rests in the Breath and this is what we call sleep.⁷² But dream is regarded as 'Waking within sleep'. If wakefulness is being in this world, dream is being 'in the other world'. Experiences in wakefulness provide the material or measure (*mātrā*) for dreams, wherein the mind 'tears apart and builds anew' this material.⁷³ Dream-experiences are projections, but they are based on pleasure and delight.⁷⁴ They are real experiences, which the self projects through the mind, although sense-perceptions are absent. 'What is bodily has been struck down; senses are asleep. But the mind is sleepless and looks upon the sleeping senses.'⁷⁵ Mind here

is the creator, fancy is its principle, and pleasure its purpose.

The three conditions (*avasthas*) of consciousness, viz., wakefulness, sleep and dream, are thus three distinct processes of knowledge. Sleeping and wakefulness are considered to be 'two banks for the river of consciousness, (with Self as the great fish moving hither and thither between the banks).

तद्यथा महामत्स्य उभे कूले अनुसञ्चरति पूर्वं
चापरं चैवमेवायं पुरुष एतावुभावन्तावनुसञ्चरति
स्वप्नान्तं च बुद्धान्तं च ॥

In the waking condition one has desires, and transacts with the world outside; in sleep, however, he has no desires whatever, he neither transacts with the world, nor does he project a dream-world of his own.⁷⁶

The Upanishad insists that even though transactions and projections are absent in the condition of sleep, it is knowledge nevertheless, "for knowing on the part of the knower never ceases."⁷⁷ And the important distinction, according to the Upanishad, is the absence of dualism (between knower and known) in the state of sleep, dualism which is necessarily involved in waking experience. The expressions *dvaita* (dualism) and *advaita* (non-dualism) have been employed by Yājñavalkya only in this context: wakefulness is dualistic, while sleep is non-dualistic.⁷⁸ सलिल एको द्रष्टाऽद्वैते । भवत्येष ब्रह्मलोकः सम्राडिति ॥ The former is object-bound knowledge, ordinary knowledge consisting of experiences of ourselves as interacting with the phenomena, senses and mind as

major instruments. The Upanishads classify all arts and sciences under this category, where perceptions, intentions, intellect and reason play their rôles. The latter, however, is the high state, wherein the Self experiences itself directly, without any instrumentation whatsoever. This, according to Upanishads, is

the total and real experience, experience of reality as such. While they do not reject the partial experiences involved in ordinary knowledge as unreal or illusory, the value they attach to the total experience is uncompromisingly important.



NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 4, 2, 1 f.
2. *Chhāndogya-up.*, 4, 2, 1 f.
3. *Ibid.*, 4, 4, 1 f.
4. *Ibid.*, 4, 10, 1 f.
5. *Ibid.*, 5, 11, 1 f.
6. *Ibid.*, 7, 1, 1 f.
7. *Taittirīya-up.*, 3, 1, f.
8. *Kaṭha-up.*, 1, 1 f.
9. *Maitri-up.*, 1, 2
10. *Praśna-up.*, 1, 1 f.
11. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 6, 2, 1
12. *Kaushītaki-up.*, 4, 1
13. *Muṇḍaka-up.*, 1, 4
14. *Chhāndogya-up.*, 7, 1. 3
15. *Íśa-up.*, 1
16. *Muṇḍaka-up.*, 2, 2, 5
17. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 2, 4, 5
18. *Kena-up.*, 1, 2, 8

19. *Kaṭha-up.*, 2, 3, 9
20. *Taittirīya-up.*, 2, 4
21. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 2, 4, 14
22. *Kena-up.*, 1, 2
23. *Praśna-up.*, 4, 9
24. *Kena-up.*, 2, 12
25. Govindagopal Mukhopadhyaya, *Studies in the Uparishads* (The Sanskrit College, Calcutta, 1960), p. 114.
26. *Kaṭha-up.*, 3, 14
27. *Ibid.*, 2, 2, 11. Also *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 4, 4, 18 and *Muṇḍaka up.*, 3, 9.
28. *Kena-up.*, 1, 3 nad 2, 3
29. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 4, 3. 1-7
30. *Kaṭha-up.*, 2, 2, 15
31. *Ibid.* 2, 1, 12
32. *Aitareya-up.*, 2, 5, 1
33. *Kaṭha-up.*, 1, 3, 12
34. *Ibid.*, 2, 3, 12
35. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 4, 4, 12

36. This view was later well propounded by Upavarsha, an Upanishadic philosopher who influenced the great Śaṅkara. Jayanta-bhaṭṭa has preserved a brief statement of Upavarsha's viewpoint: तत्र प्रत्यक्षमात्मानमौपवर्षाः प्रपेदिरे । अहंप्रत्ययगम्यत्वात् ... (*Nyāyamañjarī*). Nākamura, *op. cit.*, p. 99.
37. *Kaṭha-up.*
38. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.* 1, 4, 9-10
39. *Ibid.*, 1, 5, 14 and 15
40. *Kaṭha-up.*, 2, 1, 3
41. *Ibid.*, 2, 1, 4
42. M. P. Pandit, *The Upanishads* (Ganesh and Co., Madras, 1968), p. 68
43. *Muṇḍaka-up.*, 1, 8
44. *Kaṭha-up.*, 1, 2, 23
45. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 3, 3, 2
46. *Ibid.*, 2, 1, 1-20
47. Also in *Chhāndogya-up.*, 3, 18, 3-6 where speech, breath, eye and ear are respectively associated with fire, light, sun and the quarters of the space. And in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 5, 19, 1 f. the five-fold modifications of Breath are related to bodily functions and physical elements (*prāṇa* with eye and sun, *vyāna* with ear and moon, *apāna* with speech and fire, *samāna* with mind and rain-god, and *udāna* with skin and wind) cf.

Aitareya-up., 2,4: Fire became speech and entered the mouth; wind became breath and entered the nostrils, the sun became sight and entered the eyes; the quarters of space became hearing and entered the ears; the moon became mind and entered the heart.

48. *Ibid.*, 2, 1, 17
49. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 4, 3, 2-6
50. *Ibid.*, 5, 6
51. *Kaushītaki-up.*, 2, 3
52. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 3, 2, 1
53. *Ibid.*, 5, 19, 1
54. *Taittirīya-up.*, 1,8
- 55a. *Aitareya-up.*, 4, 5
- 55b. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 1, 5, 3
56. वाङ्मे मनसि प्रतिष्ठिता मनो मे वाचि प्रतिष्ठितमाविरावीर्म एधि ।
57. *Aitareya-up.*, 2, 4 (Also *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 5, 6)
58. *Śvetāśvatara-up.*, 4, 20
59. *Taittirīya-up.*, 2nd valli (brahmānanda-valli), Anuvākas 1-6
60. M.P. Pandit, *op. cit.*, p. 147
61. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 3, 7, 1 and 2, and 16-23
62. *Ibid.*, 2, 1, 19

63. *Ibid.*, 4, 3, 20
64. So Śaṅkara on *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 2, 1, 19:
65. *Ibid.*, 4, 3, 21
66. Cf. *Chhāndogya-up.*, 6, 8, 1
67. The Upaniṣads describe sleep as 'the Brahma-world', to which all of us go day by day; but we do not find it, even as the persons who do not know that a treasure is hidden in their homes, walk over it frequently but do not find it. Cf. *Chhāndogya-up.*, 8, 3, 2.
68. *Ibid.*, 4, 3, 3
69. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 3, 6, 1-13
70. *Ibid.*, 2, 4, 11
71. *Ibid.*, 1, 5, 3
72. *Chhāndogya-up.*, 6, 8, 2
73. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 4, 3, 9
74. *Ibid.*, 4, 3, 10
75. *Ibid.*, 4, 3, 11
76. *Ibid.*, 4, 3, 18 and 19
77. *Ibid.*, 4, 3, 30
78. *Ibid.*, 4, 3, 32 and 4, 5, 15

CHAPTER FIVE

NIHŚREYASA THE ULTIMATE VALUE



This brings us to the problem of values in the Upanishadic thought. The problem of purpose of existence bothered the Vedic poet. He conjured up the grand vision of 'universal and eternal order' (*ṛta*) which is sustained by all the high gods (especially Varuṇa), who are in fact the offsprings of that order. And man's duty was, according to him, to keep

and reflect that order in his own life. Closely related to, and mostly identical with, the *ṛta* was the *satya*, which is declared as the sun (Sūrya or Savitr), whose very nature is this *satya*.¹ If *ṛta* is the expression for essential and unchanging reality, *satya* is the truth as an absolute value in human life. *Satya* (or its variant *sat*), in later times, got mixed

up with *ṛta*, and was identified not only with Brahman but with the 'person composed of mind, subtle and residing within the heart'.² This 'person' who is described as the light (*bhāh*) is the Self, the ground of human existence. In relation to this intrinsic value, man's obligation was to lead the career of *satya*, a life in consonance with, and leading to, *satya*.

Even in the Vedic period, *ṛta* as an order that the gods had to protect by valour and steadfastness naturally evoked the negative concept of 'death' (*mṛtyu*). If the order preserves, creates and builds up, death destroys and breaks down. The fear of death, the all-devouring monster who challenges even the high gods, looms large in many of

the Vedic hymns. *Ṛta* in this sense is described as 'deathlessness' (*amṛta*). The *Ṛgveda* also spoke of the pair: *sat* (real, truth) and *asat* (unreal, falsehood), corresponding with *ṛta* (order) and *mṛtyu* (death). Identified with Brahman and the Self, *Sat-ṛta* was light (*bhārūpa*) while *asat-mṛtyu* was darkness (*tamas*). The Vedic poet and the Upanishadic seer alike pictured a state of affairs where the light was hidden and darkness prevailed, where death swept across and deathlessness was covered over, and where the unreal held the real in captivity.

The familiar Upanishadic prayer, "Lead me from unreal to the real, from darkness to light, and from death to deathlessness"³

असतो मा सद् गमय ।
तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ।
मृत्योर्मा अमृतं गमय ॥

illustrates the career of truth which was mentioned earlier. Man in normal life is caught up in the unreal, feels dull and clouded, threatened by death, and torn with anxiety and sorrow. The imagery of people, “dwelling in the midst of ignorance, deluded, and running aimlessly about like blind men being led by the blind, but puffed up with unfounded confidence”⁴ is a telling one. There are also references in the Upanishadic texts to the “sunless worlds, covered over with blinding darkness in which men wander”⁵, to ‘delusion (*moha*) and sorrow (*śoka*)’⁶ to ‘confusion’ (*sammoha*)⁷ to ‘fetters’ (*bandhana*)⁸ to ‘fear’

(*bhaya*)⁹ and to evils (*pāpa*).¹⁰ Normal life is characterised by anxiety and agitation, ignorance and infatuation. But the Upanishads point out that this state of affairs is not intrinsic to existence. Existence as such, viz., the Self in its natural condition, is free, fearless, immortal, beyond sorrow and evil, immutable and sinless. That is the only absolute value that the Upanishad knows of; that is held out as the end, the goal of human endeavour, the *summum bonum*. To get free, to become deathless, to get rid of impurities, to overcome confusion are involved in the career of *satya*.

The Self (variously called *satya*, *brahman*, *ātman*, and *purusha*) is the value that dominates Upanishadic literature. Search for the Self,

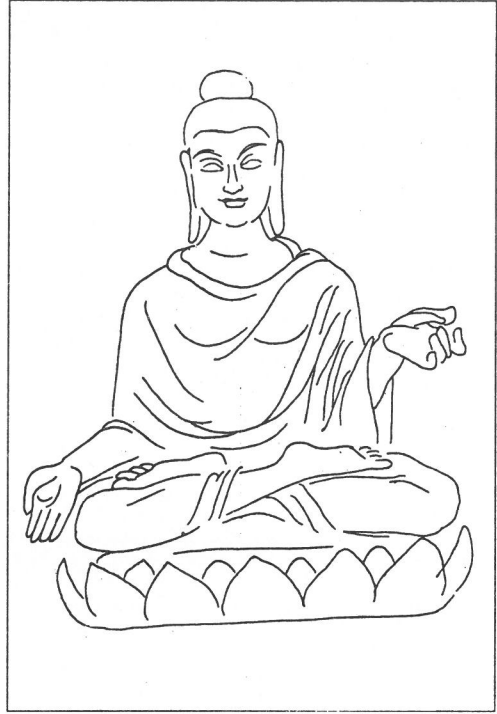
knowledge of the Self, delight in the Self, experiencing of the Self form frequent themes in all the sacred texts. The story of Nachiketas illustrates the ways of the earnest seeker after the absolute value (called 'the better course', *śreyas*) as contrasted with the way of the ordinary mortal (called 'the pleasanter course' *preyas*), who has inadequate substitutions of proximate values in the shape of pleasures and possessions. Both ways present themselves to us. The dull choose the latter way, intent on 'the getting-and-keeping' (*yoga-kshema*), whereas the wise choose the former, intent on the highest value.¹¹

श्रेयश्च प्रेयश्च मनुष्यमेतस्तौ

सम्परीत्य विविनक्ति धीरः ।

श्रेयो हि धीरोऽभि प्रेयसो वृणीते

प्रेयो मन्दो योगक्षेमाद् वृणीते ॥



The attainment of Self as the absolute value is in Indian thought called liberation (*mukti*, *moksha*). The Upanishadic texts contain numerous descriptions of the state of liberation, but essentially it is 'getting united with the Self', or more properly 'becoming the Self'. After this is done, there is nothing

more that needs to be done: one is truly and completely fulfilled. 'Having attained the Self, the sages are content with that knowledge; themselves perfected, and freed from all passions, completely tranquil indeed are they: obtaining the self that is everywhere and in all forms, these devout ones become all (enter into the Self).''¹² Such a fortunate one tides across the sea of sorrow, crosses over sin, and freed from the knots of the heart, becomes immortal.¹³ The Upanishads speak of this state as a calming down, becoming quiet, and abiding peaceful at heart (*śānta-hṛdaya*).¹⁴ It is the tranquillity of all thought.¹⁵ It is a state of utter and absolute composure: the individual has neither desires nor urges to gainful action, and this is considered 'the choicest

essence of the choicest treasure'.¹⁶ This indeed is bountiful tranquillity.¹⁷

शान्तिसमृद्धममृतम् ॥

The expression may suggest a denial of all that we are, a rejection of the normal consciousness with its phenomenal involvement. But the Upanishads insist that the 'knower of Brahman gains the highest, enjoys all desires along with the wise Brahman himself.'¹⁸

ब्रह्मविदोऽप्युक्ता । तदेषाऽभ्युक्ता । सत्यं
ज्ञानमनन्तं ब्रह्म । यो वेद निहितं गुहायां परमे
व्योमन् । सोऽश्नुते सर्वान् कामान्सह । ब्रह्मणा
विपश्चितेति ॥

In other words, the attainment of the Supreme is a fulfilment, a positive gain. The ordinary, limited, and low consciousness that we have

now is transformed, on this attainment, to an all-inclusive, unlimited and high state. It is not a mere detail of comprehension, but a new vision, a new power, a new 'compulsion to change' (Sri Aurobindo), an actualisation of a greater being, a more worthwhile being, a 'real' being. "Knowledge," says Sri Aurobindo, 'does not end with knowing, nor is it pursued and found for the sake of knowing alone. It has its full value only when it leads to some greater gain than itself, some gain of being.'"¹⁹

Self-knowledge in this sense is an instrumental value: it is inseparably related with the consequence of that knowledge, namely 'Delight' (*ānanda*). The Upanishads speak of Delight as the

highest value, identical with the very Self. The Upanishadic Delight is by no means the vulgar hedonistic pleasure complex: it is the fundamental nature of all existence, the very principle responsible for the entire evolution. This is implied in the outburst: 'Indeed, who would breathe, and who would live, if Delight were not in the space (within the heart)?'"²⁰

को ह्येवान्यात् कः प्राण्यात्
यदेष आकाश आनन्दो न स्यात् ॥

The unfoldment of Self into the phenomenal world is rooted in the Delight. But involved in the phenomenal world and caught up in its meshes, the Delight is lost sight of. We go about care-worn and agitated, altogether unconscious of

the Delight, which is our essential nature. But when one gains the essence (by becoming the Self) he is 'Delighted'²¹; for this essence it is that generates Delight.²²

रसो वै सः । रसं ह्येवायं
लब्ध्वाऽऽनन्दी भवति ॥

Thus, Delight is the fundamental principle, the first principle, the core of existence, the innermost of the sheaths which constitute a being. The Upanishad provides a scale of gradation of Delight, starting from human pleasures and ending with the essential Delight mentioned above. The discourse that describes this scale is curiously termed the 'Calculus of Delight' (*ānandasya mīmāṃsā*). It is interesting that in this scale, the initial unit, namely

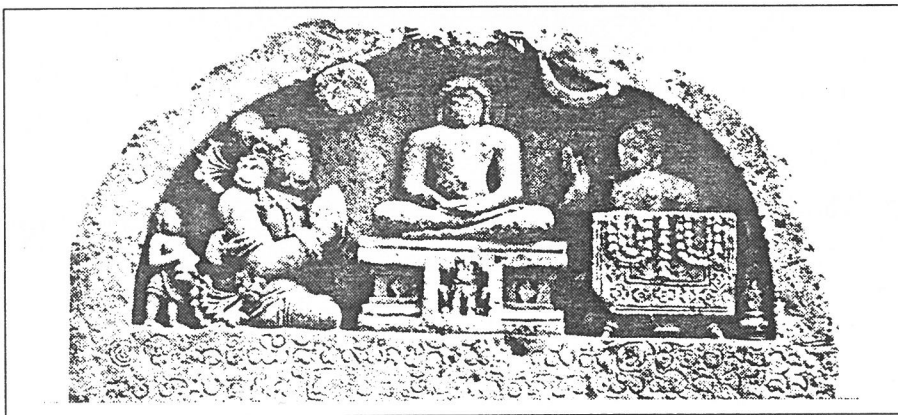
human delight (*mānusha ānanda*) is explained thus: "A youth, good natured, well-read, sharp, firm and strong, ready to benefit by the whole world, this is one measure of human delight."²³ And a hundred measures of this would be one measure of the delight of a man disciplined in the higher knowledge, and free from desires. And so on. A thousand measures of the human delight would be one measure of the Brahman-Delight, which indeed is the essential reality. A continuity is thus established between the ordinary pleasures that we enjoy and the highest Delight which is the very essence of existence. In the transformation of human nature on the wake of the liberating knowledge, there is also a progressive sublimation of the factor of delight.

Absolute existence (*sat*), undifferentiated consciousness (*chit*) and supreme delight (*ānanda*) are but three aspects of the same reality, which is the highest value in the Upanishadic thought, an objective steadily pursued. The reality of it is unquestioned, but the attainment of it (or the realisation of it) has presented to the Upanishadic thinker a practical problem: this is in fact his preoccupation. The aspect of Delight emphasises that the value is subjective.

Nevertheless, inasmuch as it is not a mere feeling, but a total experience, it is both intrinsic and ultimate.

THE HIGHEST GOAL

Self as Delight is no doubt an experience, besides being an existence or a fact. The knower's consciousness is lifted out of the phenomenal involvement, freed from the limitations of ordinary object-bound ego-transactions, and elevated



to the highest state of our being, which in the words of Sri Aurobindo, 'is not a denial, contradiction and annihilation of all that we now are; it is the supreme accomplishment of all things that our present existence means and aims at, but in their highest sense and in the eternal values.'"²⁴ It is always described as a 'gain' (*labdhi*), an 'achievement' (*āpti*), a 'becoming' (*sambhūti*), a positive something added to normal consciousness which makes a whole world of difference.

This becomes clear when we consider the expressions of the obligation in relation to this ultimate value. The end not merely exists but prompts the individual to strive for it, to earnestly aspire for it, and diligently work for it. The

Upanishads ask us to obtain (*nibodhata*)²⁵, to know (*vi jānata*, *vi jijnāsasva*)²⁶, to meditate (*upāsīta*)²⁷, to 'contemplate' (*nididhyāsasva*)²⁸, to 'strike' (*viddhi*)²⁹, to 'think' (*dhyāyatha*)³⁰. The end is to be 'known' (*vi jijnāsitavyam*)³¹, to be 'seen' (*anudrashtavyam*)³², to be 'acquired' (*āptavyam*)³³, to be 'struck' (*veddhavyam*)³⁴, and to be 'sought after' (*anveshtavyam*)³⁵. And there is an air of urgency about the call, for unless one gets it here and now, 'great indeed is the loss'³⁶.

इह चेदवेदीदथ सत्यमस्ति ।
न चेदिहावेदीन्महतो विनष्टिः ॥

Naturally enough, the texts not only mention but dilate upon the means to attain the objective, upon

the instrumental values. A keen desire is of course indispensable, Nachiketas, the hero of *Kaṭha Upanishad*, illustrates this desire: steadfast was his wish, altogether earnest, and unshaken. Satyakāma Jābāla, Maitreyī, Ajātaśatru, Uddālaka-āruṇi, Śvetaketu, Jaivali-Pravāhaṇa, and several others are distinguished by their earnest application. The numerous episodes in the Upanishads which provide the background for the lively dialogues suggest the importance of intent inquiry and earnest search, for “it is only for the person that seeks, the Self unfolds itself; it is obtained only by him.”³⁷

यमेवैष वृणुते तेन लभ्यस्तस्यैष आत्मा
विवृणुते तनूँस्वाम् ॥

Desire to learn, to know and to experience constitutes the very spirit of the Upanishadic sages. Yājñavalkya explains: ‘Man is made of desires. As he desires, so he wills; and as is his will so is his action, and as he acts so he obtains.’³⁸ And the same sage justifies the desire for reaching the Self on the ground that nothing is dearer than Self: Self indeed is the ‘honey’ (*madhu*) in all beings³⁹. Love of Self (*ātma-kāma*) is said to be the foundation for all other desires: ‘Verily it is not for the love of all that the Self is dear, but it is for the love of Self that all is dear.’⁴⁰

आत्मनस्तु कामाय सर्वं प्रियं भवति ॥

Not only is the Self the foundation of all our desires and all

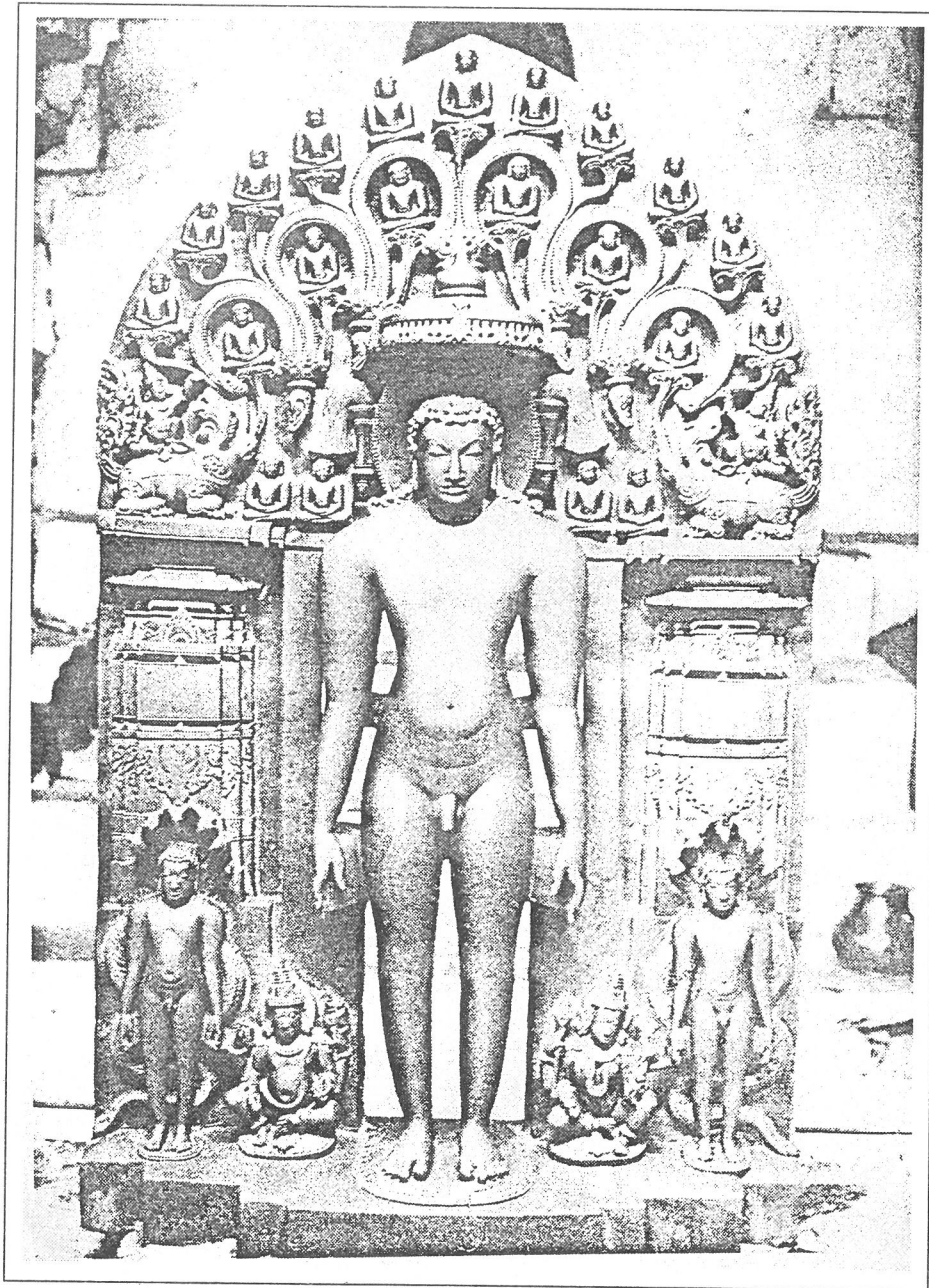
the levels of consciousness, but everything is in fact centred in it, as “spokes of a wheel in the hub.”⁴¹ All objects, all thoughts, all sensations, all physiological processes are sustained only by the Self: it is verily the beam. And knowing the Self, one would know everything.⁴² Therefore, Yājñavalkya insists, one must desire to know the self.

THE MEANS

The desire when earnest and intense assumes the form of striving (*sādhana*), and for striving to be successful the entire being must be prepared and geared up. Upanishads employ two expressions which are significant: *dhātu-prasāda* (equilibrium of all humours and

pacification of all faculties)⁴³, and *sattva-śuddhi* (purity of the whole being)⁴⁴. These processes are said to result in ‘firm mindfulness’ (*dhruvā smṛtiḥ*), which in its turn would snap all fetters of the ‘heart’. The two expressions are employed in the texts as values in themselves: they are really contributive values. They constitute the essential traits of a person in whom the ultimate value has become operative. They do not, however, stand on their own. They would be meaningless without reference to the Self-realisation, to which in fact they contribute, and for which they are in the nature of a preparation.

If this is the preparation for the ultimate attainment, the Upanishads prescribe a training programme to



perfect this preparation, and this is called '*brahmacharyā*' or pursuit of the highest reality. The seekers in the various Upanishads are frequently described as 'living the chaste life of a student of the sacred knowledge'⁴⁵. The expression *brahma-charyā* came in due course to acquire the meaning of a stage in life (*āśrama*), devoted to learning and preparation for the next stage, viz., the householder's; and later to acquire the narrower meaning of celibacy. But the Upanishadic *brahmacharyā* is more a matter of discipline, *askesis*, a dynamic involvement with contemplation. It has little to do with celibacy or with the student's stage in life. Anyone, in whatever station, who feels inclined to reach the highest would bind himself to a teacher under the vow of

brahmacharyā. It is followed by a resolution: "I shall live *brahmacharyā*" (*brahmacharyam vivatsyāmi*) with the consent of a teacher. It would appear that for the Upanishadic mind a teacher was indispensable for *brahmacharyā*.

Seekers after truth always gather round a good teacher, like Yājñavalkya, Varuṇa, Hāridrumata Gautama, Satyakāma Jābāla, Sanatkumāra, Uddālaka-āruṇi and Raikva. The teacher was said to be the prior form, and the pupil the latter form; knowledge their conjunction, teaching being the connection.⁴⁶

आचार्यः पूर्वरूपम् । अन्तेवास्युत्तररूपम् ।
विद्या सन्धिः । प्रवचनं सन्धानम् ॥

The teacher had a firmly established role in the Upanishadic

society: he could aspire to be “glorious among men, better than the very wealthy.”⁴⁷ A good teacher had always a great congregation of students who came to him from all sides ‘as waters run downward, as months run into the year’.⁴⁸ For the universally accepted notion was that ‘Only he knows, who has a teacher.’⁴⁹

आचार्यवान् पुरुषो वेद ॥

The teacher was not a mere master of the sacred lore; he had no doubt intelligence (*medhā*), delivered by Indra, but his prayer was to become the possessor of immortality. The ideal teacher, according to the *Taittirīya Upanishad*, was one whose body was vigorous, and tongue exceedingly sweet; his ears heard

abundantly; and he was a living sheath of the sacred knowledge covered over by intelligence (“*brahmaṇah koshoṣi medhayā pihitah*”). He helped the student by posing provoking propositions and enlightening problems; he stimulated his inquiry and led him on to hitherto uncharted fields of thought. There are many instances of teachers having done all this in the Upanishadic texts. But more important is the teacher’s guidance in the practical application of truths intellectually comprehended by the pupil.

The *brahmacharyā* programme with a teacher did not end with discourses. It included attending, inquiring, contemplating, concentrating. The general term for all this is *tapas*, which normally is

translated as penance or austerity. Varuṇa tells his son Bhṛgu: 'Know the highest by austerity, for austerity is the highest!'⁵¹

तपसा ब्रह्म विजिज्ञासस्व । तपो ब्रह्मेति ॥

Elsewhere we read: "It is by austerity that the highest is built up."⁵²

तपसा चीयते ब्रह्म ॥

Sometimes austerity is mentioned alongside *brahmacharyā*⁵³, burning faith (*śraddhā*)⁵⁴, restraint (*dama*)⁵⁵, learning (*vidyā*) and meditation (*chintā*)⁵⁶. These are in fact elements of austerity or aspects thereof, which are only spelt out in the above references. It is more usual to refer to austerity in its inclusive character, as in Varuṇa's

injunction cited above, or in the *Śvetāśvatara* statement: 'It is by austerity that one finds Self in himself - as oil in the sesame seeds, as butter in cream, as fire in the friction-sticks.'⁵⁷

This statement incidentally suggests the nature of austerity. Oil is no doubt in the sesame seeds; but for it to appear, seeds have to be pressed; butter comes out only when cream is churned; and fire sparks out only when the sticks are rubbed hard enough. Likewise, for the highest in the individual to be realized, one must struggle, put forth effort, and persevere. It is a process of drawing out, a dynamic transformation of being into becoming and becoming into being. The word '*tapas*' means heat,



warmth, creative urge, incubation. As a result of effort or energy, the ordinary consciousness of man is heated up, and what was latent in it comes up when consciousness works on itself, rubs against itself, applies its whole force on itself; the entire

being is concentrated; and this is austerity or askesis. To quote Pandit: 'Tapas is the ingathering of all of one's consciousness and concentrating its force upon the object in view; as a result of this heat of creative incubation there is a release of energy, a dynamism which goes to effectuate the purpose undertaken.'⁵⁸

Austerity together with restraint (*dama*) and work (*karma*) is said to be the foundation of the secret doctrine⁵⁹, the three together constituting a whole. This is the most effective means that the ancient texts frequently speak of. Sometimes *tapas* itself is credited with the characteristic of an end. But it is unmistakably the major instrumental value with reference to the ultimate

objective of Self-realisation. It is an actual experience, and contributes to directly enhance the quality of life. In this sense, it has an intrinsic worth, while also being an instrument. It is to be noted that it is subjective, being dependent solely on the individual's experience, and not existing outside him. It has reference only to the motivations and purposes of the individual: in fact, this is what mobilises all his energies and provides him with the necessary driving force. It activates him: it not only stimulates him but sustains his efforts. This is what is meant by the statement that the highest is built up by austerity.

Austerity is looked upon as more or less an abstract value though concrete action-patterns like restraint

and meditation; faith and effort are associated with it. However, there is at least one reference where it occurs as a practical programme. "Just study and teaching" says Nāka Maudgalya, "that is austerity."⁶⁰

स्वाध्यायप्रवचने एवेति नाको मौद्गल्यः
तद्धि तपस्तद्धि तपः ॥

The *Taittirīya Upanishad* attaches great importance to study and teaching, and regards these as essential conditions for the development of all other virtues. Study in this context is not to be mistaken for acquisition of information concerning secular branches of knowledge: it is an old Vedic expression signifying a sort of sacrifice for the sake of sacred knowledge (*brahma-yajña*), as a

means for the obtainment of the 'eternal world'.⁶¹ The Study is said to calm one's mind (*yuktamanāh*), heal all his ills, render him independent of others; his intelligence is sharpened and his attitudes get correct and constant, with senses under control. It is not so much learning as deep reflection on what has been learnt. Here is an interesting observation that the great Patañjali has made: 'What has been learnt from the teacher becomes fruitful in four stages - first while receiving it from the teacher, next while studying it, then while teaching it to others, and finally when applying it to life situations.'⁶² This observation applies equally to sacred and secular studies: they are both meant for life. *Brahmacharyā* as a preparatory stage was even in the

Upanishadic period devoted to the acquisition of literary and technical skills under competent teachers. It was an accepted social institution. But *svādhyāya* was largely outside this institutional framework, and its objective was not so much the acquisition of skills as the obtainment of knowledge that saves. ('*sā vidyā yā vimuktaye*')

This kind of special study was not conducted in the usual schools, but in small groups of earnest seekers sharing the uncommon enthusiasm for deeply spiritual matters. These groups, called *parishads*, were occasional, sometimes accidental, and did not survive a few meetings. There was no fixed location, nor were the participants constant. These were in the nature of closed

conferences usually dominated by a celebrated sage of extraordinary attainments, but conducted through open and free debates, disputations, interrogations and inquiries. The results of the transactions in such sessions have been enshrined in the Upanishads. The Upanishadic texts frequently mention such academic sessions, and record the deliberations therein. Yājñavalkya figures prominently in several of such conferences. The expression ‘*Upanishad*’ in fact signifies ‘approaching for instruction’, a session ‘wherein is contained the highest good’ (‘*nishaṇṇam asyām param śreyah*’).⁶³ Owing to the nature of the subject-matter of discussion in these meetings, the transactions were mostly confidential and esoteric; and hence the Upanishads

were styled secret doctrines (*guhyā-ādeśa, rahasyam*).

The important point to note is that these meetings were occasions for ‘study and teaching’ which formed essential features of austerity, and which contributed to austerity as an instrumental value. Although these meetings were occasional and short-lived, the attitude of the participants was full of faith and zeal. Faith (*śraddhā*) comes in frequently for mention as an important factor in the understanding of the highest truth; it is an essential orientation that makes the seeker open to subtle but significant experiences. It is defined as the complete cleansing of the mind (*chetasaḥ samprasādaḥ*) for the purpose of containing the truth⁶⁴. And its foundation is the ‘heart’ for

‘it is by the ‘heart’, that one knows the faith.”⁶⁵ It is interesting that in the context of faith being founded on the ‘heart’, there is mention of sacrifice (*yajña*) being founded on gifts (*dakṣiṇā*), and gifts on faith. Sacrifice here is the earnest effort represented by *brahmacharyā* (restraint) and *tapas* (austerity); and gifts symbolise dispossession of oneself, giving up the wealth (involvement with the phenomenal world), deliberately, willingly and with an undisturbed mind. Unless one is willing to give up, restraint and austerity do not become fruitful; and one cannot give up well unless one has an abiding faith.

For the self composed of understanding, the Upanishad says, faith is the head.⁶⁶ That is why

Aruṇa tells his son Śvetaketu, ‘Have faith, may dear’.⁶⁷ The Sanskrit expression ‘*śraddhatsva*’ actually means more than having or possessing faith: it signifies exerting faith, putting forth faith, making faith *become*, using faith as a powerful instrument. It is, in fact, regarded as a contributive value which is subjective. The whole being of a person is well integrated and directed towards the end. The person now responds as one whole, the multitudinous thought-processes and action-potentials are all resolved into a unitary response. The world of stimulations is severely narrowed down, as also the reaction-patterns of the individual. Faith is a state of readiness to receive, a preparatory set geared up for effort. Devoid of this faith, knowledge although

communicated through expert instruction will remain but a bundle of stray pieces of information. Nachiketas, into whom 'faith entered' ('śraddhā viveśa')⁶⁸ asks Yama to instruct him for he is full of faith.⁶⁹ In other words, he claims to be in a fit condition to receive.

The consideration of faith takes us to the problem of the 'method of approach', viz., *upāsanā*. The expression *upāsanā* means 'coming very near a thing' or 'approaching'. In Indian tradition, there is a long-standing controversy whether knowledge (*jñāna*) or action (*karma*) is the effective instrument of liberation. Knowledge aims at identity, while action involves separation. The Mīmāṃsakas emphasise the importance of action,

especially the action enjoined in the scriptural texts, and reject on the same count the value of knowledge as an instrument to reach the highest end. The Vedāntins led by Śaṅkara, on the other hand, hold fast to knowledge as the sole means of liberation and dismiss action as irrelevant or unimportant. Older thinkers like Bhartṛprapañcha, who follow closely the Upanishadic thought, seek to reconcile the two views (*samuchchaya*) by calling attention to the fact the both knowledge and action are equally relevant and involved in the approach that is styled *upāsanā*.⁷⁰ The expression in the Upanishad 'the two together' (*ubhayam saha*) is taken to justify this stand. Not entering into the details of his controversy, it may be pointed out

that the Upanishads do underline the role of action (*kriyā* or *karma*) in the production of the knowledge that liberates. We need only refer to the well-known injunction at the very commencement of the *Īśa-Upanishad*: “Doing actions only, one must desire to live a hundred years.”⁷¹

कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि जिजीविषेच्छत्समाः ॥

The action in the Upanishad is spoken of in terms of uninterrupted effort or practice (*abhyāsa*, *prasaṅkhyāna*, *upāsanā*). Śaṅkara commenting on the *Chhāndogya* defines *upāsanā* as follows: ‘It is a steady maintenance of one-pointedness of thought, uninterrupted by any awareness different from this, concerning some object supported

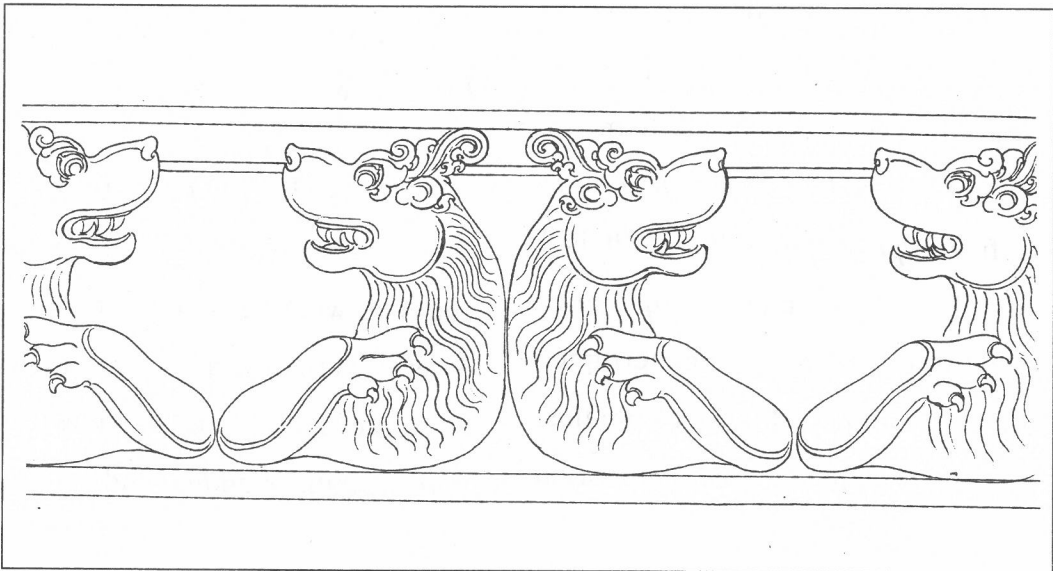
in scriptural texts.”⁷² It is not mere absorption or concentration, but devoted attention up-held by strong motivation. It is by no means passive or automatic. It is to be actively upheld, maintained, furthered; it is a matter for perseverance. This is what Rāmānuja describes as firm mindfulness, or constant remembrance (*dhruvānusmṛti*)⁷³ and Vedānta-deśika following him interprets it as meditation (*dhyāna*).⁷⁴ Thus the Upanishadic *upāsanā* is a deliberate, active, meditative absorption.

It is interesting that the Upanishads suggest that an *upāsanā* could be weak or strong. The strong or effective *upāsanā* is said to rest on three factors: right knowledge (*vidyā*), faith (*śraddhā*) and a certain

intuitive understanding (called *upanishad*).⁷⁵ These three are dynamic involvements, and they are responsible for the 'action (*karoti*)' that the Upanishad speaks of. With faith as a preparatory set, knowledge as a directing force and understanding as the leading light, the approach becomes effective.

When the approach is effective, the veil of ignorance which hides reality is removed, and concurrently

the individual's vision breaks through the limiting particulars, and extends beyond the confines of ordinary and individualised consciousness. The barriers that are projected by the ego, the mind and the sense-organs are pulled down, and consciousness begins to flow out, flow on, and flow through. This is what the Upanishads call the attainment of the Self, which is the ultimate and absolute value.



NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *R̥gveda*, 10, 34, 8
2. As in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 5, 5, 1 and 5, 6, 1
3. *Ibid.*, 1, 3, 28
4. *Kaṭha-up.*, 1, 2, 5 (Also *Muṇḍaka-up.*, 1, 2, 8)
5. *Īśa-up.*, 3
6. *Ibid.*, 7: 'moha' and 'śoka'
7. *Maitri-up.*, 6, 38
8. *Śvetāśvatara-up.*, 5, 13
9. *Kaṭha-up.*, 2, 3, 3
10. *Taittirīya-up.*, 2, 9
11. *Kaṭha-up.*, 1, 2, 1 and 2
12. *Muṇḍaka-up.*, 3, 2, 5
13. *Ibid.*, 3, 2, 9
14. e.g., *Chhāndogya-up.*, 8, 8, 4
15. *Maitrī-up.*, 6, 20 and 36
16. *Ibid.*, 6, 30
17. *Taittirīya-up.*, 1, 6, 2
18. *Ibid.*, 2, 1

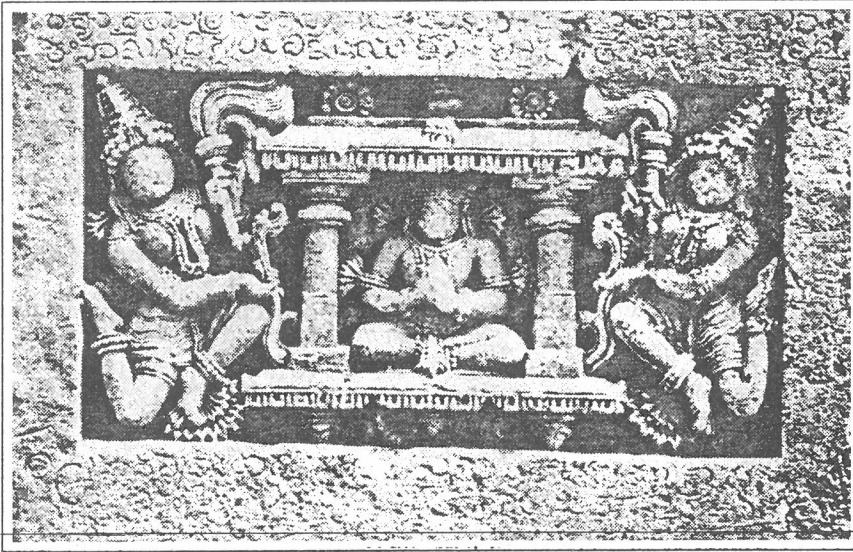
19. 'Readings in the Taittirīya Upanishad' (Arya, 5, 4)
20. *Taittirīya-up.*, 2, 7
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*, 2, 8
24. Sri Aurobindo, *op. cit.*
25. *Kaṭha-up.*, 1, 3, 14
26. *Ibid.*, 2, 1, 15: *Taittirīya-up.*, 3, 1.
27. *Taittirīya-up.*, 3, 10, 4
28. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 2, 4, 4,
29. *Muṇḍaka-up.*, 2, 2, 3
30. *Ibid.*, 2, 2, 6
31. *Chhāndogya-up.*, 8, 1, 1.
32. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 4, 4, 17
33. *Kaṭha-up.*, 2, 1, 11
34. *Muṇḍaka-up.*, 2, 2, 2 and 4
35. *Chhāndogya up.*, 8, 1, 1.
36. *Kena-up.*, 2, 5
37. *Kaṭha up.*, 1, 2, 23
38. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 4, 4, 5

39. *Ibid.*, 2, 5, 14
40. *Ibid.*, 4, 4, 5
41. *Ibid.*, 2, 5, 15
42. *Ibid.*, 4, 5, 6
43. *Kaṭha-up.*, 1, 2, 20
44. *Chhāndogya-up.*, 7, 26, 2
45. e.g. *ibid.*, 4, 4, 1; 8, 5, 1; 8, 11,3: *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 5, 2, 1, *Kaṭha-up.*, 2, 15: *Praśna-up.*, 1, 1 and 15; *Muṇḍaka-up.*; 3, 1, 5
46. *Taittirīya-up.*, 1, 3, 1
47. *Ibid.*, 1, 4, 3,
48. *Ibid.*
49. *Chāndogya-up.*, 6, 14, 2
50. *Taittirīya-up.*, 1, 4, 3
51. *Ibid.*, 3, 1
52. *Muṇḍaka-up.*, 1, 8
53. As in *Praśna-up.*, 1, 15 and *Muṇḍaka-up.*, 3, 1, 5
54. As in *Muṇḍaka-up.*, 1, 2, 11 and *Praśna-up.*, 3
55. As in *Kena-up.*, 4, 8 (33)
56. As in *Maitrī-up.*, 4, 4
57. *Śvetāśvatara-up.*, 1, 15

58. M.P. Pandit, *op. cit.*, p. 152
59. *Kena-up.*, 4, 8 (33)
60. *Taittirīya-up.*, 1, 9, 6.
61. *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa*, 11, 5, 6, 3
62. Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*, ed. Kielhorn, p.6. चतुर्भिश्च प्रकारैर्वेद्योऽपयुक्ता भवति—
आगमकालेन स्वाध्यायकालेन प्रवचनकालेन व्यवहारकालेनेति ॥
63. Sāyaṇa explains the word: उपनिषण्णमस्यां परं श्रेयः ।
64. Vyāsa on Patañjali's *Yoga-sūtra*, 1, 20
65. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-up.*, 3, 9, 21
66. *Taittirīya-up.*, 6, 12, 3
67. *Chhāndogya-up.*, 6, 12, 3
68. *Kaṭha-up.*, 1, 1, 2
69. *Ibid.*, 1, 1, 13
70. In the *samuchchaya* view there is a further division into *sama-samuchchaya* and *vishama-samuchchaya* viewpoints. The former holds that knowledge and action are equally important for achieving the final end, while the latter holds that one is more important than the other. The latter viewpoint is again sub-divided into two camps, one holding that knowledge is the principal means and that action is subordinate to

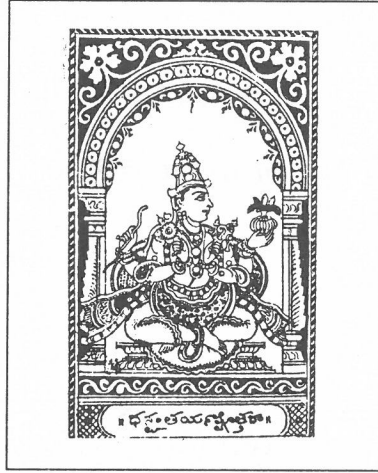
it, and the other holding that action is important, knowledge being only an accessory to it.

71. *Īśa-up.*, 2
72. Śaṅkara on *Chhāndogya-up.*, 1, 1, 1 उपासनं तु यथाशास्त्रसमर्थितं किञ्चिदालम्बनमुपादाय तस्मिन्समानचित्तवृत्तिसन्तानकरणं तद्विलक्षणप्रत्ययानन्तरितं इति विशेषः ।
73. Rāmānuja, *Śribhāṣya*, p. 34: उपासनं स्याद् ध्रुवानुस्मृतिर्दर्शनान्निर्वचनाच्च ।
74. Vedānta-deśika, *Śata-dūṣaṇī*, p. 136: वेदनं ध्यानविश्रान्तं ध्यानं श्रान्तं ध्रुवस्मृतौ ।
75. *Chhāndogya-up.*, 1, 1, 10



CHAPTER SIX

ĀYUR-VIJÑĀNA: (Science - Art of Life)



Indigenous Indian medicine has four major lines of development, all of which go back in their origin to a very remote past. Two of them, represented by the physician Charaka and the surgeon Suśruta (both of whom lived in centuries prior to the Christian era), are collectively designated as Āyurveda (or the

Science of Life), and sought to be integrated into the Vedic tradition. The third is the system of therapeutical alchemy known as *Rasa-vaidyā* (or the Rasāyana school), where use of metals and mercury is extensive; this is the meeting place of Indian chemistry and Indian medicine. This system

developed almost independently of the Vedic tradition, and profited by contact with such cultures as the Arabian, the Persian and the Chinese. The fourth line of development is the Siddha (or the adept) system, the origin of which is obscure but was distinctly outside the Vedic tradition; at present it is prevalent only in South India, especially in the Tamil country. There can be little doubt that all these systems were rooted in the Tāntrik culture, and were to a great extent influenced by the Sāṃkhya-Yoga complex.

The fear of death which has plagued man all along his career was obviously the most effective motivation for the development and discovery of techniques to preserve and prolong life: the goal of all

spiritual endeavour as well as all the worldly activities of man is deathlessness (*amṛta*) or continuity of existence. In fact, religions which believe in after-life and immortality of soul have sprung from this deep yearning. The early attempt was to prolong the physical existence itself, to make the body strong enough to survive the odds, to make the body itself immortal, to transform the essence (*rasa*) of the fleeting physical existence into a firm diamond-like substance (*vajra*). Alchemy works within this framework. If death is productive of a strong sense of fear, disease is likewise a source of concern. Death is inescapable, but disease could be prevented and cured. When the causes of disease were largely unknown, evil spirits, malevolent deities, black magic,

withcraft and sorcery gained importance in man's endeavour. Not only religions have passed beyond this stage, but all science has gone through it. Medicine, in particular, was in its early phases of development intimately involved with these obviously irrational procedures. It was only gradually that medicine has extricated itself from this involvement.

In Indian medicine the passage from the irrational to the 'rational' was not only very gradual, but in a sense was never complete. It does not, however, mean that in India medicine remained stagnant or tied up with primitive beliefs. Far from it, it made marvellous progress, especially Āyurveda; its diagnostic methods, therapeutic procedures,

medicinal employment of a large number of herbs and substances most of which are commonly used in the Hindu kitchen, discovery of the excellent medicinal properties of herbs, plants, trees and the spices, and the determination of the dosage and the manner of taking the medicine are all elaborately and carefully thought out, tried out, codified, and systematised. And more importantly, Āyurveda developed a comprehensive and consistent philosophy, which again is a marvel considering its antiquity. This philosophy is singularly free from 'the primitive mentality' which sustained magical practices. The old ideas of deathlessness, bodily continuity for all time, and immunity from all possible forces of disintegration were in Āyurveda

brought down to the idea of sound and effective health. There could be little indeed that is mystical in a medical system. But intuition had its own rôle to play, and many of the basic ideas of the philosophy of Indian medicine were obtained, not by calculated reason or careful observation, but by a different process which may be described as due to *tapas* and the consequent intuitive vision. Notwithstanding the accumulation of significant data, refinement in treatment methods, improvement in the methods of drug-preparation, the ideological position remained substantially the same throughout the ages. It did not evolve gradually, or develop in stages. Even at the earliest period, it was full-fledged, mature and comprehensive. While the practice was thoroughly

rational, the theory remained 'arational' (in the sense of being beyond reason and intuitionally justified). And the use of precious stones, amulets, talismans, and mystic diagrams for curative ends continued alongside an elaborate pharmacopoeia. It is curious, if also somewhat paradoxical, that magic and medicine could coexist for such a long stretch of time, in a country that has been for ages intellectually alert.

The two lines of development of medicine in India represented by Charaka (about 200 B.C.) and Suśruta (about sixth century B.C.) are together known as Āyurveda, and go back to a hoary antiquity. There are legends which seek to establish continuity between the Āyurvedic tradition and

the Vedic tradition, with the assumption that the Vedic tradition is without an identifiable beginning. Sometimes, Āyurveda is regarded as the fifth Veda; but it is more usual to regard it as a supplementary Veda (*upa-veda*). According to *Mahābhārata* (2,11, 33 spelt out by the commentator Nīlakaṇṭha), it is one of the four *upa-vedas*, others being archery (*dhanurveda*), musicology (*gāndharva*), and political science (*artha-śāstra*). Within the Āyurvedic tradition itself, the medical science is regarded as an appendage (*upāṅga*) of the fourth Veda, viz. *Atharva-veda*. There is a belief that this appendage originally comprised 1,000 sections (while the Veda itself consisted of a little more than 6000 verses); but in consideration of the brevity of human life and poverty of our wisdom, this

immense mass was supposed to have got attenuated in course of time to just eight divisions, the extant *ashtāṅga-Āyurveda*. Whether it is regarded as an appendage (as Suśruta does) or as a supplementary portion (as Vāgbhaṭa does) or as an independent Veda (as Charaka does), its association with *Atharva-veda* is a generally accepted proposition.

It is well-known that *Atharva-veda* is outside the classical Vedic complex which originally was only threefold (*trayī*) -- *Ṛk*, *Yajus* and *Sāman*. Although *Atharva* came to acquire the Vedic status at a later date, the content is clearly more ancient than the *Ṛks* themselves.¹ It has been shown that the *Atharva* really goes back to the Indus age.² Indeed, the outlook of magical spells,

amulets, charms, incantations, curative abracadabra, witchcraft and sorcery that we find predominant in this Veda, reflects what moderners choose to describe as primitive or preliterate mentality. *Atharvāṅgiras*, the old name for the *Atharva-veda* suggests a two-fold approach: pacificatory-curative practices (*śānta*) and the practices of witchcraft and sorcery (*ghora*). Both practices were equally in the hands of priestly magicians and medicine-men (the *atharvans*), who dominated the scene before and during the Ṛgvedic period. The situation has continued to our own day, after more than eight years, in the rural parts of our country and among the tribal folk. Kullūka-bhaṭṭa, Manu's commentator, was right when he said that there are in this country

two distinct traditions, Tāntrik and Vedic.³ The latter is generally, but not necessarily, associated with the sophisticated achievement of an abstract, spiritual, sacrificial-symbolic, intellectual-philosophical outlook; and the former is identified with the numerous folk cults with a ritualistic involvement, especially related to the cults relating to the mother-goddess and oriented to the fulfilment of natural urges. There is little doubt that *Atharva-veda* emerged out of this mass of popular beliefs and practices, in an attempt to accommodate them within the Vedic tradition.

It is highly significant, therefore, that Āyurveda relates itself to *Atharva-veda*. Of the nine classical recensions (*śākhās*) of this Veda,



only two (Paippalāda and Śaunakīya) are available now. The ninth recension, called 'Chāraṇa-vaidya', no longer extant, presumably contained the lore of wandering medical practitioners and also popular curatives (*bheshajāni*). Probably, the wandering doctors of

this age were responsible for the creation of a school of medical thought, expounded and defended later by the Ātreya-Charaka line of development. It is interesting in this connection to note that *Charaka-saṁhitā* argues that there was no time when medical knowledge and practices were not current among the people. Āyurveda, in his view, has a beginningless continuity; when it is said to be related or affiliated to Veda, it is in the nature of a concession to sophistication. It would be wrong to regard Āyurveda as a development of the *R̥gveda* or of *Yajurveda* as the Vedāṅgas (like Nirukta, Jyotisha, Chhandas and Śikṣā) were. In fact, it belongs more naturally to the amorphous heterogeneous Tāntric tradition, which undoubtedly was pre-historic.

When we find characteristically Āyurvedic ideas like the circulation of multiple breaths inside the body, or the three pathogenic factors (*tridosha*), or the medicinal properties of the herbs and plants (*oshadhi*) in the Vedic literature, it is to be assumed that the later and sophisticated culture in the country, found it necessary, or expedient, to assimilate these meaningful or prevalent ideas belonging to the people outside its own fold.

It is psychologically significant that Vedic references with regard to physicians and medical practice in general exhibit a rather ambivalent feeling. It was necessary to accept medical aid, and that is how medical knowledge was incorporated in the Vedic corpus, although this

knowledge came from the folk that was probably outside their ritualistic fold. Rudra, a divinity belonging to the Vedic as well as the Tāntric culture, was the 'first physician' (*prathamō daivyo bhishak*) and the Vedic poet prays: 'O Rudra, may we not make you furious! You are indeed a bull! We hear you are the best among physicians, and may our children grow up with your remedies!'"⁴ Asvins are again the first physicians who protect and rescue the blind, the weak, the aged and those 'that have fallen into the pit'.⁵ But they are impure (*apūtau*) 'like the physicians that wander among men': and physicians are 'unclean, unworthy of sacrifice'.⁶ *Rgveda* includes a hymn to the healing herbs (*Oshadhī-stuti*, 10, 97), ascribed to the 'cure-man' (*bhishaja*)

and addressed to Soma, the divine monarch of plants, who is represented on earth by the psychedelic drink (Indian hemp? asclepiade?) which the Vedic poets ingested and offered to the gods. But the stigma against the healing art continued till the period in which the *Dharma-śāstras* were prepared; medicine was considered an ignoble profession which no high-born should condescend to take up. It was a service which was no doubt essential and noble, but in the vocational set-up it was assigned an inferior status.

Whatever the reason for the initial taboo, in later times, when drinking was regarded as morally reprehensible and was considered a vice which heralded other vices, the healing art which extolled the virtues

of wine (as illustrated in *Charaka-* and *Bhela-saṃhitās*, where a good case for liquor is made out) was naturally looked down upon. Āyurveda not only includes alcohol in its pharmacopoeia (*āsavas* and *arishtas*), but had use for meat and drugs extracted from animal bodies. Charaka lists as many as 170 medicines of animal origin. The Āyurvedic notion of a happy life was not exactly to the liking of the austere, ascetic and puritanical law-givers. They naturally frowned upon such advice coming from Āyurvedic sources as: 'There is no sin in eating meat, in drinking liquor, or in sex-indulgence: they are natural inclinations. But there is merit in self-restraint'.⁷ Belonging as it does to the Tāntric tradition, Āyurveda looked upon body as the home of

enjoyments (*bhoga*) and also prone to ailments (*roga*). Drinking can be for enjoyment: it is hearty, makes one light, good for all beings, removes worry, pain and fatigue, expands the mind and corrects the disorders of phlegm;⁸ but excessive drinking (*pānātyaya*) can be seriously disturbing. All Āyurvedic texts contain a section of treatment procedures for alcoholics. Health for them was the highest consideration, and proper enjoyment was after all the purpose of sound health. Clean life, good food, normal pleasures and vigorous health constituted the major part of Āyurvedic ethics: deprivation and over-indulgence were equally wrong in this outlook. If austerity was prescribed, it was in consideration of health, and not because of religious reasons.



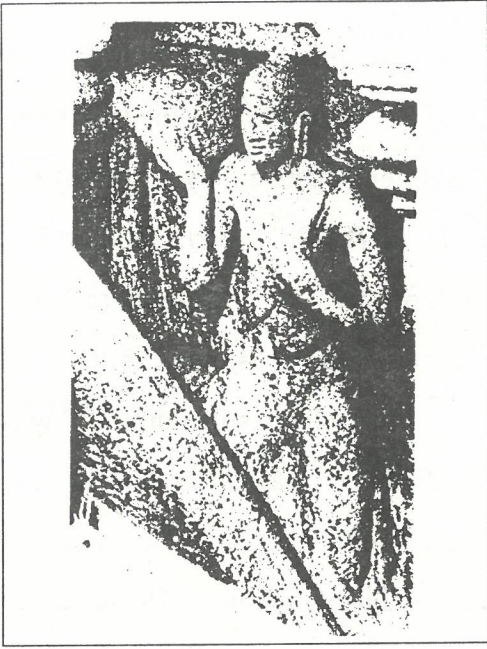
And the physicians naturally attached an enormous importance to the body, its preservation and improvement (*yoga-kshema*). A physician was expected to understand human constitution (*deha-tattva*) and human nature (*deha-svabhāva*); and his job was to secure the efficiency of the physical apparatus that we

call the body (*kāya-sādhana*). These ideas were directly drawn from the Tāntric tradition; the emphasis on nature and on the need to improve upon it were basically related to the Sāṃkhya-Yoga complex. The Vedic culture, on the other hand, regarded the body as but secondary to the spirit, and emphasized austerity, penances, discipline and contemplation. The outlook that gained currency in the wake of Vedic influence, although at a much later period, looked upon the body almost as a necessary evil, a home of dirt ('*rajassāyatanam*' as a Buddhist text describes) a habitation of the satanical forces of lust, greed, envy and wrath; by and large, it was considered impossible for the soul to reach salvation until the physical body was eliminated or sufficiently

humbled. But Āyurveda held that the body was the foundation of all wisdom and virtue, and the source of all the supreme objectives (*dharma, artha, kāma* and *moksha*);⁹ apart from his body there is nothing that is of great help to man. If one does not realize the Absolute in this very body, argued Āyurveda, it is even more difficult for him to realize it when he has gone beyond the body.

ASSIMILATION AND SYSTEMATISATION

The antipathy entertained by the conservative folk within the Vedic fold towards Āyurveda must be considered in this background. And when Āyurveda had to be accommodated within the Vedic complex, *Atharva-veda* was naturally



where it belonged. Charaka's protestation that Āyurveda is superior to other Vedas, because it deals with life which is the foundation for all happiness and profit,¹⁰ is symptomatic of the sensitivity of the medical practioners of that period; and their affiliation to *Atharva-veda* was in the nature of a challenge, for that Veda also enjoyed a dubious reputation in the conservative circles.

Charaka's comentator, Chakrapāṇi-datta, boldly suggests that *Atharva-veda* became Āyurveda by focussing its attention on the curative aspect.¹¹

The conservative view, however, was slightly different. Dārila-bhaṭṭa, an early commentator on *Kauśika-sūtra* belonging to the Śaunakīya recension of *Atharva-veda*, says: 'There are two kinds of diseases, one kind caused by eating unwholesome food, and the other caused by evil spirits.

The former are treated by Āyurveda, while the latter are dealt with in this science (viz., *Atharva-veda*).'¹²

Diseases caused by unnatural conditions and beyond easy or clear diagnosis were generally ascribed to the wrath of spirits, infection by unwholesome elements, influence of evil forces, effect of magic, or transgression of tribal laws. The

treatment of such ailments naturally involved the employment of supernatural agencies to one's own advantage. The curative procedures in *Atharva-veda* includes magical spells (*mantra*), amulets (*maṇi-dhāraṇa*), expiation (*prāyaśchitta*), magical potions (*aushadha*), sacrifices (*bali* and *homa*), pacificatory rites (*maṅgala* and *svastyayana*), fasting (*upavāsa*) and pilgrimage (*yātrā*). All these have survived in Hinduism despite their rejection in the later Vedic tradition, and most of these practices go back to pre-historical tradition. The other obviously occult practices of magicians and sorcerers (which figure prominently in the *Atharva-veda*) have, however, been confined to the unsophisticated and pre-literate folk.

One of the eight branches of classical *Āyurveda* was the treatment of ailments caused by supernatural agencies (*bhūta-vidyā*); another was toxicology (*agada-tantra*), counteracting poisonous bites and evil influences; still another was virilification (*vājīkaraṇa*), restoring lost or reduced vitality, by medical and magical means. These three branches belong more naturally to *Atharva-veda* than to classical *Āyurveda*. The other five branches, internal medicine (*kāya-chikitsā*), surgery (*śalya-tantra*), treatment of diseases of ENT (*śālākya-tantra*), paediatrics (*kaumāra-bhṛtya*), and rejuvenation (*rasāyana*), were specialised in *Āyurveda*: they developed altogether independently of the *Atharva-veda*.

Although Indian medicine sought to wean itself out of Ātharvaṇic practices and ideology at a very early age, it retained its Tāntric complexion for a long time. Even classical Āyurveda accepted Sāṃkhya as its theoretical basis, and Sāṃkhya has already been shown to be the view-point of the Tāntric tradition,¹³ uncompromisingly atheistic and materialistic, in its early phases at least, and therefore non-Vedic. We find in *Charaka-saṃhitā* in its present form (about 150 B.C.) the earlier Sāṃkhya of Pañchaśikha, whereas in *Suśruta-saṃhitā* as redacted by Nāgārjuna (about the first century A.D) the *Sāṃkhya* is of the classical type (*Īśvarakṛṣṇa*'s). There is, in both *saṃhitās*, a considerable softening of the anti-orthodox fervour, and an attempt to

reconcile the Sāṃkhya with the general orthodox orientation. We have to note that both these *saṃhitās* are only reconstructions and redactions of earlier Tantras which have been lost. We can never conjecture what the orientation of these lost Tantras was like. The very expression 'Saṃhitā' in the works ascribed to Charaka and Suśruta betrays an anxiety to fall in line with the orthodox texts belonging to the Vedic literature. Charaka's *saṃhitā* was a reconstruction of a tantra, *Agniveśa-tantra* (as in the colophon 'ityagniveśakṛte tantre charakapratisamskṛte'). Of the 1500 medical tracts listed in Aufrecht's catalogue, a good many are styled tantras: *Jīvaka-tantra*, *Kāpila-tantra*, *Sātyaki-tantra*, *Karāla-tantra* and so on. Even the eight branches

(*ashtāṅga*) of classical Āyurveda were called tantras: Śalya-tantra, Agada-tantra, Rasāyana-tantra, Śālākya-tantra, Vājīkara-tantra, etc. It is not accidental that all these were called *tantras*. The belongingness of Āyurveda to the Tāntric tradition has been consistent.

Indian medicine was actively cultivated during several centuries (seven to eight centuries according to Filliozat)¹⁴ before the birth of Christ. We have the evidence of Megasthenes the Greek ambassador who visited India in the fourth century B.C., that the Śramaṇas (a group of philosophers and ascetics outside the Vedic fold) were practising medicine and were greatly honoured by the people for this service. There is a suggestion in Strabo (15, 170)

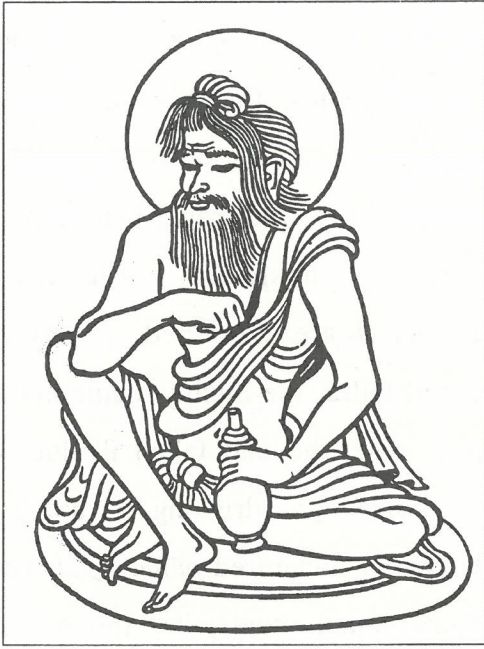
that these Śramaṇas (*pramanai*) were also magicians: here is another clue to the belongingness of Indian medicine to the Tāntric tradition.

It is customary to recognise two major lines of development in Āyurveda, one specialising in internal medicine (*kāya-chikitsā*) and the other with a bias in favour of surgery (*śalya-tantra*). The two branches have much in common; and the basic theoretical framework is the same for both. The former line of development reached its culmination in the *Samhitā* of Charaka while the latter achieved its perfection in the *Samhitā* of Suśruta. These two compendia are regarded as supreme authorities in Āyurvedic theory and practice, and their authority has been unrivalled, despite numerous eminent

authors in the field. We do not know for certain if they were historical personages at all. Charaka is said to be a class-name for wandering physicians who were popular even during the time of Pāṇini.¹⁵ Suśruta, which means 'learned', may not in fact be a proper name. However, Indian tradition takes them as real medical authors and they are supposed to have lived during the later Vedic period. The line of development represented by Charaka is called the Ātreya School and Suśruta's school is named after Dhanvantari. We are again not sure who Ātreya or Dhanvantari really was. It is helpful to follow the traditional lead. Both Charaka and Suśruta agree that Āyurveda was first formulated by the self-born Brahmā, who communicated the

system to Prajāpati, and he to the twin-divinities, the Aśvins, who in their turn passed it on to Indra. The Aśvins who are regarded as the 'divine physicians' (*devānām bhishajā*) are described as having cured Indra, the mighty Vedic hero-god, when he had fallen ill due to excessive Soma-drinking (the ailment later nomenclatured *pānātyaya*). The Sautarāmaṇi ritual puts the Aśvins into close relation with Indra, but otherwise their relation is not very intimate in Vedic literature.

After Indra, however, the lines branch off. On Charaka's side, Indra handed over Āyurveda to the sage Bhāradvāja, and he taught Ātreya-Punarvasu and other sages. Ātreya had six disciples: Agniveśa, Bhela, Jatūkarna, Parāśara, Hārīta and



ATREYA

Ksharapāṇi. Each of them composed their own versions of Atreya's teaching and the first to compose was Agniveśa. It was Agniveśa's work (*tantra*) that was reconstructed (*pratisamśkṛta*) by Charaka. On Suśruta's side, Indra taught Āyurveda to Dhanvantari, appearing as the king of Kāśi, Divodāsa, and he taught the system to a group of students

among whom Aupadhenava, Vaitaraṇa, Aurabhra, Paushkalāvata, Gopurarakshita and Suśruta are mentioned. After Indra, Bhāradvāja was the founder of Charaka's line and Dhanvantari-Divodāsa of Suśruta's line. It is interesting to note that both Bhāradvāja and Divodāsa have been mentioned in *Rgveda* as contemporaries who were together protected (and whose 'routes were made circular') by the Aśvins.¹⁶ This would make Suśruta an earlier authority, for Charaka was removed at least by two generations after Bhāradvāja, Ātreya and Agniveśa.

It is unfortunate that all these early medical treatises have been lost, excepting Bhela's which has survived in a single manuscript,

mutilated and fragmentary. Both Bhela and Charaka rely heavily on Ātreya (Ātreya-Punarvasu) and claim to follow him closely. As has been mentioned already, the work of Agniveśa (who was a contemporary and fellow-student of Bhela under Ātreya) is no longer extant in its original form; what we have today is only a reconstruction of it by Charaka, or more probably a redaction by Dṛḍhabala (about ninth century A.D.) who completed the work undertaken by Charaka by writing the seventeen sections of the Sixth Book (*Chikitsāsthāna*) as well as the remaining two books (*Siddhis-thāna* and *Kalpāsthāna*), presumably planned by Charaka.¹⁷ Chakrapāṇi-datta's commentary on this work known as *Āyurveda-dīpikā* (about 1050 A.D.) is very informative. There is another

commentary, written about the same time, by Śivadāsa-sena. Our knowledge of Charaka's school of thought is principally based on the Dṛḍhabala's redaction and Chakrapāṇi's commentary.

Likewise, Suśruta's work is no longer available in its original form. What we have is a revision by one Nāgārjuna.¹⁸ We have in the history of our thought at least three Nāgārjunas, and it is hard to identify the redactor (*pratisaṃskartā*) of Suśruta. Perhaps he was the Siddha-chemist who lived about third century A.D. We have other works by him, *Rasa-ratnākara* being the best-known one. Ḍalhaṇa (about the tenth century A.D.) wrote a splendid commentary, *Nibandha-saṅgraha* on Nāgārjuna's revision of *Suśruta-*

samhitā. There is another commentary by Chakra-datta (about the same time). Ḍalhaṇa mentions many previous commentators like Chejjaṭa, Gayādāsa, and Bhāskara; but their works have been lost.

The fusion of the two lines of development was attempted by Vāgbhaṭa (about seventh century A.D.) who compiled his *Ashtāṅga-hṛdaya* incorporating the views not only of Charaka and Suśruta, but also Bhela and Hārīta as well as the Rasāyana system. This work it was that gave Āyurveda its definition. If this medical school has survived as a unitary discipline and as a perfect synthesis of theory and practice, it is due to this work of Vāgbhaṭa. Another great help in equipping Āyurveda with an excellent diagnostic

tool came from Mādhava-kara (eighth century A.D.) who prepared his clinical guide-book *Rugvinīschaya* (familiarily known as *Mādhava-nidāna*). During the time Vāgbhaṭa and Mādhavakara lived, Āyurveda became highly systematised, its pharmacopoeia expanded, and treatment-procedures refined. The System continued to grow vigorously about the thirteenth century after which there has been a steady stalemate; the beginning of the thirteenth century marked the end of an era of growth and standardization.¹⁹ In the medieval ages, the Rasāyana System was, by a curious combination of circumstances, rejuvenated and the drugs and remedies evolved in this system became popular. Although there was considerable interaction



THE ĀŚVINS (Physicians of gods)

between Āyurveda and Rasāyana, Āyurveda as a growing discipline appears to have lost its vitality about this period.

BASIC ORIENTATIONS

For Charaka, Āyurveda was just a 'Science of life': It 'instructs us about life.'²⁰ Suśruta, on the other hand, suggests that Āyurveda is that 'by which life is obtained or examined.'²¹ Life in both definitions stands for health, or diseaselessness (*ārogya*). And the basic postulate is that man is a conglomeration of elements, a pattern of factors: and when these elements or factors are properly balanced (*samyag-yoga*) it is beneficial (*hita*) and pleasant (*sukha*). The balance involves the sense-functions (*kāla*), sense-objects

(*artha*) and the three-fold behaviour (*karma*-bodily, vocal and mental). Treatment (*chikitsā*) becomes necessary when the effective balance gets weakened (*hīna*) or distorted (*mithyā-yoga*). While Āyurveda in theory concedes the curative value of Ātharvaṇic practices (*daiva-vyapāśraya*) emphasis is almost exclusively laid on the treatment based on man's reason (*yukti-vyapāśraya*) like medicine, diet and habits. Among the Indian systems of thought, it is Āyurveda that openly recognises reasoning as an independent and important instrument of knowledge (*pramāṇa*). This naturally marks a point of departure from the primitive mentality of reliance on magic, and signifies the dawn of what may be called the scientific spirit. The

methods of Āyurveda are interesting: observation (*pratyaksha*), examination (*parīkshā*), inference based on reason (*anumāna* or *yukti*), discussion with colleagues (*sambhāshā*), formulation of hypotheses (*pratijñā*), and diagnosis (*nidāna*). There is a special value assigned to advice from competent authority (*āptopadeśa*).²²

Āyurveda accepts another treatment procedure based on yoga ideology, 'mastering the mind' (*sattvāvajaya*). This consists in restraining oneself from excess, from unwholesome sense-functions, and controlling one's own mental states. Charaka argues that most of our troubles are due to folly or errors of judgment (*prajñāparādha*) : and to avoid or eliminate the troubles, one

must 'live correctly' (*sadvṛtta*). Correct living, according to Āyurveda, does not involve supernatural sanction or Vedic authority. It is wholesome, integrated living which adequately satisfies the three fundamental motivations: urges for self-preservation, desire for material provisions which make life comfortable, and longing for better states of existence, here and hereafter. Ethics is thus judiciously subordinated to pragmatic considerations.

Although Āyurveda is, by its Tāntric background, committed to the body-principle (*deha-tattva*) and to the idea of making the body efficient (*kāya-sāadhanā*), there is in it an acceptance of what may be called the 'psyche' (*ātman*), a

spiritual principle different from, and independent of, the body. The person (*purusha*) who is regarded in this system as the frame of reference for all medical speculation and object of treatment is a configuration (*samavāya*) of the body (including the sense-organs), mind, and the psyche, organised into a single system in the manner of a tripod.²³ The body is grossly material, made up of the five physical elements (*pañchabhūtas*) : space (or ether), air, fire, water and earth. Senses are sockets in the body made up of the same elements. Mind too is likewise physical, but subtly so. It transcends the senses, and is therefore termed meta-sensory (*atīndriya*); the senses are activated by it, guided by it, and in that capacity it is described as 'supporting' or 'furnishing the

ground' (*adhishtāyaka*). The 'psyche' upholds, bears up, preserves these factors, and therefore it is 'the upholder' (*dhārin*); and in so doing it actively binds the factors into a single system; in other words, it is a designer (*anubandha*). Life (*jīvita*) is thus an organisation, a phenomenological unity (*samyoga*).

The individual person, who is thus essentially dynamic and is a product of transaction, is known in Āyurvedic literature by two expressions: *karma-purusha* (Suśruta) and *samyogi-purusha* (Charaka). The former word emphasises the activity aspect of the individual, while the latter, the integrational aspect. Both words bring out the phenomenological, transactional, and dynamic characters

of the individual. The person may be viewed as the field of activity, providing motivation for all action, and organising the physical factors that go to make up the body.²⁴ In this sense, it is described as 'one with a body' (*śarīrin*). The psyche is involved in this field as a factor, no doubt as an important factor but as one of the factors nevertheless.

Āyurveda explains the function of this factor which 'upholds' the other factors (known collectively as the body-mind complex). The psyche, when active, arouses the mind (*manas*) into action, for the psyche is invariably associated with the mind (which, incidentally, is a doctrine peculiar to Āyurveda).²⁵ The cognition occasioned by mind may not necessarily be of the external

world, for, as explained by Charaka's commentator Chakrapāṇi, there can be no cognition of the external world without the participation of sense-organs. In the absence of sense-participation, cognition of the psyche, as occasioned by the mind, alone persists. This is not transactional cognition, but introverted cognition (*ātma-jñāna*), independent of objects (*nirvishaya*), indeterminate, unstructured and devoid of form. But this introverted cognition is not to be construed in terms of *ātma-jñāna* of the Vedānta. Here it is purely a psychophysical process, only unstructured and indeterminate. And Charaka specifically subscribes to the notion of psychophysical parallelism.²⁶ And his doctrine of invariant association of mind with the psyche would adequately explain

the formulation of the phenomenological person (*samyogipurusha*).

Āyurveda's indebtedness to the Sāṃkhya school of thought has expressed itself in the concept of the 'subtle-body' (*sūkshma-śarīra* or *liṅga-deha*).²⁷ Constituted by consciousness, ego, eleven senses, and five subtle elements, this body is said to survive the physical body and transmigrate; 'like a little thing, no bigger than a thumb, yet pervading the entire body, even as a small lamp lights the whole room.'²⁸ This body is called 'liṅga' because it merges thoroughly with the constitution. In Āyurveda, this body is composed of air, fire, water, earth and mind: it is exceedingly subtle and is carried over from one life to the next

(*ātivāhika*). This is sometimes referred to as 'elemental consciousness' (*bhūtātmā*), a mass of fine particulars integrated and directed by the psyche (*jīva*). The individuals as determined by this subtle mass of directions within is, according to Suśruta, the *karma-purusha* whose disorders medicine seeks to correct.²⁹ The subtle body is the substrate, the foundation, the ground for the psychophysical constitution to take shape and function. The foetus is said to be formed as a result of the father's sperm (*śukra* or *sattva*) and the mother's blood (*śoṇita* or *rajas*) coming together, but not until the subtle body has migrated into this union.³⁰

This subtle body, mind, heat-power, (*agni*), watery contents (*sama*), breath (*vāyu*), and the five senses (cognitive functions) are together described as the vital currents (*prāṇāḥ*), which are located in one hundred and seven vital centres (*marmas*), of which head, heart and pelvis (*vasti*) are considered most important.³¹ Sensory and mental functions are associated with the head, while consciousness (*chitta*) is located in the heart. It is interesting that Charaka calls heart by the characteristically Sāṃkhyan word for elemental consciousness, '*mahat*'. In heart it is that all modes of consciousness are gathered, and all vital currents are centred.³²

Human constitution, according to Suśruta, is distinguished by the following functions: physiological functions (like breathing), reflex actions (like winking), sensory functions (*vishayopalabdhi*), intellectual functions, like decision, (*niśchaya*), inquiry (*vichāraṇā*), scrutiny and apperception (*viññāna*), memory (*smṛti*) and energetic application (*adhyavasāya*). These functions are organised on the basis of a network of elemental modifications that work together to 'uphold' the body (*dhātu*). There is a normal pattern that may be described as 'health'. When in this normal pattern, all processes are properly balanced (*samyogavāhi*); the factors that 'uphold' the body, viz., dhātus, are in their proper natural proportions (*prākṛta-māna*) so that

the balance (*sāmyāvasthā*) is maintained. When, however, these factors are deficient or in excess, the balance is disturbed, and disease results.

Disease thus is essentially in the nature of departure from normalcy or disturbance (*vikāra*). There are forces within the body that make the body foul (*mala*) and disturb its processes. It is important to note that there are also forces within the body which strive to keep the body clean and its processes even (*prasāda*). The aim of Āyurveda as a curative discipline is to strengthen the 'prasāda' forces against the 'mala' forces. The struggle between them is normal and natural, and health is a necessary concomitant of this struggle.³³ The job of a

physician is merely to aid nature in its normal struggle so that the proper balance of the basic design in the body (*dhātu-sāmya*) is secured.

Important in Āyurveda is the notion of equivalence of macrocosm (*brahmāṇḍa*) and microcosm (*piṇḍāṇḍa*), inherited from the Tāntric tradition. The structure of the individual organism is essentially similar to the structure of the universe. This refers to the five primary elements (*pañchabhūtas*) that enter into composition: earth (density, solidity), water (cohesion, liquidity), air (expansion, movement), fire (heat, light), and ākāśa (space, extension). The body is as material and physical as the world around it: its growth, maturation, decay and disappearance

follow the same natural laws. The primary elements combine and modify to produce and maintain the inorganic as well as the organic world. In the organic world, however, their modifications assume a particular pattern, best illustrated in the human body. But the Āyurvedic theory applies equally to human beings as to the lower animals or even to plants. There are not only branches of Āyurveda to treat elephants (*Hastyāyurveda*), cows (*Gavāyurveda*) and horses (*Aśva-vaidyaka*), but there is a discipline which specialises in maintaining and correcting the health of plants (*Vṛkshāyurveda*). There are treatises written on these branches, and there is no doubt that these specialities were once actually practised.



SŪRYA

THREE-FACTOR THEORY AND TYPOLOGY

Suśruta quotes an ancient opinion: 'The constitution (*prakṛti*) of human beings is physical: it is made up of air, fire and water.'³⁵ Of

the five classical elements (the *pañchabūtas*) these three were held in high regard even by the Vedic poets, who personified them as wind-gods (*maruts* or *Vāyu*), fire-god (*Agni*) and water-divinities (*Varuṇa*). The wind-god is the most powerful; it is indeed the soul or spirit of all the gods, essence of the very worlds, first-born of the natural order, monarch of the cosmos.³⁶ The fire-god of course was the living divinity in a sacrificial society. And waters were 'the causes of creation,' rich in rasa and containing the 'liquor of immortality'.³⁷ Perhaps this recognition follows an earlier thought-complex. In any case, the five primary elements in the cosmos were supposed to be represented by these three in man. In the - Tantra Sāṃkhya speculation, each of the

elements is characterised by one or more of the three modes of being (*guṇa*): *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, discussed earlier. The earth element is characterised by *tamas*, air by *rajas*, *ākāśa* by *sattva*, water by *sattva-tamas* and fire by *sattva-rajas*. In the human body, the air factor is composed of the elements *ākāśa* and air; fire factor by the element fire, and water factor by the elements earth and water. These factors are named in *Āyurveda vāta* (*vāyu*), *pitta*, and *kapha* (or *śleshman*), characterised by the three modes *rajas*, *sattva* and *tamas* respectively. It is usual to translate these factors as wind, bile (gall) and phlegm (mucus), following the humoral doctrine of the Greeks. While the Indian factors-theory and the Greek humoral theory are not

identical, we may take these expressions as meaning more or less what the Sanskrit terms connote.

These factors are the component parts of the functional system that we call on organism; and in their normalcy they support the body-mind complex, and therefore they are called 'dhātus'. But when they are thrown out of balance, or get excited, they can cause trouble. They become, in that condition, pathogenic and so are called 'doshas'.³⁸ In *Āyurveda*, the expression 'dhātu' (elements or component parts) is confined to the seven structural aspects; plasma-tissues or chyle (*rasa*), blood (*rakta*), flesh (*māmsa*), fat (*medas*), bone (*asthi*), marrow (*majjā*) and sperm (*śukla*). And, therefore, the three

factors that we spoke of earlier are generally, though incorrectly, called *doshas* (pathogenic factors). It is essential to distinguish *dhātus* from *doshas*: the former are structural, while the latter are entirely functional. *Dhātus* are body-constituents while *doshas* are behavioural processes. It should, however, be noted that some authorities have taken even *dhātu* as not so much structural as functional aspects; an even proportion of the *dhātus* (*dhātu-sāmya*), for instance, is interpreted in terms of satisfaction in sense-function (*prīṇana*), a characteristic of blood; production of oiliness (*sneha*) representing fat; support of the burden (*dhāraṇa*), namely bones; filling up of cavities (*pūraṇa*), the work of marrow; and reproduction (*garbhotpāda*) by means of the sperm. Even then, the *dhātus*

are essentially specific in their function, and actually bound with physical organs.

The *doshas*, on the other hand, are rather abstractions. When *vāta* is referred to as wind, *pitta* as bile and *kapha* as phlegm, they are not to be taken in their actual specific connotations; it would probably be nearer the Āyurvedic intentions if we regard them as the windy aspect, the fiery mechanism and the watery network in the organism respectively. But they are not merely philosophical expressions without actual parallels in the body; their areas of function have been specified, their ascendance periods have been noted, their excitation, deficiency and distortion have been described.

The *dosha* concept is really very old, as old as *R̥gveda* and probably older. We have references to wind and bile in *R̥gveda* itself, and phlegm in *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa*.

We read in the *Atharva-veda* about bile being the liquid fire (*agne pittaṁ apām asi*, 18, 3, 5). Kātyāyana's *Vārttika* on Pāṇini (5, 1, 38), prepared about 300 B.C., mentions the appeasement (*śamana*) and excitation (*kopana*) of the three *doshas*. And there may have been different schools with regard to the nature and function of the *doshas*. There was a line of thought which regarded the *doshas* as merely discrepancies, as the expression really means, and counted the three factors mentioned above under *dhātus* (constituents). Suśruta, for

instance, held the three as responsible for the formation of the body, with the active co-operation of blood (and sperm, according to his commentator Ḍalhaṇa).³⁹ Charaka, on the other hand, regards the *doshas* as quite distinct from the *dhātus*.⁴⁰ By the time, however, when Āyurvedic thought became crystallised, *dhātus* and *doshas* were regarded as structural constituents and functional factors respectively of the human body, viewed as both basic to health and as sources of disturbance. The notion of 'mala' as the group of waste products (faeces, urine and sweat) that render the body foul, unless they are promptly eliminated, highlighted the constituent elements that contribute to health (*prasāda-dhātu*) and those that cause disturbance and disorder

(*mala-dhātu*). The doshas in balance (*sva-māna*) are bound up with the former, while out of balance they relate to the latter. The *dhātu* by itself is regarded as neutral, preserved and destroyed by *dosha* and *mala*. This explains the paradoxical interpretation in Āyurveda of 'discrepancy' (*dosha*) as a constituent factor. The 'tridosha' theory is as valid in understanding normal health as in pathology.



The factors (*doshas*) are said to depend upon *dhātu* and *mala*, and when they themselves become errant they disturb and pollute the latter two. They are essentially emergent and functional, although each of them is associated with different bodily areas and physiological functions. Each factor is in actuality a complex

of processes working in a common direction, and resulting in a common benefit or disturbances. A dosha has its emergent aspect (*chaya*, arousal in its own specific areas), excitational aspect (*prakopa*, overflowing from their own areas into other regions), and the normalisation or tranquillization aspect (*praśamana*,

returning to their own areas of action). Normal health involves necessary and sufficient arousal of the *doshas*. Disease is a result of excitation, and treatment consists of the normalisation of the *doshas*.

The three constitutional factors are intimately interconnected in a complex network of behaviour patterns. In the life-span of an individual, early years are dominated by *kapha*, middle age by *pitta* and old age by *vāta*. During the first four hours of the day (morning) and of the night, phlegm will be in ascendance; the hours between 10 and 2 during day and during the night will be marked by the ascendance of bile; and between 2 and 6 both during day and during night is the period of the ascendance

of wind. Ascendance of a factor is a natural phenomenon throughout an individual's life, and in all his activities. Even when he eats his food, for instance, in the beginning *kapha* will predominate, but when food starts getting digested *pitta* will become important; and then wind will take over. The involvement of human constitution in the natural order is emphasised by the periodical ascendance of the three doshas in the several seasons of the year. In winter (*hemanta*, November-December), rains (*varsha*, July-August) and the cool season (*śīśira*, January-February) *vāta* is said to be the king; in summer (*grīshma*, May-June) *pitta* rules; and in spring (*va-santa*, March-April) *kapha* dominates. The occurrence of diseases as well as their treatment

procedures take into consideration the individual constitution with reference to the ascendance of the factor and the time of the year. Health is considered to be the result of a proper balancing of the factors (*sama-dosha*), for disease is symptomatic of an imbalance in them (*dosha-vaishamya*).

In the body, the area of arousal of *vāta* is below the navel (between the pelvic region and the rectum); the area of *pitta* is the region between the heart and the navel (mid-stomachic region and the small intestines); and the area of *kapha* is the region above the heart (chest and throat). While *vāta* fills all the interspaces in the body (like bladder, intestines, ear, skin etc.) *pitta* is active in liver, blood, spleen, heart,

eyes, and skin; and *kapha* in the upper parts of the stomach (*āmāśaya*). *Vāta* is related to the element air and space; *pitta* to the fire element, and *kapha* to earth and water. To repeat what was said earlier, the three factors in the body are comparable to the three principle elements: air, fire and water in the cosmos. And they represent the *rajas*, *sattva* and *tamas* modes of being respectively. Of these, *vāta* is the most important factor; it is the prime mover. It is because of this factor, the other two factors become active. But the *pitta* factor (fire in the body) is principally associated with digestion, and there is a school of Āyurvedic thought that regards all ailments as fundamentally due to indigestion.⁴¹ But even this 'fire' is fanned by *vāta*.

Because of the excessively unstable nature of *vāta*, the factors get frequently thrown out of balance: disturbances of the factors are thus inherent in nature. Causes of health, therefore can be causes of troubles also. What is important in health, or in disease, is the particular pattern of the factors, for the three factors always function together, although they occur in varying proportions and intensities. It is interesting that Āyurveda emphasises that the factors combine with the modes of being (*guṇa*) in various ways to bring about special states. When, for example, *kapha* (already dominated by *tamas*) flares up and gets combined with the general *tamas* of the body, sleep (*nidrā*) results. The *pitta* factor (dominated by *sattva*) flares up and gets combined with the general *rajas*

to produce delusions (*bhrānti*); an excited *vāta* (*rajas*) also enters into it. The same *pitta* combining with *tamas* results in the fainting spells (*mūrchhā*). The *kapha* (dominated by *tamas*) and *vāta* (*rajas*) together combine with the general *tamas*, and bring about drowsiness.

The combinations and the ascendance of the factors in the constitutions are responsible for personality types (*prakṛtis*). Āyurveda speaks of the pure *vāta*-type (*śuddha-vāta-prakṛti*), the pure *pitta*-type (*śuddha-pitta-prakṛti*) and the pure *kapha*-type (*śuddha-kapha-prakṛti*). These are types in which the mentioned factor is obviously assertive, the other two being subordinate to it. But pure types are rare; more frequent are the mixed types. Although this classification was

originally with reference to the pathogenic factors only, it assumed a general significance in course of time. When two of the factors combine in equal proportion to determine a type, it is called 'pair-determined' (*dvandvaja*). And when all three factors are involved more or less significantly but not equally, the constitution is miscellaneous assorted (*saṁnipāta*).⁴² When, however, the three factors combine in equal quantity and strength, the type is perfectly balanced (*sama*). The ascendance tendency of the factors commences even at the foetal stage of development, and becomes settled in late childhood. Influencing factors include heredity (*kula*), vocational affiliation (*jāti*), climate and country (*deśa*), age (*vayas*), and 'the inclinations of the subtle body'.⁴³

Vāta as a factor sustains the whole bodily system, the physical machinery as well as the physiological functions (including psychological processes): efficiency of the sense-organs and alertness of mind are alike dependent upon it. Being associated with *rajas*, it is described as red in colour, productive of energy and highly unstable (or constantly in motion). Dryness, lightness, instability, cold, roughness and solidity are given as its characteristics. In function, it is five-fold: 'forward breath' (*prāṇa*, breath that governs respiration, and prevails in the whole body from toe to nostrils, especially located in the head and moving in chest and throat, contributing to mental alertness and sense-efficiency);, 'downward breath' (*apāna*, prevailing in the



lower regions but moving in navel, intestinal canals, sex-organs and legs, contributing to production of sperm, and responsible for expelling faeces and urine);, 'pervading breath' (*vyāna*, prevailing in the heart but pervading all over the body, characterised by great speed in circulation, helping sensory-motor functions, blood circulation, reflexes like winking, all sensory perceptions,

and distribution of the vital sap to all parts of the body); 'ascending breath' (*udāna*, prevailing in the chest but moving in throat, nostrils, palate, skull and navel, responsible for speech, intentions, energy, strength, memory and complexion); and 'equalising breath' (*samāna*, prevailing in close proximity to the 'stomachic fire', and moving in the digestive organs, heart, navel and

the joints, helping digestion and assimilation). The concept of multiple breaths, as was mentioned earlier, is an old one, perhaps pre-Vedic. In Vedic literature, especially in the early Upanishads, we find that breaths, three to ten in number, are mentioned; but later Upanishads fixed the number to five.⁴⁴ Āyurveda has defined its functions as well as its anomalies. When *vāta* as a factor is excited, sense-function is weakened, insensibility for touch sets in, pain in body is felt, constipation results, one feels thirsty and restive, palpitation and trembling are noticed, and one gets weak and is emaciated.

The constitution that is dominated by this factor, known as 'vāta-prakṛti' is identified by several physical and psychological traits.

Scanty hair, lean and fragile figure, high body-temperature, dry skin, dark complexion and low voice suggest this type. The person belonging to this type has a weak constitution and has frequent trouble with his digestion; his resistance is low and immunity poor, with the result that he is often sick. His ailments are mostly of the nervous system. His intelligence, however, is above average, and receptivity high; he is imaginative. But he is likely to be nervous, timid, suspicious, jealous, quick in his likes and dislikes, fickle-minded, and rather talkative. He is a light sleeper, and when he dreams, he soars in the sky.

The second factor *pitta* (bile) is described as 'bodily fire' (*dehāgni*, *kāyāgni*). According to Suśruta, this

is the only fire in the body. It cooks all that we eat, and is responsible for warmth, digestion and metabolic changes. The concept of bodily fire is a collective one: it includes 'cooking heat' (*pāchakāgni*), the five elemental fires (*bhūtāgni*) and the fires of the seven constituents (*dhātvagnis*), covering enzymes and hormones of metabolism.⁴⁵ It is described as a hot, yellow liquid exuding an unpleasant odour; it is a 'fiery liquid'. The five-fold aspects of this factor are: 'cooking' (*pāchaka*, prevailing in the midregion between the upper and lower parts of the stomach, composed of the five elements, responsible for assimilation and digestion, and contributing to the other pittas in the body), colouring (*rañjaka*, prevailing in the upper parts of the stomach where

undigested food is received, liver, and spleen, responsible for the conversion of chyle into blood,⁴⁶ 'realising' (*sādhaka*, prevailing in the heart, and responsible for intellection, memory and self-regarding), 'perciving' (*lochaka* or *ālochaka*, shining in the eyes and responsible for visual perceptions), and 'irradiating' (*bhrājaka*, lustre-giving and illumining, occurring as a quality of the skin as complexion). When this factor is excited one is dejected, feels thirsty, sweats much, and may even faint; there appear on the face pimples, and there is excessive heat within the body.

The constitutional type determined by this factor is characterised by good appetite and good digestion, unsteady muscles,

loose joints, glowing complexion, and premature greying. His body tends to be soft and odorous. He frequently has burning sensations in parts of his body, and his urine is often high in colour; his eyes too have a yellowish tinge. His sleep is easily disturbed. He is intelligent, and inclines to be imaginative. He is irritable, impatient and rather boastful. He is proud, sometimes haughty; he is prone to anger, and can be cruel. His perseverance, however, is poor, and his moods change quickly. His dream-contents reveal association with heavenly bodies (sun, moon, and stars). He has greater stamina than the previous group; but is susceptible to ailments of the digestive system.

The third factor, *kapha* or *śleshman* (phlegm), is related to the

earth and water elements and to the *tamas* mode of being. Therefore, it inclines its possessor to heaviness, dullness and indolence. Its main function appears to be to neutralise the heat that is produced by *pitta*, which would otherwise burn the system down; it also unites the joints (and that is why it is called *śleshman*, from the root *ślish*, to connect) and eliminates friction. It is this factor that gives firmness and strength to the body, and also the capacity to resist disturbances within the organism. Its five-fold functions are: permeation of the entire body with watery essence (*kledaka*, moistening, with stomach as its principal centre and enhancing the activity of the other phlegm centres), supporting the action of the heart (*avalambaka*,

located in the chest, imparting energy and strength); salivation etc. (*bodhaka*, chief centres being throat and tongue, ensuring gustation), co-operation (*śleshmaka*, located in the joints, uniting them firmly and lubricating); and cooling the sense-organs (*tarpaka*, located in the head and favouring all sensory activities). When this factor is excited, the body becomes dense and hard, with a tendency towards cold and numbness of limbs; digestion is disturbed and sleep becomes excessive; there is an inclination to be drowsy, and the skin pales.

This constitution, being dominated by the element of lubrication and connection, is distinguished by a well-integrated body-machanism. Persons belonging

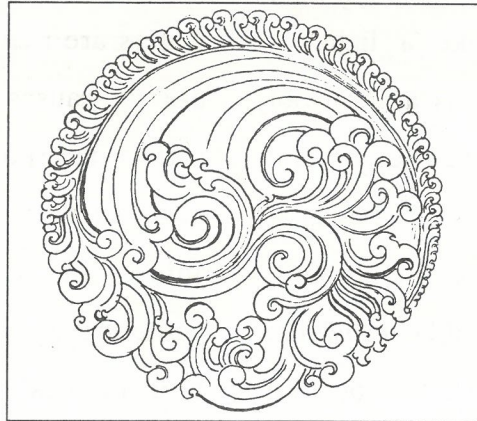
to this type are endowed with a robust physique, well-proportioned and rather heavily built. They are inclined to obesity, vigorous in sex-activity, and rather sluggish in habits. They are generally strong, courageous, and free from envy and greed. They are the healthiest of the three groups; their powers of endurance are great. They do not sweat much; their gait is firm, and steps even. Their digestion, however, is rather weak. Their sleep is heavy, and not easily disturbed. When they dream, it is usually about watery stretches like lakes and rivers. When they do fall ill, the ailments are usually of the respiratory and lymphatic systems. Dominated by *tamas*, their temperament tends to be indolent and indulgent.

THE 'FIRE' WITHIN

Interesting in Āyurveda is the consideration of what is known as 'the stomachic fire' (*jāṭharāgni*) or 'the bodily fire' (*kāyāgni*, according to Bhela). That there is a fire within man that keeps him alive and active is indeed a very ancient notion, and by no means peculiar to Indian people. That the organism is enlivened by a mysterious fire that glows within, concealed in the dark recesses of the heart is a belief that

is almost universal. Vedic literature contained this notion: 'This pan-human fire (*agnir-vaiśvānarah*) inside man, by means of which the food that we eat is cooked.'⁴⁷ The association between fire and water is likewise an old belief. The Veda considers fire as the descendant of water (*apām napāt*); there is mention of 'the fire of the clouds'. Āyurveda developed this ancient mystic idea into a rational concept.

Within the stomach, at a distance of about two inches from



the navel, to the left in men and to the right in women, is supposed to be the seat of this 'fire'. Although small like a grain of paddy or of barley, it lights up the whole being, and its heat pervades the entire body. In obese persons it is said to be of the size of a barley-grain, while in slim persons it is atomic in size. It is present in all living beings; in minute organisms like flies and insects, it is 'like mere air'. Another view locates this fire in the mystic space within the heart-lotus (*dahara-puṇḍarīka*), extremely subtle and yellowish, flaming like a light. A third view regards it as a spring of sour water located in the visceral cavity. Bhela records Atreya-Punarvasu's view: the 'bodily fire' which is of the nature of heat (*ushmā*) and light (*tejas*) digests the food we

eat. Even as the sun quickly dries up the pouddle and small water holes by his rays, the 'fire' in the stomach digests all food that enters.⁴⁸ This is the principal agent, not only in cooking (*pāka*) but in specially cooking (*vipāka*) so that the transformation of what we eat into organic juices (*rasas*), which are the primordial substances of the organism, and the essence of which is water. Charaka cites the opinion of the ancient Vāyor-vidas: 'Organisms are born of *rasa*, and so are the various diseases, because waters are rich in these juices, they are the causes of creation'.⁴⁹ Bhela makes the position more explicit: 'The heat, residing in the organic juices in the body, continues gathering up life; man is after all born of these juices, and therefore

it is the juices that go by the name of life''.⁵⁰ One is reminded of the Vedic description of fire as the descendant of water (*apām napāt*). That the stomachic fire is intimately connected with the 'fiery liquid', bile (*pitta*), is also to be considered in this context. Bhela speaks of the five-fold functions of this 'fire', but his explanations are more intriguing and psychologically significant.

'Perceiving' (*ālochaka*) as a function of stomachic fire is two-fold, according to Bhela; one specialises in the visual apparatus, and the other covers general consciousness. The former generates knowledge by the contact of the sense-organs with ego and mind, while the latter, located in between

the eye-brows on a 'mound' (or at 'the road-cross'), is responsible for the subtle 'thoughts' which are not only prehended, but retained, remembered, recalled, and projected as occasions demand. 'Irradiating' (*bhrājaka*), in Bhela's opinion, refers to the specific characteristics and functionings of the various organs in the body. 'Colouring' (*rañjaka*) is appropriating the external sense-objects as one's own, because of the ego, and inclining towards them with an emotional set. 'Performing' or 'relating' (*sādhaka*) is achieving of the proximate and distant objectives, with regard to the object thus appropriated. Cooking (*pāchaka*) is digesting the various kinds of food eaten, a physiological function but with a mental involvement.⁵¹

Bhela's analysis opens up an interesting mass of psychological speculations (see Appendix I) but it is sufficient here to note that Bhela preserves an old tradition of the association of the stomachic fire with the waters within the viscera. He likens it to a lamp that is placed in the hollow of a bitter-gourd (*ikshvāku-kośa*) and set floating. When the water is undisturbed the lamp burns steadily, but when it is disturbed the lamp is no longer steady and constant.⁵² The concept of stomachic fire in Āyurveda is an important one. We live by this fire, and glow in it. All the three essential factors (*vāta*, *pitta* and *kapha*) are involved in it; they determine its nature, although it is a fire that burns by its own fuel.⁵³ The excitation or disturbance in the factors bring about

changes in the 'fire'. An excitation of the wind will produce 'irregular fire' (*vishamāgni*); an excess of bile will intensify the fire (*tikshṇāgni*); and when the phlegm is excited we have 'sluggish fire' (*mandāgni*). The changes in the 'fire' have their direct impact on the digestive process. When, however, the three factors are evenly distributed in the body, the fire will be steady and even (*samāgni*), which makes for sound health. Man's life rests on this 'fire'. His strength, vitality, health, pleasures and sorrows are all rooted in this. The warmth (*ushmā*) that makes man alive indicates the presence of this 'fire'; when it cools, man dies.

The Āyurvedic concept of 'stomachic fire' is an important aid

in reconstructing the early phase of *ātma-vāda*, which matured in the Upanishads. The *śakti-vāda* of the Tantras is undoubtedly related to it. The five fundamental elements (*pañchabhūta*), the three constitutional factors (*tridosha*), the seven essential substances that emerge from the organic juice (*rasādi-saptadhātu*), the three modes of being (*guṇa*), the intra-organic energetics and psychological integration are all involved here. The notion of 'the fire within the visceral waters' appears to hold the key for understanding the transitional stage between the old Tantra culture and the classical Vedic tradition. Being a practical discipline, Āyurveda was interested in understanding the causes of disturbances of the fire as well as in the methods of restoring

its normalcy. The Āyurvedic regimen and treatment procedures are meant to calm the waters within (and this signifies the purification of the constitution, *sattva-śuddhi*) so that the fire in it retains or resumes its natural glow (and this is the prototype of the classical goal of 'getting back to the original nature', *svarūpāvasthānam*). The importance attached to nature (*sva-bhāva*, being in one's own natural mode) in Āyurveda is to be considered in this context. Health is significantly termed 'abiding in oneself' (*sva-stha*), 'composure', 'being at ease', 'comfort'. This refers to the even and steady 'fire' in the still waters deep within the constitution. The early Sāṃkhyan concept of *purushāvatham-avyaktam* already explained in a previous section, has

probably relevance here. The state of equilibrium (*sāmyāvasthā*) of the Sāṃkhya school of thought and the process of perfect settling down (*samādhi*) of Yoga are no doubt intimately related to the 'even fire' (*samāgni*) of Āyurveda.

ALCHEMY AND MEDICINE IN INDIA

If Āyurveda emerged out of the Tāntrik tradition and set out on an

independent career, the alchemical systems of Indian medicine, *Rasachikitsā* and *Siddha*, continued their involvement with Tāntrik ideas. It is not easy to identify the origin of alchemical ideas in India. It is supposed that contact with China, the first home of alchemy (around 3rd century B.C.), was responsible for the development of this theory-practice complex here. But the twin objectives of alchemy, viz. transmutation of base metals into noble metals (like gold



and silver) and the prolongation of life by an elixir, are suggested even in the Vedic records. Alchemic ideas were prevalent here since possibly pre-Vedic times, although they did not produce a system, as they did in China, Egypt, Arabian countries and Western Europe, until three or four centuries after Christ. The use of metals, minerals, precious stones and herbs for both medicinal and magical ends was known to the poets of *R̥gveda*, and to the authors of *Atharva-veda*. Chinese influence was certainly there, especially during the early centuries of the Christian era, and *Mahāchīna* (the great China) was familiar land to the Tāntriks as well as the alchemists of India. Siddha-Nāgārjuna is supposed to have gone there; and the Tamiḷian Siddha Bogar

is said to have come from there; and both were eminent masters of Indian alchemy, during early centuries of the modern era. But it would be wrong to assume that India borrowed alchemy from China. It is possible that cinnabar (mercuric sulphide), on which the Chinese alchemy was based, was first discovered in India: called *darada*, *yaśada*, or *rasa-siṇḍūra*, it was known to the Tāntriks both in its natural mineral form and in its manufactured form. It is a fact that Indian alchemy was mercury-oriented, and contrary to the Chinese belief that mercury is female and sulphur male, Indians regarded mercury as male and sulphur female. However, this was a passing position; the view that survived was that mercury was composed of all the five elements (*pañchabhūtas*).

Basic to Indian alchemy (*rasa-vāda*) is the Siddha ideology. *Siddha* is an adept, a Tāntrik practitioner; *siddhi* is achievement, and generally the expression refers to the eight-fold magical skills: abilities to become minute like an atom (*aṇimā*), to become excessively light (*laghimā*), to obtain everything (*prāpti*), to be irresistible in will (*prākāmya*), to get magnified (*mahimā*), to attain mastery over everything (*iśitva*), to subdue and overpower everything (*vaśitva*), and to suppress the passions (*kāmāvasāyitā*). There is a classical list of eighty-four historical siddhas, accepted by the Hindu, Buddhist, Tibetan and Nātha traditions, which became popular in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries A.D. The first of these Siddhas was Matsyendranātha (*Mīna-nātha*, or

Lui-pā of the Tibetans) who is said to have lived in the ninth century, and most of the Siddhāchāryas mentioned in the list belong to the eleventh century. But the Siddha tradition itself dates back to a remote past, and was connected with wizards and shamans of the Vedic and the pre-Vedic times. The common objective of these siddhas was the transsubstantiation of the body (*kāya-sādhana*), and various methods were evolved for the realisation of this objective. *Rasa-vidyā* (alchemy) was a method that was thus evolved: it was a physical process designed to make the body an efficient instrument both for material prosperity (*bhoga*) and for spiritual 'upliftment' (*uddhāra*). It is said that the element of alchemy was introduced into the siddha cult by



Nāgārjuna, who was himself both a siddha and an alchemist (and his date is given as 23 A.D. by some authorities, while others variously place him in later periods). There is a work ascribed to Nāgārjuna, *Rasaratnākara*, which belongs to the early strata of Mahāyāna-tantras. Another work with the same name (by Nityanātha) mentions that Nāgārjuna prepared this work for 'the benefit of the ailing' (*vyādhitānām hitārthāya proktam nāgārjunena yat*). This

makes clear the general orientation of Indian alchemy within the Siddha culture: there was greater emphasis on the medical aspect rather than on material prosperity. This distinguishes the development of Indian alchemy from that of alchemy elsewhere.

In support of the superiority of this system, it is claimed that while other systems of philosophy describe the state of emancipation (*mukti*) as

possible only after death of the physical body, the alchemic system advocates the obtainment of this highest state even while the physical body is functioning. *Mukti* in this system is a matter of direct experience, even as an object held in one's own hand. The highest purpose of alchemy, therefore, is not merely to transmute metals, but to lead to emancipation by 'binding the body' (*deha-bandha*).⁵⁴ There is no doubt that transmutation of metals became a favourite preoccupation of Indian alchemists during the middle ages, and several works came to be written on this subject. In fact, chemistry and iatrochemistry in India developed out of this interest. But work on metals was regarded as in the nature of an experimentation, and the frequent admonition found

in alchemical works is: "First, test with the metals; and then apply on the body".⁵⁵

Mercury is an important idea in Indian alchemy. The word for it, *pārada*, signifies that it helps one to cross the ocean of transmigration;⁵⁶ it is also the 'essence' (*rasa*), the 'essence of Śiva's own body',⁵⁷ in particular his 'seminal essence' (*hara-bīja* or *śiva-vīrya*), and therefore the 'great essence' (*mahā-rasa*). If mercury thus represents Śiva (the Male), sulphur represents his consort Gaurī (the Female).⁵⁸ The creative conjunction of Male and Female is involved in the idea of *rasa-siddhi*. Mercuric sulphide (cinnabar, *rasa-sindūra*) becomes important in this context. Alchemists in the middle ages believed that all

things in the world, especially metals, are ultimately made up of two principles: mercury (the water element, representing fusibility) and sulphur (the fire element, representing combustibility). These two were described as male and female, and the whole world was the result of their union. This is substantially the Śaivite Tāntric position, and Indian alchemy is heavily oriented in favour of the male-female symbolism; and its peculiarity is that mercury, the male principle, is composed of the five primary elements.⁵⁹

Interesting in Indian alchemy is the preparation of a mercurial icon in the form of a phallus (*rasa-līṅga*), to represent the male principle of Śiva. There are elaborate instructions

in texts like *Rasa-ratna-samuchchaya* and *Māṭrkā-bheda-tantra* for preparing this icon, which symbolises a kind of esoteric personality involved in the rite known as 'worship of mercury' (*rasārchanā*). Usually, this icon was prepared by a compound of mercury and sulphur in this method. It was intimately mixed with an extract of *Barberia cristata* (*jhiṇṭi*), and stirred vigorously until mud-consistency is obtained, and then it is shaped into a phallic form (*līṅga*), covered all over with sulphur powder, and heated slightly over the fire of cowdung so that it becomes hard. *Rasa-ratna-samuchchaya*, composed by Vāgbhaṭa, son of Simha-gupta, gives an alternate procedure for the preparation of *rasa-līṅga*: gold leaf three *nishkas* in weight and mercury

nine *nishkas* are rubbed with acids for three hours and the amalgam is shaped into a *liṅga*.⁶⁰ This *liṅga* is installed in the alchemist's laboratory (*rasa-śālā*) and worshipped for both material prosperity and immortality. This worship is said to be more efficacious than worship of *liṅgas* at Vāraṇāsi and other holy places.⁶¹

It has been pointed out that the *liṅga*, which is the creative emblem, is associated with mercuric sulphide (cinnabar, *rasa-siṇḍūra*). In fact, the Tamil word *liṅga* means only this substance. In Chinese alchemy, this is described as a compound of *yang* and *yin* (male and female). It is interesting to note that in the ceremony known as *Aśṭabandha* employed in the installation of icons in temples, this substance is one of

the eight constituents. This provides an important clue to the origin of *liṅga* worship in India, and the Śaivite-Tāntric cults that prevailed before iconic worship became accepted by the Vedic tradition were no doubt greatly influenced by alchemic ideas, especially the male-female symbolism. The usual form that *liṅga* takes in the classical period is always in conjunction with the *yonī* (female procreative organ as the base, and the *liṅga* is a symbol not only of Śiva but also of Śiva-Śakti, the two being regarded as inseparable. The early *liṅgas*, however, were merely erect pillars or posts in shape (*sthāṇu*) symbolising the upward sperm (*ūrdhva-retas*) and the *rasa-liṅga* of the alchemists probably supplied the prototype.

Curious is the employment of the expression 'karma-yoga' in connection with what is known as the 'fixation of mercury'.⁶² This yoga is said to work with mercury on the one hand, and with wind on the other; both are to be 'bound' so as to yield the desired results. The Indian alchemists speak of 'swooning of mercury' (*mūrçhāna*) and 'killing of mercury' (*māraṇa*). The former is to transform mercury into a multi-coloured substance, devoid of excessive fluidity and mobility; and the latter is to deprive mercury of wetness, thickness, brightness, heaviness and mobility. Its natural state is removed from it so that it could be taken into the body without harm or danger.

It is usual to list eighteen processes (*saṁskāras*) by means of

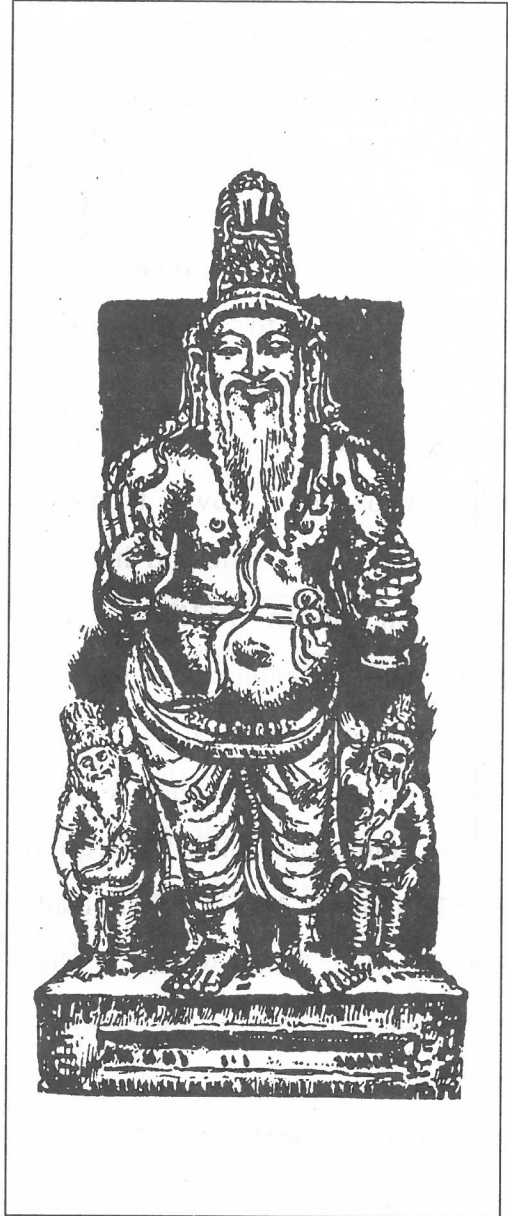
which mercury is transformed into an article of utility and absorption. Mercury, when properly treated, can be assimilated into the human system and can rejuvenate it. Working with the wind means regulating the breath and suspending it (*prāṇāyāma*), a yogic technique. The twin techniques not only preserve the body, but make it a 'glorious one' (*divya-tanu*); and a 'glorious' body is a necessary precondition for 'salvation' here and now, in this very body and in this very life. It is in this sense that alchemy was considered as an adjunct of Yoga: if Yoga worked with troublesome tendencies inherent in mind, alchemy dealt with the removal of the natural infirmities of the body. It is significant that Patañjali, the earliest authority on Yoga, is also considered an alchemist.⁶³

The employment of mercury for its uncanny therapeutic effect on the organic juices (*rasa*) within the body was attempted early. The world *rasa* meant not only the juices of the body which are responsible for blood and other *dhātus*, but fluid extractions and concentrated decoctions. *Rasāyana* signifies in Āyurveda 'the way of the fluids or juices', which are designed to prevent aging and to prolong life. In the early phase of medical thought, the fluids and juices referred to herbal extractions and mineral preparations; but in due course, they meant exclusively mercurial medicines.⁶⁴ Āyurveda developed the art of combining metals with herbs in the preparation of medicines. It was known as *kalā (dhātvaushadhīnām saṁyogakriyā)*.

The use of metals, minerals and particularly mercury, in medicines is an ancient practice in India; and this was a part of the Tāntric legacy inherited by Āyurveda. This legacy is conspicuous in the so-called Siddha system of medicine which is now prevalent mostly in South India, especially in Tamiḷ-nāḍu. An old system, dating of back to pre-Āyurveda period and strongly Tāntric in orientation, it got mixed up with the cult of the nine million Siddhas (*nava-koṭi-siddhas*). These alchemist-Siddhas 'who defied death' preached a philosophy of transmuting the gross physical body composed of impure matter (*aśuddhamaya*) to the refined body of naturally pure matter, thereby rendering the body immutable and free from disabilities and limitations (*praṇava-tanu* or

baindava-tanu). 'Liberated while alive' (*jīvanmukta*), the person who is possessed of this refined body, transacts freely with the world of impure matter as well as the world of pure matter. He is distinguished by the skills (*siddhis*) that facilitate such transactions.

In the classical list of Siddhas, two are of especial importance to the Tamil Siddha System.⁶⁵ Bogar, supposed to be a Taoist Chinese of the pre-Christian period, came to India and settled down on the Paḷani Hills in Tamilnāḍu. He has left not only his works on alchemy and medicine in the Tamil Language, but a tradition of what is known as the 'pure path' (*śuddha-mārga*), respected alike by the adherents of *Śaivāmnāya* and *Śāktāmnāya*.



AGASTYA (Stone, Chidambaram Temple)

Another Chinese who accompanied him and became an authority on medical alchemy here is known in Tamil as Pulippāri. Besides these two, the name of Tirumūlar, whom tradition assigns to 3,000 B.C. (?), is associated with the founding of the Siddha School. Agastya, an Āryan sage who came down from the Himālayan region and did his life's work in South India, is also mentioned in connection with the early development of this school; he is said to have established a centre on the Siddhakūṭa-hill in the present-day Tirunelveli district in Tamilnāḍu. An important Tamil work on which the Siddha-physicians rely is ascribed to this sage: *Agattiyar Charakku*. However, it is difficult to determine the origin or development of this remarkable system, especially

because most of the *Siddha-vaidya* works in Tamil have not been critically or carefully studied; very few indeed have been even published. But there is no doubt that it was once a very prevalent system. Numerous medicines rich in mineral content, especially mercurial preparations, in extensive use today among the rural folk in the South are to be traced to this system. The employment of mercury and arsenic as medicinal agents, extractions from minerals, preparation of essences, calcination, and the use of animal products with healing properties distinguish the Siddha practitioners. There is considerable impact of Āyurveda on the Siddha medical thought as we find it today; but that is a later achievement.

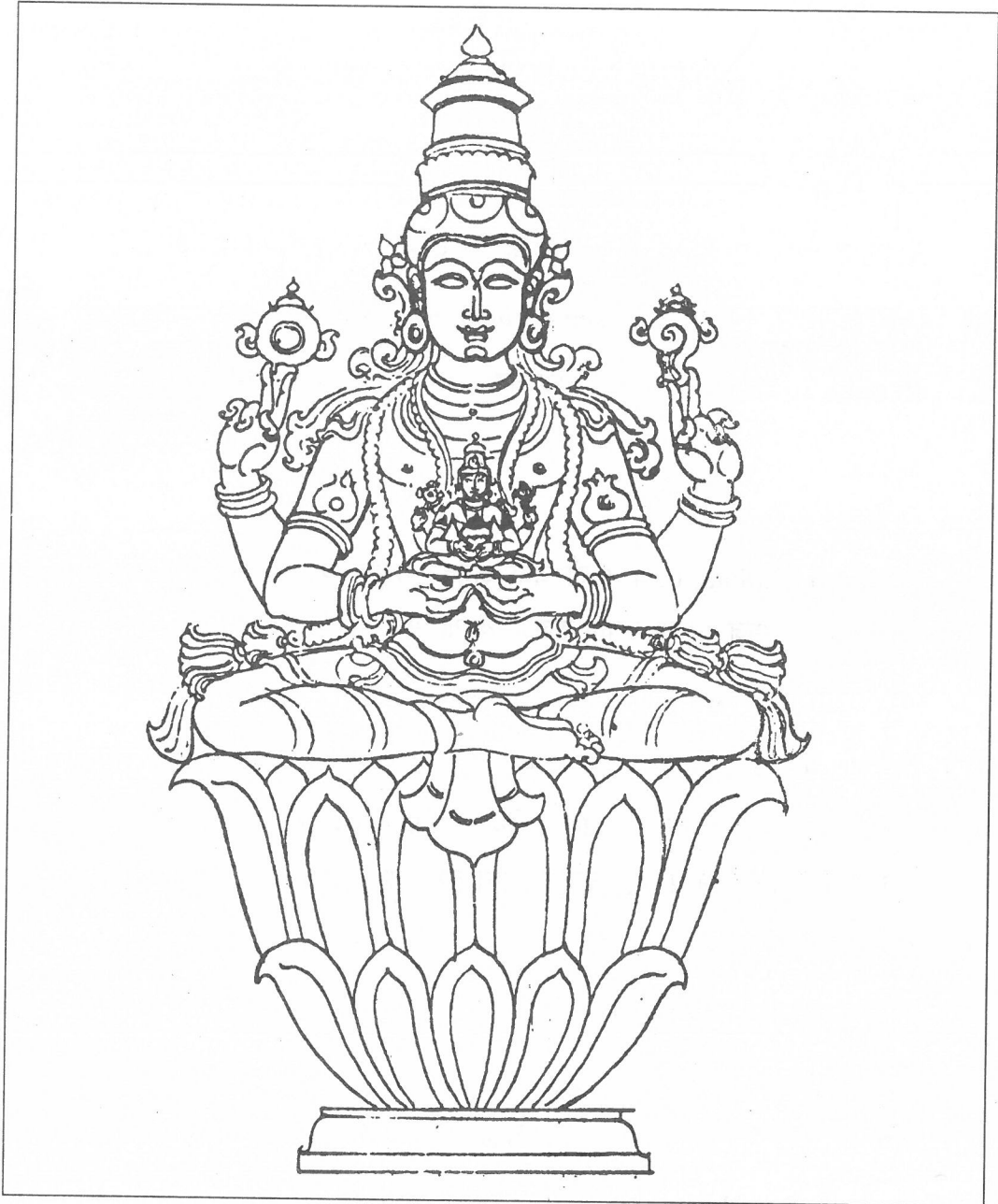
Of special interest in the Siddha system is the rôle of *muppu*, a preparation peculiar to Tamil alchemly, in making mercury pills of exceedingly high potency, intended to prolong life. The exact significance of the Tamil expression, *muppu*, is rather obscure, but it is generally described as the Indian version of 'the philosopher's stone'. Its employment is twofold: transmutation of base metals to gold, and rejuvenation of the human system. The *muppu* used in the Siddha system is known as the 'medicinal' one (*vaidya-muppu*); but another kind of *muppu* is employed in South Indian alchemy (*vāda-muppu*). Two other kinds of *muppu* are mentioned in Tamil literature, which do not appear to be substances at all; they may be mere abstractions:

yoga-muppu and *jñāna-muppu*, meant to be used by spiritual aspirants. However, it is possible that these two kinds of *muppu* were psychedelic drugs, effective not only in producing visions, but in stimulating the vital psychic centres.

There is some knowledge available about the medicinal *muppu*. There are three ingredients that go into the preparation of *muppu*: mixture of carbonates (*pūnīru*), rock salt (*kal-uppu*), and calcium carbonate (*aṇḍak-kal*), which are all obtained naturally. This substance it is that gives mercury its effective property; and therefore it is described as 'guru' of the three ingredients, mentioned above. Important is the *pūnīru* (water exuded from earth). *Muppu* is effective in

proportion to the quality of this *pūnīru*, which is a fluid, whitish in colour, and efflorescence from the soil. Although it is naturally got, its occurrence is restricted to certain places like Kālahasti, Tiruvalaṅgāḍu, Vaḍamadurai, Śivagaṅgai, Teṅkāśi, Tillaivānaṁ and Kanyākumāri. The efflorescence, useful to a Siddha physician, is to be collected in the early hours of the morning at these places; for it is the result of the action of full moon on earth. Tamiḷian alchemy works on the male-female (*āṇ-peṇ*) principle, in common with the alchemical thought in the rest of the country. The Siddha ideology looks upon the male-female symbolism in terms of *biṇḍu-nāda*

differentiation. *Pūnīru* is said to be the result of the union of male and female: full moon (male) acts on the earth (female) at some places in a peculiar way to produce this fluid. The collection is done in a ritualistic manner, and the preparation of *muppu* from it is even more heavily ritualistic. There are numerous works in Tamiḷ⁶⁶ describing the several methods of *muppu*-preparation (*bhasmaṁ*, *chendūram*, *chuṇṇam*), but the methods are preserved as closely guarded secrets. It is necessary that these works must be carefully studied before the rôle of *muppu* in South Indian alchemy can be fully understood.



DHANVANTARI (from Chariot in Suchindram temple)

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. S.N. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, pp.280-81.
2. K. N. Sastri, *New Light on the Indus Civilization*, Vol. II, p. 67.
3. *On Manu*, 2, 1 (He calls them *śrutis*)
4. *R̥gveda*, 2, 33, 4: मा त्वा रुद्र चक्रुधामा नमोभिर्मा दुष्टुती वृषभ मा सहूती ।
 उन्नो वीराः अर्पय भेषजेभिर्भिषक्तं त्वा भिषजां शृणोमि ॥
5. *Ibid.*, 10, 39, 3.
6. *Taittirīya-samhitā*, 6, 4, 9: तौ देवा अब्रुवन् अपूतौ वा इमौ मनुष्यचरौ भिषजाविति ।
तस्माद्ब्राह्मणेन भेषजं न कार्यं अपूतो ह्येषोऽमेध्यो यो भिषक् ॥
7. न मांसभक्षणे दोषो न मद्ये न मैथुने । प्रवृत्तिरेषा भूतानां निवृत्तिस्तु महाफला ॥
8. *Bhela-samhitā*, *Chikitsā-sthāna*, 30.
9. आयतनं विद्यानां मूलं धर्मार्थकाममोक्षाणां । श्रेयः परं किमन्यत् शरीरमजरामरं विहायैकं ॥ अस्मिन्नेव
शरीरे येषां परमात्मनो न स वेद । देहत्यागादर्ध्वं तेषां तद्ब्रह्म दूरतरम् ।
10. *Charaka-samhitā*, 1, 1, 42
11. अथर्ववेदस्य आयुर्वेदत्वमुक्तं भवति । अथर्ववेदैकदेशा एवायुर्वेदः ।
12. *Dārila-bhaṭṭa on Kausika-sūtra*, 25,2: द्विप्रकारा व्याधयः, आहारनिमित्ता अशुभनिमित्ता
चेति, तत्र आहारसमुत्थानां वैषम्य आयुर्वेदं चकार अधर्मसमुत्थानां तु शास्त्रमिदमुच्यते ॥
13. *Deviprosad Chattopadhyaya, Lokāyata, A study in Ancient Indian
Materialism*, New Delhi, 1959

14. J. Filliozat, *The Classical Doctrine of Indian Medicine*, p. 194
15. For he has a special sūtra: कठचरकाल्लुक् (*Ashtādhyāyi*, 4, 3, 107)
16. *Rgveda*, 1, 116, 18 : यदयातं दिवोदासाय वर्तिर्भरद्वाजायाश्विना हयन्ता ॥
17. तत्रेतान् कापिलबलः शेषान् दृढबलोऽकरोत् ।
तन्त्रस्यास्य महार्थस्य पूरणार्थं यथायथम् ॥
18. उपदिष्टा तु सम्यग् धन्वन्तरिमहर्षिणा ।
सुश्रुताय सुशिष्याय लोकानां हितवाञ्छया ॥
सर्वत्र भुवि विख्याता नाम सुश्रुतसंहिता ।
आयुर्वेदत्रयीमध्ये श्रेष्ठा मान्या तथोत्तमा ॥
सा च नागार्जुनैर्नैव ग्रथिता गन्थरूपतः ।
19. D.M. Bose *et al.*, *A Concise History of Science in India* (Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi), 1971, p, 262.
20. *Charaka*, 1, 30, 20 : आयुर्वेदयतीति आयुर्वेदः ।
21. *Suśruta*, 1, 1, 14: आयुरस्मिन् विद्यतेऽनेन वाऽऽयुर्विन्दतीत्यायुर्वेदः ।
22. आप्तो नामानुभावेन वस्तुतत्त्वस्य कात्स्न्येन निश्चयत्वात् रागादिवशादपि नान्यथावादी यः स इति चरके पतञ्जलिः ॥ (quoted in Nageśa-bhaṭṭa's *Laghumañjūshā* as the opinion of Patañjali in his commentary on *Charaka-saṃhitā* (?).
23. *Charaka*, 1, 1, 45 : सत्त्वमात्मा शरीरं च त्रयमेतत् त्रिदण्डवत् ।
लोकस्तिष्ठति संयोगात्तत्र सर्वं प्रतिष्ठितम् ॥

24. *Suśruta*, 1, 1, 21 : पञ्चमहाभूतशरिरिसमवायः पुरुष इत्युच्यते, तस्मिन् क्रिया सोऽधिष्ठानम् ॥
25. *Charaka*, 4, 3, 26 : न ह्यसत्त्वः कदाचिदात्मा सत्त्वविशेषाच्चोपलक्ष्यते ज्ञानविशेषः ॥ The psyche cannot at any time be without mind, so that there is always some sort of knowledge or other. Chakrapāṇi, the commentator, explains: यत्तु केवलमनोजन्यं आत्मज्ञानं तद्भवत्येव सर्वदा । इदमेव चात्मनश्चेतनत्वं यदिन्द्रियसंयोगे सति ज्ञानशालित्वं न निकृष्टस्यात्मनश्चेतनम् ...।
26. *Charaka* : शरीरमपि सत्त्वमनुविधीयते सत्त्वं च शरीरम् ।
27. Cf. Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṃkhya-kārikā*, 40.
28. Cf. *Sāṃkhya-pravachana-bhāṣya*, 5, 103 : यथा दीपस्य सर्वगृहव्यापित्वेऽपि अङ्गुष्ठपरिमाणत्वम् ।
29. *Suśruta*, 3, 1, 16 स एष कर्मपुरुषः चिकित्साधिकृतः ।
30. *Charaka*, 4, 2, 3: cf. Chakrapāṇi, यद्यपि शुक्ररजसी कारणे तथापि यदैवातिवाहिकं सूक्ष्मभूतरूपशरीरं प्राप्नुतः तदैव ते शरीरं जनयतः नान्यथा ॥ Also cf. *Suśruta*, 3, 1, 16.
31. Chakrapāṇi on *Charaka*, 8, 9, 16 : हृदिः मूर्ध्नि च वस्तौ च नृणां प्राणाः प्रतिष्ठिताः । Elsewhere (4, 7, 9) head, heart, throat, navel, rectum, bladder, vital fluid, sperm, blood and flesh are given as the seats of *prāṇa*.
32. *Charaka* : हृदयं चेतनाधिष्ठानमेकम् । The entire body is said to be founded (*samśṛta*) on the heart (1, 30, 5) तत्र चैतन्यसंग्रहः... प्राणवाहानां श्रोतसां मूलमङ्गः अन्तरात्मनः श्रेष्ठमायतनम् ॥

33. योगक्षेमौ शरीरस्य स्वभावपरिकल्पितौ । स्वभावस्य तु साहाय्यं कर्तव्यं भिषगुत्तमैः ॥ Cf. *Charaka*, 1, 1, 52 : धातुसाम्यक्रिया चोक्ता तन्त्रस्यास्य प्रयोजनम् ।
34. ब्रह्माण्डकलितं सर्वं पिण्डाण्डेऽपि च वर्तते । सारूप्येणोभयं ज्ञेयं उभयत्र गुणाधिकम् ॥
35. *Suśruta*, 3, 4, 80 : प्रकृतिमिह नराणां भौतिकीं केचिदाहुः । पवनदहनतोयः कीर्तितास्तासु तिस्रः ॥
36. *Rgveda*, 10, 168, 3-4
37. *Ibid.*, 10, 129, 1 and 3, 19.
38. Thus *Ashtāṅga-sūtra* 1, 13, and 1, 6 : रसासृङ्मांसमेदोऽस्थिमज्जाशुक्लानि धातवः । वायुः पित्तं कफश्चेति त्रयो दोषास्समासतः ।
39. *Suśruta, Sūtra-sthāna*, 1, 5, 12 देहसम्भवहेतवः Dalhaṇa comments शुक्रार्तवादिसहकारितया देहजनका अभिप्रेताः ।
40. Vāgbhaṭa, for instance, looks upon the factors as polluting agents (*doshas*) while the dhātus are the things that are polluted (*dūshya*). The body, according to him, is an organisation of *doshas*, *dhātus*, and *malas* (शरीरं च दोषधातुमलसमुदायः)
41. As illustrated in *Āyurveda-sūtram* (edited with Yogānanda-nātha's commentary, by R. Shama Sastry, Oriental Library Publications. University of Mysore, 1922)
42. Bhela speaks of the mixed types as 'samsṛshṭa-prakṛti' According to him, 'pure' types are the best, 'pair-determined' are of middling quality,

and the 'miscellaneous' the worst. संसृष्टप्रकृतिं विद्यात् संसृष्टैश्चापि लक्षणैः । निवृत्त (एकात्म)-प्रकृतिर्धन्या द्वन्द्वा भवति मध्यमा । सन्निपातात्मिका या तु जघन्या सा प्रकीर्तिता ॥ (*Bhela-samhitā*, *Vimāna-sthāna*, 4, 26-27)

43. Cf. S. Venkataraghavan, "The Scope and Importance of the Doshas", *Chakra* (New Delhi), Vol III, 1971, pp. 124-127.
44. For instance, three *prāṇas* mentioned in *Br.-up.*, 3,1, 10 and *Ch.-up.* 1, 3, 3, four in *Br.-up.*, 4, 4, 1, six in *Br.-up.* 1, 5, 4, seven in *Br.-up.* 2, 2, 3 and ten in *Br.-up.* 3, 9, 4. In *Maitrī* 2, 6, five are described : *prāṇa* that goes up (य ऊर्ध्वं उत्क्रामति), *apāna*, that goes down (योऽयं अवाङ् संक्रामति), *vyāna* that favours other breaths (येन वा एता अनुगृहीता), *samāna* that sends the thickest part of nourishment into *apāna* and brings the minutest in each member (योऽयं स्थविष्ठो धातुरन्नस्यापाने प्रापयति अणिष्ठो वाङ्गाङ्गे समानयति), and *udāna* which disgorges and swallows what is drunk and eaten (योऽयं पीताशितं उद्विरति निगरति)
45. Cf. S. Venkataraghavan, *op. cit.*
46. Chyle is the subtle essence of fiery nature which results from well-digested food (आहार्यस्य सम्यक्परिणतस्य यस्तेजोभूतः सारः परमसूक्ष्मः स रस इत्युच्यते - *Suśruta*, *Sūtra-sthāna*, 14, 1). *Ḍalhaṇa* explains it as the 'heated thing' (*ghṛta*), a fluid which softens, nourishes and vitalises the body. Located in the heart, it proceeds through twenty-four arteries (*dhamanis*) to all parts of the body, keeping them alive. When it reaches liver and spleen

it acquires the red colour and becomes blood (स खल्वाप्योरस यकृत्प्लीहानौ प्राप्य रागमुपैति, *Suśruta, ibid.*)

47. *Br.-up.*, 5, 8, 1 : (अयं अग्निर्वैश्वानरो योऽयं अन्तःपुरुषे येनेदमन्नं पच्यते यदिदमद्यते ॥
48. *Bhela-samhitā*, Śarīra-sthāna, 4, pp. 85-86 (Girijādayālu Śukla's ed.)
49. *Ibid.*, 4, 13-14 (देहिनां भोजनं भुक्तं नानाव्यञ्जनसंस्कृतं । सूर्यो दिवि यथा तिष्ठन् तेजोयुक्तो गभस्तिभिः । विशोषयति सर्वाणि पल्वलानि पयांसि च । तद्वच्छरीरिणां भुक्तं जाठरो नाभिसंस्थितः ॥
Cf. the typical Ayurvedic view of *jātharāgni* : (नाभेरूर्ध्वं द्रव्यङ्गले वामभागे नृणामग्निर्जाठरे । योषितां तु भात्येवायं दक्षिणे व्रीहितुल्यस्तस्यैवोष्मा व्यापृतः सर्वदेहे ॥ स जीर्णकारी वदन्ति केचिद्वैश्वानरीं दीपशिखामथान्ये । नीवारशूकप्रतिमां च पीतां कुक्ष्युद्भवो ह्याम्लरसोऽयमग्निः ॥
50. *Charaka, Sūtra-sthāna*, 25, 13 : रसजानि तु भूतानि व्याधयश्च पृथग्विधाः, आपो हि रसवत्यस्ताः निर्वृत्तिहेतवः ॥
51. *Bhela-samhitā*, Śarīra-sthāna 4, 35 (ऊष्मा रसस्थो देहेऽस्मिन् जीवं संगृह्य तिष्ठति । रसोद्भवः पुमान् तस्माद्रसो जीवनमुच्यते ॥
51. *Ibid.*, Śarīra-sthāna, 4th Adhyāya, pp. 86-87 (Misra's ed.)
52. *Ibid.*, verses 22, 23 (p. 89) : (जाठरो जलसंभूतः पाचकः पवनैस्सह । प्रदीप्यते नृणां कोष्ठे सति स्वेन्धनपूरिते ॥ इक्ष्वाकुकोशमास्थाय यथादीपः स्थिरेऽम्भसि । तिष्ठति स्तिमिते सक्तो न यथा चलितेऽम्भसि ॥
53. *Ibid.*, स्वेन्धनपूरिते ..
54. Cf. Mādhava's *Sarva-darśana-saṅgraha*, Raseśvara-darśana, 8. न च रसशास्त्रं धातुवादार्थमेवेति मन्तव्यं, देहबन्धद्वारा मुक्तेरेव परमप्रयोजनत्वात् ॥ 'Deha-bandha' is in

imitation of 'rasa-bandha' (fixation of mercury by destroying its fluidity).

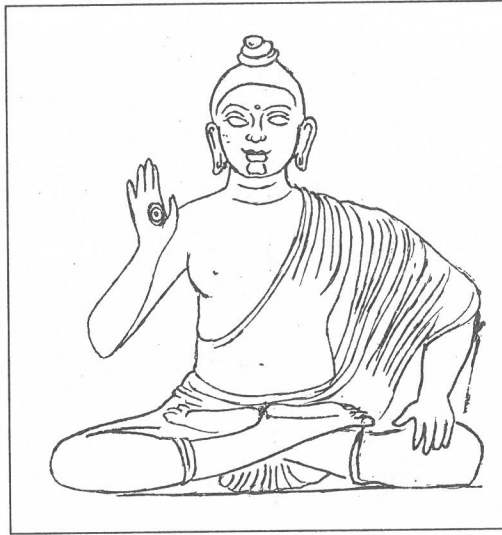
55. पूर्वे लोहे परीक्षेत, पश्चाद्देहे प्रयोजयेदिति । ...यथा लोहे तथा देहे कर्तव्यः । (*Ibid.*)
56. *Rasārṇava*, पारदो गदितो यस्मात्परार्थं साधकोत्तमैः cf. also रसस्य पारदत्वं संसारपरप्रापणहेतुत्वात् ।
57. *Ibid.*, मम देहरसो यस्माद्रसस्तेनायमुच्यते ।
58. अभ्रकस्तव बीजं तु मम बीजं तु पारदः । अनयोर्मेलनं देवि मृत्युदारिद्र्यनाशनम् ॥
59. *Ibid.*, पञ्चभूतात्मकः सूतस्तिष्ठत्येव सदाशिवः ।
60. *Rasa-ratna-samuchchaya*, 6, 16 निष्कत्रयं हेमपत्र रसेन्द्रं नवनिष्ककं । अम्लेन मर्दयेद्वामं तेन लिङ्गं तु कारयेत् । For the other method, cf D. M. Bose *et al.*, *op. cit.*
61. काश्यादि सर्वलिङ्गेभ्यो रसलिङ्गार्चनं शिवं । प्राप्यते येन तल्लिङ्गं भोगारोग्यामृतामरम् ॥
62. *Rasārṇava* : कर्मयोगेन देवेशि प्राप्यते पिण्डधरणम् । रसश्च पवनश्चेति कर्मयोगो द्विधा स्मृतः ॥ मूर्छितो हरति व्याधीन् मृतो सञ्जीवयति स्वयम् । बद्धखेचरतां कुर्याद्रसो वायुश्च भैरवि ॥ नानावर्णो भवेत्सूतो विहाय घनचापलंलक्षणं दृश्यते यस्य मूर्छितं तं वदन्ति हि ॥ आर्द्रत्वं च घनत्वं च तेजो गौरवचापलं । यस्यैतानि न दृश्यन्ते तं विद्यान्मृतसूतकम् ॥
63. So Śivadāsa in his commentary on Chakrapāṇi-datta; he speaks of Patañjali not only as an authority on *loha-śāstra*, but as a redactor of *Charaka-samhitā*. Chakrapāṇi's *Āyurveda-dīpikā* has this verse - पातञ्जलमहाभाष्यचरकप्रतिसंस्कृतैः । मनोवाक्क्रायदोषाणां हर्त्रेऽहिपतये नमः ॥ *Laghu-mañjūshā* of Nāgeśa-bhaṭṭa quotes a statement of Patañjali from his 'work on Charaka' (इति चरके पतञ्जलिः) Śaivarāma's commentary on *Vāsavadattā* has preserved a verse from Bhoja: योगेन चित्तस्य पदेन वाचां मलं शरीरस्य च वैद्यकेन ।

योऽपाकरोत्तं प्रवरं मुनीनां पतञ्जलिं प्राञ्जलिरानतोऽस्मि ॥ There is also an attempt to identify Patañjali with Charaka.

64. As for instance in *Bhāva-prakāśa*, रसायनार्थिभिलोकैः पारदो रस्यते यतः । ततो रस इति प्रोक्तः स च धातुरपि स्मृतः ॥
65. The eighteen Siddhas (Sittars) in the Tamiḻ tradition are as follows : Agastya (Agattiyar), Tirumūlar, Bogar, Gorakkar (Gorakshanātha), Sattai-muni, Nandīśar, Konkoṇar, Kamala-muni, Iḍaikkāḍār, Sundarāṇḍār, Roma-muni, Brahma-muni, Machcha-muni (Matsyendra?), Varāha-muni, Kūrma-muni, Punnakkīśar, Kailāsa-nāthar and Kunkannār, (Cf. A. V. Subramania Aiyar, *The Poetry and Philosophy of the Tamil Siddhars*, 1957, p. 72 fn.) It is, however, doubtful if all these were historical personages.
66. Like *Muppu-vaippu*, *Muppu-chuṇṇam*, *Pannīr-kāṇḍam*, *Vālai-sūtram*, *Pachchaiveṭṭu-sūtram*, *Amudakalaijñānam*, etc.

CHAPTER SEVEN

YOGA-TANTRA IN THE MIDDLE AGES



Buddha (from Nālandā)

ORIGINS OF VAJRAYĀNA

In the conflicting and confusing chronicles concerning Tibet, one detail stands out: the Indian origin of Tibetan religion. Not only in the obvious and general sense that the

founder of Buddhism, which has influenced religion in Tibet enormously, was an Indian; but the course of that religion in that country was almost exclusively guided by Indian Pundits. The Indian influence can very well be gleaned from this

detail. The Tibetan Canon in two collections, *bkaḥ-Gyur* and *bsTanḥ Gyur*, contains as many as 4,569 books. A very large majority of these are translations from Sanskrit works written by Paṇḍitas from Nālandā, Vikramaśīla and Odantapura - all in Magadha; and the translators (lo-tsa-ba), both Indian and Tibetan, were also alumni of these universities. The flow of Indian teachers into Tibet, and of Tibetan scholars into India, was continuous and copious for several centuries following the sixth.

Fifth and sixth centuries after Christ were important in the history of Indian Buddhism, for it was then that the Tāntrik element entered into the austere teaching significantly. It was natural that the Tibetans, long

acquainted with Bon, were interested only in the Tāntrik traditions of India. Nālandā, Vikramaśīla and Odantapura universities were well-known as centres of Tāntrik studies. The number of Tibetan scholars was so great that each of these universities had a Tibetan House (for their residence), a department of Tibetan studies (for Indians interested in Tibetan language and culture), and a provision for translation of Buddhist works in Sanskrit into Tibetan conjointly by Indian and Tibetan scholars. Indo-Tibetan contact was not only extensive but profound.

Nālandā, of course, was the foremost influence. Founded in 425 A.D., the Nālandā 'mahā-vihāra' (monastic university) attained unprecedented celebrity in India and

in the neighbouring countries; it flourished till 1205, when it was destroyed by the Muslim army. It was the chief centre of academic Mahāyāna Buddhism, specialising in Sādhana. Great names like Nāgārjuna, Asaṅga, Śānta-rakshita, Rāhula-bhadra, Kamala-śīla, Padma-sambhava and Atīśa, who moulded the Tibetan talent, were associated with this institution. In fact, the Tibetan genius who gave the country its script, THon-Mi-Sambhoṭa was sent by the Tibetan monarch around 640 A.D. to Nālandā for the purpose. Nālandā was very much in the imagination of Tibetans, both when it was flourishing and after it was forgotten in India. Tibetan scholars were streaming in, even when the great Chinese pilgrim Hsuan-tsang was in residence there. And a great

monastery that was built in Tibet in 1351 was named 'Nālandā'; this monastic university, as recorded in the *Blue Annals*, was filled with monks of different sects - even as Nālandā itself was.

It is from Tibetan sources that we learn about the 'Dharma-gaṇja' (Dharma-Mart) establishment in Nālandā, and about the final destruction of the great centre. And a Tibetan was the last soul to stick on at Nālandā, even after its destruction. An interesting story of the Tibetan scholar named Dharma-svāmi who was in Nālandā around 1230 was recovered by Rāhula Sāṅkrṭyāyana from a monastery in Central Tibet. During his travel in India, this Tibetan monk settled down to study Sanskrit grammar under the



Saraha- Pāda

80-year old Indian Buddhist monk, Rāhula-Śrībhadrā, who was one of the very few professors who still lingered on in Nālandā. There were as many as seventy students with this old Paṇḍita, who was supported and looked after by a Brahmin nobleman, Jayadeva of Odantapura. Muslims were again planning to ransack Magadha, and Jayadeva

somehow got into trouble and was thrown into prison by the Muslim rulers. But he struggled hard to communicate the news of the impending Muslim attack to Rāhula-Śrībhadrā, so that the old monk could escape in time. When the news reached Nālandā, the few scholars who had held on fled and deserted the premises, except the old Rāhula and his Tibetan student Dharma-svāmi. Rāhula urged the student to fly to safety; he himself was too old to run, or to care for what happened. But the Tibetan refused to leave the teacher alone, and stayed on with him. Soon, however, Muslim army did arrive on the scene; the Tibetan scholar carried his old teacher on his back along with a supply of rice and sugar and some books, and walked into hiding

in a ruined temple, not far from Nālandā. When the invaders ransacked the monastery and left, the Tibetan scholar and the Indian teacher returned to Nālandā, to continue their study of grammar!

Nālandā's importance in the history of Buddhism consists in the inspiration it offered for the development of Mādhyamaka, Yogāchāra and Sautrāntika schools of Mahāyāna. Among the ruins here are found images of numerous Mahāyāna divinities; and collections of Sāadhanās like *Sādhana-mālā* contain rituals addressed to various Mahāyāna deities, prepared by Nālandā Paṇḍitas like Saraha-pāda, Advaya-vajra, Ratnākara-gupta, Anupama-rakṣita, Abhayākara-gupta, Dharmākara-mati,



Nāgārjuna

Padmākara-mati, Harihara, Nandyāvarta, Muktaka, Śāśvata-vajra and Maṅgala-sena. It is Nālandā that principally encouraged the esoteric cult of Vajrayāna. The two sources thereof, namely Mādhyamaka ideology and Yogāchāra system, were products of Nālandā: the former was the contribution of the great Nāgārjuna who studied under

Rāhula-bhadra in Nālandā, while the latter was the work of Asaṅga, who, according to the Tibetan historian Tārānātha, taught in Nālandā for twelve years. The story told in the Tibetan chronicles about the destruction of the vast library complex in Nālandā ('Dharma-gaṇja') by fire has an interesting detail. When the nine-storeyed building, where Mahāyāna and Tantra works were stored, was engulfed by fire, water miraculously gushed out of two books that were preserved in the topmost storey, and just these two were saved. The two books were *Prajñā-pāramitā* and *Guhya-samāja*. It is precisely these two books, especially the latter, that contain the seeds of Vajrayāna. The meaning of the story is that when Nālandā was destroyed, it was only

Vajrayāna that remained. And in a curious manner, Tibet continued the Nālandā tradition.

The other university that made its impact on Tibet in a big way was Vikramaśīla, which was founded a little later than Nālandā. Built upon a spacious and gigantic cliff on the banks of Gaṅgā in northern Magadha - the exact site is uncertain - this monastic establishment achieved eminence during the reign of King Chaṇaka (955-983 A.D.). Its 'door-Pandits' (*dvāra-paṇḍitas*, the senior professors to examine and admit scholars coming from the four directions) were celebrated all over the country from their scholarship as well as their saintliness. Ratnākaraśānti who guarded the eastern gate had studied under the eminent master

Jetāri, and had taken to the sādhanā of *mahāmudrā*; he was the author of thirteen works in Sanskrit (the most famous being *Vajrābhairvagāṇa-chakra-nāma*). The southern gate was guarded by Vāgiśvara-kīrti of Banaras, a devotee of Tārā and Chakra-saṁvara; his *Mṛtyuvañchanopadeśa* ('the instruction regarding how to cheat death') became a popular text. Prajñākara-mati, a devotee of Mañjuśrī, was the Paṇḍita of the Western gate; and the greatest of them all, Nāḍa-pāda (Nāro-pā, known as *mahāpaṇḍita*) guarded the northern gate. Ratna-vajra, the Brahmin scholar from Kāshmir, and Jñānaśrī-mitra were paṇḍitas of the central quarters; both of them, being adepts in Tantra, translated numerous works into Tibetan, and

went over to Tibet in their old age. All these paṇḍitas were authors of Vajrayāna treatises. While their Sanskrit originals have been lost in India, the Tibetan Canon has preserved the Tibetan translations of as many as thirteen professors of Vikramaśīlā. The first president of the establishment, Buddha-Jñānapāda, was mainly responsible for the development of the 'mantra-Vajrāchāra' sect; and he is known to us because of the nine Tāntric works of his, preserved in Tibetan. The second president Jetāri (about 983 A.D.), the third president Abhayākara-gupta, the fourth, Dīpankara-Śrījñāna, and the fifth, Śākya-Śrībhadra, were all eminent masters whose writings have an honoured place in the Tibetan Canon. Vairochana-rakshita (reputed to be

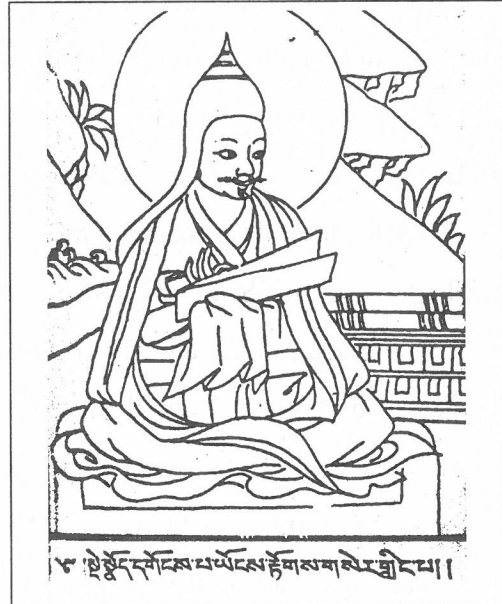


Dipamkara

a student of the great Padmasambhava of Nālandā) went to Tibet about 750 A.D. and was treated with hushed reverence.

The most important teacher of Vikramaśīla in Tibet was, of course, Dipamkara-Śrījñāna (Atiśa, b. 982, known in Tibet as Jo-bo-rJe, 'the great lord'). We have already indicated his

achievement in Tibet. He had studied for a while in Nālandā, under teachers like Rāhula-gupta and Śīla-rakshita, and had received numerous Tāntric initiations before he went to Suvarṇadīpa (Sumātra, Malaya) to be introduced to the doctrine of 'the arousal of *bodhichitta*'. On his return to India he was chosen to be the president of the Vikramaśīla



Suvarṇa-Dvīpikā

university by the Magadhan monarch Nāgapāla. He had studied earlier in Vikramaśīlā under Vāgīśvara-kīrti, whose three works on Tārā he translated into Tibetan. As president of Vikramaśīlā, he also looked after Odantapura and Somapuri monasteries. Invited by the Tibetan King, he left for Tibet in 1040 after spending some months in Nepal. Of the two Tibetan students of his who were mainly instrumental in taking him to Tibet (-he was 60 when he undertook this difficult journey-), Nag-TSHo (Jayaśīla-bhikshu, a monk) and brTson-'-'GrusSenge (Vīryasimha-upāsaka, a lay devotee), the latter died in Nepal and the former was a great help to the master's work in Tibet. Dīpamkara-Atīśa lived in Tibet and taught for thirteen years, till his death in 1054. He not only

wrote excellent treatises in Sanskrit, but translated as many as seventy-seven Sanskrit works into Tibetan. Among his Indian students who accompanied him to Tibet, Kshiti-garbha, Vajra-pāṇi (b.1017) Bhūmi-saṅgha, Vīrya-chandra and Parahita-bhadra contributed considerably to the spread of Tāntrik wisdom in Tibet. Among his Tibetan disciples, the foremost was Brom-STon-Pa (1005-1064, 'Jayāchāra'), who had a great gift for organisation, and who was a puritan in religious matters. He helped the master's work of cleansing the Tibetan Buddhism of his days for ten years, and continued this work for ten more years after the master's demise. His partiality for Vinaya and distrust of Tantra were marked.

After Dīpamkara, Śākya-Śrībhadrā (1145-1225) was the

reputed president of Vikramaśīla. A Kashmiri Pundit, he was a Tāntrik enthusiast. His students Vibhūti-chandra and Dāna-śīla were professors of Tantra at Jāgaddala university (in north Bengal, founded about 1077), before they went to Tibet and achieved renown there. Thanks to them, Jāgaddala became a favourite resort for Tibetan scholars. The two professors not only translated Sanskrit works into Tibetan, but they were so proficient in that language that they wrote independent works in Tibetan, now included in *bsTanhGyur*. Another luminary, Mokshākara-gupta, was also associated with Jāgaddala. Odantapura monastery was an earlier institution, founded in 730 A.D., on a hill near Nālandā. It had a typical Tāntrik background; its origin was

traced to the hideous 'corpse-ritual' (*śava-sāadhanā*) of one Nārada. But it seems to have had leanings towards the older, puritanical Hīnayāna (whose professor in Odantapura was Dharma-rakshita, under whom Dīpaṃkara studied for two years) and the Mahāsāṅghika (whose teacher in Odantapura, Śīla-rakshita, gave monastic ordination to Dīpaṃkara at the age of nineteen). This Mahāvihāra had become so famous that the first vihāra built in Tibet, the bSam-Yas (achintya-vihāra, built in 749), was modelled after it. Odantapura was destroyed in 1197 by the Muslim invaders led by Ikhtiyar-ud-din Ahmed Khilji.

These universities cannot be strictly described as Buddhist, although their renowned masters

were Buddhist monks. The curriculum was broadbased, and it included all the 'orthodox' and 'heterodox' schools of thought. The students were likewise drawn from all groups. But all these institutions were unmistakably Tāntrik in their orientation, in keeping probably with the spirit of the times. The association of these universities with the Tāntrik adepts known as 'siddhas' was an intriguing but important detail, for they brought to bear the influence from other parts of the country, especially the hilly regions of Swat valley, Orissa and South India. Saraha from Orissa and Nāgārjuna from South India, the most creative architects from Siddha cult, were connected with Nālandā; Tillopā and Nāropā, the siddhas who heralded 'the great seal' doctrine in Tibet

through the latter's pupil Mārpa, and Ratnākara-śānti (Śānti-pā) were associated with Vikramaśīla.



Śānti-Pāda

SIDDHA CONTRIBUTION

The Siddhas constitute an interesting, if also little known, period of Indian thought. Tradition recognises a million of them, but



speaks of eighty-four (*chaturaśīti*), who are all more or less historical, although the historical elements are buried under a mass of legendary matter. Siddhas are, by definition, those who have attained miraculous powers (*siddhis*) like clairvision, invisibility, unobstructed locomotion on earth, flight in sky, resuscitation of the dead, drawing away the life, entering another body, omniscience, unfailing utterance, divining buried treasure and interminable life. There are long lists of such achievements in books of Hindu and Buddhist preferences. The extraordinary powers such as these are obtained by some by birth (*janma*), by others by medicines (*aushadhi*), by still others by magical spells (*mantra*), by others again by austerities (*tapas*), and lastly by some by contemplative



Ārya-Deva

devices (*samādhi*). Siddhi is usually taken in the sense of rendering the body immutable with the help of occult and alchemic preparations (*rasa*). This involves transmutation of the physical body revitalising and spiritualising its essence, so that it becomes a veritable diamond (*vajra*),

which cuts everything else, itself remaining uncut. The siddha cult thus was closely associated with the 'adamantine path' (*vajrayāna*) that developed in the Magadhan universities with an academic slant.

It is not accidental that the celebrated Nāgārjuna was recognised as a Siddha, an alchemist, a *mahāmudrā* adept and a Mahāyāna philosopher. The modern scholarly habit of decomposing any celebrated person of tradition into several personages, removed from each other in space and time, has of course introduced two or three Nāgārjunas, one a Siddha, another an alchemist, and a third a philosopher. But Indian tradition knows but one Nāgārjuna, who was all three. And we have no evidence



Nāgārjuna

to doubt or refute this position. It cannot be gainsaid that the Siddha cult got a big push from this versatile genius, who hailed from the South. According to the Tibetan account, he went from the South to Nālandra (Nālandā), studied under Saraha-pāda and obtained initiations from him in 'Amitāyus' ritual and in the Kālachakra system, attained siddhis

of *Mahāmāyūri*, *Kurukullā* etc., achieved proficiency in alchemy (*rasāyana*) and made his body 'adamantine' (*vajrakāya*), went to Puṇḍravardhana and produced immense quantities of gold which he gifted away, heard *Tārā-tantra* from Haya-ghoshaka, went to Nāga-loka and recovered *Śatasāhasrikā* - *Prajñapāramitā* and several dhāraṇīs, composed *Mādhyamaka-Kārikās* and works on alchemy like *Rasa-ratnākara*. Both his alchemical experiments and spiritual success were said to be on Śrī-parvata (Nāgārjuna-koṇḍa in Āndhra Pradesh), also known as 'diamond mount' (Vajra-parvata).

That South India contributed to the crystallisation of Vajrayāna

appears to be based on solid facts. The 'Pāramitā path' which brought in its train the 'Mantra path', which in its turn produced the 'Diamond path', was clearly of South Indian origin. We have clear evidence in the oldest *Prajñā-pāramitā* text, *Ashṭa-sāhasrikā*, that the 'Paramitā-naya' first spread in the South ('dakṣiṇāpathe pracharishyati'), then spread in the East ('vartnyām', which according to Haribhadra's *Āloka* means 'pūrva-deśe'), and from there it moved northward (Rajendra Lal Mitra's edition, p.225) Nāropā's *Sekoddesa-ṭīkā* (a Māgadhan work) mentions that the 'Mantra-naya' organised in Śrīdhānya-kaṭaka ('Śrīdhānye niyata-mantra-naya-deśana-sthāne'), the modern Dharaṇikoṭa on the banks of Krishṇā in Andhra Pradesh. It is interesting

that the highest divinity in Vajrayāna, Avalokiteśvara, is said to reside on the Potalaka mountain (after which the Dalai Lama's place in Lhasa is known as Potāla, for Dalai Lama is considered to be an incarnation of Avalokiteśvara), which is located by all authorities in South India (although the exact location is disputed: Cunningham suggesting Malakūṭa, a tract between Tañjāvūr and Tiruv-ananta-puram, Nanda Lal Deo suggesting Western Ghats, N. Dutt suggesting Poṭṭayam in Kerala, and some pointing to Dhānyakaṭaka or Śrīparvata). The monk who took the Tāntric tradition to China in 719 A.D., Amogha-vajra, was a Ceylonese, and his teacher Vajra-bodhi who accompanied him was a South Indian Brahmin; the teacher had translated several tantras and

dhāraṇīs into Chinese before he died in 730 A.D., and the pupil who died in 774 A.D. had translated as many as 108 Tāntric texts. The Chinese *Mantrayāna* (Ch'en yen Tsung) originated thus. Bodhi-dharma, who founded the dhyāna school (*ch'an* or the Japanese *Zen*) in China around 600 A.D. was a Brahmin from Kāñchipuram (as Dharma-pāla who presided over Nālandā around 550 A.D. was); and the closeness of Zen to *mahāmudrā* in Vajrayāna is not accidental.

Nāgārjuna's teacher Saraha (Saroruha or Saroja, also Śara-hasta) - pada was a great Siddha in his own right. He is said to have hailed from Orissa.

His work *Mahāmudrā-praśnottara* contains the colophon



Śābari-Pāda

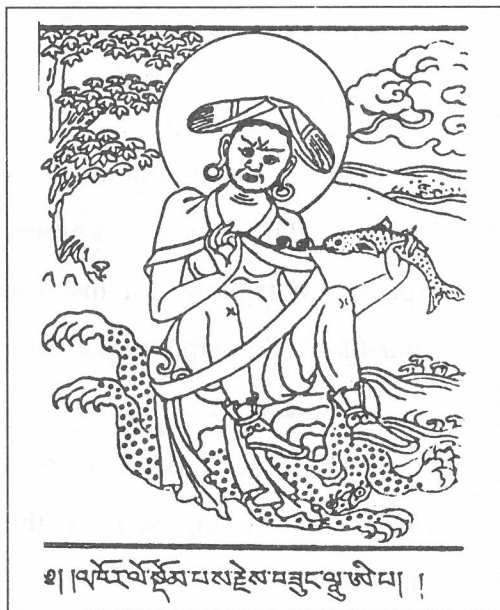
“mahābhāhmaṇa-saraha-pāda-prabhu”. Hailing from the Eastern country (Orissa ?), he studied under Haribhadra of Nālandā (himself a student of the great Śānta-rakshita), a contemporary of the Pāla king Dharma-pāla (768-809 A.D.). He is said to have come down to Mahārāshṭra and settled down there. He wrote a large number of treatises,

ritual manuals, poems, songs and instructions. In the Tibetan canon, we have seven of his Sanskrit works and sixteen of his Apabhramśa pieces; some of his *dohas* and *charyāgītis* are extant in India also. His importance in the Tāntrik tradition is due to the fact that he taught *Guhya-Samāja-tantra*, a basic Vajrayāna text (with which we will deal later) to his pupil Nāgārjuna, and that with the help of another Siddha, Kambāḷa-pāda, he compiled another ‘Guhya-Samāja’ work, *Hevajra-tantra* (which, however is ascribed to Padma-vajra by Tārānātha). He is reputed to have introduced *Buddhakapāla-tantra* and *Maṇḍala-vidhi*. He is pictured in Tibet as an ascetic holding an arrow in action suggesting one pointedness and effort. His colleague Kambāḷa-

pāda wrote four works on *Prajñāpāramitā* cult and eleven on Tantra.

Nāgārjuna's pupil Śabara-pā, another *siddha*, who was a hunter before he became a mystic, introduced the well-known *Kurukullā* - *sādhanā*, a ritual concerning the mountain-goddess of the jungle-tribes who is later identified with Tārā. His disciple Lui-pā (Samanta-śubha), a South Indian identified with the Nātha saint Matsyendranātha, spent most of his life in Assam and Bengal; he achieved such celebrity that he heads the traditional lists of *siddhas*. *Yoginī-saṅcharyā*, or *Yoginī - kula*, a tantra of association with female ascetic, is ascribed to him. A contemporary of his was Kāṇha-pā,

(Kṛṣṇāchārya), another South Indian who was a disciple of the Siddha Jālandhara (also a Nātha Master, popularly known as Hāḍi-siddha). The Nātha cult with a Śaivite bias and the Siddha cult, which was more eclectic, worked out numerous points of contact, and Kāṇha-pā was the product of this synthesis. He is reputed to have written six works on



Lui-Pā (Samanta-Śubha)



Kāṇha-Pā (Kṛṣṇāchārya)

philosophy and seventy-four on Tāntrik subjects; his commentary on *Bodhicharyāvatāra* was well known. An especial contribution of his was *Samputa-tilaka*. Kāṇhapā, Saraha and Lui-pā, became popular because of the mystic songs (*dohas* and *charyāgīti*) they composed in the Apabhraṃśa dialect. All the three mahāsiddhas were associated with

the 'Mahāmudrā' doctrine, which developed extensively in Tibet. Kāṇha-pā (Nag-Po sPyod-Pa) in particular is remembered in Tibet for his doctrine of Male-female union (*Yuga-naddha*, in Tib. *Yab-Yum*), which will be discussed later.

There were other well-known siddhas like Dārika-pāda (author of *Chakra-Samvara* texts), Vajra-ghaṇṭā (author of *Sahaja-Samvara-sādhana*, *Vajravārāhi-sādhana*, *Gaṇachakra-vidhi* and *Abhisheka-vidhi-ratna-mālā*), Kukkuri-pāda (author of *Mahāmāyā* treatises), Pi-to-pāda (author of *Kālachakra* system), Gambhīra-vajra (author of *Vajrāmṛta*), Maitri-pāda, Taila-pāda (Tillo-pāda) and Nāḍa-pāda (Naro-pā). The last two are especially important as they were directly



Kukkuri-Pā

responsible for the *bKah-brGyud* tradition. (See the author's *Tibetan Tāntrik Tradition*, Arnold Heineman, New Delhi.)

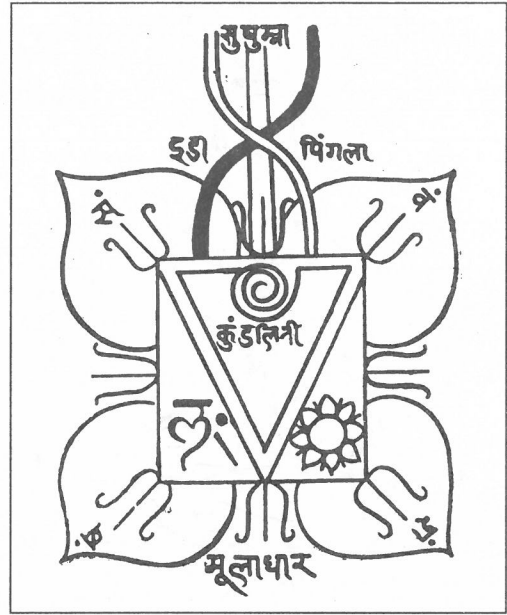
Tibetans were greatly attracted by the Indian Siddha cult. There are in the Tibetan Canon elaborate accounts of the life and work of eighty-four siddhas (in Tibet. *Grub-*

THob). The Tibetan historians like Bu-Ston, Gos lo-TSa-ba, Sum-Pa-KHan Po and Tārānātha deal with them. There are also Nepalese traditions about them. The great scholar Rāhula Sāṅkrityāyana has reconstructed the Sanskrit text of *Chaturaśītisiddha-pravṛtti* from the Tibetan *bsTanh-Gyur*. Although eighty-four appears a mystical



Tillo-Pā (Tailika-pāda)

number, and not all the mahāsiddhas enumerated therein were historical persons, quite a number of them have left behind them poems and treatises which have been preserved both in India and in Tibet. It is possible, therefore, to reconstruct the philosophical position of these siddhas. The general view is that they were all Buddhists belonging to the Vajrayāna sect.



Kuṇḍalinī in Mūlādhāra

But this supposition is not borne out by an examination of their compositions; even the legends and historical accounts concerning them do not support this view. It must be noted that all the teachers of Śaivite Nātha cult (like Matsyendra, Goraksha, Jālandra, Gāhini, Charpaṭī, Revaṇa, Chauraṅgi, Jālandhara, Virūpa, Kāneri, Kaṇha-

pā and Kaṇṭhata) are included in the list of Siddhas. There were some Kāpālikas also in this list (like Anādikāla, Vaṭuka, Mahākāla, Vīranātha, Śrīkaṇṭha, Jālandra, and Kāṇha-pā). And there were of course those who were evidently Buddhists (like Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva or Karnari-pā). To be a siddha, therefore, sectarian affiliation was

irrelevant. Yogic practices (especially with nāḍīs and chakras), esoteric rituals and mystical ideology were the essential details of a siddha career. They regarded the human body as a miniature cosmos. Sun and moon were for them inside the body : some siddhas are described as “wearing them for their earrings.” All opposites like birth and death, growth and decay, male and female, knowledge and action, activity and passivity accommodated within the left and right halves of each one of us, and the understanding of this play of opposites with an insight into their essential, innate union and identity were the main concern of the siddha. The ‘straight’ path, which Siddhas extol, is the path of the central channel steering

clear of the opposites, described variously as sushumnā, avadhūti, and Chāṇḍālī. The apparent opposition makes for phenomenal involvement; the realization of identity leads to freedom. The siddhas speak of this transcendental condition of identity as ‘empty’ (*śūnya*) in the sense of being devoid of all phenomenal content, as ‘innate nature’ (*sahaja-svabhāva* or simply *sahaja*) in the sense of being both the source and end of existence, and as ‘harmony’ (*samarasa*) in the sense of identity of opposites.

Tillo-pāda describes the state of communion (*samarasa*) which is pure and devoid of polarities, as occurring when the positive and negative aspects of mind merge:

जहि जाइ चित्त तहि सुणहु अचित्तं ।
 समरसं णिम्मल भावाभावरहिअ ॥
 (यत्र गच्छति चित्तं तत्र प्रविशति अचित्तमपि । तदेव
 समरसः निर्मलः भावाभावरहितः ॥)

The extant songs of the siddhas (known as *dohas* and *charyāpādas* or *charyāgītis*) reveal that the siddhas were distinguished by their utter indifference to formal religion; some even ridicule meditation, asceticism and Tāntrik practices which, there is reason to believe, they all adopted. They struck the note of simple, natural living - very much like the Taoists - and rejected ascetic rigour as well as beastly enjoyment as unhelpful to this kind of living.

Saraha says:

जइ जग पूरिअ सहजानन्दे ।
 णच्चहु गाअहु विलसहु चङ्गे ॥

When the world is filled with natural bliss, dance, sing and be merry well.

Kāṇha-pā:

घोरान्धारे चन्दमणि जिम उज्जोअ करेइ ।
 परममहासुह एक्कुखणे दुरिआसेस हरेइ ॥

(इह घोरान्धकारमध्ये चन्द्रकान्तमणिरुद्योतनं करोति ।
 तादृशः परममहासुख एकक्षणे संसार दुरिताशिषं हरति ॥)

(When the moonstone illumines in the dense darkness, then the supreme and great bliss naturally dawns, and in a single moment, will dissipate all evil).

The detail was so outstanding in their teaching that the expression 'the path of naturalness' (*Sahajayāna*) was coined to identify their viewpoint. And the expression came

in course of time to signify a distinct cult or sect, which obviously was an error, for the Siddhas did not constitute a sect of their own, nor did they encourage a general cult (although individual cults developed around some of them). They lived in different periods of time and in different parts of the country; they either lived in solitude, or were continuously moving about so that crystallisation of their thought or attitude was impossible. Many of them were ascetics, living in jungles and burial-grounds, and leading quiet and joyous lives. A few of them were pre-occupied with 'magical attainments' (*siddhis*) like alchemy, clairvoyance, physical immutability, rejuvenation and longevity; and they were given to such queer and outlandish practices that they

attracted wide and oftentimes vulgar attention. A majority of the siddhas, however, were serious-minded; many of them were learned and austere. The traditional list includes abbots of monasteries, professors in monastic colleges and respectable householders celebrated as great teachers. It is unlikely that there was at any time any organization to preserve, or project, the intellectual or practical position of the siddhas. The expression 'Sahaja-yāna' therefore is misleading: there was never any 'yāna' of this description.

In fact, the Siddhas discouraged all intellectual activities, and pleaded that one must remain perfectly natural. Mind in its natural state is pure and unsullied: one must not reason and sully it.



Nāḍa-Pāda (Nāropa)

सचल णिचल जो सअलाचार
सुण णिरञ्जण म करु विआर॥

(सचलं निश्चलं यत्सकलाचारः (Tibetan translation would make the first line read यदेव निश्चलं सकलं च सर्वथा॥) अविचारितः । शून्यं निरञ्जनं तत्र विचारं मा करु॥)

But the impact of some of the earlier Siddhas, like Saraha-pāda,

Nāgārjuna-pāda, Lui-pāda, Kāṇha-pāda and Śabari-pāda was felt in the great universities, especially Nālandā, Vikramaśīla and Dhānyakaṭaka. It contributed to the finalisation of some esoteric trends in Mahāyāna Buddhism, in particular the trend which flowered out as Vajrayāna and spread to Tibet. The basic position of these siddhas was that the universe is after all a projection of the individual, that the human body is the laboratory where spiritual experiments can be carried out, and that ritualistic formalities are irrelevant in this context. This appealed greatly to the academicians. The view that the ultimate goal of spiritual endeavour is not the obtainment of a heaven or miraculous powers, but the realization of the innate, natural condition of

undifferentiated unity and harmony was attractive to the scholars.

We have Saraha-pāda telling us that the body is the boat, and mind the oar; take hold of the oar at the behest of the true master and jump into the ocean of transmigration. Make the mind steady, unperturbed, and let your boat go in the waters. There is no other way of crossing the ocean.

काअ णावडि खाण्टि मण केडुआल।
सदुरुवअणे धर पतवाल।
चीअ थिर करि धराहुरे नाई।
आण उपाये पार ण जाई॥

(कायः नौकाखण्डः मनः नौकादण्डः।
सदुरुवचनेन नौकादण्डं गृह्यताम्। चित्तं स्थिरीकृत्य
धारय नौकाम्। अन्योपायेन पारं न यायते॥)

The prestige enjoyed by Nāgārjuna, who was not only a

siddha but an alchemist, and a creative writer besides being a great teacher, helped spread the idea that the ultimate truth is 'empty' (Śūnya). We find this idea in the songs of his teacher Saraha, the earliest of the Siddhas; and Nāgārjuna developed this idea into a doctrine which became fundamental to all schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Saraha spoke of the 'death of the mind' and 'stilling of the winds in the body' as productive of 'great bliss (*mahāsukha*).

जहि मण मरइ पवण हो क्खअ जाइ।
एहु से परममहासुह रहिअ कहिम्पि ण जाइ॥

(यत्र हि मनो प्रियते पवनं च क्षयं याति।
एष हि परममहासुख रहितं न गतं क्वचित्॥

“Where the mind dies, and the wind disappears, it is there that

supreme and great bliss abides, and never wanders.”

One gets bound by the mind, and when mind is freed one is doubtless freed. Therefore, the wise should make the mind no-mind, and that is the innate nature in which one can enjoy. Saraha's position was mystical. It was his disciple Nāgārjuna that provided the basis for Mahāyāna theory and practice. Well-known is his work on Mādhyamaka philosophy. But little known is his monumental treatise on vacuity (*Śūnyatā*) viz. *Pañchakrama*, which deals with what is known as anuttara-yoga-tantra in five stages of perfection. It sets out the objective as perfection of body-mind-speech, so that the individual nature becomes immutable and adamant (vajra-



Tantra-Pāda

svabhāva). This is said to be based on *Guhya-samāja-tantra*, of which Saraha was known to be a teacher.

Between Saraha and Nāgārjuna, they appear to have given shape to an esoteric doctrine that perhaps was current from immemorial times in secret societies (*guhya-samāja*). The Yogāchāra ideology left its

indelible stamp on the shape that thus developed. In Tibet, the doctrine known as *Guhya-samāja* (gSong-hDus-rGyud), is described as a “sleeping text”, i.e. the text which was secretly communicated from teacher to student until Asaṅga (in Tibetan, THogs-Med) made it public. Born in a brahmin family of the North-Western region of India, Asaṅga was a teacher in Nālandā, and expounded what is now known as the Yogācāra system, which provided the framework for Tibetan Vajrayāna school. Asaṅga was instructed by Maitreya (who lived, according to G.Tucci, around A.D. 200), the founder of the Yogācāra system. The Tibetan account makes this Maitreya the future Buddha in the Tushita heaven, from whom Asaṅga miraculously obtained the

revelations. And these were in the form of five treatises, known in Tibet as “Maitreya’s famous five”: *Mahāyāna-sūtrālamkāra*, *Madhyānta-vibhaṅga*, *Dharmādharmatā - vibhaṅga*, *Abhisamayālamkāra* and *Mahāyānottara-tantra*. Maitreya was a genius of synthesis, and had a partiality for the practical aspects of the Buddha’s teaching. Asaṅga carried on this spirit and wrote not only brilliant commentaries (*ṭīkas* and *kārikās*) on his master’s works



Maitreya

but independent treatises like *Mahāyana-saṃparigraha* and *Yogāchāra-bhūmi*. Maitreya-Asaṅga's position was complementary to Nāgārjuna's. If Nāgārjuna emphasised on 'emptiness' (Śūnyatā) as an extension of the 'no-soul' (nairātmya) doctrine, Maitreya-Asaṅga put forth a more positive view: 'emptiness' is not nothing at all, but a reality, which is both transcendental and absolute, 'devoid of mental constructions' (*abhūta-parikalpa*), emptiness. It is that the two, viz. the subjective world caused by 'the veil of the attachment and passion', *kleśāvaraṇa*, and the objective world caused by 'the veil of knowables' (*jñeyāvaraṇa*), do not exist. This expression 'abhūta-parikalpa' is compounded of two words, the first

meaning that the images of things we construct in our imagination do not in fact exist, in the very same forms as a subject grasping the objects; and the second word meaning that the objects in the world do not have in reality the forms that they seem to have (*Madhyānta-vibhaṅga-ṭīkā*). The argument of Maitreya-Asaṅga emphasised the role of mind (*viññāna*) not only in the projection of the world in its subjective as well as objective aspects, but also in the achievement of *nirvāṇa*. If Nāgārjuna's argument of 'emptiness' be regarded as nihilism, the Yogāchāra view can be termed as subjective idealism. The latter was so named because of its insistence that personal experience in meditation was the sole means of realising the ultimate truth.



Vijaya-Pāda Mahāsiddha

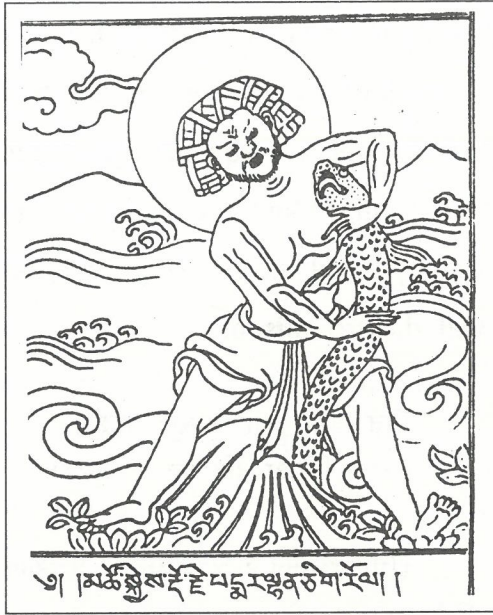
We find here an echo of the Siddha reliance on mind to reach the state of 'no-mind'. Refining the mind, purifying the mind, sharpening the mind, emptying the mind, making mind sky-like (*kha-sama*), eliminating subjectivity and objectivity from the mind, making it unitary were concerns for the siddha.

Tillo-pāda speaks of the mind becoming sky-like, when the bliss arising out of equanimity, enters ones being. Mind becomes one with vacuity, and no sense-perceptions will disturb this bliss.

चित्तं खसम जहि समसुह पइठुइ।
इन्दीअ-विसअ तहि मत्त ण दीसइ॥

(चित्तं खसमेन शून्यता समसुखे प्रविशति।
इन्द्रियैर्विषया तत्क्षणे न दृश्यन्ते॥)

The empty aspect of the mind inspired the notion of 'Śūnyatā', while the productive or the projective aspect was responsible for the idea of 'abhūta-parikalpa'. The two were like two sides of a coin: the difference was only in the emphasis. And it is likely that both arose out of the Siddha nucleus. The Vajrayāna that matured in Tibet is considered the



Saroruha-Vajra

direct development of Yogāchāra; but all Tibetan traditions alike hold Nāgārjuna in the highest esteem. The *sāadhanā* in vajrayāna successfully integrates the two lines of development. The 'development of emptiness' (*śūnyatā-bhāvanā*) and the 'visualizations' of the maṇḍalas and the forms of the deities which

are characteristic features of this *sāadhanā* illustrate these two lines.

The Indian background to the Tibetan Tāntrik tradition was not only in the Mahāyana school of Buddhism, but was in close association with the Siddhas. Nālandā was the centre where both *Mādhyamaka* and *Yogāchāra* viewpoints were subjected to Tāntrik interpretations. During the reign of king Mahīpāla, the president of the University, Paṇḍita Abhayākara-gupta (who also headed the Mahābodhi-vihāra in Buddhagayā) wrote many esoteric tracts, nine of which are included in the Tibetan Canon. His disciple Vikṛiti-deva continued this work.

GUHYA-SAMĀJA-TANTRA



Guhya-Samāja

Asaṅga's name is not usually included in the list of siddhas; but his works betray mysticism of the Siddha variety. And being interested in the Yogic practices, he naturally works with numerous Tantrik ideas. There is in fact a *sādhana* devoted to *Prajñāpāramitā* ascribed to

Asaṅga (*Sādhana-mālā*, Vol. I, p. 321-325 : the colophon reads “kritiriyam āchāryāsaṅgapādānām”).

In this background, the ascription of *Guhya-samāja-Tantra* to him is not surprising, although it may be improbable. There is a persistent tradition in Tibet that the esoteric teaching or Vijrayāna continued in secret from the days of Asaṅga (second or third century A.D.) till the days of Dharma-kīrti (A.D. 600-650). The Chinese pilgrim I-tsing also refers to this tradition. There is a belief that Asaṅga is the originator of Vajrayāna ; and *Guhya-samāja-tantra* happens to be the earliest available source-book of Vajrayāna. It should, however, be remembered that the book is also ascribed to Saraha, and to siddha-Nāgārjuna, in the Tibetan *Blue-Annals*. ‘Guhya-

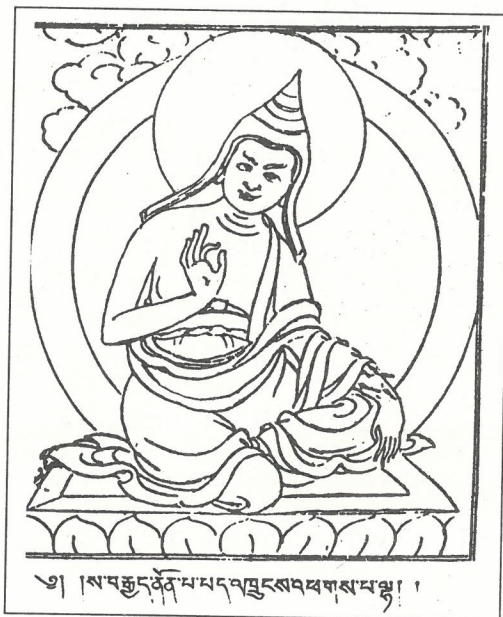
samāja' appears rather to be a class of works belonging to the Sangīti group, and we are not certain if the work we now have is the same as the one known as *Tathāgata-guhyaka*, or the one mentioned in *Nikāya-saṃgraha* as *Samāja-tantra*, or the one mentioned as *Śrī-samāja* by Padma-vajra in his *Guhya-siddhi*, or the one which was probably known as *Tathāgata-chintya-guhyā-nirdeśa* (as can be inferred from the Chinese translation of it about A.D. 1000) quoted in Śānti-deva's *Śikshā-samuchchaya*.

This remarkable work, which is described in the colophon as 'the great king of secret Tāntrik texts' (mahāguhyatantra-rāja), and as the 'beyond the beyond in the tantra' ('tantrāṇām uttarottaram'), a work

which specifically, and elaborately deals with the 'Vajra-path'.

सुदुर्लभमिदमुपायं बोधिसाधनम् ।
तन्त्रं गुह्यसमाजाख्यं तन्त्राणामुत्तरोत्तरम् ॥

And the commentators include Nāgārjuna (*Guhyasamāja-maṇḍalopavika*), Līlā-vajra (*Nidāna-gurūpadeśa-bhāṣya*), Śāntideva



Ārya-Deva

(*Guhyasamāja-mahāyoga-tantra-bali-vidhi-nāma*), Ratnākara-Śānti or Śānti-pā (*Kusumāñjali*), and the celebrated Dīpaṅkara-Śrījñāna (or Atīśa, *Guhyasamāja-lokeśvara-sādhana-nāma*). The translation of the title as 'Secret Assembly' or as 'Secret Society' can be misleading. There is an explanation in the work itself. "The three-fold entity, body, speech and mind, is known as secret (*guhya*); and assembly (*samāja*) means gathering together, it is a collective expression for all the Enlightened Ones." The work commences with a question ('what is *bodhi-chitta*?') posed by an assembly of bodhisattvas and tathāgatas to the Blessed one (*Bhagavān*); and the burden of the answer is that the 'adamantine integration' of body, speech and mind

holds the key to the highest attainment.

त्रिविधं कायवाक्चित्तं गुह्यमित्यभिधीयते।
समाजं मीलनं प्रोक्तं सर्वबुद्धाभिधानकम्॥
अहो समन्तभद्रस्य कायवाक्चित्त-वज्रिणः।
अनुत्पाद प्रयोगेण उत्पादोऽयं प्रमीयते॥

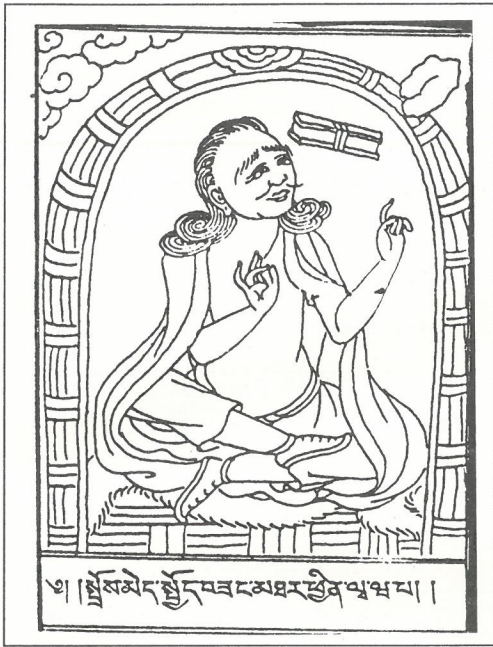
(अत्पादयतु भवन्तः चित्तं कायाकारेण, कायं चित्ताकारेण, चित्तं वाक्प्रव्याहारेणेति॥ सत्त्वाः सर्वतथागतकायवाक्चित्ताकाशाकारेण संयोज्य इदमुदानमुदानयामासुः॥)

The importance of the work consists in the first enumeration of five Buddhas, known as *Dhyāni-buddhas*, presiding over, or as representing, the five constituent-aggregates of the individual: the form (*rūpa*), consciousness (*viññāna*), sensation-feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saṃjñā*) and conception-organisation (*samskāra*), viz. Vairocana, Akshobhya,

Ratnasambhava (called in the text Ratnaketu), Amitābha and Amoghasiddhi.

This idea is basic to Vajrayāna. The five Buddhas are arranged in a design (*maṇḍala*) with Akshobhya in the centre and the other four in East, South, West and North respectively. They are also associated with elements (ākāśa, air, fire, water, and earth), with consorts (Vajradhātviśvarī or Tārā, Lochanā, Māmākī, Pāṇḍarā and Ārya-tārā), with *bodhisatvas* (Samanta-bhadra, Vajrāpāṇi, Ratnapāṇi, Padmapāṇi and Viśvapāṇi), with 'families' (moha, dvesha, chintāmaṇi, rāga, and samaya) and with the five 'human Buddhas' (Krakuchunda, Kanakamuni, Kaśyapa, Gautama and Maitreya). In the *maṇḍala*, it is usual

to represent Akshobhya as the presiding deity, and the other four in his own form but smaller in size. The assumption is that consciousness (*viññāna*) over which Akshobhya presides) is the essence of the other four aggregates, which are merely modes and modifications thereof. Further, Akshobhya is characterised by a miniature Vajrasattva, (Diamond-essence, viz. Basic vacuity which is ultimate reality) on top. The symbolism is that consciousness (*viññāna*) is but one of the five aggregates, and is not ultimate; the ultimate principle is devoid of subject-object distinction which consciousness involves. The five Buddhas are in their cosmic aspect represented by the elements; but they are also represented in the individual body, Vairochana in the



head, Akshobhya in the heart, Ratnasambhava in the navel, Amitābha in the mouth and Amoghsiddhi in the feet. Heart is the centre for primary or basic consciousness, undifferentiated, initial, and of the nature of a stream (*gTSo-Sems*). This condition of consciousness is also symbolised by

the mystic syllable *Hūm*,
Akshobhya's seed-syllable.
Akshobhya's source-deity; viz.
Vajra-sattva was looked upon as
Hevajra or Heruka, with a mystic
consort Vajravārāhī or
Prajñāpāramitā.

However, these details were worked out later; the *Guhyasamāja* merely provided the main but bare coördinates. The text also underlines the importance and value of 'bodhichitta'. The 'Lord' gets into a state of mystic absorption (*samādhi*) and describes 'bodhichitta' in a verse, which unfortunately is exceedingly difficult to understand.

भगवान् बोधिचित्तमुदाजहार-
अभावे भावनाभावो भावना नैव भावना।
इति भावो न भावः स्याद्भावना नोपलभ्यते॥

The literal translation would be “In the absence of existence (when existence is viewed from the perspective of void), no thought remains a positive construction, existence ceases to be existence. No thought-construction can then be discovered”.

As explained (?) by Nāropa in his *Sekoddesaṭīkā* it would mean: “If you view existence from the position of emptiness (*abhāva*), there would then be no thought construction (*bhāvanā*) whatever. Thus existence would not be existence, and thought-constructions would not arise at all.”

This verse was augmented by the descriptions of bodhi-chitta by the other four Buddhas -

(2) Akshobhya:

अनुत्पन्ना इमे भावाः न धर्मा न च धर्मता ।
आकाशमिव नैरात्म्यमिदं बोधिनयं दृढम् ॥

(3) Ratna-Ketu:

अभावाः सर्वधर्मास्ते धर्मलक्षणवर्जिताः ।
धर्मनैरात्म्यसम्भूता इदं बोधिनयं दृढम्

(4) Amitābha:

अनुत्पन्नेषु धर्मेषु न भावो न च भावना ।
आकाशपदयोगेन इति भावः प्रगीयते ॥

(5) Amogha-siddhi:

प्रकृतिप्रभास्वरा धर्माः सुविशुद्धा नभः समाः ।
न बोधिर्नाभिसमयमिदं बोधिनयं दृढम् ॥

Whatever the import of the verse, it is significant that *bodhichitta* is sought to be formulated in such an involved thought-complex. Later in the text *bodhichitta* (- which

originally meant merely 'thought of enlightenment' or 'mind bent on enlightenment') is extolled as the ultimate truth and there are four verses with the refrain "I bow to thee, *bodhichitta!*" (*bodhichitta, namo'stute*, second chapter).

अहो बुद्ध अहो धर्म अहो संघस्य देशना।
 शुद्धतत्त्वार्थं शुद्धार्थं बोधिचित्तं नमोऽस्तु ते॥
 धर्मनैरात्म्यसम्भूतं बुद्धबोधिप्रपूरकं।
 निर्विकल्पं निरालम्बं बोधिचित्तं नमोऽस्तु ते॥
 समन्तभद्रं सर्वार्थं बोधिचित्तप्रवर्तकं।
 बोधिचर्यं महावज्रं बोधिचित्तं नमोऽस्तु ते॥
 चित्तं ताथागतं शुद्धं कायवाक्चित्तवज्रधृक्।
 बुद्धबोधिप्रदाता च बोधिचित्तं नमोऽस्तु ते॥

It is described as the "essence and source of knowledge of all the Enlightened Ones" (*sarva-buddha-jñānam sārabhūtam utpattibhūtam*). It is what leads one to enlightenment, being the very source of it; it is the

diamond (vajra) of the unity of body-speech-mind. "Without beginning or end, tranquil, all pervading and free from being and non-being, this *bodhichitta* is Emptiness (*śūnyatā*) and Compassion (*Karuṇā*) undistinguished".

अनादिनिधनं शान्तं भावाभावाक्षयं विभुम्।
 शून्यताकरुणाभिन्नं बोधिचित्तमिति स्मृतम्॥

Śāntideva prescribes: "Mind must be bent on enlightenment for the sake of freeing all beings from sorrow." Vajrayāna has taken this prescription seriously, and invariably employs *bodhichitta* in its *Sādhana* as a vow to inspire the mind into enlightenment for one's own good as well as for the good of all beings. In *Tri-samya-rāja-sādhana*, for instance, we have the detail:

“The *bodhichitta* must be aroused thus:

“I arouse my mind into perfect enlightenment for the sake of all embodied beings attaining to enlightenment. I walk the auspicious path which secures the good of all beings”.

Another frequently employed formula is:

“I arouse the supreme and best *bodhichitta*, I invite all the beings, and I walk the excellent path of enlightenment; may I become a Buddha for the sake of world’s welfare.”

उत्पादयामि वरबोधिचित्तं निमन्त्रयाम्यहं
सर्वसत्त्वान्।
इष्टां चरिष्ये वरबोधिचारितां बुद्धो भवेयं

जगतो हिताय॥
बोधौ चित्तं करोम्येष स्वपरार्थसिद्धये॥

The expression ‘*bodhichitta*’ occurs also in the *dohas* of Siddhas. For instance, Kāṇha-pā speaks of his *bodhichitta* (*bohichia* in Apabhraṁśa) dirtied, and then washed bright by *chitta-vajra* or diamond-mind; he also speaks of it as the ultimate state of five elements, suggesting that it is the essence of the five *dhyāni*-Buddhas.

बोहिचिअ रअभूसिअ अवत्खोहेहि सिद्धओ।
पोक्खरविअ महासुह णिअदेहहि टिठ्ठओ॥

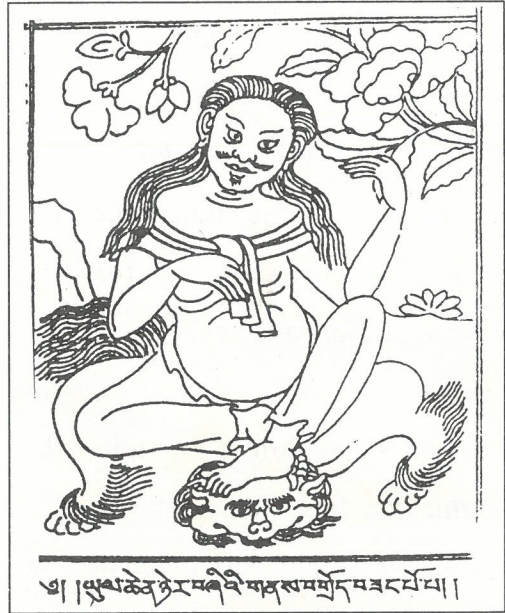
(बोधिचित्तं रजोभूषितं तत् चित्तवज्रेण
आश्लिष्टं। पुष्करबीजं सुखस्वभावेन स्थितं निजदेहे॥

Perhaps the distinction between two states or conditions of *bodhichitta*, one ordinary and agitated and therefore involved in

phenomena, and the other still and blissful, altogether transcendental, is suggested even in the *dohas*. This distinction became functional and meaningful in the context of Vajrayāna-Sādhana concerning the arousal and arrest of *bodhichitta*. The assumption is that the *bodhichitta* lies hidden and passive in everyone of us, very much like the Kuṇḍalinī of our classical Tantra, in the lowest of the centres. The Vajrayāna speaks of four such centres (*chakras*): the lowest called *nirmāṇa-chakra* or *maṇipūra* is situated near the navel and is pictured as a lotus consisting of sixtyfour petals. It symbolises the earth element. *Bodhichitta* lies here concealed and restive, and the purpose of sādhana is to activate it, to make it 'move upwards' (*ut-pāda*).

But as soon as it is aroused, it tends of flow downward; the yogī must check this fall by plugging the vent known as 'jewel-bottom' ('*maṇimūla-nirodham kartavyam*'). When *bodhichitta* is thus arrested, it moves upwards along the spinal column, which is linked to the Sumeru mountain. It reaches the next centre, known as *dharma-chakra*, located in the heart, and pictured as a 'double-lotus' (one facing upward and the other downward, *Viśva-padma*) with thirty-two petals. It symbolises water element. The center higher than that is the *sambhoga-chakra*, situated in the throat (in some accounts, in between the eyebrows or on the forehead), and pictured as a lotus of sixteen petals, red in colour. It stands for the fire element. In the Tibetan

rites of *tum-mo*, they attend to these two centres (*dharma* in the heart and *sambhoga* on the forehead) and produce an internal fire, which consumes not only the world of subjectivity, but transcends time; incidentally, it warms up the body and enables the individual in the cold regions to survive in almost a naked condition. The fourth and the highest center is known as the 'lotus on top of head' (*ushṇīsha-kamala*, in Tibetan Dab-STon). It consists of four petals, representing the four noble truths the Buddha taught. When *bodhichitta* reaches this center, it enjoys great bliss, and therefore this center is called 'mahāsukha-chakra'. It is as if *bodhichitta* has gone home, utterly relaxed and restful; it is described as the 'natural form' (*sahaja-kāya*). *Bodhichitta*, as it is bound to the lowest center (*samvṛta*)



Bhadra-Pāda

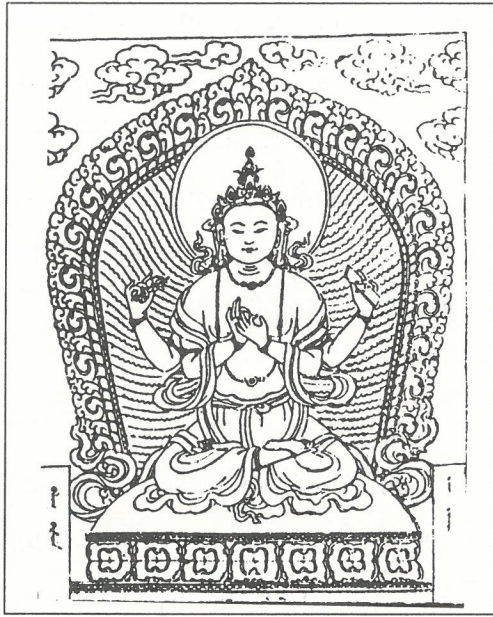
and restive, is responsible for the phenomenal involvement, which the same *bodhichitta* in its restful and blissful state in the highest centre (*vivṛta*) is responsible for emancipation.

The integration of the opposites, which is a characteristic Tāntrik approach, makes the

distinction between these two states significant. The former is active involvement (*pravṛtti*), while the latter is quiet withdrawal (*nivṛtti*). The former is the foundation of the womb of phenomenal existence (*garbha-dhātu* or *tathāgata-garbha*), while the latter is immutable, mere 'suchness' (*vajra-dhātu* or *tathatā*). The integration of the two is pictured in a design (*maṇḍala*), or is represented as a flame (male) arising from a lotus or vase (female), or is imagined as the copulation of two deities (*yuganaddha* or *yub-yum*). While *Guhyasamāja-tantra* does not elaborate the above conceptions, there is no doubt that it provided ample suggestions which were worked out in texts like *Hevajra-tantra*, *Śrīsamputikā*, *Heruka-tantra*, *Marma-kalikā-tantra* and *Sekoddasa-*

tīkā. It should be pointed out that, as is the case with the classical Tantras, the Vajrayāna tantras differ in their accounts of esoteric structure (like the *chakra*) and processes (like *bodhichittotpāda*).

Following *Guhya-samāja*, the Vajrayāna position was crystallised by Padmavajra's *Guhya-siddhi*, which emphasised that by eschewing all opposites one can obtain emancipation in this very life, and which advocated the *mahāmudrā* method; Ananga-vajra's *Prajñopāya-viniśchaya-siddhi* (about A.D. 730) in twenty chapters which emphasised the union of wisdom (*prajñā*) and compassion (*kṛpā*) as the mixing of water with milk; Indra-bhūti's *Jñāna-siddhi* which commences with a praise of Vajrayāna, and provided



Prajñā-Pāramitā

copious explanations for the ideas in *Guhya-samāja*; and works of Advaya-vajra like *Seka-nirṇaya*, *Chaturmudrā*, *Pañcha-krama*, and *Yuganaddha-prakāśa*. *Guhya-samāja* presupposed scriptural texts like *Kāraṇḍa-vyūha* (which perhaps originated the Avalokiteśvara cult, and gave the famous mantra 'Om maṇi-padme Hūm' and several spells;

translated into Chinese between A.D. 557-581 by Yaśogupta), *Survaṇṇa-pābhāsā-sūtra* (translated into Chinese first by Dharma-kshema between A.D. 317-322, then by Paramārtha in the sixth century and again by I-tsing in the seventh) and *Mañjuśrī-mūla-kalpa* (translated into Chinese in the tenth century and into Tibetan in the next). The last mentioned work composed in archaic Sanskrit style (edited by Mahāmahopādhyāya Gaṇapati Sastri in TSS no. LXX and LXXVI, 1920 and 1921) calls itself a 'mahāyāna-vaipulya-sūtra', glorifies Mañjuśrī, introduces Tārā, and formulates mantras as method. Rāhula-Sāṅkṛtyāyana regards this as a South Indian work; the work mentions Śrīparvata and Dhānyakaṭaka monasteries as the centres of *mantra*-

yāna; and the text was recovered from Maṇalikkara-maṭṭam near Padmanābhapuram in Kerala. It may be recalled that the Tibetan *Blue Annals* held that Nāgārjuna introduced *Guhya-samāja*. And *Mañjuśrī-mūla-kalpa* is considered to be the immediate precursor to *Guhya-samāja*. The former appears to have finalised the *mantra-yāna* ('the path of mantras') phase, which in due course brought about the *Vajra-yāna* ('the adamant path'), of which the *Guhya-samāja* was an early advocate.

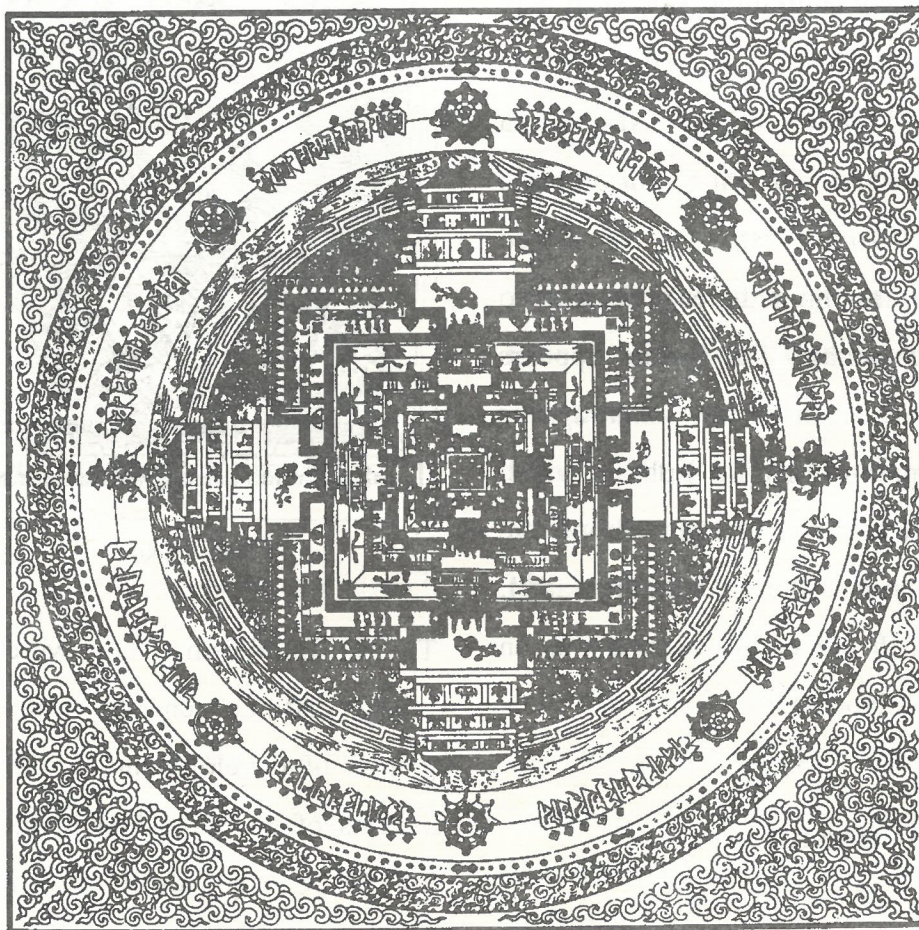
KĀLACHAKRA

It is usual, although erroneous, to distinguish between Mantra-yāna, Vajra-yāna, Sahaja-yāna and Kālachakra-yāna in the so-called



Kāla-Chakra

Tāntrik Buddhism. They were not really distinct schools, but only phases of development of different aspects of the cult. And Vajrayāna may be a collective and comprehensive nomenclature. The Siddhas, whose philosophy is generally identified as Sahaja-yāna, were also responsible for the ideas



Mandala with Mantra

crystallised in *Guhya-samāja*. And the impact of *Mañjuśrī-mūla-kalpa* carved out the importance of *mantras* within this framework. *Kāla-chakra-yāna*, however, stands on a different footing, partly because its origin was not entirely in India, and partly because it encouraged iconographic representation of abstract ideas. Waddell regards it as an extreme phase of Tāntrik Buddhism which developed in North India and Nepal during the tenth century. Repelled by the host of 'ferocious and blood-thirsty' 'demoniacal Buddhas' in the *Kālachakra* system, Waddell dismissed it as 'coarse' and "unworthy of being considered as a philosophy". This judgement is based on a profound misunderstanding. *Kālachakra* was a

fundamental concept accepted by most of the sects, including the austere and reformed dGe-Lugs-pa, and it had an elaborate philosophical structure.

The *Kālachakra* system is ascribed to Piṭo, one of the eighty-four siddhas, and among the preceptors of the system are counted Vajra-ghaṇṭā-pada, Vakaya-pāda, Kūrma-pada, Kāṇha-pā, Bhāḍe-pā, Tillo-pā and Nāropa, all siddhas. Nāropa's famous work *Sekoddesa-tīkā*, is a commentary on the 'Sekoddesa' section of the *Śrīkālachakra-tantra*, the only scriptural text of this system, the manuscript of which has been preserved in the Cambridge university. In this work, *Kālachakra*

is hailed as a deity, the very *bodhichitta*, the undistinguished union of 'emptiness' (*śūnyatā*) and 'compassion' (*karuṇā*), and the embodiment of knowledge (*jñāna-kāya*). Like Guhyasamāja, Kālachakra was also visualized as a divinity: the blue god with four-faces and three eyes, three-necks and six-shoulders and twelve hands on each side, dancing in the *ālīḍha* pose on the bodies of Anaṅga (the god of love, Eros) and Rudra (the God of destruction, Śiva). He is also represented in the *Yuganaddha* or *Yub-yum* form, embracing Prajñā. There seems to have been a teacher called Kālachakra-pāda, who is sometimes identified with the siddha Piṭo-pā. Tillo-pā is supposed to have defeated the Nālandā Paṇḍita Nāro-

pā in an argument, and Nāro-pā is said to have learnt from him the Kālachakra doctrine. One of Nāro-pā's students, Somanātha-Paṇḍita, is reputed to have been one of the well-known exponents of this doctrine. The Kālachakra cult spread in Nepāl, Tibet and Mangolia.

Suchandra, the fist of the kings of Śāmbhala, obtained the *yoga* of Kālachakra from the Buddha himself, as it was the sole means of salvation for people in this degenerate Kali-age. It is with this piece of information that *Śrī-Kālachakra-tantra* begins. The Tibetan historian Bu-STon who wrote his *CHoso hBYung (History of Religion)* in 1322 mentions that, according to 'Kālachakra calculation', 2198 years

had elapsed since the Buddha taught the 'source-text' (*mūla-tantra*) of Kālachakra, and that the Buddha taught it a year before his passing away. And, TSong-Kha-Pa is said to have heard the Kālachakra doctrine from an astronomer. It is likely therefore that the system had its origin in some astronomical speculation that was current in India, and was introduced into Tibet, as Lawfer suggests. The 'wheel of time' (*kālachakra*) is in fact closely related to sexagenary system, derived from the combination of five elements (wood, fire, earth, iron and water) and twelve animals (monkey, hen, dog, pig, mouse, bull, tiger, hare, dragon, serpent, horse and sheep), which seems to have entered into Tibet in the year A.D. 1027, the

year the commentary on *Laghu-Kālachakra-tantra* (*Vimalaprabhā*) appeared in Tibetan, although it became an accepted mode of reckoning only around 1241.

Whatever the genesis, Kālachakra (in Tibetan, *Dus-Kyi-Ko'r-lo*) became an important philosophical system and religious discipline in Tibet. The expression 'kālachakra' means 'the cycle of time'. The first part of the word, 'kāla', signifies the state of absorption, decease, cessation; in its extended meaning, it stands for 'vacuity' (*śūnyatā*, the ultimate and immutable knowledge). And the second part, 'chakra' signifies the round of existence or the cycle of world-process; in its extended



Matāṅga-Pā

meaning, it stands for the method (upāya), or the state of compassion (*karuṇā*). The former is the essence, and the latter its manifestation. The two together comprehend all knowability. The three worlds appear and disappear therein, manifest themselves and dissolve themselves.

Nāro-pā takes *kāla* to mean phenomenal existence, and *chakra* vacuity; *kālachakra* is therefore the embodiment of compassion and vacuity, one and eternal. When in a state of union, they destroy all clouding, and bring about the highest bliss. He further derives the meaning of the expression from each of the letters: 'ka' denotes that causality has ceased, 'la' cosmic reabsorption, 'cha' mind that is mobile and restless, and 'kra' the method or process of worldly involvement. The first two comprise the transcendental state, *dharma-dhātu*, while the last two denote the emergence of objectivity with senses and elements. The former is termed 'adamantine knowledge' (*vajra-jñāna*), and the latter 'the great cosmogram of adamant element'

(*vajradhātu-mahāmaṇḍala*). Thus *Kālachakra* is another expression for *bodhichitta*.

What is important in the *Kālachakra* doctrine is its insistence that the entire universe, with all its objects and events, is located really in one's own body; the time with its divisions (hour, day, night, month, year etc.) is accommodated within the vital currents (*prāṇa*) that flow in the veins of the body. The obvious point that is generally missed, even in the scriptural texts and their commentaries, is that *kāla* means just 'time' and *chakra* is space, or field (*maṇḍala*); and thus *kālachakra* means the whole of physical and dynamic universe that moves in a cycle. It is the same as *bhava-chakra*.

But *kālachakra* sought to work out the correspondence between the flow of the vital currents in the body and the flow of time in the universe, and insisted that the manifestation of time is possible only in the functioning of the vital currents. The *kālachakra* theorists inferred that if the vital currents, especially the uprising and down-flowing courses (*prāṇāpānagatī*), are checked, one would thereby stop the passage of time also; one would transcend time, and overcome the phenomenal necessity of growth, change and decay. All yoga therefore is to be practised right inside the body (*dehamadhye samastam yogam*). The proximate goal is to render the body adamantine (*vajra*). i.e. immutable and powerful; and the ultimate goal

is great bliss (*mahāsukha*) that arises when all obstructions are eliminated. In other words, the purpose of kālachakra discipline is to rise above *bhava-chakra* (cycle of phenomena).

As a religious discipline, kālachakra has adopted 'the six limbed yoga' (*ṣaḍāṅga-yoga*) of the *Guhya-samāja-tantra* (ch. 18), in particular *prāṇāyāma* (checking and holding up of the vital currents). It is in the context of *prāṇāyāma* that the well-known and oft-employed mystic formula in Tibet 'Om Āh Hūm' (*Om* for inhalation, *Āh* for pot-like holding up, and *Hūm* for exhalation, or for origination, preservation and destruction respectively) was coined: known as *Vajra-japa* it is exceedingly popular not only among *sādhakas*,

but even among the pious laity. As a result of the holding-up of the vital-currents, the practitioner obtains a veritable 'rebirth' out of the womb of the realised vacuity. The 'rebirth' is characterised by immediate enlightenment which however is fleeting: the enlightenment is described as 'momentary' (*ekakṣaṇābhi-sambodhi*). For this to deepen and get fixed, one must continue the practice. The next stage is reached when one can, during the flash of enlightenment, understand the working of the senses and the mind intuitively. He is no longer a being bound to the phenomenal world: he is a 'great one' (*mahāsattva*), in the sense that he has already risen above it. The third stage destroys his passions and

fetters, makes him realise the nature of vacuity fully, but also orients him towards his duty to the rest of mankind. He is now a *bodhisattva*, and is likened to a completely developed foetus, ready to come out. In the fourth and the fifth stages (called *Samavasattva* and *Vajra-yogi*) one tears asunder all veils of passion, is weaned out of enjoyments of sixteen kinds, and becomes progressively freed from all kinds of fetters that bind him to the world. He now becomes purified, and firmly established in *dharma*. The final stage is known as *Kālachakra*, where he becomes utterly blissful (*mahāsukha*) by an absolute union of wisdom and method, of knowledge and knowability. In this stage, he is the primordial Buddha (*ādi-buddha*), the

ultimate principle of utter vacuity, from whom the Buddhas and the worlds evolve.

There are, in Tibet, rituals and initiations connected with *Kālachakra* which are heavily *Tāntrik*, and which are mainly communicated by oral teachings. It is interesting in this connection to note that one of the Siddhas, *Dārīka-pā*, wrote a tract on the initiation into *Kālachakra* ritual (*Kālachakra-tantrasya seka-prakriyāpatti*); its Sanskrit original is lost, but the Tibetan translation has been preserved. Even the celebrated Paṇḍita Advaya-vajra (better known as Avadhūti-pā, another Siddha) wrote a work on *Kālachakra*, which perhaps dealt with the 'six-limbed yoga' that was associated with it; the

Tibetan translation of this work included in *bs TanhGyur* gives the title as *Śrīkālachakropadeśa-yoga-tantra-pañjikā* which suggests that it was in the nature of a commentary on an important work, now lost. The famous Tibetan historian Tārānātha (Kun-dGah-SNin-po of the Jon-nyin

sect, born in 1575) was an advocate of Kāla-chakra-yāna.

[NOTE: The wood-cut drawings of the Siddhas reproduced in this chapter are from Bhadra-Kalpika-sūtra pantheon, given in *Śata-piṭaka Series* Vol.342 (*Buddhist Iconography*, by Lokesh Chandra, Vol. II, Aditya Prakāsan, New Delhi, 1987)]



APPENDIX I

NOTE ON BHELASAMHITA

Of the early medical authorities in India Charaka and Suśruta achieved great celebrity, and have held the field in Āyurveda till our own day. Although the problem of their historicity has still not been laid at rest, the *Samhitās* ascribed to them have been regarded as unquestionable authorities by all subsequent medical writers and physicians of the Ayurvedic persuasion. These two treatises merited redaction, reconstruction, annotation and commentaries by such eminent personages as Nāgārjuna, Ḍalhaṇa, Chakrapāṇi and Chakradatta; even the great Patañjali is said to have commented on *Charaka-Samhitā*¹. We do not

know the exact circumstances in which earlier writers like Bhela, Hārīta, Ksharapāṇi, Jatūkarna and Parāśara belonging to the Ātreya School of Charaka, and Aupadhenava, Aurabhra, Paushkalāvata, Vaitaraṇa and Gopurara-kshita of the Dhānvantara School of Suśruta were forgotten and their works lost. Charaka himself has written that Bhela and other disciples of Atreya wrote their own 'tantras'². How did they all disappear? There is an intriguing statement by Vāgbhaṭa, who mainly favours Charaka and Suśruta, although he cites the views of Bhela and Hārīta, in his *Ashtāṅga-hṛdaya*:

ऋषिप्रणीते प्रीतिश्चेन्मुक्त्वा चरकसुश्रुतौ ।

भेलाद्याः किं न पठ्यन्ते तस्माद् ग्राह्यं सुभाषितम् ॥

It becomes clear from this reference that already about 1200 A.D. Bhela and other pre-Charaka authorities were no longer consulted by medical students, whose studies were confined to Charaka and Suśruta. The reason suggested by Vāgbhaṭa is not, however, clear.

Āyurvedic tradition makes *Charaka-Saṁhitā* a reconstruction of an earlier work by Agniveśa (as is evident from the colophon इत्यग्निवेशकृते तन्त्रे चरकप्रतिसंस्कृते) ; and this Agniveśa was a disciple of Ātreya, who in his turn was student of Bharadvāja. It is impossible to identify who this Bharadvāja was, and about Ātreya we are not sure

if the mere Ātreya, Kṛshṇātreya, and Punarvasu-Ātreya that are referred to in the Saṁhitās of Charaka and Bhela were different persons, or were different names of the same person. Chakrapāṇi, the commentator on Charaka, however, refers to an old tradition that it was the same person³. Whatever the truth, both Charaka and Bhela cite his views with a hush of reverence and frequently affiliate themselves with his school of thought. Expressions like इत्याह भगवानत्रेयः, इति हस्माह भगवानत्रेयः occur again and again. Ātreya must doubtless have been a very great master of medicine, and naturally the therapeutic medicine, *Kāyachikitsā* in this country is claimed to be his formulation. There is a suggestion that he was

a Buddhist; but we cannot be sure. He had several students like Agniveśa, Bhela, Hārīta, Ksharapāṇi and Jatūkarna, each of whom, according to Charaka⁴, prepared a corpus embodying the master's teaching. While these works have been lost, it is fortunate that Bhela's corpus (*samhitā*) has survived the ravages of time, albeit in a mutilated and fragmentary manner.

Due to an unknown reason, Bhela (as others) lost favour with the physicians and his compendium ceased to be studied. This explains the unfortunate circumstance that we have today but a solitary manuscript of *Bhelasamhitā*, that too incomplete and worn out. This manuscript, written about 1650, in

Telugu characters was discovered in the Tanjore Palace library (Burnell's catalogue, No. 10773) and Hoernle got it copied in 1905. Ashutosh Mookerjee got the manuscript again copied twice, and these transcripts formed the basis for the first edition of *Bhelasamhitā* in the *University of Calcutta Journal of the Department of Letters* (Vol. VI) in 1921. Aufrecht had noticed another manuscript of this work in a Lahore collection (Catalogus Catalogorum, No. 416), but subsequent search for it by Hoernle was futile. A manuscript of the same work was announced among Keith's finds in Turkistan. However, the Tanjore Mss. is our principal material. In recent years, the Chowkhamba Vidyabhavan of Banaras has brought out another

edition of *Bhelasamhitā*, based principally on the Calcutta Edition, but giving better readings and emendations (ed. Girijadayalu Sukla, 1959).

As the principal manuscript of Bhela that has reached us is badly damaged, especially in its initial portions (the first three sections and a part of the fourth section are missing), it is difficult to identify the author's personal details, philosophical leanings or religious affiliations. In the portions that are extant *devapūjā*, *svastyayana*, *bali*, *māṅgalya-homa* are found prescribed, thereby suggesting that the author belonged to the Vedic tradition: but we cannot be very certain. He makes an explicit reference to a

contemporary prince, Nagnajit of Gāndhāra⁵, whom *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa*⁶ and *Aitareya-brāhmaṇa*⁷ also mention, equally specifically. Bhela therefore lived during the early Upanishadic period, several centuries before the present era. Vedic tradition as we know it in the classical period had not as yet got crystallised when Bhela lived. There is close agreement between Charaka's views and Bhela's views on several important details of medical theory and practice, and therefore it is likely that Bhela also subscribed to the early Sāṅkhya of the Pañchaśikha type.

The general orientations of Bhela with regard to the basic ideas of Āyurveda are the same as those of Charaka and Suśruta: the

theory that the organism is made up of five elements (*pāñchabhautika* theory), the concept of component parts (*dhātus*), the notion of the basic modes of being (*guṇa*), the factors of equilibrium, and sources of disturbance (*doshas*), and the pathogenesis. But there are some notions which appear peculiar to Bhela. The fragmentary nature of the manuscript is all the more regrettable when we find that even in the extant portions there are highly interesting suggestions. An attempt at partial reconstruction may, however, be made.

Bhela's ideological position seems to be based on the type of Sāṃkhya that was prior even to Charaka. He speaks of a strongly

materialistic nature (*prakṛti*) which is seven-fold: the five ultimate constituent elements (*mahābhūtas*), the consciousness that is unitary (*mahat*) and the unmanifest (*avyakta*). To this conglomeration, he adds the nature of things (*svabhāva*) and time in the sense of seasons (*kāla*) as causative agents. All organisms are produced from them, and return to them at death. The senses, the sense-objects as well as the understandings arising from their contact do likewise⁸. The human being is composed of six material elements, five of them being the elements (space, air, fire, water and earth) and the other the unmanifest *brahman*⁹. Bhela employs the expression *purusha* only in the sense of a human

being, as is the case with the later Vedic texts. We may note in this connection that Charaka takes the word to mean pure consciousness, in line with later Upanishadic thought; he equates this with *chetanā*. Bhela uses the word *chetanā* in a different sense; for him, it is not the idealistic pure consciousness, but the concrete organic awareness invariably associated with vital functions. That is why he locates *chetanā* in the heart¹⁰. It would appear that Bhela regards understanding (*buddhi*) as a function of this *chetanā*. The unmanifest *brahman* that Bhela speaks of as involved in the human being probably refers to the consciousness which is not tied to the organism. For he refers to the settling down of mind and

understanding in the *brahman* at the time of death when the material components return to the respective elements¹¹. The expression *brahman* occurs in another context: while dealing with the phenomenon of sleep, Bhela thinks that it is an arrangement of *brahman* (*brahmaṇā vihitā purā*): what he means probably is that it is an old order established by nature. There is also a reference to *bhūtātmā*, the elemental soul, involved in transmigration.

Bhela's employment of the expression *buddhi* is clearly in the sense of understanding, determinate and concrete. And it is a function of *chitta*, which is more general but indeterminate although

concrete. It is chitta that is responsible for all understanding (*buddhi*), for all action in the individual, for all his feelings. Chitta and *chetanā* are interchangeable expressions for embodied consciousness that supports the individual's individuality, identity and uniqueness: this is the function that is centred in the heart. Bhela distinguishes between *buddhi* as understanding and *manas* as mind. Mind, according to him, is localised in the brain; and Dasgupta is right when he says that this is a unique view in the the field of Sanskrit literature¹². Mind's centre is said to be the area between the head and the palate (*śirastālvantargatam*). It concerns itself with all senses; and due to its location it can apprehend all details obtained by the sense-

organs. Both the senses and the mind alike are sustained by the chitta situated in the heart¹³. The understanding (*buddhi*) in the form of judgments arises when the mind 'knows' (*viditam*) the chitta and the choice of action is actualised¹⁴. Here, 'knowing' may mean inward direction or introspection. Bhela is here discussing the problem of motivation in action. Mind initiates the consideration of the object with regard to its desirability, urgency, and possibility. Understanding is in reality an evaluation and decision-making. It is called 'buddhi' because it instructs (*bodhanam*) the man about what to do, and how. In its chitta aspect (aspect of undifferentiated consciousness) it is in fact the 'embodied soul'

(*śarīrī*), the highest spirit (*paramātmā*), and the main director of all behaviour¹⁵. Mind's field is more limited: it is responsible for cognitions.

There is an interesting discussion in *Bhelasamhitā* on what he calls *unmāda*, which is a general expression for mental ailments (Nidānasthāna, sections 7 and 8). Bhela is definite that these ailments are all bodily in origin, confined to the body, and harm the body itself, even as fire destroys the very things that support it¹⁶. This somatopsychic approach is remarkable, considering the age in which Bhela lived. The disturbances (*doshas*) which occur in the area between the head and the palate, viz., the brain, will first affect the mind and immediately it

is transmitted to the chitta (basic consciousness which is also vital), and when chitta is thus touched understanding (*buddhi*, judgment) is destroyed: the person would then not know what to do and what not to¹⁷. There is also an attempt to fix the causes of such disturbance in the *chitta-manas* complex: grief, anger, excessive delight and insecurity (loss of wealth) are mentioned as causes¹⁸. As a result of this disturbance sets in insanity. The individual so disturbed is preoccupied, he cries without a reason, he laughs all on a sudden, he becomes reticent, he is excessively sleepy, he loses energy and enthusiasm, he is frightened, he feels helpless, or he is irritable¹⁹. It is interesting that Bhela recommends various ways of shocking the mental patient like

caning, whipping, confronting him with elephants or snakes, surrounding him with fire, and throwing cold water on him. Bhela has also a theory: shocks such as these would intensify the disturbances in the mind because of fear, and fear may set the mind in order even as it throws it out of order²⁰.

Equally interesting is Bhela's treatment of dysentery as a psychosomatic ailment: disturbances in the *doshas* could be occasioned by fear or grief, and they are treated by reassurance by friends or wise folk in whom the patient has trust; relief to be obtained by relaxing the mind²¹.

The problem of the manner in which the mind can enter into

contact with the vital and pure consciousness has been raised by Bhela. How does the mind cognise the objects that are presented to the senses? Bhela answers that the bodily fire (*kāyāgni*) has five varieties one of which is perceptual (*ālōchaka*). This is considered to be one of the functions of fire-element in the body known as bile (*pitta*). According to Bhela, this function is two-fold: vision-specific (*chakshurvaiśeshika*) and understanding-specific (*buddhivaiśeshika*). The former occasions knowledge by bringing the mind into contact with chitta (Bhela uses the expression *ātmā* here) and also projecting the mental details on the plane of consciousness. This makes visual experience properly

structured so that different details are both separately apprehended and integrated. This function is centered in the eye, as it is the principal sense-organ. The latter is located in the area between the eyebrows; it grasps the subtle details that one has apprehended, organises what one has grasped, integrates what one has organised, with reference to past experience, remembers what is past and imagines what is in the future. This function is involved in planning our actions, focussing our mind, and gathering our thoughts²².

In his discussion on sleep Bhela points out that when sense-functions cease, mind also ceases so far as perceptions are concerned; in this condition mind settles in the

undifferentiated consciousness (*chitta*) in the heart. The individual being (*jīva*) is overcome by *tamas* (quality of inertia, inactivity, clouding, darkness) and then the sense-organs gradually withdraw themselves from their activities. It is at this time that the food eaten is digested; with phlegm (*śleshman*) entering the heart, work of the eyes and ears are arrested. Heavy sluggishness enters into consciousness and this is called sleep (*nidrā*). Nature arranges sleep for all beings, because it wards off anxiety, dissatisfactions and fatigue²³.

The earliest medical treatise available to us, *Bhelasamhitā*, is refreshingly original and bold: it is a great pity that the complete work is not available.

REFERENCES

1. So Bhoja and Chakrapāṇi
Cf. Nāgeśa - bhāṭṭa's
Laghumañjūshā cites,
आप्तो नामानुभवेन वस्तुतस्तस्य कार्त्स्न्ये
निश्चयत्वात् रागादिवशादपि नान्यथावादी यः
स इति चरके पतञ्जलिः ॥
2. *Charaka-saṃhitā*,
Sūtra-sthāna, 1
अथ भेलादयश्चक्रुः स्वं स्वं तन्त्रानि च ।
श्रावयामासुरात्रेयं सर्षिसंघं सुमेधसः ॥
3. Chakrapāṇi on *Charaka*,
Chikitsāsthāna, 11,32
कृष्णात्रेयः पुनर्वसोरभिन्न एवेति वृद्धाः ।
Also Bhela, 16 कृष्णात्रेयं पुरस्कृत्य
कथाञ्चक्रुर्महर्षयः ।
4. *Charaka-Saṃhitā*, 1
5. *Bhela Saṃhitā*, 15, 1 (p.32)
6. *Śātapatha-brāhmaṇa*, 8,1,4,10
अथ ह स्माह स्स्वर्जिन्नाग्नजितः नग्नजिद्वा
गान्धारः ।
7. *Aitareya-brāhmaṇa*, 7,35 नग्नजिते
गान्धाराय
8. *Bhela-saṃhitā*, *Vimāna-*
sthāna, 4,9-11
प्रकृतिं वै विजानीयात्तस्या वक्ष्यामि लक्षणं ॥१॥
अव्यक्तं च महांश्चैव महाभूतानि पञ्च च ।
पुराः प्रकृतयः सप्त स्वभावः
काल एव च ॥१०॥
तेभ्यो भवन्ति भूतानि नान्येव प्रतियान्ति च ।
इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थाश्च बुद्ध्यः पञ्च
तास्तथा ॥११॥
9. *Ibid.*, षड्धातुरेवायं पुरुषो भवति । धातवः
पुनः पञ्चभूतानि ब्रह्म यदव्यक्तं ॥
10. *Ibid.*, *Śarīra-sthāna*, 7,3

- हृदयमेकं चेतनायतनं । दश प्राणायतनानि,
यद्यथा मूर्धकण्ठो हृदयं गुदो नाभिर्विस्तिरोजः
शोणितं मांसमिति ॥
11. *Ibid.*, 6, 23, quotes a verse
and explains it,
भिद्यमाने शरीरे वै धातुर्धातुं नियच्छति ।
मनोबुद्धिश्च सर्वेषां ब्रह्मणि प्रतिष्ठति ॥
12. Dasgupta, S.N.A *History
of Indian Philosophy*, II, p.
340-341
13. *BS*, Chikitsā sthāna, 8, 4
स मनः प्रभवं चापि सर्वेन्द्रियमयं बलं ।
कारणं सर्वबुद्धीनां चित्तं हृदयसंश्रितम् ॥४॥
14. *Ibid.*,
विदितं मनसा चित्तमालम्भो लभ्यते ततः ।
ततो वृद्धिः प्रभवति कार्याकार्यविचारिका ॥६॥
15. *Ibidl.*,
सा बुद्धिः परमात्मा च स शरीरी प्रकीर्तितः ।
यथाकृती कर्मकरः क्रियां योजयते नृषु ॥८॥
16. *Ibid.*, Nidāna-sthāna,
एवं शरीरजा दोषाः शरीरे पर्यवस्थिताः ।
शरीरमेव हिंसन्ति पावकः स्वामिवाश्रयम् ॥
17. *Ibid.*, Unmāda-
Chikitsitādhyāya, 8 (p.157)
ऊर्ध्वं प्रकुपिता दोषाः
शिरस्ताल्वन्तरे स्थिताः ।
मनः संदूषयन्त्याशु ततश्चित्तं विपद्यते ॥१०॥
चित्ते व्यापदमापन्ने बुद्धिर्नाशं निगच्छति ।
ततस्तु बुद्धिव्यापत्या कार्याकार्यं न
बुद्ध्यते ॥११॥
18. *Ibid.*,
शोकात्कोपात्तथा हर्षाद्व्याणां च विनाशनात् ।
चलिते चित्तमनसि मदमाशु निगच्छति ॥१३॥
19. *Ibid.*,
प्रध्यायति प्रस्वपिति रोदिति ह्यनिमित्ततः ।
हसत्यकस्मात्
निद्रालुरल्पवाङ्मनित्यमुत्सुकः ॥१४॥
त्रस्तः शरीरदीनाक्षिक्रोधनो निरपत्रपः ।
पुरस्तादवलोकौ च न यथावृत्त एव च ॥१५॥

20. *Ibid.*,

वित्रासयेयुर्वैद्यास्तं त्रासनैस्तु पृथग्विधैः ॥
त्रासास्तीत्रा हि कुर्वन्ति चित्तस्य
विकृतिं भयात् ॥
भयमेव तु चित्तस्य स्थानयानार्थमुच्यते ॥१६॥

21. *Ibid.*, Atisāra-

Chikitsitādhyāya, 10

भयाद्वा यदि वा शोकाद्योतिसारः प्रवर्तते ।
यः कुप्यति ततो दोषस्तस्य कुर्याच्छक्तिसितम् ॥
नित्यमाश्रासयेयुस्तं सुहृदश्च विपश्चितः ।
मनः प्रहृष्टं कुर्याच्च तदा सम्पद्यते सुखी ॥

22. *Ibid.*, Śārīra-sthāna, 4,

अत्रोवाच भगवानात्रेयः- तत्रालोचको नाम
वर्षाशीतातपप्रवृद्धः । स द्विविधः- चक्षुर्वैशेषिको
बुद्धिवैशेषिकश्चेति । तत्र चक्षुर्वैशेषिको नाम
य आत्ममनसोः संनिकर्षात् ज्ञानमुदीरयित्वा
चित्ते चित्तमाधाय संस्वेदजाण्डजोद्भिज्जरायुजानां
चतुर्णाः भूतग्रामाणां लक्षणसंस्थानरूप-
वर्णस्वररुच्यैवावचानां पुष्पफलपत्राणां
रूपनिवृत्त्यर्थमेकैकस्य द्वयोः पात्रयोः सर्वेषां

वायुगपत्प्रणिपतितानां वैशेष्यमुत्पादयतीति ॥
बुद्धिवैशेषिको नाम यो भ्रुवोर्मध्ये शृङ्गाटकस्थः
सुसूक्ष्मानर्थानध्यात्मकृतान् गृह्णाति, गृहीतं
धारयति, धारितं प्रत्युदाहरति, अथ तं
स्मरति, प्रत्युत्पन्नं कृत्वाऽनागतं प्रार्थयति,
जातमात्रश्च पुनरनुपदिष्टस्वभावः मातुः
स्तन्यमभिलषति, ध्याने प्रत्याहारे योजनाश्च
बुद्धिवैशेष्यमुत्पादयति ॥

23. *Ibid.*, Chikitsā-sthāna, 25

तमसा हि समाक्रान्ते जीवे दिवससंक्षयात् ।
इन्द्रियाण्यस्य कर्मभ्यः क्रमाद्भि विरमन्त्यथ ॥
भुक्तेने पच्यमाने च श्लेष्मणा हृद्गतेन तु ।
विवृद्धेन निरुद्धेषु चक्षुः श्रोत्रवहेषु च ।
शारीरमानसैश्चैव तैस्तैरुक्तैरुपद्रुतैः ॥
एवं क्रियास्तसंज्ञानां तन्द्राविश्यति तामसी ।
एवं सर्वेषु भूतेषु निद्रा नामोपजायते ॥
चिन्ताशोकश्रमहरी ब्रह्मणा विहिता पुरा ।
स्वपतस्तस्य देहेऽस्मिन् प्राणापानौ
सहेन्द्रियैः (?) ॥

APPENDIX II

NOTE ON NĀḌĪ AND ITS EXAMINATION

Meaning tubular stalk or flute (from naḍa, hollow reed which grows in the rainy season), the word nāḍī, is as old as the Vedic literature (e.g. RV 10, 135, 7; AV, 6, 138, 4) used in the sense of a body. it is often used synonymously with dhamani (RV 2, 11, 8; AV 1, 17, 3 and 4), Sirā (or hirā, although a distinction is sometimes made, as e.g. AV 7,35,2 'hundred dhamanīs and a thousand hirās') and snāva ('tendons') (AV 9,8,11 and 12;12,5,69). The diminutive form, nāḍika, is also used (e.g. AV 5,18,8).

In the Vedic context, the nāḍī means conduits in the sense of

spermatic ducts. An Upanishad (Kaṭha, 6, 16) speaks of a hundred and one nāḍis of heart; and another Upanishad (Prasna,) 3,6) of the hundred nāḍis of the the heart with their thousand branches. This idea developed in due course into an elaborate doctrine of nāḍī-organization in the human body (nāḍī-chakra). There are references to this in several purāṇas, (e. g. Padma, Brahma-vaivarta, Kāli), Upanishads (Prašnopanishad, Kshurikopanishad, etc.) and tantras (Kuṇḍalini-tantra, Rudra-yāmala etc). There seem to have been other texts by authors like Agneya, Yājñavalkya, Dattātreya and Gautama dealing with this doctrine,

for Kṛpāla-miśra's *Nāḍi-prabodhana* cites from them; Kaṇāda's *Nāḍi-vijñāna* mentions Gautameya and Vaśishṭha.

However, the present meaning of pulse, amenable to examination and helpful in diagnosis and prognosis, is absent from the Vedic and early religious literature. The concept of *nāḍi-parīkṣhā* (pulse examination) is likewise absent from the classical texts of Indian medicine (CS, SS, KS, BS, AS, AHr, MN), although there are references in CS (*indriya-sthāna*, 3, 'satatam spanda-mānānām śarīra-deśānām stambhah') SS (*Sārīra-sthāna*, 28, 32), AHr, (*Sārīra-sthāna*, 5, "hrasvam cha yat prasirsihi vyāviddham spandatau

bhṛśam") which suggest that these authors were acquainted with the doctrine of *nāḍi*. Its first occurrence appears to be in SaS (*pūrva-khaṇḍa*, 3, 1-11), about the thirteenth century. It is also mentioned in BP, (1, 7, 11-22), BYT, YR, Dhanvantari's *Sarva-roga-nidāna*, and *Gada-saṃjīvinī*. There are about 50 works dealing exclusively with this topic (e.g. Kaṇāda's *Nāḍi-vijñāna*, Rāvaṇa's *Nāḍi-vijñāna*, Sankara-sena's *Nāḍi-prakāśa*, Raghunātha-prasāda's *Nāḍi-jñāna-taraṅgiṇī*, and several anonymous works like *Nāḍi-jñāna-tantra*, *Nāḍi-parīkṣhā*. In the course of time, pulse-examination became very popular, not only as a variety of examination by touch (*sparśa-parīkṣhā*), but as a valuable aid for

discovering the errant condition of doshas.

Pulse examination was regarded as an indispensable aid for the physician to ascertain the nature and severity of diseases. “Like the study of scriptures without understanding, like food without salt, like a woman who has been widowed, the physician would be without a knowledge of pulse-examination” (ND, 3,3);

बोधहीनं यथशास्त्रं भोजनं लवणं विना ।
पतिना यथा नारी तथा नाडीं विना भिषक् ॥

“The physician who attempts to practice without a knowledge of pulse examination would not be prosperous, would not do the right thing, and would not obtain celebrity” (NP, 2, 41):

नाडीज्ञानं विना यो चिकित्सां कुरुते भिषक् ।
स नैव लभते लक्ष्मीं न च धर्मं न वै यशः ।

Pulse examination was given primacy among diagnostic aids in all diseases : the pulse, tongue, eyes, urine and blood were sought to be examined in that order (ND, 3.3)

आदौ सर्वेषु रोगेषु नाडी जिह्वाग्रनेत्रकम् ।
मूत्रार्तवं परीक्षेत पश्चाद्रोगं चिकित्सयेत्

Even as the strings of a lute articulate all the melody-moulds, the nāḍī of the hands can reveal all the diseases (ibid).

यथा वीणागता तन्त्री सर्वान् रागान् प्रभाषते ।
तथा हस्तगता नाडी सर्वान् रोगान् प्रकाशते ॥

There are said to be three crores and a half-crore of nāḍīs,

gross and subtle, in the human body, all rooted in the region of the umbilicus and spreading upward, downward, and across. Among them 72,000 are gross, and carry the properties of the five sense-functions. The subtle ones (called *sirā*, in SS, *Śarīra*, 7,3) are 700 in number, and they carry uninterruptedly the 'food-juice' (*anna-rasa*). Prompted by the bodily wind to spread in all parts, and satiate the entire body, 'like a hundred rivers that flow into the sea' : they pervade the body from head to foot, and are covered by the skin even as the *mṛdaṅga* (a percussion instrument) is. Not all of them, however, are visible; only 24 are, and among them one alone (which extends to hands and feet) can be examined (cf. SkD *Toḍala-*

tantra, 8). It is directly related to the heart, and therefore the condition of the entire body is reflected in it. In men, this *nāḍī* is to the right, and in women to the left. Its condition is perceptible on the wrist of the right hand of men, and of the left hand of women. It is also perceptible in the foot; but in practice the wrist is to be preferred.

The pulse for examination is to be found in the wrist immediately below the thumb. This pulse (*nāḍī*, *dhamanī*) is described as the witness of the life-process in the body (*jīva-sākshiṇī*), and as the evidence of happiness or misery within the body. When the physician presses against this pulse with his three fingers of the right hand (the

forefinger, the middle finger and the right-finger), he can feel by the first finger, movement that is diagonal in the part of the pulse that resembles a barley-seed. This portion of the *nāḍī* indicates the condition of *vāta*. He can feel by the second finger the movement that is quick and constant but in one point. This portion of the pulse indicates the condition of *pitta* ('fire' in the body). He can feel by his third finger movement that is oblique (horizontal) but slow and almost non-existent. This indicates the condition of *kapha*. The physician must press the pulse three times with his three fingers and release it, before he begins to feel exactly the condition of the three doshas. During examination, however, he must first discern *pitta*

(with his middle finger), then *vāta* (with his fore-finger) and finally *kapha* (with his ring-finger) (GOML, Madras, Vol 23, NO. 13086).

The three doshas are perceived in the pulse as transverse movement (*vāta* like the movement of wind), unsteady (*pitta*, like the flames of the fire), and steady (*kapha*, like the settling water). When *vāta* is aggravated, the pulse at the point appropriate to this dosha is perceived like the moving serpent or crawling leech. When *pitta* is aggravated, movement in the pulse appears like the flight of a crow or sparrow, or like the hopping of a frog. When *kapha* is aggravated, movement in the pulse is similar to the measured strutting of a peacock or the floating of

a swan on water. When two doshas are together aggravated, the movement in the pulse is sometimes slow, sometimes fast. When all three doshas are troubled (saṁnipāta), the movement in the pulse is extremely erratic, sometimes very slow, sometimes very fast, resembling the flight of a quail (lāvaka) or a partridge (tittirī). The physician will understand by pulse-examination whether the disease is hard to cure (kṛcchrasādhya) or impossible to cure (asādhya). The dosha that strays from its position on the pulse (sthāna-vichyuta), the pulse that stops very now and then, the pulse that is extremely sluggish, and the pulse that is cold to touch indicate approaching death (*Nāḍī-prakāśa*, SKD).

The examination of the pulse was introduced into Greek medicine as early as 320 B.C. by Pnaxagoras of Cos. Herophilus is said to have evolved a system of counting the pulse by a water-clock. Pneumatists evolved an elaborate pulse-lore. And it entered the field of Arabic medicine, and thence into the Yunāni system. Chinese medicine had an ancient literature concerning pulse-examination. It cannot be ascertained with any degree of certainty when or how pulse-examination was introduced into Indian medicine. But its popularity during the middle ages and in the recent past is beyond doubt. It is likely that the 'Nāḍī-chakra' doctrine of the Yoga-Tantra complex provided the back-drop for the 'nāḍī-pariksha' method.

Examination of the pulse (nāḍī, principally the radial artery) is included in the eight-fold examination (aṣṭa-sthāna-parīkṣhā) which gained currency during the middle ages. However it is different from the pulse examination in European medical practice, where the pulse (usually the radial artery running superficially at the wrist, and rarely also the carotid artery behind the knee and the posterior tibial artery at the ankle) is felt for rate, rhythm, volume and character, and give an idea about the condition of the circulatory system, especially the condition of the heart. "Pulse in this practice is little more than the change of pressure within the artery that occurs with each heart-beat. The pulse indicates its rate or rhythm, the size and condition of

the arterial wall or the volume of blood that flows through the artery, or the force with which the blood flows. But pulse in Indian medical practice is the "witness of the living porcesses (Jīva-sākṣhiṇī), and its examination helps the physician ascertain not only the totality of all the vital functions of the patient's body (including mind) at the time of examination but also its trends in future."

The assumption is that the nāḍī pulsates characteristically differently under the influence of one, two or all three of the doshas (vāta, pitta and kapha). The ascertainment of these differences is of great value in diagnosis as well as prognosis. "The sum total of whole impression that the physician acquires, through the

degrees of abnormality that exists in the vitiation of vāta, pitta and kapha helps the physician to estimate the prognosis..... The investigation is used chiefly to ascertain the deranged dosha or doshas to the extent to which they are respectively deranged, and also to forebode any complications or impending death”

When the pulse is examined, it involves the physical examination of the artery; but it is not merely a mechanical counting of the pulse rate. It is an art as well as a science. ‘Even as the strings of a lute illumines all the melody modes, the radial artery (hasta-gatā nāḍī) shows up all the diseases (in the body)’” (*Nāḍī-darpaṇa*). To become proficient in pulse examination, incessant practice is

important; but more important is the trance-like concentration (samādhi) which the physician is capable of while examining the patient, for it is only by such concentration he can enter, with the aid of the lamp of wisdom (‘jñāna-buddhi-pradīpena’), into the very inside of the patient (‘viśati āturyasya antar ātmānam’) (CS, vimāna, 5, 12). The expertise is obtained by the grace of a competent teacher.

The examination as it was standardized in India involved the ascertainment of the size or volume of the pulse (determined by the condition of kapha), frequency or rapidity of the pulse (indicated by the condition of pitta), and the rhythm or regularity of the pulse (determined by the condition of

vāta). The purpose is to know the prevalence of a particular dosha or a combination of two or all three doshas. The articulations of the pulse under the influence of such prevalence are likened to the creeping movement of a leech or a snake (in vāta prevalence), to the leaping movement of a frog, crow or a sparrow (in pitta prevalence), and to the steady movement of a swan, a peacock, or a pigeon (in kapha prevalence) (SaS, 1, 3, 1). The movement may be characteristically isolated (when doshas vitiated are severally responsible for the diseases) or may occur in combinations of two (like vāta-pitta, vāta-kapha and pitta-kapha) or of all three (saṁnipāta).

When the pulse articulates now emulating the movement of the snake, and then that of the frog, the indication is that both vāta and pitta have been vitiated. When, however, the articulations of the pulse resemble the movements of a snake as well as a peacock, then vāta and kapha are vitiated. If the pulse is felt as jumping like a frog alternately with the gait of peacock, then pitta and kapha are vitiated. When all three doshas are vitiated (the condition known as saṁnipāta), this is indicated by the alternative slowness of the pulse (manda), intermittence (śīthila), crookedness (vyākula) and fickleness (chañchala). The pulsation appears, disappears and reappears frequently. At times it is very subtle and hard to be perceived, it varies

time and again. The pulsation in this condition is likened to the unpredictable flutter, flight and immobility of a partridge (tittiri) or a quail (lāvaka) (SaS, 1, 3, 3), or to the movements of a rodent caught in a heap of fire-wood (Lolimba-rāja).

The examination of the pulse is done for the length of time the pulse takes to beat thirty times, or longer, if required. Usually it is repeated twice (viz., three counts in all). But in between the counts, the physician withdraws completely his hand from the patient's wrist.

Both the patient and the physician must be comfortably seated while the pulse is being examined, and must be free from worry, fear, stress, and bodily

urges. The patient's hand must be free, not too far nor too near the physician, slightly flexed at the fore-arm. The physician with his left hand must massage the hand of the patient slightly, and hold it lightly; and then he places gently the three fingers of his right hand; the fore-finger is placed nearest the thumb, and the other two fingers next to it in order.

The best time for pulse-examination is said to be early in the morning. The articulations of the pulse characteristically differ during the course of the day, for in the early hours of the morning kapha prevails, around noon time pitta, and in the evening vāta; and in the early parts of night kapha, around midnight pitta, and last part of the night vāta. Seasons also

play an important role in altering the pulse-examination. The pulse articulations also vary in accordance with the patient's bodily condition (hunger, thirst, sleep, exertion, food in the body and stage of digestion, posture etc.), mental state (excitement, anger, sorrow, joy, etc.) and environmental conditions (exposure to sun, heat, cold breeze, strong smells etc.).

Pulse examination is not indicated in certain conditions of the physician: inebriation, suppression of natural urges and extreme distraction; or if the physician is greedy or sexually excited (NP,2,41):

पीतमद्या चञ्चलात्मा मलमूत्रादिवेगयुक् ।
नाडीज्ञानेऽसमर्थः स्याल्लोभाक्रान्तश्च कामुकः ।

Pulse examination is a difficult art, and presupposes not only long, and assiduous practice but insight into the normal human constitution as well as pathogenesis. Scriptural study alone would not be sufficient; guidance of an expert teacher is indispensable. Likewise constant practice is of paramount importance; and one must indeed be lucky to become adept in it:

परीक्षणीया सततं नाडीनां गतयः पृथक् ।
न चाध्ययनमात्रेण नाडीज्ञानं भवेदिह ॥
न शास्त्रविज्ञानादपि न बहुश्रुतकारणम् ।
नाडीज्ञाने मनुष्याणां अभ्यासकारणं परम् ॥
सद्गुरूपदेशाच्च देवतानां प्रसादतः ।
नाडीपरिचयः सम्यक् प्रायः पुण्येन जायते ॥

The physician who is wise and disciplined in personal life, must examine the pulse only when he is in a state of perfect composure ('ekachittah')

‘praśāntātmā’) for otherwise, the pulse will not reveal the details:

नाडीगतिमिमां ज्ञातुं योगाभ्यासवदेकतः ।
शक्यते नान्यथा वैद्य उपायैः कोटिशतैरपि ॥

Its especial value consists in helping diagnose the disease of patients who cannot communicate (dumb folk, patients with paralysed speech, patients who have lost consciousness, patients who are ‘possessed’ and talk irrelevantly etc.) Amidst the welter of confusing symptoms, the pulse can provide an accurate picture of the diseased condition of the body ‘like objects being illumined by a lamp’. It tells the physician the condition of the three doshas (vātā, pitta and kapha), severally (vyasta), in pairs (dvandva or yugalīkṛta) and collectively (samasta, or

saṁnipāta). It also suggests to him the ease or difficulty with which treatment could be effected, or whether the disease is altogether incurable (‘sādhyāsādhyā-viveka’)

Abbreviations used:

AHr	: Ashtāṅga-hṛdaya
AS	: Ashtāṅga-saṁgraha
AV	: Atharva-veda
BP	: Bhāva-Prakāśa
BS	: Bhela-saṁhitā
ByT	: Bṛhad-yoga-taraṅgiṇī
CS	: Charaka-Saṁhitā
GOML	: Govt. Oriental Manuscripts Library
KS	: Kāśyapa-saṁhitā
MN	: Mādhava-nidāna
ND	: Nāḍī-darpaṇa
NP	: Nāḍī-prakāśa
SaS	: Śārṅgadharma-saṁhitā
SKD	: Śabda-kalpa-druma
SS	: Suśruta-saṁhitā
YR	: Yoga-ratnākara

APPENDIX III

INDIAN MEDICINE IN TIBET



1

Indianization of Tibet began around 620 A.D., when the Tibetan emperor Srongbehan sgarñ Po (620-649) sent the Tibetan scholar Thon-mi Sam-bhota to Kashmir to evolve a suitable script for the Tibetan language. Even before this time, an earlier emperor (gNah-Khri-behan-Po) had invited two physicians from India to visit Tibet. Both of them stayed in Tibet for over ten years,

during which time Indian medicine (viz. Āyurveda) took root in the Himalayan region. One of the Indian physicians married a Tibetan woman, and their son became a famous physician. Medical wisdom was being orally transmitted until Sam-bhoṭa developed the art of writing in Tibet.

The next great event in Tibet was the arrival of Śānta-rakṣita and Padmasambhava (both paṇḍītas of Nālāṇḍā), invited by the celebrated emperor Khri-gehang-Idé-byan (755-780). It was under their influence that Indian Buddhism took firm root in Tibet and the adjoining areas. They founded the monastery at bSam-yas on the

model of the Indian Odantapuri-vihāra and combining three styles of architecture, Indian, Tibetan and Chinese. The monastery, founded some time between 763 and 767 A.D. (according to the *Blue Annals*) served as the focal point of Tibetan culture for centuries to come.

It should be mentioned that Buddhism and medicine were closely associated all along. The Pāli text *Iti-vuttaka* describes the Buddha as the physician (bhishak) and as the surgeon (salla-kattā). The epic poem *Buddha-charita* of Aśvaghosha calls the Master mahābhiṣak. There is a form of the Buddha in later Buddhism, known as 'Bhaishajya-guru', which became popular in China, Japan and Central Asia. The Śākyan ascetic appeared

as the 'sovereign-healer' in his sambhoga-kāya, holding a fruit of the myrobolan in his right hand, to offer protection from all ailments, and holding in his left hand a bowl containing three kinds of ambrosia (amṛta), to cure diseases, to counteract ageing and to facilitate meditation and enlightenment. There were also many deities within the context of folk Buddhism, which were specially associated with healing. Simha-nāda Avalokiteśvara, for instance, was the sovereign healer of leprosy; Parṇa-śabarī was worshipped to counteract fever and to ward off small pox and other epidemics; Jāṅgulī provided the antidote for all poisons, especially of snakes and scorpions.

The association between Buddhism and medicine is not

unwarranted. The gospel of the Buddha recognizes the phenomenon of suffering and seeks to unravel the aetiology thereof, to understand the state of utter elimination of all suffering, and to prescribe the methodology favourable to such elimination. This procedure involving four steps (which also is to be found in the Sāṃkhya-Yoga schools of thought) is compared to the four-fold approach of the physician: recognition of the ailment, diagnosis, visualization of health and prescription of therapy. In the general context of phenomenal suffering, bodily and mental diseases naturally got included; and in texts like *Bhaishajya-vāstu*, the Buddha is made not only to speak in medical terminology but to

suggest actually curative procedures.

It is well-known that the celebrated physician Jīvaka who was the personal physician to the King Bimbisāra of Rājagṛha and who became celebrated for his operations like craniotomy and laparotomy, and was skilled in curing diseases like jaundice and fistula-in-ano, was also a friend and physician to the Buddha. A contemporary of his, Ākāśa-gotra was reputed as a surgeon. During the early centuries of the Christian era, the name of Nāgārjuna, the great Buddhist saint, scholar and mystic is also associated with medicine, especially with the system which makes use of minerals and precious stones for therapeutic ends.

The influence of Buddhism even on Āyurveda is not inconsiderable. It is possible to find numerous references in *Charaka-saṁhitā* to Buddhist ideas and principles. The redaction of *Suśruta-saṁhitā* is ascribed to Nāgārjuna himself. Recipes like 'Nāgārjuna-bhasma' and so on have unmistakable Buddhist associations. The Buddhist mendicants who travelled extensively in the Himalayan regions and in Central Asia were responsible for the spread of Indian Medicine in those regions (as is evident from the famous Bowers Mss).

Vāgbhaṭa (latter half of 4th cent.), the greatest name in Indian medicine after Charaka and Suśruta, was himself a Buddhist.

Belonging to the Sindhu country, he was the son of Simha-gupta and student of Avalokita. His two works, *Ashṭāṅga-saṁgraha* and *Ashṭāṅga-hṛdaya* contain many references to the Buddha and the Buddhist deities (like Avalokiteśvara, Tārā, Maṇi-bhadra, and Jina-suta). His acquaintance with Mahāyāna folk cults was intimate, and probably that is how his celebrity spread in the Himālayan regions. Tibetan medicine was greatly influenced by Vāgbhaṭa's works, especially as interpreted by the Buddhist savant Chandra-nandana (author of *Vaidyāshṭāṅga-hṛdaya-vṛtti*). Vāgbhaṭa is known to Tibetans as Pha-Gol, and his works are included in the bsTan-hGyur division of the Canon. Besides

Chandra-nandana's *Vivṛti* on Vāgbhaṭa's *Aṣṭāṅga-hṛdaya* (Padārtha-chandrikā?), Vāgbhaṭa's own commentary on *Aṣṭāṅga-hṛdaya*, known as *Vaiḍūryaka-bhāṣya* (which is not available in the original Sanskrit) has been preserved in the Tibetan translation.

The steady stream of Indian scholars and teachers into Tibet, and of Tibetan scholars and students into India, since the days of the emperor Sroṅ-Ide-bTsan (755-780) made it possible for the Indian concepts of health, diseases, cures and methods of treatment to become a part of Tibetan culture. It was during this emperor's reign, and it was by his persistent efforts, that the great Indian saint Vimala-

mitra visited Tibet and trained a number of translators (Lo-tsa-ba) who rendered Sanskrit works into Tibetan. One of his trainees was the Tibetan youth Vairochana-rakshita (reputed to be a student of Padma-saṃbhava himself), who was prolific in his translation work, and included many medical texts in its scope. He visited India to study the famous text of Vāgbhaṭa under the Buddhist medical authority, Chandra-nandana of Kashmīr, mentioned above.

In the court of this emperor (Khri-Sroṅ-Ide-bTsan) was a Tibetan physician who achieved great celebrity by his wisdom and competence. Named gYu-THog-paYon-Tan-mGon-po rN ing-Ma, he visited India three times to

study the medical theory and practice here, and he wrote many medical works, including a book on diagnosis by pulse. This physician convened a medical conference in bSam-Yas Monastery in the year 794 A.D., and eminent physicians from Tibet, India, Nepal, Persia, Afghanistan, Sikiang and China participated in the deliberations, discussing theoretical issues and practical problems concerning health and disease. This fact made Tibetan medicine broad-based, and open to other influences, although its core continued to be Āyurveda.

2

The official translators working at the great bSam-Yas

monastery rendered many medical texts, long and short, from Sanskrit into Tibetan; about twenty of them have been included in the bsTan-gyur collection of the Canon. And in many cases, the Sanskrit originals have been lost in India, but their Tibetan versions have been preserved. One such was a work known in Sanskrit as 'Amṛta-ashtāṅga-guhyopadeśa-tantra' ("the treatise containing the secret instructions regarding the eight branches of essential immortality viz. health"), translated by Vairochana-rakshita himself, 'the prince of translators'. This work, familiar by its short title *rGyudbzi* (*Chatush-tantra* in Sanskrit, 'Four Treatises;') has all along been held in great and universal regard by the Tibetan physicians; and has

been regarded as the source book of Tibetan medicine. Of the seventy odd medical texts that the Tibetan physicians generally consult, this is the most authoritative and fundamental. There are numerous annotations and notes on this work in Tibetan, like *Bai-Ḍūrya-sNon-Po* by *Saṅgs-rGyas-mTse* (composed earlier than 1700 A.D.), and *lhan-Thabs* (annotating only the third part of *rGyud-bzi*) by the same author. These two annotations together with the main text of *rGyud-bzi* are held as three most important texts by Tibetan physicians.

It is usual for the Tibetan physicians to carry this book with them when they are itinerant, and get oral explanations from

competent masters. The formal training of a physician in Tibet takes as many as ten years, and often more, during which period the main book for study is *rGyud-bzi*.

While the contents of *rGyud-bzi* leave no doubt that it is based entirely on the *Saṃhitās* of Charaka, Suśruta and Vāgbhaṭa, the form in which the Tibetan text is composed is rather unique. It is divided into four parts, each part being called a 'tantra' or treatise: the first is *rTsa-bahi-rGyud* (in Skt, *mūla-tantra*), 'root treatise in six chapters; the second *bSad-pahi-rGyud* (in Skt. *ākhyātā-tantra*, 'explanatory treatise;) in 31 chapters; the third *Man-N ag-Gi-rGyud* (in Skt. *upadeśa-tantra*, 'treatise of

instructions') in 92 chapters; and finally *PHyi-Mahi-rGyud* (uttara-tantra, 'final treatise') in 27 chapters. The first part mentions the eight branches of medicine, corresponding exactly to the *ashtāṅga-āyurveda*, except for the branch dealing with diseases of women, which in the Tibetan text is substituted for minor surgery (*śālākya*) in *Āyurveda* (which is included under treatment of wounds or *śalya* in Tibetan).

It is difficult to ascertain which was the original text in Sanskrit of which this *rGyud-bzi* is a Tibetan version. It bears little resemblance to any of the texts that are now in vogue in the country. But it is recorded, as has already been mentioned, that the Tibetan

translator Vairocana-rakshita visited India in order to study Vāgbhaṭa's *Ashtāṅga-hṛdaya-saṁhitā* tradition under the celebrated authority Chandra-nandanapaṇḍita of Kashmir, who had also written a gloss (*Vṛtti*) on this text known as *Chandrikā* or *Padārtha-chandrika*. It is known that Vāgbhaṭa, who belonged to the Sind region, had become popular in the North Western regions of the country and the adjoining Himālayan tracts before the seventh century A.D. I-tsing, the Chinese traveller, makes an obvious reference to his celebrity. But *rGyud-bzi* does not conform to the scheme adopted either in the *Hṛdaya* or in *Samgraha*. And there is a distinct work entitled in Sanskrit *Vaidyāshṭāṅga-hṛdaya-vṛtti*, which is an exact rendering

in Tibetan of Vāgbhaṭa's *Ashṭāṅga-hṛdaya-Saṃhitā*, included in *bsTan-hGyur*. This translation has been done by Rin-chen bZang-po (between 1013-1055 A.D.)

3



Before I proceed to give a brief description of *rGyudbzi*, let me remind you that Tibetan Medicine is entirely Āyurveda in its

origination, approach, assumptions, diagnostic methods, prognosis, pharmacy, treatment procedures, and materia medica. The theory that all substances, all physical and mental constitutions, all ailments and all curative processes, are *pāñcha-bhautika* in character (viz. composed of earth, water, fire, air and *ākāśa* elements), the assumption that the patient's constitution, health and disease are determined by the Tri-dosha (*vāta*, *pitta* and *kapha*) are common to Āyurveda and Tibetan medicine. The Indian tradition that the science of medicine was handed down from *Brahmā* to *Prajāpati*, from *Prajāpati* to the *Aśvins*, and from the *Āśvins* to *Indra* has been accepted in Tibet, with a slight amendment that it was *Buddha-Kāśyapa* who taught

Brahmā this art and science. Vāgbhaṭa's *Ashṭāṅga-saṁgraha* mentions merely that Brahmā learnt this immortal art along with the import (Āyurvedāmṛtam sārtham. brahma buddhvā sanātanam), not however spelling out from whom. Tibetan tradition fills this gap.

It recognizes the father of Indian medicine, Atreya, as the teacher of Dhanvantari (Thang-la bar), and the lineage continues with Dka-'gnis Spryod, Mu-khyud-'dzin, gshol-'gro skyed, Me-bzin-jug (Agniveśa), Lug-rg (Kṛshṇa-mesha?), and rGya-sKegssna. These are Tibetan names of Indian medical authorities, but it is difficult to identify them except for Dhanvantari and Agniveśa. The medical works of all these authorities are clubbed together

under the title Rtsa-ra-kasda (viz. Charaka ashṭa-varga). The Samhitās of Charaka, Suśruta and Vāgbhaṭa (the so-called Vṛddha-trayī) have been rendered into Tibetan and accorded a prestigious position in the canonical literature, bsTan-hGyur.

Likewise, several other useful and authentic works in Sanskrit have entered into this collection, like Nāgārjuna's *Yoga-śataka*, and *Vaidya-jīva-sūtra*. Thus the framework of classical Āyurveda has been entirely adopted. Working concepts of Ayurveda like pañcha-bhūta, tri-dosha, sapta-dhātu, mala-traya, śodhana, śamana, pañcha-karma, nidāna, dina-caryā, ṛtu-charyā and svastha-vṛtta have constituted the main features of Tibetan medicine also.

But, as mentioned earlier, the bSam-yas Medical Conference (around 974 A.D.) represented a confluence of several medical traditions, and the Tibetan leader of the conference had visited India thrice to learn about Āyurveda. Among the many medical books that he wrote, however, one dealt with diagnosis of diseases by reading the pulse (mN on-Śes-gNad kyī hPhrul hKHār). It is uncertain if he could have picked up this diagnostic and prognostic aid in India; probably he did not. We do not find references to this detail in any of the classical texts of Āyurveda; the mention of nāḍi-parīkṣhā occurs for the first time in *Śārṅgadhara-samhitā*, a work of the 14th century. Tibetans were acquainted with this art, and had

perfected it long before this time. It is likely that the Chinese medical tradition provided them with the preliminary motivation; and pulse-reading constitutes an important detail in Tibetan medicine right from the days of the bSam-Yas Conference. In fact, it forms a major section in *rGyud-bzi*, which had become celebrated even by the time the Conference at bSam-Yas was convened.

The *rGyud-bzi*, or the 'four-fold tantra' in 156 chapters and 5900 stanzas, is in the form of a dialogue between two sages: Yid-las-SKyes seeks to be enlightened about the art of medicine and Rig-pahi Ye-S'es explains it, as he had heard it from the Buddha himself appearing as sMan -pahi-rGyal-po

(Bhaishhajya-guru). The Tantra begins with a description of the charming 'realm of medicinal treasures', which cure 404 diseases of man. It goes on to enumerate eight branches of medicine, all of which are discussed both concisely and comprehensively in the four treatises of the Tantra.

The eight branches are : (1) treatment of diseases of the adult body (Lus); (2) diseases of children (bYis-pa); (3) diseases of women (Mo Nad); (4) diseases caused by evil spirits, occult influences etc. (gDon) viz. nervous and mental ailments; (5) diseases caused by spears etc. (inchon). viz. Wounds and other bodily afflictions needing surgical intervention; (6) diseases caused by poisons (Dug); (7)

diseases caused by senile degeneration or ageing (rGas); and (8) diseases needing rejuvenation and sexual invigoration (Ro-Cha-Pa). One can see that these eight branches correspond exactly with our kāya-chikitsā, kaumāra-bhṛtya, strī-roga (not, however, enumerated separately in the ashtāṅga; instead we have śālākya or ūrdhva-jatru-roga-chikitsā here), bhūta-vidyā, śalya, agada-tantra, rasāyana and vājīkarana.

Then the text goes on to describe health, and define disease. We find here the usual Āyurveda ideas of foetal formation, foetal development, anatomical structure, physiological processes, aetiology of diseases, classification of diseases, differential diagnostics,

prescription and preparation of medicines, methods of preparation of medicines, methods of treatment, behavioural therapy and the physician's moral responsibilities (which are all dealt with in the second or 'explanatory' treatise); specific diseases coming under each of the eight branches, and their treatment (which form the bulk of the third or 'instructional' treatise); the forms of medicament (decoctions, powders, pills, ashes, butter, syrup etc.) and various methods of treatment (internal like purgatives, emetics, elixirs, clysters etc., and external, like blood-letting, bath, ointment and surgery).

The arrangement of topics in the book is excellent : it is at once clear, orderly and meaningful. For

instance, in the second treatise, after discussing treatment of diseases that are due to vāta, pitta and kapha severally and conjointly, fever is taken up: ordinary fever, hidden fever, persistent fever, spreading fever, fluctuating fever and infectious fever. In the next division of the treatise, diseases that afflict the head and the several sense-organs are dealt with in an orderly fashion. Following this, the diseases of the organs which are hollow (the two intestines, stomach, urinary bladder, uterus, seminal vesicle) and solid (heart, lungs, liver, spleen and kidney) are discussed; and then the diseases of the urogenital system in men and in women. The discussion concludes with 'minor diseases' (like loss of appetite, abnormal

thirst, hiccough, colic, constipation, nausea, diarrhoea and skin diseases).

The unique feature of Tibetan medicine is its ideological structure of medical theory and practice in the image of a tree. There is a section devoted to it (Treatise I, 6) and there are oral explanations and charts based on this account. While the details of this picture are to be found also in the Āyurvedic texts, the picture itself appears to be unique to the Tibetan text. We have references to the 'medicine in three divisions' (tri-skandha-āyurveda) in classical works such as *Aṣṭāṅga-saṃgraha*, the three aspects being cause, (hetu), symptoms, (liṅga) and therapy, (auśadha), which

undoubtedly suggest the imagery of a tree (skandha, meaning 'stem', 'trunk'). But the idea did not develop here, as it did in Tibet.

If medical theory and practice together can be likened to a tree, it would have three Roots (rTsa-ba), nine trunks (sDong-po), forty-seven branches (yal-ga), and two hundred and twenty-four leaves (Lo-ma). The three roots constitute the major divisions of medical theory and practice, viz. (1) psychophysical constitution of the individual (gNas Lugs) in health and in disease; (2) diagnosis or clinical examination (Nos-hjin); and (3) therapeutics (gSoba). The roots are arranged in terms of primacy and importance; Root (1) is fundamental and foundational, the

other two being entirely dependent upon it; Root (2) is dependent on Root (1) but fundamental to Root (3); and Root (3) is immediately dependdnt upon Root (2) but ultimately supported by Root (1).

The most fundamental Root has two Trunks. The first of them is relevant to all individuals at all times, and it is especially involved to achieve a healthy condition of body and mind ('undisturbed' MahGyur, Skt. avikṛta). Constituting this Trunk are three branches, the doṣhas (five forms of each of the three: vāta or rLung, pitta or mKHris-pa, and kapha or Badkan), the dhātus (the seven body-constituents, Lus-Zungs) and the malas (Dri-ma, three: urine, faeces and sweat), having twenty-five leaves in all.

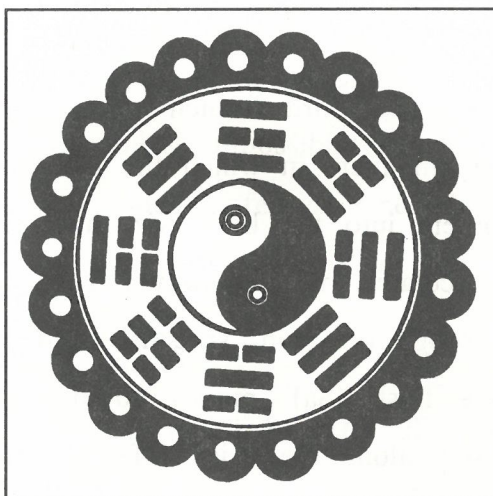
The second Trunk refers to the diseased condition of the individual ('disturbed', rNam-hGyur, Skt. vikṛta). This has nine branches, and sixty-three leaves in all. Of interest and of unique significance is the Tibetan reckoning of the three phenomenological processes : 'attachment' (hDodChags Skt. rāga), 'aversion' (Ze-sDang, Skt. dvesha) and 'delusion' (gTi-Mug; Skt. moha) as the three primary poisons (Dug-gSum), which are responsible for 42 and 33 diseases respectively. They together constitute the first brach of the pathological trunk, signifying the main or primary cause (rGyu) of diseases.

It may be noted here that in Tibetan culture, medicine is more

intimately related to religion then in any other culture. The Tibetan physician is not merely a healer of body and mind; he is responsible for the spiritual welfare of his patient. His office combines the normal functions of diagnosis, management and treatment of diseases, with teaching, scriptural texts and performance of magical rites for the patient. Medicine and religion are thus interwoven with each other.

The job of a physician is really to help maintain the first Trunk of the first Root (viz. to maintain a balanced or undisturbed condition of health) by counteracting the second Trunk (viz. disturbed condition or disease) with the help of the other Trunks

of two other Roots (viz. diagnosis and therapy). The first Trunk is important in as much as its fruits are health and longevity, which are necessary for the three goals of life (virtue, wealth and happiness) to be accomplished.



While 'attachment', 'aversion' and 'delusions' are the primary causes of any disease, four conditions which coöperate with them to aggravate the disease are

also recognized: (1) time (Dus), viz. time of the year, time of the day, age of the patient; (2) evil influences (gDon), (3) food (Zas) and (4) conduct (spyod-pa). These are called secondary or supporting causes (rKyen), constituting the second branch.

The third branch relates to the manners in which the disease enters into the body viz. how it percolates into the body (Pags-pa) through the skin, spreads through the flesh (Sa), moves about the body along the veins (rTsa), gets established in the bones (Rus-pa), descends into the 'solid organs' (Don, heart, liver, lungs, spleen and kidneys), and finally accumulates in the 'hollow organs' (sNod, intestines, stomach, gall and

urinary bladders, uterus, and seminal vesicle). These constitute the entrances of diseases (hJug SGo, Skt roga-praveśa-dvāra), which are six in number.

The fourth branch relates to how the disease gets localized and stays within the body-constitution. They are 'spheres', 'abodes', 'dwelling places', 'places of residence', 'sites' (gNas) so far as the disease is concerned. The body for this purpose is broadly divided into three parts: upper part (Stod), where the diseases that originate from disorders of kapha (Bad-Kan) are localized; middle part (Bar), Where the diseases that originate from disorders of pitta (mKHris-pa) are localized; and lower part (Smad), where the diseases that

originate from disorders of vāta (rLuṅg) are localized.

The fifth branch comprises of the channels (Lam, Skt. srotas) or the bodily organs through which the three dhātus travel and communicate disease. They are fifteen in number in three groups of five each: sense-organs (dBang-po), 'solid' organs (Don) and 'hollow' organs (SNod).

The sixth branch refers to the three factors, each in three variations, that are attendant upon the occurrence of diseases: age of the person (Na-so, kapha in early age, pitta in middle age, and vāta in old age being mainly responsible for diseases, place of his residence (Yul, windy and cold, dry and hot, damp and sticky), and the time of

the year, and the period of the day or night (Dus, summer, autumn, spring; early hours, middle hours, and late hours of day or night). These are regarded as the nine leaves of this branch.

The seventh branch relates to the impact of the diseases (severity amenability, impossibility, malignity etc.) which is felt as nine-fold. It is called 'consequence' or 'effect' (hBras-bu).

The eighth branch, called the factors that oppose each other (IDog) and thus become causes (rGyu) of diseases, relate to the antagonistic positions in which each of the three doshas arrange themselves in the diseased body. There are twelve such positions

possible, and therefore they are described as the twelve leaves of this branch.

The ninth branch consists of two leaves, called 'cool' (Grang-ba, Skt. śīta or soma) and 'warm' (Tsa-ba, Skt. ushṇa or āgneya), which are fundamental conditions of diseases.

Thus the second Trunk of the first Root has in all nine branches and sixty-three leaves, representing the causes, conditions, courses, varieties and effects of the pathological element in the human constitution.

II The second Root (Diagnosis or clinical examination) refers to how the diseases are understood

by the physician so as to enable him to decide on the proper line of treatment. The Trunks here are three in number: examination by sight, examination by touch and questioning the patient.

(1) The Trunk of visual examination of the patient's condition (blTa-ba, 'to see', 'to view', Skt. darśana), involves two branches and six leaves: examining the tongue's colour, moisture and texture (three leaves), and examining the urine's colour, density and bubbles (three leaves);

(2) The examination by touch (Reg-pa, Skt. sparśana) is mainly the reading of the condition of health or ill-health by feeling the pulse or distal artery (nāḍi) at the

wrist. The pulse-reading involves the understanding of the individual conditions of the three doshas, Thus the Trunk is said to have three branches and three leaves.

(3) Questioning the patient (Dri-ba) involves the eliciting of information regarding three causative factors (Ślong-rKyen), regarding the symptoms or disease conditions (Na-Lugs), which are 23 in number, and the habits and conduct of the patient (Goms-pa) in three areas (food, drink, surrounding), thus providing this Trunk with twenty-nine leaves.

III The third Root pertains to the lines of treatment, which are principally fourfold (thus described as having four Trunks): food

(nutrition), conduct regimen, internal medicine, and external treatment.

(1) The importance of proper food (Zas, Skt. āhāra) has been recognized not only in maintaining normal health but in correcting the ailments. Prescriptions of corrective articles of food (Zas) and drink (sKom) constitute the first Trunk, and their variations in disorders of each of the three doshas give us six branches and thirty-five leaves in all. Tibetan medicine believes that in case of any disease, the initial line of treatment must be to correct food-habits.

(2) The importance of hygienic conduct (sPyod-pa, Skt-āchāra) is likewise underlined. The

prescriptions of correct conduct is relative to the state of the dosha prevalent in the disease. Thus this Trunk has three branches, each of them having two leaves.

(3) Internal medicine (sMan) comprehends the remedial tastes (Ro, Skt. rasa) and the active properties (Nus-pa, Skt. vīrya) of the drugs to be used in the diseases caused by the three doshas, thus contributing six branches (taste and active properties in the three doshas) and eighteen leaves (nine tastes and nine active properties); the alleviative medicines (Zi-Byed, Skt. śamana) for each of the three disorders (including three kinds of liquid drinks, five kinds of medicinal butter, four kinds of decoctions,

four kinds of powders, two kinds of pills and five kinds of paste, altogether twenty-three leaves); eliminative medicines (sByong-byed, Skt. Śodhana), for the errant doshas viz. cleansing by enema, by purgation and by vomiting. Thus there are three branches; three varieties for vāta, four for pitta and two for kapha, and thus nine leaves. Altogether this Trunk of internal medicine has fifteen branches and fifty leaves.

(4) External treatment including surgery (dpyad-pa, lit. use of instruments) appropriate to each of the three doshas, two for vāta, three for pitta and two for kapha, thus giving us three branches and seven leaves.

While the foregoing analysis of the Tibetan classic clearly illustrates its indebtedness to the nucleus of ideas incorporated in the texts of Charaka, Suśruta and Vāgbhaṭa, we find in it many ideas that appear alien to the Indian texts, at any rate in the form in which they appear now, as e.g. the primary causation of all diseases by the three phenomenal errors (attachment, aversion and delusion), persistent relating of all theoretical constructs, diagnostic tools and therapeutic prescriptions to the tridosha theory, the great importance attached to pulse-examination as a diagnostic as well as a prognostic aid, the use of urine examination, the distinction

in order to arrive at the case-history of the patient, the dosha-oriented grouping of various forms of medicine, and the theoretical constructs of śamana and śoṣaṇa. It may also be mentioned here that the simplicity of terminology, the orderliness of the arrangement of topics, and the homely metaphors that are frequently used to drive home medical constructs are the characteristic features of this work, which we miss in the Sanskrit texts that are available now.

One of the details found in this text is reading of pulse for diagnosis and prognosis which detail, as was said earlier, is conspicuous by its absence in the early Āyurvedic texts. How the Tibetan physicians acquired it, and

how it came to be so elaborately developed are uncertain. The text *rGyud-bzi*, which deals with it, was celebrated even during the bSam-yas medical conference (794A.D.). The principal influences that stemmed from this conference were Indian, Tibetan and Chinese. If *rGud-bzi* mentioned the value of pulse-reading, Indians must already have been conversant with the diagnostic tool. And we know for certain that the Chinese had developed it much earlier, and had made it an important equipment for a physician. The Tibetan leader who organized this medical convention, gYu-Thog-pa Yon-Tan, was himself an authority on pulse-reading; he has written a book on it, which has become well known.

The pulse-reading as developed in Greek medicine had reached Persia during the early centuries of the Christian era; and a Persian physician, Gelanos, participated in the bSam-Yas conference. It is to be expected, therefore, that the conference highlighted the diagnostic value of pulse-reading. And, during the rule of the emperor Khri-gTsang-Ide-bTsan (815-838 A.D), the Chinese influence on Tibet was marked. This may be how this aspect of medicine assumed on enormous importance in Tibet.

Whatever the circumstances, it is a fact that Tibetan medicine holds this examination by touch as most valuable in understanding the relative conditions of the three

doshas as well as the state of each of the ten organs (five 'solid' and five 'hollow') inside the body. It provides for the physician a vivid picture of the health of the individual or the diseased condition of the body. It also enables him to foresee the course the doshas are likely to take in the patient's body. The method of pulse-reading that the Tibetan physicians have evolved is very elaborate, and the Tibetan physician spends as much as three years learning to master its details. This method is characteristically different both from the Chinese and the Indian methods, although the impact of both on it can readily be seen. In Tibet, it can operate like a complete, self-sufficient diagnostic method.

Although pulse can be read at different parts of the body, it is read satisfactorily only at the distal artery at the wrists of the two hands ("shouting, in summer, across an open field"), for near the vital organs, the pulse is too close to the scene of activity ("talking near a waterfall"), and at the extremities it is too far removed ("message from a distant merchant"). Pulse is best read after the night's rest, and before one gets busy with the day; "when the sun has arisen but his rays have not reached the hill-top yet". Preferably the body and mind of the patient are prepared for pulse-reading a day earlier, by avoiding excess of food, physical or emotional stress, loss of sleep etc.

The energies would then be sufficiently well settled to enable the doshas to be articulated distinctly through the pulse. The physician who reads the pulse must likewise prepare himself. Pulse-reading is thus a transaction between the energy dynamics of the patient and the energy dynamics of the physician.

Three fingers (forefinger, middle finger and ring-finger) of each hand are used by the physician to read the pulses at both wrists of the patient. And the pressures of the fingers on the artery are regulated so that the forefinger 'feels the skin', the middle finger 'feels the flesh', and the ring finger 'feels the bone'. Each finger is

conceptually divided into two units, the upper and the lower, and thus there are six units of the fingers in each hand. The twelve units on both the hands are meant to provide the physician information concerning the twelve organs ('solid' and 'hollow') in the body which are relevant to all diseases.

Three are the pulses that the physician looks for, to ascertain the patient's constitution: expressions 'male' and 'female' have no reference to the sex of the person. All individuals have three pulses. The 'male' pulse appears "strong and thick", the 'female' pulse "subtle and quick", and the bodhisattva-pulse "continual and smooth". These

pulses not only distinguish personality characteristics but also help the physician to foresee the life-span, general state of health, strength of resistance to diseases, the nature of progeny, and transactional level of the patient. The 'bodhisattva' pulse is so named because it indicates the most desirable constitution, where all the bodily constituents are perfectly balanced, health is maximized, and mind is ready for higher attainments. It is the superior pulse, not frequently found; but it is by no means impossible for normal folk to have it. The name of the pulse does not mean that it is confined to, or peculiar to, the superhuman bodhisattvas.

There are other details of pulse-reading, such as 'hot' or 'cold' diseases that the body had succumbed to), general and specific pulses (indicating disorders of all, two or one of the doshas), relation of the pulses to the 'hollow' and 'solid' organs inside the body, the nature of pulse when death is imminent (extreme irregularity, periodical cessation, unequal lengths, quick changes etc.) and 'collective pulse' (like 'guest', 'enemy', 'friend' etc.).

While Tibetan medicine follows in general the rational line adopted in the Indian medical texts like the Samhitās of Charaka, Suśruta and Vāgbhaṭa, it does not confine itself to the yukti-vyapāśraya mode of treatment. It

recognizes, more effectively than Indian medicine does, the value of supernatural influences in the curative process (daiva-vyapāśraya).

The man who falls ill is also the man who is intellectual (hence the expression Gaṅg-jag, Skt. pud-gala). There is an aspect of him that is not exhausted by the psychophysical details, and which in fact lords over the latter. There are practices in Tibetan medicine which seek to influence this aspect by such devices as prayers, incantations, rituals and contemplative practices. The use of amulets, talismans, magical pills (Ril-bu), 'wondrous medicines' (rDzas) and unusual potions

(Nang-mCHod) is also resorted to.

While the role of evil spirits (hDre) in the causation of diseases is accepted by the folk, the value of the pacification of the mind-body complex of the patient in all such cases is recognized by the Tibetan physician. The real 'nectar' (bDud-rTsi) is tranquillity (Zi-ba, Skt. Śiva, in the sense of śamana). The body should not be subjected to undue or improper exertions, and the mind should be free from excitements and anxieties. It is only then that the balance of the basic principles of the body-mind complex is restored. In order to effect this pacification in the patient, the physician attempts to transmit his own cultivated calm to

him during diagnosis as well as administration of drugs. The presence and proximity of the physician (who is most often also a saintly person) have by themselves a salutary effect on the patient.

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