INDIAN POETRY

Tradition and Modernity

INDIAN POETRY

Tradition and Modernity

BHABEN BARUA

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY
Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla

First published 2018

ISBN: 978-93-82396-61-1

Published by:

The Secretary
Indian Institute of Advanced Study,
Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla

Typeset at:
Sai Graphic Design, New Delhi

Printed at:
Pearl Offset Press Private Limited
5/33, Kirti Nagar, New Delhi

Contents

Preface vii

1. For the Great Idea of Poetry in World Culture for Poetry, Philosophy and Religion 1
2. And Introduction to the Tradition of Indian Cutlure 5
3. The Importance of the Indian Idea of Poetry 24
4. From Logos and Polis to Sabda-Brhaman and Nous 32
5. Reflections on Indian Poetry in the Perspective of Comparative Literature and Cultural History 42
6. Kabir, The Philosophy of the Bhakti Movement and Its Historical and Social Implications 50
7. Saint Sankardeva, Indian Civilization and the Philosophy of Vaishnavism 89
8. Indian Renaissance, Tagore and Literature 153
9. Shakespeare, Indian Renaissance in Bengal, and Assamese Literature 164
10. Aesthetics and Poetics in Modern Indian Culture 191

Preface

This book – Indian Poetry: Tradition and Modernity—is not a history of Indian Poetry written in various Indian languages and it does not even contain the names of any Indian poets and poetical works. Nor has the book been written basically as a work of common literary criticism –not to speak of it being planned according to the historical spirit. Readers coming to this book with preconceptions of the paths of normal historical scholarship as well as of literary criticism of the common or the New Criticism type will be disappointed.

This book has been prepared from a perspective which is basically rather that of a 'cultural history centered in a philosophical spiritual understanding. The treatment too has been heavily selective only three major Indian poets have been selected for illustration of the philosophical-spiritual tradition of Indian poetry. After an introductory part x-which presents the deep Indian background coming from the times of Rig Veda through Bhartihari and Abhinavagupta to the time of Rabindranath and Aurobind, three major Indian poets Kabir, Sankaradeva and Rabindranath have been … brought forward tax for . . . a more or less special treatment in a Cultural-philosophical perspective. My interest has all along been rather in the background—the background of the philosophical-spiritual vision that lay behind their poetical works and thus such, definitely in the real of philosophical ideas—an approach that neither the common type of historical scholarship nor the New Criticism type of discussion of literature or poetry … shows.

While the first few essays present a sort of 'introduction' to the cultural tradition of which the tradition of Indian poetry … (--particularly in its serious or 'great' character has been a significant expression, the essays on Kabir also Sankaradeva are intended and

highlight the case also of a rather .. what may be called a 'democratic and progressive' social line in the field of Indian poetry and philosophy. The Kabir –Tagors axis in the history of Indian poetry, according to me, has such implications too. Then the essays on Tagore, and Indian Renaissance of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are intended to throw some light on the phenomenon of the impact of the West and this on 'modernity."

That the great tradition of Indian poetry—The great tradition of the Indian idea of poetry received a new character particularly in Bengal through Rabindranath and Aurobind before 1921 has also been complicity one of my contentions. I have tried to show this character of 'modernity' coming into the field of Indian poetry (both lyrical and dramatic) in three last essays –one of which deals with the impact of the greatest English poet-dramatist Shakespeare on the evolution of the tradition of Indian poetry in the modern age. I have decided not to include any discussion of the evolution of Modern Indian poetry in the post-Tagorian age and so have not come to ….

such poets as Suddhindranath Datta, Jivanananda Das, Amiya Chakravarty, Buddhadeva Bose and Bishnu Dey of the Post-Tagorian phase of Modern Bengali poetry. The Hindi poet Ajnevya or the Indo-English poet A.K. Ramanujan and some offer poetry have been left out of discussion for similar reasons.

I would like also to say at the end: this is not an exhaustive study of the subject selected but rather a suggestive one.

Poetry may be studied in any of these various perspectives: language, music and rhythm, imagery, symbolism, techniques, themes or subjects reflections of historical social and political realities. My study here has been concerned with none of these perspectives but with a different one. It is the undercurrent or background of spiritual-philosophical consciousness that runs behind the great tradition of Indian poetry. T.S. Eliots' essays on Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare and Goethe carry, I have felt, basically also a spiritual-philosophical approach; and, could together they give us also an idea of the great tradition Western poetry which is ultimately connected with a tradition of spiritual-philosophical idea or concerned. Likewise H.G. Grierson's book an Milton and Wordsworth gives us something similar—though in a different or more scholarly style.

My understanding of the tradition of Western poetry—from

Homer, Pindar, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Virgil Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Goethe, Wordsworth, Baudelaire, Yeaths and Rilke in particular in the light of such critical as well as scholarly works has also inspired me to approach the study of subject of the tradition of Indian poetry in a somewhat similar spirit. On the other hand Heinrich Limmer's *Myths Symbols in Indian Civilization* too has inspired me to think deeply about this tradition.

Jacques Maritain's *Creative Induction in Art and Poetry* first helped me to understand the great tradition or Western thoughts in the realm of poetics and ultimately, though indirectly, to place in a line the thoughts of Plato, Aristotle, Longinus, Coleridge, Croce and Cassirer in the field of poetics. My idea of the great tradition of Indian poetry carried also such a background.

Bhaben Barua

One

For the Great Idea of Poetry in World Culture: for Poetry, Philosophy and Religion

> "For what was such a man (Hamlet) made? Plainly for the ultimate things; for wonder, for *curiosity and the pursuit* of truth, for love, for creation—*but first of all for freedom, the condition of the other four*. He was made, that is, for religion and philosophy, for love and art, for liberty to "grow into himself"—five forces that are the elemental enemies of Force." (Harold C. Goddard, *The meaning of Shakespeare*, Vol. p.333).
>
> "Secular religions…arepar excellence, in Western eyes, sins against the human spirit." (Raymond Aron, *Progress and Disillusion,* p. 245)
>
> "…the specific content of religious faith—God, transcendence—is not to be found in any set of economic-social beliefs." (Ibid, p. 250)
>
> "Nor do I think that a genuine love of freedom is ever quickened by the prospect of material rewards … The man who asks from freedom anything other than itself is born to be a slave." (Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Ancient Regime and the French Revolution,* pp. 188.)
>
> "Liberty has been the criterion of evolution ever since the appearance of the original cell. It is toward liberty that the development of the personality of man tends, towards an ever-increasing independence. It is at the same time a goal and a tool." (Lecote du Nouy, *Human Destiny*, p. 148).
>
> "A sincere concern for Man's quest for the ultimate spiritual presence behind the phenomena of the Universe has been the principal inspiration of the greatest works of art throughout the ages."

This traditional dedication of art to religion suggests that the true end of art is not art but religion. This has always been Man's true end since our ancestors became human. The quest for ultimate spiritual

reality is inborn in human nature. In the past, some human beings have eagerly embraced this common birthright of ours, while others have sought to be quit of it. We are now moving into an age in which it will be more difficult to ignore the truth. In this coming age of *mechanization*, atomic power, affluence, and leisure, religion will surely come into its own as the one boundless field for freedom and for creativity that is open for the unlimited aspirations of human nature.

This is a hard saying for modern Western Man. It is perhaps an even harder one for the non-Western intelligensia that has been remoulding itself in Western Man's image. During the last three centuries, Western Man has been putting more and more of his treasure into another quest which is also as old as humanity. He has been concentrating on the perennial human enterprise of mastering non-human nature. He has now deliberately turned his attention towards the material facet of the Universe. He has allowed his human gift for spiritual contemplation to grow rusty through disuse. It will be painful and terrifying for him to reverse the modern tide of Western Life and to look inward again. It will be painful to resume the use of a faculty that has been out of action for so long. This will also be terrifying; for, when Western Man does look inward again, he will be facing himself and, beyond himself, will be facing 'the dweller in the innermost'. This is a vision from which modern Western Man has shied away. When he has found himself being led back towards it by some of the shattering experiences that he has brought upon himself, he has been seized with panic and has sought escape, like Johah, by fleeing from God to the ends of the Earth. He has redoubled the impetus of his external activities—grinning like a dog and running about through the city in the futile hope that aimless outwards action may make him immune to a spiritual experience that might carry him whether he would not.

Fortunately, this distraught mood of modern Western man is both recent and abnormal. It would have surprised his medieval ancestors, as it surprises his Hindu contemporaries in so far as the modern Hindus have not become infected with the modern Westerner's psychosis. It would indeed be a truism to say that religion is the true end of Man if one were saying this to any representative of the human species except the modern Western one. However, modern Western

Man is temporarily dominant; and therefore to remind him of his blind spot may not be a waste of ink and paper.

What are the prospects for the West and for our Westernizing World? Is Western and Westernizing Man likely to succeed in recovering the use of the human faculty for spiritual contemplation? If this faculty were to atrophy in us we should forfeit our birthright of being human, in the Atomic Age, the course of our relapse into sub-human animality would certainly be 'nasty, brutish, and short'. It is possible, *however hard we may try to pluck it out* and cast it from us. 'What is the chief and highest end of Man? Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever.' This question and answer do not come from any of the Hindu scriptures or from any medieval Western Christian theological work. They are the opening words of the shorter Westminster Catechism which was composed in 1648 and was adopted by the Calvinist Church of Scotland. In these words, modern Western Man, in spite of himself, declaring the truth that he has been seeking to elude. He is giving evidence against himself; and this confession is a plea in his favour and is a hope for his redemption. To glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever is to partake of eternal life here and now, without waiting for Man's still unspent 2,000,000,000 years of life on Earth." (Arnold Toynbee: *Change and Habit: The Challenge of Our Time*, pp. 225-227, Oxford University Press 1966).

The level of being with which the higher religions are concerned is incomparably more important for the human souls than the level of science and technology. But, just because of their relative unimportance and triviality, science and technology are able to give precise answers to the relatively petty question that they raise. By contrast, the higher religions are so many attempts to probe the mystery of the Universe and to bring the soul into touch and into harmony with the ultimate spiritual reality behind the phenomena, and the questions that these religions raise are of a kind that human beings will never cease to ask but will never succeed in answering with scientific precision. The language of religions is not the language of science and technology. It is the language of poetry and prophecy. This wells up from a deeper level of the psyche, and its findings are inevitably tentative and provisional, because its subject is ineffable

and infinite. Dogma is an ill-conceived attempt to express religious truth in scientific terms." (Ibid, p. 194)

"In the nineteenth century, and to a certain extent even since the Renaissance, people have in actual fact tried to create a universe in which there would be only man; in our time man has lost the initiative and is now stepping into a universe—or pseudo-universe –wherein only the machine is "real"; under these conditions one can no longer speak even of "humanism". In any case, man by attributing to himself, his own self-sufficient reason, cannot remain what he is; if he no longer believes in that which transcends him and if he does not place his ideals above himself, he condemns himself to the *subhuman*.

It is difficult to deny, if one is still sensitive to true norms, that the machine tends to make man into its own counterpart; that it renders him violent, brutal, vulgar, quantitative and modern "culture" is affected thereby." (Frithjof Schuon, *The Transfiguration of Man*, pp. 13-14.)

Two

An Introduction to the Tradition of Indian Culture

I

The following words of Hegel may be taken as the starting point in our investigations into the significance of Indian culture in world history:

> "From the most ancient times onwards, all nations have directed their wishes and longings to gaining access to the treasures of this land of marvels, the most costly which the earth presents, treasures of nature—pearls, diamonds, perfumes, rose essences, lions, elephants etc.—as also treasures of wisdom. The way by which these treasures have passed to the West has at all times been *a matter of world historical importance bound up with the fate of nations* ." (see S. Radhakrishnan's *East and West* for details)

Of what Hegel called 'the treasures of wisdom' the ideational dimension of Indian culture may be called a very important one. It was not only a matter of *the spirit* in which Indian culture acquired its reputation it was equally a matter of *the mind.* The Indian mind acquired not only a philosophy of *Vak* but also an astonishing type of science of human speech in the great age of its major emergence. The whole development of philology took place in India between 600-100 B.C and this is what A. L. Kroner said in this context: "This high development is so abstruse and (self-conscious an activity as philology at so early a time remains perpetually astonishing), *suggests the existence of a vast historical lacuna in our knowledge of more ancient India—a great realm* which we can hope to see in part explored by archaeology alone." *(Configurations of Cultural Growth,* p.180.) Already in the seventh century A.D. the Indian method of mathe-

matics too had received such an eulogy: "surpasses all description" (Serverus Sebokht), as taken note of by S. Radhakrishanan too.

If we take note of this fact very carefully—that in both the respects of the two major contexts of human culture—the alphabet and the numbers—the Indian mind alone had shown in its ancient phase the most scientific character ever achieved till now, we may perhaps feel inspired to acquire a new insight into the very process of the ancient Indian mind. A.L. Basham's sense of wonder too found expression particularly in these two contexts in a very significant way.

> "One of ancient India's greatest achievements is her remarkable alphabet, commencing with the vowels and followed by the constants, all classified very scientifically according to their mode of production, in sharp contrast to the haphazard and inadequate Roman alphabet, which has developed organically for three millennia. It was only on the discovery of Sanskrit by the West that a science of phonetics arose in Europe." (A.L. Bashan: *The Wonder That Was India,* p.390).

The Arabs themselves called mathematics "the Indian art" *(hindisat),* and it appears that the decimal notation, with other mathematical lore, was learnt by the Muslim world either through merchants trading with the west coast of India or through the Arabs who conquered Sind in AD. 712.

The debt of the Western world to India in this respect cannot be overestimated. Most of the great discoveries and inventions of which Europe is so proud would have been impossible without a developed system of mathematics, and this in turn would have been impossible if Europe had been shackled by the unwieldy system of Roman numericals. The unknown man who devised the new system was from the world's point of view, after the Buddha, the most important son of India." *(Ibid,* p.498).

It is also a significant fact that the ancient Indian mind was not encumbered with a most unscientific geo-centric and anthropo-centric mythology—which became the fate of the Semitic and the Western traditions of human culture. The Indian mind, however weak it might have been in the contexts of geographical and historical knowledge, was free from a significant type of Western myth. The Indian mind had not only a greater idea of mathematics but also a better idea of Nature than the Western mind.

> "This vast time-consciousness, transcending the brief span of the individual, even the racial biography, is the time-consciousness of Nature herself. Nature knows, no centuries, but ages—geological, astronomical ages—and stands, furthermore, beyond them. Swarming egos are her children but the species is her concern; and world ages are her shortest span for the various species that she puts forth and permits, finally, to die (like the dinosaurs, the mammoths, and the giant birds). India—as life brooding on itself—thinks of time and of herself, that is to say, in biological terms, terms of the species, and not of the ephemeral ego. The latter *becomes* old: the former *is* old, and therewith eternally young.

We of the West, on the other hand, regard world history as a biography of mankind and in particular of on Occidental Man, whom we estimate to be the most consequential member of the family. As yet our physical and biological sciences—which, of course, are comparatively young—have not affected the general tenor of our traditional humanism. (Heinrich Zimmer: *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization,* pp. 20-21).

The significance or the advantage of the Indians' position in this field of cosmological imagination may be realized also in the light of the following observations:

> "Open-mindedness with respect to the growth and bearing of knowledge of the material world is a high-priority requirement for the set of adjusted ideals. To me the *Discorso,* two years ago, of Pope Pius XII, at the opening of the Vatican Academy of Sciences, was epochal. He surveyed and accepted the approximate truth of recent advances in nuclear physics and in cosmology. He outlines clearly the nature of atomic energy and of atomic fission, and presented the evidence that the beginning of the world, as we see it, was a few thousand million years ago. It was a notable statement from a notable leader of hundreds of millions of his fellow men.

Open-mindedness to the progress and proceeds of the human intellect—that is, for you, if you will accept it, the first ideal. Reoriented piety is second, and follows naturally. (Harlow Shapley: "Human Ideals and the Cosmic View" in R.M. MacIver ed. *New Horizons in Creative Thinking,* p. 9, Harpers)

> "All Indian religions, however, maintained certain cosmological doctrines, which were fundamental presuppositions of Indian thought, and

were strikingly at variance with the Semitic ideas which long influenced the thinking of the West—the universe is very old; its evolution and decline are cyclic repeated and infinitum; it is immensely large; and there are other universes beyond our own." (A.L. Basham: *The Wonder That was India,* p.490).

On the other hand, a great sense of the Cosmic reality has been combined in the central tradition of Indian philosophical thought also with a love of the 'human form'—in which the cosmic mystery was found revealed. This is also where the Indian tradition remained at a distance from the Semitic idea of the unbridgeable gulf between the Divine and the Human.

Is it also not a fact of world history that without the Indian or Indian type of philosophy of *Vac* or Word the Aryan-Greek tradition and the Semitic tradition too could not have come together to become the great Western Christian tradition? In this context too we may find the Indian philosophical mind along with its mysticism—to be of help in world history—if we pay close attention to such facts:

"The reconciliation between the Jewish and the Greek notions of God was affected through the concept of the Wisdom of God immanent in creation, which though distinguishable, is not separate from God Himself Wisdom in this sense was not different from what the Stoics called Logios, the rational principle immanent in the universe. Hellenistic Judaism accepted the equivalence of Wisdom and Logos but maintained that it proceeded from a Transcendent Being. Logos was the Word of God which made the world and revealed Himself to men. Philo of Alexandria rationalized to Greek readers in this way some of the fundamental ideas of Jewish monotheism. The works of Philo (first century B.C.) are distinguished by the combination of Mosaic faith and Greek thought. They were, for the most part, composed in the reign of Augustus, before the death of Jesus and probably before His birth... Philo looked upon the principle mediating between the transcendent God and the finite world as the Logos, first-born son of God or even the second God, the heavenly man. The concept of the Logos, analogous the *Vedic Vak,* the word as divine power, entered the Fourth Gospel." (S. Radhakrishnan, *East and West,* pp. 65-66).

> "I am beginning to understand from history that Christianity is not an independent Semitic growth, but an outgrowth of Hindu religious thought and life ... Christ appears to me like some strange, rare, beautiful flower whose seed has drifted and found a home in a partly alien land. India, in this as in so many other ways, is the great Mother in the world's history." (C.F. Andrews *quoted in S. Radhakrishnan's East and West,* p.79)

Not only the Indian mind acquired a better consciousness of the cosmic reality but also a better idea of the relations between Man and Nature (there was more respect here for Nature) as well as a better idea of the ideal relation between Man and Woman—which found a significant expression in the great Indian idea of God as *Ardhanarishar.*

Much of the quarrel between what may be called a 'Masculinism' (which may be ultimately seen to have come from the Semitic tradition) and the present-day movement of Feminism may find a point of resolution in the sense of balance that such an Indian idea of God—which also gave the realm of Arts—including Dance—a very honourable place in human culture. The human body, along with the human soul, may find an honourable place mainly in such an Indian path of culture. Here in Indian culture God directly appears also as the essential significance of the Muses of the Greeks—Music as divine inspiration for man.

It may also be a truth that it was neither the Persian or Iranian Aryans (whom the Greek Aryans criticized as being representative of Oriental despotism) nor the Greek Aryans with their ideal of the City State who may be considered as the source of the best ideal of democracy.

> "...mother, of through the Arabs, of much of our mathematics, mother through the Buddha of the ideals embodied in Christianity; *mother through the village community of self-government and democracy. Mother India is in many ways the mother of us all"* (Will Durant) f>. IS"

It appears that what distinguished the really Indian-Aryan society from the Iranian-Aryan on the one hand and the Greco-Aryan on the other hand is an idea of such a "svaraj" or independence for the individual.

> "Great numbers, accounting for conformis, behaviorism, and autom-

> atism in human affairs were precisely those traits which, in Greek self-understanding, distinguished the Persian civilization from their own." (Hannnan Arendt, *The Human Condition,* p. 40)

On the other hand we may see that "the foundation of the *polis* was preceded by the destruction of all organized *units resting on kinship,* such as the *phratria* and the *phyla" (Ibid.,* p.25)

Indian society appears in contrast to show a more organic type of development. Man and woman relations too may be found in India to be of a better character. Neither Greek drama nor Roman drama shows such a relation of tenderness between man and woman as we may find in Sanskrit drama and this too is a reflection of a social and historical fact.

Greek rationalism came mainly from the path of Greek 'geometry' and it is this tradition to which Empiricism appeared as a reaction in the Western tradition of philosophy, though no solution to the central problem has appeared there till now.

In the path of the Indian philosophical mind Being and Knowing, Knowing and Feeling, Being and the World—all appear to have a better or ultimate connection with each other. The root *Vid* has given us not only the Vedas but also the word *vedana*; 'to be' in the tradition of Indian thought or Indian language is also to feel the world too; and our *bhava* (world) and *bhaava* (thought may also show, ultimately, a more sensitive way of thinking about the world—away marked by a greater *finesse*—(to use an expression in the path of Jacques Barzun) than the Grecian way, which was marked by a more 'geometrical' character of thinking.

On the other hand, it may also be observed that the ideational dimension of Indian culture has been predominantly connected with her share in the Indo-European or Indo-Aryan linguistic tradition. One main reason why neither the Austric nor the Dravidian linguistic tradition could provide a unifying common linguistic bond to the Indian people and why it was basically Indo-Aryan linguistic tradition which could do this may be found mainly in this fact. This tradition had helped Indian culture to acquire in the ideational field also a central position between the West and the East.

Indian philosophical ideas have generally come from the path of the Indo-Aryan linguistic path and even the kind of influence Islam

had during the medieval period in this field in India does not show an exception to this rule.

"Besides the Greek, Christian, modern western, and the classical Indian traditions, some elements of Islamic Sufism also have influenced contemporary Indian thought. Islamic contribution to the growth of Indian thought is almost nothing; for it was not the Shia tradition of Iran (Persia), but the conservative and unprogressive Sunni that was dominant in India. The Aryan Muslims of Iran, with their Shia tradition, are like the Greek and Indian *Aryans,* philosophical and rational in outlook and can generally tolerate and encourage a philosophical understanding of religion. But the Sunnis saw to it that the Shia sect and their kings did not prosper in India. However, Sufism thrived well, and got new impetus from Vedanta,." (R.T. Raju, *Structural Depths of Indian Thought,* p. 541)

That Indian Philosophical ideas exerted a great elevating and humanizing influence on the cultures of both the Far East and Middle East in an ancient phase of world history—when the light of Aryan culture was at its height—the phenomenon of Buddhism (which was connected with the stream of Upanishadic thought) would show itself. On the other hand, what the Indian ideas may possess in a potential character in this age too may be indicated by the following assessment: "What the Indian thinker has to do now is to graft all that has taken place in the West on to his own grand tradition. Such a task should not be impossible in view of the fact that the roots of the modern western tradition lie in the Indian ideas also." (P.T. Raju ibid, p. 557).

It may also be noted in this context that the great age of ideas in human history came in what Karl Jaspers has identified as the greatest age of World History—the Axial Age—representing the First Millennium B.C., which, on the other hand, links up very much with what Gordon Childe has shown as the Iron Age and what H.G. Wells has emphasized as the Age of the Aryans. Three out of five main streams of the Axial age culture were represented by the Aryans—the Greeks, the Persians and the Indo-Aryans.

What has been called as the phenomenon of Renaissance in the history of the West may also be found—on historical analysis to be a process of renewal of the original essence of the philosophically elevated mind that the Aryan linguistic culture had come to evolve

in an ancient phase. It may also be a fact that the Indian branch of Aryanism contained a more seminal type of character in this field—at least in the philosophical—spiritual direction such as this phenomenon of Pythagorus and Plato: "Pythagoras, who travailed all the way to India and succeeded in obtaining initiation into the secret wisdom of the Brahmins, divided men into three classes, placing those who loved *philosophy* in the highest class . It was indeed in this connection that he coined and used the word *philosophy,* and was thus first European to do so." (Paul Brunton, *The Hidden Teaching Beyond Yoga,* 86)

Whatever may be the exact historical truth its is also *at least* a very significant observation. The Indians had come to call this philosophical tradition of their connected culture with the Aryan linguistic family—its basic 'Aryadharma' (which, however, did not have a basically 'racial' connotation such as the Nazis in Germany have idiotically infused into that word). On the other hand, the major periods of Renaissance in Western philosophical culture too may be seen to be the renewal periods of what was basically the 'Arya' philosophical spirit such as was connected with the Indian philosophical idea of 'Aryadharma'. So it is not surprising to find such historical findings :

The West has already incorporated many central and basic ideas of Indian thought both knowingly and unknowingly, and developed them in several of their aspects to stages far surpassing those of the India. It is said that the West did not have only one Renaissance, but three. The first occurred in about the 12th century when the Arabs brought Plato and Aristotle in the Neo-Platonic and Arabic gard to the West, and Thomism was the result. Then occurred the 16th century Renaissance. Both were for the West a revival of learning that was lost. But that revival was a revival of a comparatively recent past of the Aryans of Europe.

The more remote past existed in India and it was revived in the 18th century through the discovery of Sanskrit, its literature and philosophy. The golden age of German idealism and romanticism was the result of the mixing up of the Kantian and Indian traditions. Idealistic absolutism and romanticism spread to England and America. In being incorporated, Indian ideas did not remain what they were in India, but obtained new significance and content in

new contexts. . . . Should we trace these new developments to only Kant or some other western origin or to the Vedanta also? We can do both, provided we keep in mind that these developments are not straight but circuitous, following devious ways, branching off the main road and sometimes coming back and rejoining it at expected points, but at other times not returning at all." (P.T. Raju: *Structural Depths of Indian Thought,* p.557).

These are, according to me, some major points which may make a 'Dictionary of Indian Culture: The Philosophical Ideas' a very important project to be undertaken particularly at the beginning of the new millennium. The great tradition of the Indian mind—in this field—may be expected to throw light ultimately on many important things of the human mind.

II

The cultural tradition of any higher type of society may be—ultimately seen as possessing three kinds of knowledge or awareness besides the empirical—scientific type. One type of this knowledge is reflected in the symbols and images that its aesthetic and poetic tradition has acquired and accumulated over the centuries. A book like Heinrich *Zimmer's Myths and Symbols in Indian Civilization* gives us an illumination interpreting of such images and symbols which are an important part of the Indian world of knowledge. Another field of a nation's world of knowledge may be seen represented by the narratives along with the myths which also represent basically *an experiential* mode of knowledge. However, what becomes important here is particularly a knowledge of *Kala* or the processes of Time more related to human actors and human history and the problems of human action and knowledge come basically through the mode of memory. The *Mahabharata* is basically a realm of knowledge which is of this character—it is basically a narrative. On the other hand, the *Mahabharata* shows also a mode of knowledge which we may call more ideational in character and this mode may be seen particularly in that inner space where the Gita has been placed. The *Gita* is that space within the realm of Time or History—the Mahabharata narrative of the basically temporal reality goes on after the recital of the *Gita* too but by that juxtaposition it has acquired the light of a

higher mode of knowledge than that is given to man by the type of 'narrative' knowledge.

The realm of ideas that the *Gita* carries is basically the realm of philosophical ideas which are seen, in normal situations, in less poetic or less sacred contexts and colours. The philosophical ideas that a society or nation has evolved or acquired through the centuries of its existence and evolution may be seen as the result of consolidation of various human experiences examined by the human mind in various ways. As such a Dictionary of the Philosophical Ideas of the Indian Culture may be seen as a book that may represent the ideational dimension of that civilization and it is also a point to be noted that, while even primitive societies may possess the other two types of knowledge ~ Symbolic experiential and the Mythic-narrative—only societies representing a higher stage of culture possess this dimension in a significant form. And it is the distinction of Indian culture that it possesses this philosophical-ideational dimension in a remarkable manner and this dimension shows not only a long process of development but also an abundantly multidimensional as well as dialectical character. Mimamsa: Purba and Uttara, Vaishnava Vedanta, as well as Buddhism, Jainism, Samkhya, Tantra—such are the major schools of ancient Indian philosophy.

It may also be said that there is a middle path which is congenial for the health of the realm of ideas in human culture and this path is the one where man may keep the culture of ideas free from two opposite dangers—the danger of 'ideology'-which is what happens to the realm of ideas when it comes to be used in the interest of the power of any establishment and on the other hand the danger of utopianism—which brings the other extreme into action.

This is also the path of *Dharma* as we may find its in the *Bhagavad-Gita* and the whole history of ideas of the Indian mind may be understood or grasped within a short compass in the following account given by Max Weber's reflection on the Indian scene of ideas. "The Bhagavad-Gita is the great intellectual synthesis of Hindi religion. Like other great documents in *the history of ideas,* its world-view had a surpassing influence upon the minds of men, perhaps because it gave promise of release to all". (R. Bendix, *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait,* p.196).

The ideational dimension of Indian culture has been the creation

innumerable spiritual intellectual leaders from the time of the *Rig Veda* and the *Upanishads* and this tradition may be seen, at the beginning of the new millennium we are entering into, also in the light of a challenging development in human civilization. What may indirectly be at stake—silently and imperceptibly—is the spiritual foundation of the whole tradition of the culture of 'thinking'. The point may be illuminated through the following observation:

> "Unfortunately, and contrary to what is currently assumed about the proverbial ivory-tower independence of thinkers, no other human capacity is so vulnerable, and it is in fact far easier to act under conditions of tyranny that it is to think. As a living experience thought has always been assumed, perhaps wrongly, to be known only to the few. It may not be presumptuous to believe that these few have not become fewer in our time. This may be irrelevant for the future of the world; **it is not irrelevant for the future of man.** For if no other test but the experience of being active, no other measure but the extent of sheer activity were to be applied to the various activities within the **vita activa,** it might as well be that thinking as such would surpass them all. Whoever has any experience in this matter will know how right Cato was when he said: Numquan se plus agare quam nihil cum ageret, numquam minus solum esse quam cum solup esset—"Never is he more active than when he does nothing, never is he less alone than when he is by himself." (Hannah Aredtt, *The Human Condition,* p.297, Anchor Books).

The Indian thinkers of the ancient times too thought that trees and creepers also live but "man lives also by the intellect and he truly lives only when he lives by the intellect": *"Mananena hi jivati"* Rabindranath quoted this ancient Indian view in his book *Charitraniti.* Ultimately it will also be felt that the intellect comes to be alive within man only when he becomes spiritually alive at same stage or other.

From being alive above the level of matter, being alive at the primary biological stage man may move upward in the way of being alive. Instinct, sensitivity, feelings, awareness, consciousness, intelligence, insight, intuition, imagination, intellection, reasoning, vision—all these words tell us of the various stages and ways a human being can be alive and active in a subtle and ultimate sense. Man needs not only insight but also hindsight as well as foresight—the prophetic sense or the sense of the future as well as the sense of the past. The

quality and range and depth of the ideational process that may go in mind will depend upon the way all such capacities may come to work within a synthesis in it. This kind of human action or activity require a deep background of inner silence and solitude—which is what the images of ancient Rishis and Munis of India were there to uphold. The Indian tradition of reflection may play its necessary role in the new age of such an ongoing process of activity or action antithetical to the Spirit.

> "In the world today, gentleman, a great thing is dying—it is truth. Without a certain margin of tranquillity truth succumbs." (Jose Ortega Y Gasset*: The Self and the Other)*

> "The same thing that happened in Rome: The capacity to take a stand within the self, to withdraw serenely into our incorruptible consciousness, was lost—nothing is talked about but action. The demagogues, impresarios of altercion, who have already caused the death of several civilizations, harass men so that they will not reflect, manage to keep them herded together in crowds so that they cannot reconstruct their individuality in the one place where it can be reconstructed—which is in solitude. They cry down service to truth and in stead offer us myths". *(Ibid).*

Only the individual man—the representative of the "category of the individual"—which the major Indian tradition of ideas upheld through the ages in various ways can save and cherish and deepen and extend that tradition in the new age—which in a major area may be a found to be "full of sound and fury" that easily invites a language that is rhetoric rather than vision of truth.

All this may ultimately lead us to a better understanding of the realm of our philosophical ideas.

III

Ideas are created by the human mind through reflections on human experience. Depending on the amount of intellection involved in it, knowledge is either of the experiential or of the intellective critical type. Broadly speaking, the human mind works in two basic modes—intuitive and critical; and ideas may be said to be the results

of these two modes of reflection. "The majority of critical refutation of intuitive ideas' (Karl Popper: *In Search of a Better World).*

Human knowledge may thus be broadly divided into two types—experiential and intellective. In intellective knowledge operation of the intellect with its critical character may be more dominant while the human intellect may also very much function in the light or guidance of an understanding of life and the universe which the whole spirit of one's being may acquire through meditations and intuitions.

As Jacques Martin has shown in *his Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry,* the ideas that have the touch of creativity are creative ideas and such ideas carry the light of 'transcendence' in the realm of immanence and ultimately belong to that category which may be called the spiritual and philosophical realm. Ideas that particularly the natural sciences carry or have to deal with are of a different category as they by themselves do not carry this light.

Human knowledge carries this light particularly in that field of knowledge which we may distinguish from the naturalistic type of knowledge and identify as either of a humanistic or of a more spiritual character. Philosophical ideas, depending on the area of reality they deal with are either of these two descriptions. Philosophy takes on a more scientific character in so far it exhibits a basically critical mode of understanding and critical examination of the subject dealt with. However, philosophy is not confined merely to this mode and the intuitional mode too may be necessary very much in this field depending on the context.

Moreover, knowledge always tends to take on such a quality of ideation.

"I only say that knowledge, in proportion as it tends more and more to be particular, ceases to be knowledge. It is a question whether knowledge can in any proper sense be predicated of the brute creation: without pretending to metaphysical exactness of phraseology, which would be unsuitable to an occasion like this, I say, it seems to be improper to call that passive sensation, or perceptions of things, which brutes seem to possess, by the name of knowledge. When I speak of knowledge, I mean something intellectual—something which grasps what it perceives through the senses; something, which takes a view of things, which sees more than the senses convey; which

reasons upon what it sees, and while it sees invests it with *an idea.* It expresses itself, nor in a mere enunciation, but by an ethymeme; it is of the nature of science from the first, and in this consists its dignity. The principle of real dignity of knowledge, its worth, its desirableness, considered irrespectively of its results, is *this germ within it of a scientific or a philosophical process.* This is how it *comes to be an end in itself. This is why it admits of being called Liberal.* Not to know the relative disposition of things is the state of slaves or children; to have mapped out the Universe is the boast, or at least the ambition, or *philosophy."* (John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University).*

Knowledge that liberates as well as the education that liberates are necessarily of this liberal or philosophical character—they have the touch or vibrations of *Brahman,* as it were; and all other types of knowledge—which are more of an instrumental character—are lacking essentially in this liberal or philosophical character. So, there are ideas and ideas, and only those ideas, which are representative of a process of thinking which may be called an end in itself—valuable for the very process of illumination it produces—may be called the truly 'philosophical' or ideas of a higher kind. Parallelly it may also be said that it is the philosophical attitude that makes any subject of study partake in the character of a true liberal education while, on the other hand, even the subject of philosophy may degenerate into a lower position of mere 'academic' character or of an instrumental character if it is wrongly handed or used for the sake of some political, nationalist or other type of ideology. The philosophies of Utilitarianism and Pragmatism may very well lead to an ultimate dilution of the true philosophical spirit—which is a liberal impulse and so is an end in itself and is a process of Ananda or 'joy for ever'. It is an education that is basically of our Being and of our Mind and it is because of this fact that the philosophical impulse in its true character has such implications: "Education is a higher word (than 'instruction'), it implies an action upon our mental nature, and the formation of a character; it is something individual and permanent, and is commonly spoken of in connection with religion and virtue ." (John Henry Newmaan, *Ibid).*

The ideational dimension of a culture forms its basis or backbone and in the nineteenth-century England Matthew Arnold felt compelled to stress this truth in the face of a philosophy of

'Utilitarianism': "Let us think of quietly enlarging *our stock of true and fresh ideas"* ("The Function of Criticism at the Present Age"), 'Criticism' too came to mean in Arnold's presentation a liberating and spiritual power necessary in the modern culture: "a certain intellectual and spiritual atmosphere *...a certain order of ideas". (Ibid)*

The right order or hierarchy of 'ideas' can only be the discovery of an investigation which is philosophical in the deeper sense and so spiritual-philosophical in character. "The least knowledge that can be had about the highest things is more desirable than the most exact knowledge about lesser things." (Aquinas) Philosophy in the deeper sense necessarily carries a spiritual light . It is this type of philosophy that becomes concerned with the idea of a hierarchy of ideas and also the discovery of the ideas that carry the greatest amount of truth. "As beauty is higher than harmony, as truth is higher than consistency, so is love higher than law. Like fire it purifies everything." (S. Radhakrishnan, *East and West in Religion,* p. 142)

As for true ideas, those, that is to say, that more or less implicitly suggest aspects of total Truth, and hence this Truth itself, they become by that very fact intellectual keys and indeed have no other function; this is something that *metaphysical thought* alone is capable of grasping.

The purely "theoretic" understanding of an idea, which we have so termed because of the imitative tendency that paralyses it, may justly be characterized by the word "dogmatism". (Frithj of Schuon, *The Transcendental Unity of Religion,* p.2). +

"The universality of fundamental ideas which historical studies demonstrate is the hope of the future. It emphasizes the profound truth which eastern religion had always stressed, the transcendent unity underlying the empirical diversity of religions." (S. Radhakrishnan, *East and West: Some Reflections,* p. 127).

And in this way the defence of philosophy may necessarily become also "the special technique of defending religious faith in an age of ever-growing prestige of natural science." It becomes necessarily the defence also of what within Marxism Adam Schaff called *A Philosophy of Man* against the silent pressure in the modern age of a Dictatorship of the Philosophy of the Natural Sciences, cut loose from the tradition of a basic and necessary Philosophy of Man. So ideas belonging to the specifically 'historical' order—ideas connected

with the spheres of politics, sociology, economics too have to be given the weight due to them but not beyond the limits that the ultimate philosophical realm of knowledge would show here.

That only those ideas that have the greatest liberating power for man have to be placed in the highest rank—as Indian thought always indicated directly or indirectly—may be discovered to be the lesson that world history of our age too should teach mankind.

> "The French revolution's change of aim from *freedom* to *happiness,* despite the fact that it culminated in manifest disaster, infected and corrupted the entire revolutionary tradition. (Hannah) Arendt sees a similar confusion at work in the theory of Marx (the greatest and most influential theorist of revolution) who, despite his ostensible (and genuine) concern with freedom, 'finally strengthened more than anybody else the politically most pernicious doctrine of the modern age, namely that life is the highest good. Economic progress, in other words, became the ultimate *raison d'etre* of revolution." (Micheal H. Lessnoff, *Political Philosophers of the Twentieth Century,* p. 83)

That 'freedom' is an idea of a higher spiritual significance than 'happiness' or even 'life' may be realized through such an understanding of human history.

That neither the realm of the Natural Sciences nor the realm of Politics can be allowed to determine the character of the philosophical dimension of our cultural tradition in the present and the future should be a much-needed realization for modern man. A historical and philosophical understanding of a legacy of the nineteenth-century West should also help us with such realizations.

"While the nineteenth-century ideas deny or obliterate the hierarchy of levels in the universe, the notion of an hierarchical order is an indispensable instrument of understanding. Without the recognition of 'Levels of Being' or 'Grades of Significance' we cannot make the world intelligible to ourselves nor have we the slightest possibility to define our position, the position of man, in the scheme of the universe." (E.F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful,* p. 78).

"In ethics, as in so many other fields, we have recklessly and willfully abandoned our great classical—Christian heritage. We have even degraded the very words without which ethical discourse cannot carry on, words like virtue, love, temperance ...

What is to take the place of the soul-and-life-destroying metaphysics inherited from the nineteenth century? The task of our generation, I have no doubt, is one of metaphysical reconstruction," *(Ibid,* pp. 82-83).

So the state of health of any cultural tradition is dependent on the character, quality and fund of the ideas it possesses.

"I say, therefore that we think with and through ideas and that what we call thinking is generally the application or pre-existing ideas to a given situation or set of facts ...

The way in which we experience and interpret the word obviously depends very much on the ideas that fill our minds." (E.F. Schumachaer, *Ibid,* p.68).

"Now what characterizes man, as Man, is precisely the presence in him of abstract ideas, of moral ideas, of spiritual ideas, and it is only of these that he can be proud. They are as real as his body and confer to this body, a value and an importance, it would be far from possessing without them.

If, therefore, we want to give a meaning to life, a reason for effort, we must try to revalorize these ideas scientifically and rationally, and it seems to us that this can only be achieved by trying to incorporate them into evolution, by considering them as manifestations of evolution, in the same way as the eye, the hands and articulate speech." (Lecomte du Nouy, *Human Destiny,* pp. 13-14).

Philosophy has a function higher not only than that of the natural sciences but also than that of political activism. Hence, we may have to face critically also such an idea of 'philosophy'-

"Philosophy is essentially a political activity: this was one of the fundamental convictions of the ancient Greek philosophers. It is still in our own day the conviction of the majority of Continental philosophers." (Christian Delacampagne, *A History of Philosophy in the Twentieth Century,* p.XI, John Hopkins University Press 1999).

However, the Greek mind at its highest level, which was certainly not represented by the Sophists with their 'political' ethos, was always of a superior character and here it showed a homogeneity rather with the great Indian mind devoted to the idea of *Brahma.*

"That the various modes of active engagement in the things of this world, on one side, and pure thought culminating in contemplation, on the other, might correspond to two altogether different

central human concerns has in one way or another been manifest ever since "the men of thought and the men of action began to take different paths," that is, since the rise of political, thought in the Socratic school. However, when the philosophers discovered—and it is probable, though unprovable, that this discovery was made by Socrates himself—that the political realm did not as a matter of course provide for all of man higher activities, they assumed at once, not that they had found something different in addition to what was already known, but that they had found **a higher principle** to replace the principle that had ruled the polis. (Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition,* p. 18)"

The challenge that Socrates and Plato faced in Greece was the challenge posed to the deeper and sacred idea of 'philosophy'—which the Indian cultural tradition in its higher reaches had always carried.

Although Indian society too became burdened, during a long period of time, with the character of "ancient oriental bureaucracies", it—more than the other regions of the Orient—may be felt to have carried also the light of the transcendence that lies in the great world of ideas. To fight the spectre of a return of that type of 'Orientalism' through the doors of "Modernism" and "Postmodernism" too, we may have to go for a foundational understanding of the whole ideational dimension of Indian cultural tradition.

"His (Max Weber's) observations about socioeconomic forces of modernity combined with his study of ancient oriental bureaucracies had provided Weber with a daunting insight about the irreversible bureaucratizing trends of the modern society, which would guarantee the further entrenchment of a proliferating intelligentsia at the expense of the increasing isolation of intellectuals. He foresaw the possibility of "orientalization" of the West: organized state bureaucracies would control masses of postmodern "fellahin". Thus Weber staked his hopes on individualistic intellectual to fight the tide of the grim future and its bureaucratic storm-troopers: the intelligentsia." (Ahmad Sadri, Max Weber's *Sociology of Intellectuals,* p. 19-20, Oxford University Press, 1992).

While the universities in our country may be more and more dominated by that category of scholars who are the intelligentsia, there should be an ongoing struggle to preserve an adequate space

also for what Max Weber called "Intellectuals" in the high sense of the word.

'Intellectuals' "ideal interest" lies in the constant rationalization of the sphere of ideas and in relentless attempt to transcend the immediate world in search of its meaning, its essence or its beauty. Ideas that emanate from this search can only occasionally be conducive to the interests of various social classes and strata. Viewed as a flux, ideas are destabilizing and potentially dangerous for the interests of any given social class, including those of the intellectuals themselves." *(Ibid.,* p. 118)

It is ideologies connected with political materialism that generally harm the cause of the spiritual light that the realm of the ideas carries for man.

Three

The Importance of the Indian Idea of Poetry

"The Arabs themselves called mathematics "the Indian art" (*hindsat*), and it appears that the decimal notation, with other mathematical lore, was learnt by the Muslim world either through merchants trading with the west coast of India or through the Arabs who conquered Sind in 712 A.D.

The debt of the Western world to India in this respect cannot be overestimated. *Most of the great discoveries and inventions of which Europe is so proud would have been impossible without a developed system of mathematics, and this in turn would have been impossible if Europe had been shackled by the unwieldy system of Roman numerical*." (A. L. Busham, *The Wonder that was India,* p. 498)

One of ancient India's greatest achievements is her remarkable alphabet, commencing with the vowels and followed by consonants, *all classified very scientifically* according to their mode of production, in sharp contrast to the haphazard and inadequate Roman alphabet, which has developed organically for three millennium. It was only on the discovery of Sanskrit by the West that *a* science of phonetics arose in Europe." (Ibid, p. 390).

This 'scientific' Indian mind, which has given to the world both the most scientific type of alphabets and numerical, has also left an illuminating legacy in the field of poetics and philosophy.

The Indian philosophy of Language and Poetry, compared to the Greek or Western tradition, shows more sensitivity to what Barfield has called 'poetic principle' in language. It is now my belief that it is ultimately what the Indian rishis also the called 'Sabda Brahman'. In the beginning was the word'—this was basically and characteristically ancient Indian message—which we find **emerging** also in the West from the birth of Christianity as a result of a great and mysterious transformation of the Judaic religious tradition under the impact

of the Indo-Aryan culture and language in the age of the Roman Empire. In the beginning was the Word". "God said—Let there be Light and there was Light." This Biblical utterance was preceded by the idea of Sabda—Brahma as well as Nad-Brahma of the Indo-Aryan mind in India of the ancient age. That tradition also gave the Indians the belief that the Indian alphabets represented immortal or indestructible or elemental powers of gods—which were identified as "aksharas".

"Sound and Brahma are both "akshara"—(imperishable). The Rishis had general faith in the meaningfulness of individual sounds. The Rigveda says that the prayers reside in the eternal sound wherein the meanings manifest themselves. They who do not know the signification of these sounds can gain nothing by prayers. Patanjali, the great grammarian, commentator and the writer of 'Mahabhashya', believes that the nucleus of speech is a sound. He remarks that all roots are originally monophonic (*dhatavah ekvamah anthavanto drisyanti*. M.B.) This upholds the idea that there is a notional correspondence between sound and sense and that words acquire their form and meaning through a certain pronounced symbolism . . . Aksharas were invented for all times and for the entire universe." (Prem Krishna Bhatnagar, *The Renaissance of Devnagari Aksharas*: A Complete Discovery of Spectrum of Speech Sounds, p. 54, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi).

There is no doubt that the ancient Indian rishis approached the subject of language—starting from the alphabets in a much more scientific spirit than the Greeks and Romans or other nations of the world.

"The psychological possibility of direct supersensuous intuition of the Divine is one of the major points of divergence between Eastern and Western thought. Bhartihari is typically Eastern in maintaining that direct intuition of *Sabdabrahman* is not only possible, but is the necessary means by which the Divine may be known and moksa realized. In Western thought, the conceiving of intuition on such a high epistemological level has seldom been suggested, let alone practiced. Perhaps Plato came closest to it in his discussion of the illumination of truth in Book VI of *The Republic*." (Harold G. Coward, *Bhartihari*, p. 118, Twayne Publishers, Boston, 1976).

"The contribution of Bhartihari to modern literary critics may

well be his forceful demonstration of the need for all aesthetic experience to be grounded in a common universal consciousness such as *Sabdabrahman*." (Ibid., p. 123)

Bhartihari represented a traditional Indian line of thinking which came down through the Vedas and he leads us not only to Anandavardhana and Abhinava Gupta but also to the poetics of Sri Aurobindo.

"*Vyakarana* has long been considered to be a *darsana*, a view of life, a system of philosophy in India, in addition to being proper grammar and Vedanga, an auxiliary discipline of the Veda ... It is the *Vakyapadia* which is the earliest work, among the grammatical treatises known to us, claiming to contain philosophical matter, besides ideas relating to General Linguistics and to the forms of the Sanskrit language. . .

That it was Bhartihari who was thought of as the main exponent of the grammarian's philosophy, the *Sabdadvaita*, is further shown by the fact that those who opposed it in ancient times quoted passages from his works, especially the *Vakyapadiya* for first expounding it and then refuting it, "(K.A. Subramania Iyer, Bhartihari: *A Study of the Vakyapadiya in the Light of the Ancient Commentaries,* p. 69, Deccan College, Poona, 1969)

"The central idea of his philosophy that the ultimate Reality is of the nature of the word which presupposes the consciousness has resulted in the notion that all of us are born with the source of valid knowledge and of speech within us. The notion was quite distinct from what was held by the Mimamsakas, the Vaisesikas, the Sankhyas and the Bauddhas on that subject. To Bhartihari must be given the credit for raising Vyakarana to the rank of a Darshana, that is, a discipline by following which man can attain liberation. To him again must be given the credit for putting together, for the first time, in a somewhat logical sequence all those general and particular notions which form the basis of the forms of the Sanskrit language. In this process emerged also those notions such as that of the s which throw light, not only on the Sanskrit language but also on language in general. It is in the *Vakyapadiya* that one sees gathered together in one place all those ideas which might be called the contribution of Ancient India to General Linguistics. He saw more clearly than even Patanjali that words moved about in a realm of their own, a realm

which had links with the outside world but which was different from it." (*Ibid*, p. 402).

"While we may recognize the originality of his thought, he himself emphasized that it was based on tradition, particularly the Vedic and grammatical tradition....His contribution consists in having brought together in one place and arranged in some kind of sequence all the general notions on which the forms of the Sanskrit language are based, Secondly he linked these general notions on the word and its meaning with a general metaphysical and epistemological background. He claims *that his metaphysical background goes back to the* Vedic Tradition though it is certain that it was influenced by the development of the philosophical systems up to his day. He was very close to the philosophical circles and of course, he was in the direct line of succession from Panini, Katyayana and Pitanjali." (Ibid, p. 403)

"That is what is presented in all cognitions in an invariable manner while the objects are constantly changing. When it is viewed apart from the forms of the objects, it is the truth. That is, therefore, the ultimate reality. That is the supreme word, called Pasyanti or Paravak or Subdubrahman. The expressive word and the expressed meanings, both are derived from it. They are, therefore, not different from each other. (Ibid, p. 261).

"After having stated the nature of Brahman, he (Bhartihari) declares that the *Veda* is the means of attaining it. The *Brahman* is essentially Sabhatattva, the Word-Principle. He adds that the Veda is the anukara or Brahman . . . The handing down of the Veda in different branches and rescissions is *due to the gradually decreasing capacity of man* and the consequent inability to grasp the *veda* as one, as a whole . . .

As said before, the *Veda* is not only the means of attaining Brahman, but is also the *anukara*, the image of it. Really speaking, the Veda is the *Brahman* itself. To speak about it in an image or symbol is a metaphor. The *Vrtti* explains the ideas of Anukara by saying that the *Rsis* who had acquired dharma, see the ultimate and eternal Word-Principle [*nitya vak*) in the form of *Mantras*. The ultimate Word-Principle which is one and without any inner sequence cannot be imparted to others in that condition. Only an image or symbol of it can be imparted. "(K.A. Subramania Iyer, *Bhartihari...* pp. 94-95)

Here was implicit also an ideal of 'philosophy' that belonged to the path of the rishi-kavis and it required the operation not merely of 'prajna' but also more of 'pratihabha'. This is where the original Vedic philosophy to which Bhartihari resorted was ultimately deeper and more helpful than the Buddhist philosophy which relied exclusively on 'prajna'. The religious tradition of the Bhakti movement recovered the original poetic philosophy centred in 'Pratibha' in a new way and it provided what was generally absent in the path of Buddhism which was centred in the ideal of *Prajnas*.

"At the beginning of the creation of *Rsis* emerge together with the *Pratibha* and become one with it. They see the *agama*, the *Sruti* and the *Smriti*, either with their *pratibha* or with their prajna. If with the former, the mind does not play any part in it and if with the latter, the mind plays a part in it. Though it appears that the *pratibha* or agama of the *Rishis* is spontaneous, it is really not so, because it is the result of their strict observance, in their previous lives, of the *dharna* taught in the Sruti. (K.A. Subramania Iyer, Ibid, p. 97)

While it is also a truth that the original Vedic line of philosophy—which had also supra-rational and poetic character—could also be used in a lower mode—the mode of magic or power—with which the Brahmanical path became more and more connected and against which both the Upanishadic and Vaishavite philosophies were reactions—that Vedic path may be, provided we learn to use it with an integral awareness of all these matters, used in a positive way which can be illuminating and helpful for an Indian philosophy of poetry and poetics.

When the mind comes to be in tune with or to grasp the 'eternal verities' of the heart, it becomes elevated to a higher level and becomes an instrument for a higher job than the quotidian. When a truth is not merely mentally grasped but also felt by the heart and ultimately lived by the spirit it represents a basically inner and spiritual reality and not a mere external and objective reality that only the senses and the mind in its lower level of work grasp.

A higher type of poetry than the common type gives us a vision of a reality that has a deeper significance and value, but to respond to such a illumination or reality, the reader's mind too should have the capacity to work in tune with a deep sensitivity of the heart and a spiritual passion of the whole being. There are different levels of

poetry and we too may read and respond to at different level of our being. Only the deeps can respond to the deeps.

In a sense all poetry, at the deepest level, is a struggle or fight against time and becomes an experience of Eternity. The deeper the character poetry acquires it becomes free from the pressure of the ephemeral. In this deepest sense all living poetry is also an imitation.

The Hindu scriptures call God 'The Ancient Poet'; His, they imply, is the primal imagination which we consciously reproduce. The poet is a creator only in the sense that his individual imagination coincides with the cosmic. Poetic inspiration, therefore, must be a surrender of originality." (C. Narayana Menon, *Shakespeare Criticism: An Essay in Synthesis*, p. 3 Oxford University Press, 1938)

Indian philosophy of language, such as the one we find in the path of Bhartrihari, assumes this idea of God as *Sabda Brahman*—as Poet and assumes that the central or true identity of man is also that of the Poet. It is the 'poet' in man who represents the deepest level of his being. Thus, Indian philosophy—in its great tradition—presents the deepest level of God as that of a Poet. Utterance of language was the path of his creation. Christianity in particular—came to link up such an ideal also with the West.

Poetics, in its deepest layer, consequently has to capture the mystery of the creative principle at work in human culture as well as in the cosmos as a whole. This is what Indian poetics—particularly through Bhartihari, Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta has shown. This is what Western poeties too in its deepest moments, whether directly or indirectly, come to show.

"Shakespeare was not original: he borrowed plots and even thoughts. The thoughts were platitudes, and the plots nursery tales handed down from, the infancy of the race. In writing *Hamlet*, for example, he only clarified an experience undergone by people in different countries in former ages. Having stood the changing tastes of generations, the Hamlet story had already been pruned of most of the ephemeral element, for the ephemeral belongs to those superficial layers of the mind which are limited by time and place. What Shakespeare did was further to approximate Hamlet the man to the indestructible prototype preserved in our mans. 'Poetry', says Emerson, 'was all written before time was.' This is more than a mere fancy. ...In a true work of art it is ourselves that we recognize." (Ibid,

p. 2) The Western tradition may show such an Indian ideal—not only in the path of Christianity, but also in the ancient path of Plato:

> "the famous contention of Plato, quoted by Aristotle, that thaumazien, shocked wonder at the miracle of Being, is the beginning of all philosophy. It seems to me highly probable that this Platonic contention is the immediate result of an experience, perhaps the most striking one, that Socrates offered his disciples: the sight of him time and again suddenly overcome by his thoughts and thrown into a state of absorption to the point of perfect motionlessness for many hours. It seems no less plausible that his shocked wonder should be essentially speechless, that is, that its actual content should be untranslatable into words. This, at least, would explain why Plato and Aristotle, who held *thaumazein* to be the beginning of philosophy should also agree—despite so many and such decisive disagreements—that some state of speechlessness, the essentially speechless state of contemplation, was the end of philosophy. *Theoria*, in fact, is only another name for *thaumazein'*, the contemplation of truth at which the philosopher ultimately arrives is the philosophically purified speechless wonder with which he began." (Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 275-276) Sunday is a *holiday* and this idea came from the Biblical conception of God who took rest on the seventh day and worked for the preceding six days. The idea of rest or leisure connected with a holy silence may be gathered also from such an injunction: "Have leisure and know that I am God." (Psalm Lxv, D) Likewise the word "school" too shows the importance of the idea of rest or leisure. Leisure in Greek is *skole*, and in Latin *scola*, which has become school in English; and so the word used to designate the place where we educate and teach is derived from a word which means leisure.' Besides these points something more has been noted by Josef Pieper in his *Leisure-the Basis of Culture*,—"Aristotle's statement in the Politics to the effect that *leisure* is the centre-piece about which everything revolves."

"Among other things, it might be pointed out. . . that the Christian and Western conception of the *contemplative life* is closely linked to the Aristotelian notion of leisure. It is also to be observed that this is the source of the distinction between the *artes liberates* and the *artes sesrviles*, the liberal arts and servile work." (Josef I Pieper, *Leisure the Basis of Culture,* p. 27)

"But the Gods, taking pity on mankind, born to work, laid down the succession of recurring Feasts to restore them from their fatigue, and gave them the Muses, and Apollo their leader, and Dionysus, as

companions in their Feasts, so that nourishing themselves in festive companionship with the Gods, they should again stand upright and erect." (Plato quoted in Josef Pieper's *Leisure the Basis of Culture*, p. 24)

"The sphere of leisure, it has already been said, is no less than the sphere of culture in so far as that word means everything that lies beyond the utilitarian world. *Culture lives on religion through divine worship*. And when culture itself is endangered, and leisure is called in question, there is only one thing to be done: to go back to the first and original source.

Such is, moreover, the meaning of the marvellous quotation from Plato Placed at the beginning of this essay. *The origin of the arts in worship*, and of leisure derived from its celebration, is given in the form of a magnificent mythical image: man attains his true form and his upright attitude 'in festive companionship with the Gods.' (Ibid., p. 78)

Four

From Logos and Polis to Sabda-Brhaman and Nous

"Aristotle meant neither to define man in general nor to indicate man's highest capacity, which to him was not *logos,* that is, not speech or reason, but *nous,* the capacity for contemplation, whose chief characteristic is that its content cannot be rendered in speech." In his two most famous definitions Aristotle only formulated the current opinion of the polis about man and the political way of life." (Hannah Arent, *The Human Condition,* p. 27)

Language and reason appeared in the human reality only on the basis of the experience of a supra-rational reality—represented by Muses—which could move man also to the state of singing. It was also an experience of wonder.

Animals have no reason because they are incapable of conceiving the Absolute; in other words, if man possesses reason, together with language, it is because he has access in principle to the supranational vision of the Real and consequently to metaphysical certitude. The intelligence of animals is partial, that of man is total; and this totality is explained only by a transcendent reality to which the intelligence is proportioned." (*Eithof* Schuon, *Survey of Metaphysics and Esoterism*, p. 3, World Wisdom books, 1986).

"Man is essentially a speaking animal" (Frithj of schuon. *Root of the Human Condition*. World Wisdom Books, 1991) "Man has also a "*metaphysical instinct*" which is within the reach of every really normal man." (Ibid., p. 92).

Here Logos not only refuses to be reduced to the meaning of Logic—it becomes connected rather with a power—a mysterious power—that we do not associate with the common human language. Poetry—particularly great poetry—is not common human language and what is uncommon about it or in it was taken is the geat Aryan

tradit on to be a kind of that only the Muses—the daughters of God—could give to man. Poetry or great literature represents a use of human language that renews as it were the birth or origins of human language—the time when man gave birth to language. This magic cannot be learnt through the conventional learning of language; and great writers—particularly those who are poets—learn it—come to acquire it in way that also remains connected—directly or indirectly—with the idea of 'inspiration'—a link with the realm of the Muses—an experience of a reality of what may be called 'Music'—the electricity of Word received form that realm of the Muses.

"A great writer . . .is one who has something to say and knows how to say it . . . his characteristic gift, in the large sense the faculty of expression. He is master of the two-fold Logos, the thought and the word, distinct, but inseparable from each other .... What aim is to give forth what he has within him; and from *his very earnestness. . .* an incommunicable simplicity." (John Henry Newman, "Literature": *The Idea of a University,* p. 244)

However, poetics has had to struggle in the West against a tradition of philosophy not every congenial for its development. The *noetic* background of poetry remained more or less neglected because of the pressure of a philosophical tradition that relied heavily on the idea of Logos—interpreted in a spirit that leads us rather away from its mysterious or divine background.

The ascendance of the logical-rational principle and the descendance of the poetic principle which Owen Barfield's account helps us to see in the history of human culture may also be connected with the growing dominance of the Western mode of thought over the ancient or more Eastern mode of human thought.

In a sense, in the light of such historical facts we may also say that as Civilization progresses—there is not merely a problem for the sphere of Culture in general (—as Susanne K. Langer has also shown in a book) the fate of poetry also becomes secretly endangered. And a philosophy of 'progress'—such as the one that has come down from the eighteenth century and against the disturbing implications of which the whole Romantic movement in the nineteenth century was a reaction on behalf of the life of Poetry in human culture—may also come to imply that poetry can be long only to the realm of sport.

Problems in the Western Tradition

"Thirty-five years ago among the intelligent young there was a passionate engagement with literature. Today I believe there is a change. It is not at all a dishonourable change, but it is a serious one from the point of view of literary study. The great attraction of the schools of English literature in the universities is no longer primarily literary." (Graham Hough, "Criticism as a Humanist Discipline" in Selected Essays, pp. 12-13, Cambridge 1978).

"It is possible that we are now in a process of cultural change greater and more rapid than any that has been seen before—greater than the end of the ancient world or the close of the middle ages. A culture dominated by the *word* is turning into a culture dominated by *number,* and no one can for see what place the arts of the worrd will occupy in the kind of society that is coming into being. Poetry has been a part of man's collective life from the earliest civilization, but it has not always served the same function. It has been the vehicle of law and history; it has been a popular entertainment; and it has been the esoteric activity of a few. We must suppose that poetry will continue; but a change in its position has been discernible since the beginning of the modern world." (Graham Hough: "The Modern Lyric" in *Selected Essays,* Cambridge University Press, 1978).

"not only poetry, but an understanding of the nature of poetry and of the *poetic element* that is present in all meaningful language, it of vital importance". (Owen Barfield, "Preface to Second Edition," *Poetic Diction, A Study in Meaning,* pp. 24-25 Faberand Faber, London, 1951, 1st Edition 1927).

"Where then does the modern poet find again this poetic principle that is dying out of language? Where? *Nowhere but in himself.* The same *creative activity,* once operative in meaning without man's knowledge or control, and only recognized long afterwards, when he woke to contemplate, as it were, what he had written in his sleep, this is now to be found within his own consciousness. And it calls him to become the true creator, the maker of meaning itself." (Ibid, p. 107)

"In the West, Since Plato's time, the study of language has been developed mainly by grammarians and logicians. It is true that about a hundred and fifty years ago a more historical conception of philoso-

phy suddenly began to spread rapidly over Europe. But the emphasis was still, until recently, on the external forms of words. The result is, as far as I am aware, that no really profound study has yet been made of meaning—that is to say, of the meanings of individual words. This subject—Semantics, as it is now commonly called—makes its first, embryonic appearance as a cautionary chapter on Terms in a logical textbook, and it is not until long after that it acquires a separate existence, and even a hint of wings, in the work of writers like Archbishop Trench, Max Muller, and, today, Mr. Pearsall Smith.

The extraordinarily intimate connection between language and thought (the Greek word logos combined, as we should say, both meanings) might lead on to expect that the philosophers at least would have turned their attention to the subject long ago. And so, indeed they did, but with a curiously disproportionate amount of interest. *The cause of this deficiency is, I think, to be found in the fact that Western philosophy, from Aristotle onwards, it itself a kind of offspring of Logic.* To anyone attempting to construct a metaphysic in strict accordance with the canons and categories of formal Logic, the fact that the meanings of words change, not only from age to age, but from context to context, is certainly interesting; but it is interesting solely because it is a nuisance. "(Owen Barfield, *Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning*, pp. 60-61, Faber & Faber, London, 1951)

The importance of the Indian tradition of poetics in this context on the other hand may be shown also by a new departure in the Western tradition since the times of Shakespeare and Bacon.

"It (language) is this instrument which is needed for thinking about living material. And it is poetry's task to learn how to manage this kind of thinking and then to teach it. Poetry puts language to full use as a means of thought, exploration and discovery, and we have only so far just about made a beginning and no more on its potential usefulness." (Elizabeth Sewell, *The Orphic Voice: Poetry and Natural History,* p. 20, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960-61).

"It is going to be the theme of the rest of this book that for the last 400 years, with the coming of what one might call the modern age, poetry has been struggling to evoke and perfect the inclusive mythology on which language works and all thoughts in words is carried on, and that this type of thinking is the only adequate instrument for thinking about change, process, organisms, and life.

The history of this struggle and evolution is occasionally explicit, more often implicit. This is where Orpheus comes in: for Orpheus is poetry thinking about itself..." *(Ibid,* p. 47)

"The task is becoming not the invention of something new but *a revaluation and a making explicit of a long tradition.* For that reason it will be helpful to gather up the voices in the immediate past which belong to this tradition too, all of whom have been saying, from their widely different standpoints, that *thinking needs rethinking on lines other than those currently accepted in the various academic disciplines,* if modern thought is to reach out to its living material in dynamic ways and overcome the artificial barriers which have been allowed to hedge it in, the division between *arts* and *sciences,* for instance.

Things have been moving this way fairly steadily since the twenties. Names which come to mind are Agres Arber, Teilhard de Chardin, Evelyn Hutchinson, Suzanne Langer, John Middleton Murry, Michael Polanyi, Herbert Read, Rebecca West, Lance Whyte. The disciplines involved range from archaology arid anthropology, botany, chemistry, zoology, and physics through philosophy and social thought to plastic art and literature...And it is Murry who takes us back one stage further, to the point at which we ourselves shall begin. "*The Renaissance.... is the beginning of modern Romanticism. Shakespeare is its prophetic voice.*"[1] (Ibid., pp. 49-50).

An understanding of the evolution of modem thought through Baconian 'inductive logic' and the related philosophy of Empiricism as well as a new understanding of the medium of language' may help us to discover also a hidden bridge between the West and the Indian mind.

"In England something happened to thought between 1600 and 1610. It happened in the persons of Bacon and Shakespeare, our two great teachers at that time. The results of what happened can be seen in their work. *This transfiguration of thinking was effected and suffered by two minds apparently different yet fundamentally so similarly directed that* their names have kept cropping up ever since, in opposition, conjunction, or even identification. What they accomplished was a *"Renaissance" action in the best sense, for they drew, out of a classical tradition as old as poetry, which is as old as language and thinking,* the lines of possible development for future. So they are balanced between new and old, men at once profoundly traditional and also,

perhaps because of that, even more profoundly prophetic and forward—looking." (Ibid, p. 155).

"The nature of things consisted in those forms which were laws of action and motion. To this the mind must offer a match, not in the sense of opposition but in that of a wedding. What is needed, as Bacon indicates, is a mental process more dynamic, subtle and precise than the logic then in use." (Ibid, p. 144). "He thinks of Aristotelian logic as tending to disputation rather than reality." (Ibid, p. 145).

It is also our thesis that the inner logic of the Baconian or modern path of Empiricism or 'scientific' thinking as opposed to medieval logistic' or 'rationalist' thinking can lead us to what we, on our part, may call Integral Empiricism. The following exposition too will support our argument that, following Shakespeare, both Goethe and Coleridge too would be found to represent the spirit of what we have also called Integral Empiricism.

"Now, to hark back a moment, what was it that Bacon asked of his new logic or instrument or method or interpretation? That it be more subtle than the old, more exact, generative, analogous to the natural processes it figures, universal and close to things and reality...

The later Orphic voices speak now. They are Vico, Herder, Goethe, Coleridge, and Hugo. *They corroborate the Baconian postlogic in gross and detail,* in the vision of nature as a language to be interpreted, and in the three-fold scheme for the work, natural history, forms, and organon. *Only when Bacon betrays his own vision do these commentators propose Shakespeare in his place, as another and greater interpreter of nature, who is to venture further into poetry*, *and so effect the transformation of man's mind in its relation to nature which Bacon saw could not carry through*." (Ibid, pp. 150-151).

"Our line of argument stems from Bacon and Shakespeare; but of the two, it is the Baconian line which is easiest to follow. The Shakespearean one seems to go underground after Milton, not to reappear until that wonderful burst of Orphic recognition and celebration of Shakespeare at the end of the eighteenth century and through the nineteenth, in Germany and England for the most part, though it moves into France later with Hugo and Renan. Erasmus Darwin is involved in this slightly, Goethe profoundly, though it is

Coleridge who sorts out most clearly the respective claims of Bacon and Shakespeare upon the Orphic minds." (Ibid., p.179).

Orpheus or Orphism was also the great link between the great tradition of the West and that of India and it was this tradition that carried both explicitly and implicitly the idea of Sabda Brahman. It may be seen to give us also what is valuable in the tradition of Tantricism or ideas of generation, procreation and creation.

"The Orphic voice attests a *tradition and a method of thinking. The tradition is constant.* What is important about it is that it is not history, cold and embalmed, but a living invitation. If the tradition means anything, *it means that here is marvelously adapted instrument for ordinary people to use in understanding their universe and themselves.* It can and should enliven every situation in which thinking in words is going on—literature, criticism, education, many more. Indeed they need enlivening. It is not a matter for specialists, but for people, as the voices themselves insist. That is why they have felt their task to be so important. The method, the postlogic, is a way of using mind and body to build up dynamic structures (never fixed or abstract patterns) by which the human organism sets itself in relation to the universe and allows each side to interpret the other. The mind's relation to structure or myth is inclusive and reflexive. It is not detached; the working mind is part of the dynamic of the system, and is united, by its forms, with whatever in the universe it is inquiring into. The process of making the interpretative myths is carried on in language, and the structure of language in its dynamic with the mind both conditions and is conditioned by the mutual interpretation. The body is an essential part of the method. The method bears a close relation to sex ~ and fertility. Love is necessary part of its working. Its aim is the discovery of the world, and it is this which gives it all the beauty it has.

I have used the word 'postlogic' in this study, but it is time now to return to the true term, which is "poetry", though I hope by now a little filled out, or cleared of the misunderstandings we have allowed to grow around it. It has come into this study as drama, as epic, as didactic verse, as lyric. You can use it in any form, since this is its deep purpose, and according to whatever level of achievement you can reach. There is no need to think that only superlative poetry has any right to survive or that lesser work is not good and useful in

common explorations. It lies to everyone's hand we have to return to it, not as a vague ornament of life *but as one of the great living disciplines of the mind,* friendly to all other disciplines, and offering them and accepting from them new resources of power.

On this the Orphic voices have made a beginning for us." (Elizabeth Sewell, *The Orphic Voice: Poetry and Natural History*, pp. 404-405)

It was this that Blake too represented with such a manifesto:

"The Poetic Genius
The Argument:
"As the true method of knowledge is experiment, the true faculty of knowing must be the faculty which experiences. This faculty I treat of.

Principle First:
That the Poetic genius is the true man

Principle Third
No man think, write or speak from his heart but he must intend the truth.

Thus all sects of philosophy are from the poetic genius, adapted to the weaknesses of every individual.

Principle Fifth
The religions of all nations are derived from each nation's different reception of the poetic genius which is everywhere the first of prophecy.

Principle Seventh
As all men are alike (though infinitely various) so all religions, and as all similar have one source.

William Blake The true man is the source, he being the poetic genius."

Why does Word matter? Why does Poetry matter?

"We shall understand the poet more readily therefore, if we understand the Good Man. *The goodness, like poetry, is a kind of wholeness*."

(John F. Danby, Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature'. A Study of King Lear, p. 219)

"Poetry, I believe, does represent a wholeness of being that we cannot find in the application of liberal ideas to life. What the greatest poetry gives us seems to answer more to the romantic 'idea'—a full state of being in which the mind achieves *that kind of order* which allows of clearer perceptions. Poetry, as Blake said, cleanses the doors of perception. It expresses the 'whole man' in a way that 'idea' as Arnold understood them cannot possibly do." (Ibid, p. 218)

Such a philosophy grounded in such an idea of wholeness contains within it also such philosophical implicatins

"The evil self is evil, then, because and in as far as it is antagonistic to the good, for however highly organized in itself, it is inevitably through this antagonism *the adversary of unification of experience and the vehicle of contradiction in the very heart of the self."* (B. Boanquei, *The Principle of Individuality and Value.)*

"A man is *good in* as far as his being is *unified* at all in any sphere of wisdom or activity. And in dealing with *a whole as vital as the whole of mind,* one cannot say that the perfection of any part is indifferent to that of any other, or, therefore, that morality is entirely unimpaired by aesthetic and scientific incapacity.

Still in the main, the dependence is the other way; *simple morality* can more nearly stand alone, and its absence shakes the whole foundations of life and mind. Such absence is in respect to life as a whole, what a failure of *belief in the first principles* of rational system is to the scientific intelligence.

This, then, is the true distinction between *morality,* commonly so called, and intellectual or aesthetic excellence, which is goodness in the wider, or (should we rather say?) in the narrower sense. It is a distinction of degree *between the more and the less fundamental* of the ideas which govern life....ideas which, as we said of moral mond ideas, form *the main structure of the mind...* (Ibid, p. 348) All this as Danby too would moral show, lead us back to such a view.

"Croce tells us the true doctrine is homo *nascitur poeta.* Every man is born a poet, little poet some, great poets others." (H. Wildon Carr, *The Philosophy of Benedetto Croce:* The Problem of Art and History, p. 196, Macmillan & Co, London, 1927, first published: 1917).

Not only Croce but also Goethe, Blake and Rabindranath thought

that the identity of man is that of the poet. Such a view has been in fact implicit in the central Indian view of man from the Vedic times onwards.

Human speech receives in poetry a re-connection with its origins and in this way it receives also a new life without which it may take more and more of the character of prose and ultimately mechanism and only through an inner connection with the realm of the Muses this process of rejuvenation may come. Hence the word 'logos' or a definition of man given in terms of that word alone cannot give us an intimate understanding either of the mystery of poetry or of the mystery of man.

"Singing is older than speech. In singing the human being has always expressed his relatedness with his forces, with the totality of life... Song is the primeval communion of all, the ancient amicable inimical closeness of nature whose pulse educated its rhythms. *Speech is* acquired separation." (Martin Buber: "Introduction" to *Kalevala).*

Five

Reflections on Indian Poetry in the Perspectives of Comparative Literature and Cultural History

The composite and multilingual character of 'Indian Literature'—which is written at least in quite a good number of languages makes the idea of Indian literature comparatively more illusive and difficult to tackle than the idea of 'English Literature', or 'American Literature'. Books like *A Critical History of English Poetry* by Herbert Grierson and J.C. Smith, *Phases of English Poetry* by Herbert Read and *The Continuity of American Poetry* by Roy Harvey Pearce (which may also serve as models for a book on Indian Poetry) are, comparatively speaking, easier to write because of the very unilingual character of the subject dealt with.

The idea of Indian Literature too, of course, becomes easier to grasp or tackle particularly when it becomes virtually identified with one language or two or three such related language as Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit as it did in Mauric Winternitz's *History of Indian Literature,* (which was concerned with Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit Literatures) or as it does in a book like *The Oxford Anthology of Twelve Modern Indian Poets*, edited by Arvind Krishna Mehrotra. The second book is concerned only with those Indian poets who have written verse in English and here it is mainly the use of the English language which becomes the identity mark of an Indianness.

It is also a fact that while there is definitely the need of an ampler idea of Indian poetry than is indicated in the above examples, a work on Indian poetry, to be a living thing, will have to be written also from a living centre and a 'home' area. To write from a position of 'philosophical abstraction' will be to miss the 'life' of the idea of Indian poetry and also the authentic critical note.

However, from Umashankar Joshi's *The Idea of Indian Literature* to Sisir Kumar Das's *Indian Literature* one may notice at least the development of a new integral approach to the subject of Indian Literature. This new approach has been necessitated by the consciousness that Indian Literature, for an adequate understanding of its history, requires also the comparative Literature approach in some form or other. As Umashankar Joshi put it. "A new discipline—that of Comparative Indian Literature—is in the process of evolving. The idea of Indian Literature and the idea of Comparative Indian Literature seem to be so inextricably interwoven that even if there were no discipline called Comparative Literature, we, culturally situated as we are in Indian today, would have had to invent one. It would seem, at long last the idea of Indian Literature has found its *raison d'dtre"*. This type of study of Indian Literature—which is concerned not with a unilingual perspective but with a multilingual one—necessarily becomes, I would like to say, also a study in Indian Culture.

Viewed in this way, a particular regional Indian language would appear only as one of the several languages which can be present in a broad Indian cultural pattern that transcends the bounds of that particular language.

A study of Indian poetry thus becomes, necessarily, also a study in the cultural history of India and the history of Indian poetry may also be viewed ultimately as the 'profoundest expression of the complex of modalities' that is Indian culture. Roy Harvey Pearce, while using that expression in his effort to identify the 'national' character of American Poetry, said further: "indeed, I have tried to show how the works of our great poets cluster around a series of "basic' poetry styles (a term which I use occasionally) and how these styles are best understood as they articulate with other "basic" styles in the culture—specifically the stylized means of defining (in philosophy, social theory, religion, and the like) the nature and destiny of modern man and his attempts to invent again that sense of community which he appears to have lost somewhere along the line of his recent evolution. My interest here centres on the relation between an era's poetry and its philosophical anthropology. The poet's relation to his culture's general life-style and to the basic poetic style which mediates between it and his own style is well described by Andre' Malraux in

his *Voices of Silence*". He thus came to this conclusion: "basic style in poetry, then, is the grammar and syntax of the sensibility as it is given to a poet to extend and deepen and so accommodate to his sense of the possibilities (and, I must again emphasize, impossibilities) for living fully in his culture".

The basic style which is present in the life of a culture consequently determines the direction in which the poet's imagination may move; 'it delimits the areas of experience on which his sensibility may be operative'.

Seen in such a perspective, the era of Tagore, Iqbal and Bharati (three Indian poets who also represented three regional realities of Indian culture the Eastern, The Western, and the Southern) in Indian poetry too will show not only a particular historical situation but also a characteristic 'philosophical anthropology'. However, each of these poets had also a distinctive individual voice. So Tagore's voice will reveal not only his distinctive relation to the 'general life-style of Indian Culture' but also a resonance which came from his special 'Bengali-Indian' tradition of Eastern India as well as a more creative idea of East-West connection—which again was more representative of a dominant assimilative attitude that was present in 19th-century Indian Renaissance in Bengal. There was something nearer the 'modern' mind in Tagore's way. Consequently it would appear, that also paved the way for the earlier appearance of the 'modernist' movement in Bengali Poetry as compared with the situation in Urdu or Tamil. The appearance of such poets as Suddhindranath Dutta with his *Parichay*, Jivanananda Das and a few other poets in Bengali was representative of that further stage.

From Michael Madhusudan Dutta to Suddhindranath Dutta and Jivanananda Das one also notices such questions often haunting the minds of a few serious Indian poets in some form or other: Has the idea of 'poetry' received its full recognition in India as compared to the idea of 'religion'? Has there been something lacking or rather weak or soft in the accepted or popular traditions of Indian poetry as compared with that of Western Poetry? Just after Independence, an Indian poet wrote: "Specially now that our political freedom has been attained, there is every reason to look forward to a time when our literature, released from the obligations of public service, freed from front, cured of sobs and bravado, will become adult, fully mature.

The soil is rich, the waters are sweet, and the seeds of Rabindranath cannot have been cast in vain." (Buddhadeva Bose: *An Area of Green Grass*: A Review of *Modern Bengali Literature,* pp. 103-104). About ten years later, A.V. Rajeswara Rao, the Editor of *Modem Indian Poetry*: *An Anthology* (1958), wrote in the Preface to that book: "A language should be a means of knowledge if it is to be a medium for creative expression. In India, such a language as would meet the modern demand of human quest for truth and knowledge, has yet to grow. That is precisely the reason why Indian poetry is faltering in the task of inviting universal attention".

All this shows a new quest: "What is both interesting and exciting is the way in which Urdu, locked in tradition and stasis, could so easily adapt itself to become a language of revolution, social comment and political action." (Mohmood Jamal, "Introduction", *The Penguin Book of Modern Urdu Poetry*, p. 15)—Does not, particularly in such a situation, real 'modernity' mean an urge to transcend the boundary of the mystical or political-sloganizing simplifications of life's problems? It is also a fact of cultural history: "The participation of many Urdu writers and poets in the Bombay film industry helped to make Urdu a language both of literature and of popular speech—which in turn facilitated its usage in politics; many of the slogans and poems sung by political activities are evidence of its universality" (Ibid, p. 12). Does not an important part of the life of real 'modern poetry' remain at a distance from such a path? "Poets turned to sloganizing to arouse the people to revolt, and some, disillusioned by the failure of their own ideology, began to explore more personal areas of life: *a kind of healthy scepticism* emerged in Urdu poetry in the sixties. With this trend poets became more speculative, introverted and psychological in their themes. This brought a new and welcome dimension to Urdu poetry, and slowly the powerful and often dogmatic mould of the progressive' Writers was weakened the sloganizing in which many of the best poets indulged was exposed for what it was-propaganda rather than art." (Ibid).

Was not such a line of modernity connected in India also with the age of nearer while in Pakistan it could not get such a connection? From Agyeya to Adiga we may notice such a connection in India. "In India, meanwhile, the Progressive hegemony was lost but not to the same extent, and the secular-nationalist consensus remained within

the community...." (Aijaz Ahmad: *In the Mirror of Urdu*, p. 35). Is not the Pakistani situation also connected with a strand of West Asian (Semitic) Eastern culture which has not been much favourable to the empirical-democratic spirit? And does not Urdu poetry-particularly the type that shows a less West-Asian cultural character and a more Indian or so practically 'prakritic'—character share also what Izaz Ahmed calls "a basic metaphysic and a cognitive mould which is indistinguishable from those adjacent linguistic forms which have evolved in the same, shared social space"? (Ibid).

There has been however, a difference between the 'Prakritik' base of Indian Urdu and the Persianizing influence of the ruling Muslim class, as the late Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee noted: "Persianized Urdu, it is true, has become the real home language of the *elite* among Hydarabad and Uttar Pradesh Musalmans, especially in families with some literary culture". (Suniti Kumar Chatterjee: *Indo Aryan and Hindu*, p. 248). "The first Urdu poets, deeply moved by the manifest decay of Muslim political power in the 18th century, sought to escape from a world they did not like by taking refuge in the garden seclusion of Persian poetry, the atmosphere of which they imported into Urdu. The whole thing in its earlier stages was an exotic one, not having its roots on the soil. And upon this largely the superstructure of the 19th Century and of the present-day Urdu has seen founded. Urdu literature and the Urdu form of Hindustani are of the nature of Gandhara Art…" (S.K. Chatterjee, Ibid, p. 243).

At least it would appear that Indian poetry, to remain Indian, cannot move away far from a particular centre or locus; beyond a certain point Indian poetry comes to lose its special Indian cultural identity.

The whole matter of Indian poetry may be thus linked in one direction to the basic Indian character of the Indian languages and at a certain level we may receive help also from the words of Dr. Chatterjee: (if we link up 'Sanskrit' to with the old Aryan Indian Prabrit) "The importance of Sanskrit in the life of India cannot be overrated. Sanskrit is the link which has bound up India into a single cultural, and as a consequence a single political, unit... Sanskrit is the great feeder of most Indian languages, Aryan and Dravidian, and Hindustani, to remain Indian, must fall in line. Persianized Hindustani, not understood ordinarily outside of the Punjab and Western Uttar Pradesh, cannot be a popular speech…. Even the offi-

cial drive of the Government of Pakistan has not succeeded in this matter in East Bengali". (Ibid, pp. 245-255). All this is also in conformity with the following observation: "Since its roots lay in Arabized Persian of the conquering Muslims, it inherited the highly developed diction of Persian Literature" (Mahmood Jamal, "Introduction": *The Penguin Book of Modern Urdu Poetry*, p. 11). However, Urdu too may show two tendencies and Indian poetry (whether in Sanskrit particularly under the heavy pressure of *Souraseni* or in Urdu under the heavy pressure of *Arabic-Persianizing* influence) could be almost equally artificial and mannered in a court atmosphere, *disconnected from the spirit of the Prakritik culture*. "As a result of the particular demand in the court atmosphere the natural spontaneity of the poet was at a discount…. Learning and adaptation to circumstances were given more importance than the pure flow of genius. As a result Sanskrit poetry not only became artificial but followed a traditional scheme of description... also led the poets astray and led them to find their amusement in verbal sonorousness." (S.N. Dasgupta quoted in A.L Basham's *The Wonder That Was India*, pp. 414-418).

Here is an area where a modified type of Marxist analysis of cultural history too may be helpful. A significant part of Indian poetry was lacking in the real signs of life, divorced as it was from the springs of the people's 'spiritual' culture of a positive kind-with which the poetry of the Bhakti movement in the regional languages was particularly connected.

So a conception of cultural history which can thus accommodate various types of insights (including the Marxist and post-modernist ones) within a whole will lead us to a deeper understanding of the nature and possibilities of the tradition of Indian poetry.

Countering not only the Arabic-Persianizing cultural strain that came from Western Asia but also to some extent the Sauraseni (or 'Sanskritizing') dimension of Hindi there has been at work in the history of Indian poetry it appears the Magadhi prakritik dimension of Eastern Indian cultural life of 'Purbi' Hindi, Oriya, Bengali and Assamese as well as the Dravidian cultural life of the South with its emphasis on "bhakti'. However, both the Eastern and the Southern tendencies may too lead us to some problems—if we do not try to cultivate a balanced outlook.

The history of Indian poetry is obviously connected with the

cultural history of India and both its geography and linguistic forms too ultimately have to be taken into account in order to understand its inner cultural dynamics.

We are in need of a satisfactory idea of Indian poetry which may emerge if we try also to bring together such views of it as were expressed in *Prachin Sahitya*, written in Bengali by Rabindranath, and Aurobindo's reflections in English on the poetry of Vyasa, Valmiki and Kalidasa as well as those views which have been expressed, for instance, in J. Gonda's *The Vision of the Vedic Poets*, A.K. Ramannjan's The *Interior handscape: Love Poems from a Classical Tamil Anthology* and Alokeranjan Dasgupta's The Lyric in Indian Poetry.

As far as I have been able to know, no one has till now tried to tap all such diverse sources of critical ideas in order to arrive at an spacious idea of Indian poetry—of its historical evolution and multiple strains. The study I am Presenting may be expected to clarify such an idea of Indian poetry.

While by 'tradition' I would mean the heritage of Indian poetry that had appeared before the coming of the British rule to India, by 'modernity' I would mean a more than a-century-old process of historical evolution—three phases of which may be identified as (a) Pre-Modernism, (b) Modernism, and (c) Post Modernism. My study of the subject will cover it from its beginnings to its present state.

While there is my 'home area'—the Assamese language in which I write my poetry to start from and ultimately rely on in my comparative study of the history of Indian poetry against the general background of Indian Culture—I know also the Bengali language fairly well and have been reading Tagore and all the important Bengali poets in the original for many years. I can also understand Oriya to a perhaps significant extent and have studied the literary and cultural histories of Orissa, although the Oriya script still stands in my way of an easy entry into Oriya poetry. Assamese, Bengali and Oriya have a common East Indian—'Purva Magadhi'—character. Besides that Eastern Indian linguistic tradition there are the fields of Sanskrit and Prakrit poetry as well as of Hindi poetry, and though I cannot claim to have a 'scholarly' knowledge of these languages, with the help of translations and histories of the concerned Literatures I have become acquainted with the basic lineaments of Indian poetry in such languages. My idea of poetry in the South Indian languages, on

the other hand, have been gathered till now from such second-order sources as English translations (which persons like A.K. Ramannjah have published), critical articles, histories of Tamil and related literatures, and the histories of Tamil culture that have been written by scholars like Nilakanta Shastri.

To know all the major Indian languages is not a necessity, I think, for my basic purpose. *Basically, it is an integral idea of Indian poetry I am aiming* at and it can be acquired in reality mainly along the path I have followed—in which one would obviously know some regional area of it more intimately in comparison with other areas which may be grasped not in a very intimate way but mainly in a general way.

I think the following areas may have to be surveyed in the process: (1) The Vedic and Upanishadic tradition with its basic Aryan linguistic culture; (2) The Aryan-Dravidian Synthesis: Classical Sanskrit Poetry and Poetics; (3) The tradition of poetry in Tamil and allied languages. (4) Medieval Indian Literatures; (5) The Phenomenon of Urdu; (6) Bengal Renaissance and the Age of Tagore; (7) Post-Tagorian Modern Bengali Poetry; (8) Modernity in Assamese and Oriya poetry; (9) Modernity in Hindi, Marathi and Gujarati; (10) Modernity in South Indian Poetry.

I do not, however, intend to write a detailed history of these areas but rather to bring to light some basic patterns and special features which may be discovered in the history of Indian poetry—in its both regional and national forms.

Six

Kabir, the Philosophy of the Bhakti Movement and Its Historical and Social Implications

I

Using the words, "poetry" and "history" in the Aristotelian sense we may say that man at the common level—man in the realm of common sense remain within the reality of "history" and does not rise to the level of "philosophy". Or using Longinus's term "the sublime" we may say that man in his common mode does not rise to the vision of the sublime and misses the grandeur that poetry at its heights touch. The uncommon reality that both Aristotle and Longinus hint at in the context of poetry is not at a great distance from the reality which is the concern of poets like Kabir. The Bhakti Movement of India was essentially connected with the poetic-philosophical-spiritual discovery of the uncommon wonderful reality that lies hidden within with man and the Universe.

Coleridge connected the creation of poetry essentially with what he called "the delight of the musical impulse" and the medieval Indian Bhakti movement, with its emphasis on Nam Dharma, may be seen also as a movement inspired by this impulse. It was an essentially creative impulse, not connected with the utilitarian mentality or with the desire for material achievements or political or economic power. It is this impulse which can redeem man's heart and mind and it is ultimately connected also with the mystical sense. At the very heart of human existence this impulse should play its controlling ride.

The trouble with people of mere common sense is that they remain unconscious of the uncommon nature of the very fact of the existence of human life and the Universe. Practical sense, prag-

matic sense, common sense and also comic sense—all these too may be necessary for man within a total outlook on life but unless the ultimate mystical sense—the ultimate sense of wonder as well as the creative spirit and love redeem such senses they become a great obstacle in the path of man and can constitute a sort of prison house.

The difference between Asiatic magical religions and Nama Dharma was that the former type of religions, (which predominated in India as a result of the idea of Power becoming more and more dominant with the onset of Feudalism from above—from about 6th century A.D.—through a fusion of the primitive religions and the Brahman priest's power cult made man imprisoned within a realm of reality in which the essential creative spirit and the essential poetic sense with its non-utilitarian "delight of the musical impulse" became more and more missing. Hence the instrument of human liberation that the leaders of the Bhakti movement in Indian society took up in their hands was the instrument of poetry and music—tuned to a mode of existence which is of a sacred quality.

The belief in the necessity of a higher spiritual mode of existence—which carries the essence of music and poetry—is a belief that redeems man's heart and mind. The philosophy of "Marga Sangeet" as well as the philosophy of the 'Bhakti Movement' carry essentially such a message. Ordinary language could not convey and carry that spiritual 'electricity' that the language of a higher mode of poetry and music-called 'Ram Nam'—could carry. 'Ram Nam' in essence represented that mode of existence which is accessible through musical utterances.

At the heart of the Bhakti movement there were the discovery or rediscovery of the message of creation—of the creative spirit in and beyond the Universe and a faith in a reality which is beyond death. Nam—the Name of God—the carrier of His spirit and process of creativity—Nam was made by the Saints available to the common man—all varieties of people, but particularly people who had no economic, social or political power. All who were defeated and dispossessed could acquire—in the new path revealed—a faith in the spirit lying within them and the secret of the arousal of that spirit lay within them in the utterance of or response to the musical utterances of the sacred Word. That way religion too became a religion in the mode of poetry and music, and songs came to have a central

importance. It was a performance for the arousal of the soul to a higher realm—it was a means for the acquisition of "enthusiasm"—or the "inspiration" from the creative spirit of God. The saints—the mystics—the poets of the Bhakti-movement were basically men dedicated to such a path of "enthusiasm". And what is 'enthusiasm'? The word derives from Extheos, "possessed by a God", and was regarded by Paster [the scientist] as one of the most beautiful and expressive in our language—*which is the impelling force driving us ever onward*" (Eric K. Rideal, "Foreword" to Philip A. Coggin's Art, *Science and Religion*, pp. 5-6, George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd. 1962)

The *Bhakti*-movement had at its heart the message that man in general—even without the support of economic, social, political power—can uplift himself to a higher mode of being and that mode was the precious "(payoji mene) Rama Ratana dhana (payo)." It is an orientation of the psych—an orientation of man's being to a mode where there is a basic sense of being connected to a primal source. It was a philosophy of the art of being and the utterance of the Names carrying the electricity of immortality and creativity was the magic discovered by the great mystics. This religion of the poetry and music—of musical spiritual utterance—Nama-dharma—was the heart of Kabir's message.

Kabir was basically a discoverer of the spiritual realm. It may be noticed that two particular words have become connected with the path of Kabir: one is 'Sakhi—which is said to have come from the *tatsam* 'sakshi' which means 'evidence'; and the other is 'Bijak'—which has come from 'Bij' (seed), which means 'essence' as well as 'invoice' or may ultimately mean 'the secret key'. 'The first has in fact come to mean in his path 'the evidences' of the Truth found and the second word may imply the keys to the Truth. Both these words also ultimately point to a central truth discovered. It appears that the original meaning of the word "akshar" meaning "immortal" too may be rediscovered along this path of Kabir. And this may be found leading us also to a philosophy of Word as creation. A word is also a name—at least generally.

"*The doctrine of Shabda (Word)*'. 'A doctrine which might be so described is taught in many of the Hindu religious sects, but it is not easy to determine in each particular case either the origin or character of this teaching. In the writings of Kabir three thoughts seem

to underlie such teaching: (1) All thought is expressed in *language*, (2) Every *letter* of the alphabet, as a constituent part of language, has significance, and (3) The plurality of letters and words now in use appear as one, when the Maya that deludes men in their present conditions have been overcome. The two lettered Ram seems to Kabir the nearest approach in this world to the unity of Truth or the letterless One." (G.H. Westcott: *Kabir and Kabir Path*, p. 49)

J.E. Keay in *Kabir and His followers* has also referred to Kabir's 'Doctrine of the Shabda' and its similarity with the idea of the Logos in the *New Testament*. However, Kabir's path—his emphasis on the *Shabda or Name* and rejection of idolatry as well as image may remind us not only of Islam with its anti-iconic character but also the original stage of the Vedas. Bhartihari in his days did something which may be ultimately linked up with the path of *nam-dharma* of the age of Kabir.

"But whereas the popular Hindu religion of the day, perhaps following the lead of the Buddhists, was turning more and more to the *image worship* that came to characterize the religion of the Epics and Purana, Bhartihari returned to the Vedas and Upanishads in the true conservative fashion. Rather than finding Brahman in popular images, he experienced the Divine in the Vedic words themselves. This is consistent with the Vedas." (Harold G. Coward: *Bhartihari*, p. 17, Twayne Publishers, Boston, 1976) Shankar Gopal Tulpale's book. *The Divine Name in Indian Tradition* also throws light on the long Indian tradition of this context.

> "It is no accident that different religions have an identical approach to the concept of the Divine Name. It is due to the effect of similar causes. There is a whole process of evolution—internal evolution, of course—behind it. When, after many centuries of thought, a pantheistic or monotheistic unity has been evolved out of *the chaos of polytheism—which is itself only a modified form of polydaemonism*—the evolution of a school in which theological discussions have lost their interest was but natural. Men began to seek for a new solution to the deeper questions of life. A new system was evolved, the Way of the Divine Name, and was adopted simultaneously by different faiths. *Behind it was the unitized mystical experience* as enjoyed by Saints belonging to different faiths—faiths which agreed internally and differed externally. This common, utilize experience of the mystics had the Divine name at its root. The

> realization of this fact can once again bring harmony among different sects and creeds. Both the end and the means are the same. The difference exists only externally. Years ago the American thinker, Wendell Wilkie, had propounded the idea of 'One World.' We can, after the late Professor Ranade, modify it, saying, "*One God, One Way and hence basis of this modification is of course the Divine Name*." (Shankar Gopal Tulpule, The *Divine Name in the Indian Tradition*, p. 161)

On the other hand, the significance of the path of *Nam-dharma* that appeared in the age of the Bhakti movement in India may be seen in a still wider perspective of worked history:

"... from the featureless matrix of Being to its organization. Thus the *Babylonian-Assyrian myth* of creation describes Chaos as the condition of the world when the heavens above were "unnamed" and on earth no 'name' was known for anything. In Egypt, too, the time before creation is called the time when *no god* existed and *no name* for any object was known.

From this indefinite state arises the first determinate existence *when the creator God utters his own name, and by virtue of the power dwelling in that word calls Himself into being.* The idea that this god is his own cause, a real causa sui, is mythically expressed in the story of his origin through the magical force of his name. Before him there was no god, nor was any god beside him, "there was for him no mother who made his name for him, nor father who uttered it, saying: I have begotten him." In the Book of the Dead, the sun-god Ra is represented as his own creator in that he gives himself his names, i.e. his characters and his powers. And from this original power of speech which dwells in the demiurge arises everything else that has existence and definite being; when he speaks, he causes the birth of gods and men.

The same motif occurs, with a somewhat different turn and a new depth of meaning, in the Biblical account of Creation. Here, too, it is the word of God that separates light from darkness and produces the heavens and the earth. But the names of earthly creatures are no longer directly given by the creator, but have to wait their assignment by Man. After God has created all the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air he brings them to man, to see what he will call them. "And whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof," (Genesis 2: 19). ***In this act***

of appellation, man takes possession of the world both physically and intellectually—subjects it to this knowledge and his rule. This special feature reveals that fundamental character and spiritual achievement of pure monotheism of which Goethe remarked that it is always uplifting because the belief in the one and only God makes man aware of his own inner unity. This unity, however, cannot be discovered except as it reveals itself in outward form by virtue of the concrete structures of language and myth, in which it is embodied, and from which it is afterward regained by the process of logical reflection." (Earnst Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, pp. 82-83.)

Like Ernst Gassier, Frithjof Schuon too has written these revealing words—

"Lastly, we must emphasize *the fundamental and truly universal significance of the invocation of the Divine Name*. This Name, in the Christian form—as in the Buddhist form and in certain branches of the Hindu tradition—is a name of the manifested World, in this case the Name of Jesus, which, like every revealed divine Name when ritually pronounced, is mysteriously identified with the Divinity. It is in the Divine Name that there takes place the mysterious meeting of the created and the Uncreated, the contingent and the Absolute, the finite and the Infinite. The Divine Name is thus a manifestation of the Supreme Principle …

The Apostle says: Pray without ceasing, which is to say that we must remember God all the time, wherever we are and whatever we are doing." (Frithjof Shcuon: the *Transcendent Unity of Religions*, p. 136, Harper & Row, 1975)

The practice of Nama-dharma (which is *a dharma* common to Hinduism of the Bhakti Path, Islam and Christianity—in particular) is an exercise in the mode of a higher being and the emulation of the qualities (of virtues) of the Being who is the essence of the Creative Spirit but invisible and not bound within the realm of the qualities—a being who lies predominantly intangible.

The practice of the Name—naming the Creative Being—Ramanan Krishnanam 'astottar-sata-nam'—is a way of participating in the higher mode of being available for man. The divine Prototype is 'a sea of qualities' or 'gunanidhi.' What Aristotle called 'Imitation' in the field of poetry applies to the practice of 'Nam; too. The Bhakti

movement was a religious movement the essence of which was the spiritual art of being.

So we may come to Kabir's poetry and philosophy also from such background. "The core of the teaching of Kabir is worship of the Name of the Lord. The Lord is nameless... The name is the first emanation of God that has created and now sustains the other universes. It is the life of our souls: it is the life of the mind and the body, and its withdrawal means instant death." (Isaac A. Ezekiel: *Kabir the Great Mystic*, pp. 180-181)

To be in tune with the spirit of God or creative Spirit—the Holy Ghost of the Christians is the foundational knowledge that all man has to acquire.

To feel or to be in tune with the basic primal creative spirit working behind and within the Creation and to share in a reality that is a reality of joy and strength and creativity is the end the *sadhaks* of the bhakti path upheld again and again. It is a process of psychoanalytical as well as spiritual liberation of the mind from a state of unconsciousness. It is a process of evaluation of the being to a higher level—and only through the utterances of language—which is not the language of the mundane quotidian reality but *the musicalized spiritual language representative of a higher level of being which is poetry or music of an elevating character that man may find salvation. The figure of Narada—the mythical representative of the higher musical mode of human being too they be remembered here and Narada with his "Narayana Narayana" leads us also to Kabir with his spiritual songs—songs that elevate the level of our beings.*

His songs are thus evidences or 'Sakhis" of a precious consciousness he had—of the fact that he was mystic. They have come to work as a seminal power—in many listeners, minds carrying the mysterious of seeds of the spiritual life of man. This 'essence' is, in fact, what R.N. Dandekar in his evaluation of *Hinduism call* 'the mystic, personal, spiritual aspect of religion' as distinguished from its 'theologic, trial, institutional, ritualistic aspect' and is what Abul Kalam Azad has shown in his reflections on Isam as '*Din*' as disguished from 'Shari'a'.

The distinction between the Din and the Shari'a—the substance of a religion and its form: it is through this distinction that the 'particular modes' of various religions can be explained. This is what Maulana Azad clearly brought out in his discussion on the unity of

Religion. "The qur'an points out that the teaching of a religion is twofold. On constitutes its spirit; the other its outward manifestation. The first is called Din, the second Shari …. The Qur'an states that the differences which exist between one religion and another are not differences in Din, the basic provision, but in the manner of giving effect to it, or in the Shari'a and *Minhaj*, not in the spirit of religions, but in its outward form." (*The Tarjuman Al-Qur'an*: I.H. Azad Faruqi, pp. 96-97).

The philosophy of Bhakti was a great discovery in the realm of man's spiritual culture. Mysticism and love and creativity are the three major strands of this philosophy. How this philosophy may be given also a modern character may be seen from the following account.

" Maulana Azad's understanding of the concept of unity of Religion.... appears undoubtedly a unique phenomenon in the exegetic history of the Qufan". (Ibid.)

"When love and not the will is postulated as the ultimate source of moral activity....*what is eliminated is the discontinuity between the moral realm and the religious*", …. (Dorothaa Crook: *Three Traditions of Moral Thought*, p. 251)

Here we may realize how the Philosophy of Bhakti and a new Humanist Faith may come near each other and illuminate each other in the content of the idea of love. To believe in the power of Love and to realize it as a creative, supernatural or miraculous power in life is to come very near this meeting-place between Humanism and traditional religious path of Bhakti.

"The degree of this acknowledged discontinuity will not indeed be the same for all Christians. The break will be very sharp for those who believe in the total depravity of human nature since the Fall, and insist therefore that salvation depends wholly upon grace and not upon 'nature' …

The Humanist need acknowledge no such discontinuity... For although he believes absolutely in *an order of values* transcending in permanence, dignity and power the inferior, perishable values of the world, he does not believe that it lies "beyond, the human or natural realm. Therefore love, the supreme value of this transcendent order of values, also lies only within the human realm....And since love is the supreme redeeming power in the life of man...therefore love

redeems man alone and without break in his moral and religious nature." (Ibid, p. 252)

The modern man may learn at this state much from the philosophy of Bhakti how and in what path the redeeming experience of Love in modern life too may be kept protected against the degrading onslaught of the mere secular and mundane and linked up to the nourishing primal numinous source of human life—even within the very modern language of modern life—that is how Kabir and Rabindranath will still be relevant for us.

II

The Indian tradition of Bhakti of the Gupta Age—after being replenished with a Dravidian spirit—was gradually moving back towards Northern India generally through the philosophical path opened by Ramanuja (1006-1137). What was happening in south India through Ramanuja and the Virasaivas by 10th century came to happen in Maharashtra in the 13th and 14th centuries and in northern India about a century later.

Jnaneshar was the famous Maharashtrain Saint of the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries who is famous for his Marathi commentary on the *Gita*, and his sister Muktabai, with her devotional songs, was a precursor of Mirabai of the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. Namdev of Maharashtra also belonged to these thirteen-fourteenth centuries and was born in 1270. The wind of the Bhakti movement started blowing in northern India above the belt of Maharashtra when Ramahanda, a follower of the school of Ramanuja, had become an active force there. According to Dr. Tara Chand, "From the South the impulse was transmitted to the north through Ramananda, a pupil of Ramanuja." And "Ramananda was the bridge between the Bhakti movement of the South and North." Kabir was a disciple of Ramananda and he himself says, "I was revealed in Kasi, and was awakened by Ramananda." (Dr. Tara Chand)

There is also historical evidence that Kabir and Assam's Sankaradeva belonged to the same century.

"Sankaradeva set out on his pilgrimage in 1481 when he was thirty-two years of age … [He returned home after twelve years] He

carried home with him a *deep impression of the nascent neo-Vaishnava movement and the sweet poetry that grew in its wake. He refers to this poetry in one of his songs: In Orissa, Varanasi and other places the pious people sing the numbers make by poets'* His own imagination took fire, taking him further and further away from mundane pleasures. It is at Badarikashrama in the upper reaches of the Ganga that he composed one of his earliest baragita lyrics: 'Rest my mind, rest on the feet of Rama." (Maheswar Neog: *Sankaradeva* pp. 9-10, National Book Trust) Could such a thing happen two centuries earlier in Northern India? The contribution of the philosophical stand of Ramanuja, as distinguished from that of Sankaracharyya, was that it connected the spirit of the Vedanta also with the language of the Shudras and this came to have great consequence in the field of religious philosophy of the South as well as the North.

"The age of the Alvars had been succeeded in Vaishnavism by the age of the Acharyas. The *Alvars were mystics and poets*, whereas the Acharyas were scholars and thinkers. The aim of the latter was to reconcile the Vedanta with the Tamil *Probandha* into public worship and raised it to the rank of the Veda in the eyes of the Vaishnavas. The next important Acharya is Hamunacharya, the grandson of Nathamani..'...*Ramanuja's chief object was to give a philosophic basis to Bhakti and to prove that Bhakti was the central teaching not only of Tamil Prabandha, but also of the Prabandha-traya*." (D.S. Sarma, *Hinduism Through the Ages*, pp. 4041)

> Ramanuja thus gave a final push to the cause of the Vedanta also as the Cause of the regional languages of India—languages what lay outside the pale of the *Deva-bhasha* of the brahmanical religion and philosophy. Like Buddha's philosophy this new phase of Vedanta too came to be nourished by the creative and humanistic spirit lying embedded in the languages of the people—the cultivators and artisans. That was a great step taken.

It may also be noted in this context that in Northern India Ramananda of the school of Ramanuja came to substitute "the worship of Rama for that of Vishnu." (Dr. Tara Chand)—This is also significant and not unexpected the path of Ramanuja and Ramananda.

In fact, already during the 13th and 14th centuries a good number

of Acharyas from the South had visited northern India and propagated the Southern cult of Vaishnava Bhakti and they were mostly connected with Siri Sampraday. (See Alakananda Palnitkar, "*Awami Haridas*: *Bani Ebong Sanjit*", p. 8). So the cause of the *Ramanam* became also the cause of Hindi. Visiting the whole of northern India he made Hindi a medium for the propogatron of Bhakti. As a result of his efforts the whole of Northern India became a region of the Bhakti movement. (The cause of the Bhakti movement became connected with the formation and development of Hindi—which ultimately represented a 'norm' of 'people' voice or democracy and worked not merely against sanskritization-cum-Brahmanization but also against Persianization (beyond the norm) be Islam-oriented ruling elites of the New Age.

In fact, the Bhakti Movement had also a significant linguistic dimension the 'new' rulers of northern Indian being Muslims, Sanskrit was already taking a less important place then before and the theological and linguistic power of the Brahmin pandits had been challenged. On the other hand, while the Brahmanical religious tradition had become intensely connected with and dependent on *Sanskirt*, the linguistic' response of the Dravida region—South India—to North Indian Hinduism with its Sanskrit had already pushed Tamil too into the sacred area solely occupied by Sanskrit. This linguistic assertion of the Dravidian South in the field of Hinduism—which became a fact, ultimately also with the help of the Sudra-oriented philosophy of Vaishnavism developed by Ramanuja on the path of the Alwar Saints had its logical impact also on the linguistic situation of soared literature in the North. Though Ramananda's liberal attitude towards the question of the language of Sudras and women in the field of religion—which is an essentially southern Dravidian attitude—showing the green signal—the (emerging relational languages on Northern Indian too became the media religious or sacred poetry. So the example of the Dravidian South—through the (philosophical accommodations made by the school of Ramanuja's liberalism—made the shudras of northern Indian too feel that God could be directly approached and reached through their native or spoken languages. This was a great event connected with the growth the Bhakti movement in northern India and the resultant process also played a great in the development and

enrichment of the modern Indian regional language—all of which have not merely an Indo-Aryan dimension by also a Dravidian one to some extent.

The great contributions made by the *Alwars*—the South Indian Tamil Vaishnava mystics and saints to the cause of Indian civilization and culture movement to the brahmanical-cum-neokshatriya ethos of the medieval times—helped the Indian society to recover in spirit, although indirectly, an ancient heritage of Indo-Aryan society—connected significantly from the ancient phase with the image of Vishnu—which image certainly did not belong to the group of (*Nordikryans*) who were led by Indra and who intruded into a more democratic and creative type society which represented the ancient cult of *Vishnu* (ultimately given a place in the Tenth mandala of Rigveda). The relation of Prithu, the First Indo-Aryan King in the history of Indian civilization, to the people—the agriculturists and artisans—is memorable for its democratic and creative character and this first king was also connected with Vishnu. So when in the path of Vaishnavism, the Alwars of the Dravidian society were giving a new prestige to the Shudras they were but following a very ancient Vaishnava tradition of India, which need not conflict with Dravidian ethos ago which was not there in the path of Indra or Indra-centered Aryanism. (The word Aryan, originally, meant also a cultivator and household).

> "The Vaishnava mystics and saints are known as Alvars. It has been well said that they fill the place between the Bhagavad Gita and Ramanuja. (I) For the fountain of Vaishnava bhakti rises in the *Gita*, passes through the songs of the Alvars, gathers its waters in the system of Ramanuja and flows out later, as we shall see, in varied streams all over India. The Alvars *flourished* during the seventh and eight centuries. They were all wandering singers who were popularly supposed to be mad after God. The greatest of them are Nammalvar and Tirumangalai Alvar. In fact, it is the religious experience of the former that gives a clue to the reconciliation effected by later Acharyas of the traditional Vedanta with the bhakti cult. His four works in Tamil are regarded by the southern Vaishnavas as equivalent to the Vedas. The hymns of the Alvars are collectively known as the Nalariya Prabandham, and they contain some of the most moving devotional poetry in the world. One pleasing feature of the Alvar movement is that in it distinctions, of caste, rank and sex were ignored.

> The Alvars included among them a king, a beggar, a woman, a man of the depressed class and non-Brahmans as well as Brahmans. In fact, the most characteristic feature of their teaching is that God is accessible to all without any distinctions of caste, rank or culture, and that by love and self-surrender every man and woman can obtain salvation." (D.S. Sarma: *Hinduism Through the Age*, pp. 35-36, Bharatya Vidya Bhavan, 1956, 1962)

The Brahminical idea of Veda, with its connected idea *of Sanskrit as* the 'deva bhasha' thus met with a serious challenge in the south.

> "He (Sankaradeva) had seen how the whole of Northern India was pulsing with a new life, a life of liberalism evoked by the neo-Vasishnava movement. He had already decided on the mission of his life and was now very intent on efforts to fulfil it." (Maheswer Neog, *Sankaradeva*, p. 11) "The Assamese biographers make Sankaradeva consider this mystic poet (Kabir) of Northern India a Kevala bhakta, a strict monotheistic." (Maheswar Neog: Ibid., p. 22)

So on the basis of such evidences too—gathered from Assamese sources—we may place Kabir securely in the 15th century. So this position is acceptable: "All that can be said with some degree of confidence is that *Kabir* probably lived in the 15th century." (Prabhakar Machwe: Kabir, p. 9). According to Isaac A. Ezekiel's *Kabir the Great Mystic*, "Possibly he was born in or about 1440, became a disciple of Ramanand in about 1455, and passed away in 1518 at the age of 78. This fits in with the historic records regarding Sikandar Lodi, who reigned from 1448 to 1512 and was, according to legends, responsible for the persecution of Kabir at the combined instigation of Mulvis (Muslim priests) and Brahmins."

If Kabir was born in 1440, as it has been shown also in the "Introduction" to Rabindranath's *Poems of Kabir* (p. V) and *Sankaradeva* was born in 1449, as it has been shown in Dr. Maheswer Neog's Sankaradeva (Sahitya Akademi), then it is obvious that they were near contemporaries. Evidences from the biographical records of Sankaradeva show that Sankaradeva, who survived Kabir, took interest in Kabir. On the other hand, we find in the first chapter of Bishop G.H. Westcott's well-known book on Kabir (published in 1907 by Christ Church Mission Press, Kanpur): "The interest which Nanak felt in Kabir was probably enchanted by the fact that

he had enjoyed personal intercourse with the reformer." (P. 2) Nanak was born in 1469 and he is supposed to have met Kabir in 1496. The Kabir, Nanak and Sankaradeva represented a particular (or Ramanuja-Ramananda-oriented) wave-length of the cultural history of northern India of the fifteenth century and Kabir was the eldest of the medieval Northern Indian saints may be easily concluded.

The fact that Kabir was the eldest of those saints seems to have given him also a special position among them. "...he exercised tremendous influence on many who later themselves became Saints. Incomparably the most powerful influence in the moulding of Dadu's thought was the teachings of Ramananda's disciple Kabir, writes Rev. Dr. W.O. Orr *in A Sixteenth Century Indian Mystic*.... And Dadu's disciples often spoke of Dadu as the second Kabir." (Isaac A. Ezekiel, *Kabir the Great Mystic*, p. 23)

So Kabir or Uttar Pradesh, Nanak of Punjab and Sankaradeva of Assam as well as Chaitanyadev of Bengal (6:1485) all belonged to the fifteenth century and Kabir was the eldest and Chaitanyadev was the youngest among them. After them—about a century later—there appeared Eknath (1533-1599) of Maharashtra, Tulsidas (1532-1623), Surdas (1540-1620), Mirabai (1573-1630) and Dadu (15441603) all of whom belonged to the sixteenth century and seventeenth century. When we come to Tukaram of Maharashtra and Narsi Mehta of Gujarat it is pure seventeenth century. Charan Das of Rajasthan and Delhi belonged to the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century and shows us the way how the Bhaktimovement in its last phase continued into the British age.

We may also notice such facts: Shah Inayat and Shah Latif were two Muslim Saints of Sind while Sarmad was a Jewish saint who was executed as a heretic by the orders of Aurangzeb. Sarmad is said to have inculcated the hearing of Saut-i-Sarmadi (the Eternal Sound) within, "giving up all other forms of worship" and he too in his way contributed to the development of the religion of Namdharma in India of those times. Mirdad was apparently a Saint from Lebanon. These historical facts are also suggestive of a new atmosphere in the age of Kabir. It was not an exclusively Hindu or mono-religious atmosphere.

III

Kabir's age with its Bhakti movements too however need to be seen in a longer perspective of Indian history.

It was the Gupta Age that saw the beginnings of a consciousness developing regarding the norm or characteristic basis of Indian culture and civilization. It was also the age of a great process of editorial work represented by the mythical or collective Indian 'superconscious' called Vyasa.

The Indian society needed a philosophy of religion which could ultimately give man an integral and multi-faceted vision of life and the Universe and ultimately could take Hinduism to a position where it might harmonize at a fundamental level with such other great religions as Buddhism (with its moral and humanistic ethos it became the most civilizing force in world history in its heyday) as well as with nascent Islam and Christianity. It had to be a philosophy which was not available in—not to speak of Lokayata and Tantricism (though they too had positive points) but also in Vedic Brahminism {which by upholding Vac and the idea of the Vedas served to uphold ultimately not only a sense of great memory and tradition but also the idea of the Transcendent ('appaurusheya') Reality}, and even in the path of such more humanistically-oriented religions as Jainism (which perhaps was once the greatest civilizing and humanizing force that the soul of India has contributed to world civilization and without the example of which it is doubtful whether there could have been such a miracle as Christianity and Christian philosophy, not to speak of the monasteries and saints in the tradition of Christianity. What even Buddhism—this great civilizing force—lacked was the philosophy of the Creative Spirit. Non-theism in Jainism and Buddhism was ultimately an expression of a lack of faith in the presence of the Creative Spirit within human life and human history—of a more positive sense in human history and destiny. (The limitation of atheism or narrow Relationalism and Empiricism are also connected with the lack of a deeper faith in human destiny). This is where which world religions as Judaism, Islam and Christianity—all coming from the Semitic-Herbraic—Biblical source, in spite of some limitations in other respects (such as a dominance of the 'masculine' principle and a distance from the principle of 'ardhanarishar') can

become more satisfying for man than such religions as Jainism and Buddhism, not to speak of Brahminism and Tantricism—both of which too, however, have some positive points. What the Indian mind in its deepest and widest character was to evolve was an ideal of religion that could overcome the serious limitations of the paths of Lokayata, Tantra, Brahmanism (either in its a Vedic form of Power-cult or in its Tannic form), as well as the relative limitations of such non-Brahminical religions as Jainism and Buddhism and this the Indian mind could do through its Vyasa form in those moments of the *Bhagavadgita* when it had an epiphany of Many in One as well as of the Transcendent in the immanent: 'sutre mani gatha iba'. It was also the deepest voice of the Indian people, and not Brahmanical Hinduism but popular Hinduism carried this voice; and Vyasa, the son of the non-brahmanical Matsyagandha, was the trustee of that Indian people's voice. That voice, because of a sense of totality as well as of a balance and complexity which lay behind it, was not also 'anti-brahmanical' in a one-sided subaltern character and so may be taken advantage of—by forces lying to the left as well as by forces lying to the right.

The subtle and deep Indian mind that was Vyasa—had through the Gupta age—laid the basis of an Indian philosophy of religion which could ultimately no harmonize but not only the Aryan and Dravidian Strains of Indian nationality also with the message of Islam and Christianity in their innermost regions.

R.N. Dandekar's scholarly analysis of the character of the Mahabharata is also very revealing in this context.

The rise of Krsnaism on the religious horizon of ancient India synchronised with the partially accomplished process of enlarging the bardic-historical poem *Jaya* into the epic *Bharata*. This newly created literary monument belonging to the suta tradition had instantly caught the imagination of the people. What wonder then that the practical-minded sponsors of Krsnaism should have thought of employing this popular epic as a vehicle for propagating their religious teaching? They, accordingly, redacted the partially completed epic *Bharata* in such a way as to make it serve their own purpose. They stared by associating the heroes of the epic the Pandavas, with Krsna. Krsna came to be represented as a close relative of the Pandavas, indeed as their guide, friend, and philosopher. Actually he became

the central figure of the epic, the pivot round which all persons and events in the epic revolved. All credit is, indeed, due to the remarkable ingenuity and resourcefulness of the Krsnite redactors, who brought about these basic changes in the older epic in such a manner as not to give any cause for even a faint suspicion that the character of Krsna was really extraneous to the original epic. Of course, the real cornerstone of this Krsnite superstructure was the *Bhagavadgita*. The *Bhagavadgita* epitomises the religious, ethical, and philosophical teachings of Krsna, and the Krsnite redactors of the epic must be said to have conceived a very dramatic background and form for it." (R.N. Dankedar, Exercises in Indology, pp. 298-299, Ajanta Publication (India) Delhi 1981) "in the religious history of India, two movements, originating in two distinct ideologies, seem to have been jointly responsible for stemming the advance of the heterodox systems of thought, which had strengthened their position during the interregnum following the Upanisadic period. They were the *Sutra-Vedanga* Brahmanism and the popular Hinduism. By its very nature, however, it was the latter which held the field after the decline of the heterodox religions. But once the danger of the avowedly anti Brahmanic religions was past, the sponsors of Brahmanism again began gradually to assert themselves. They knew that, though the popular Hinduism represented, in some respects, a definite reaction against Brahmanism, it was not avowedly anti-Brahmanic. It was, therefore, possible to bring about a workable compromise between Brahmanism and the popular Hinduism—that is to say, so far as the present context is concerned, between Brahmanism and Krsnaism. The sponsors of Brahmanism accordingly attempted to brahmanise, so to say, the popular religion of Krsna as far as it was feasible to do so. Indeed, they attempted thus to brahmahise several minor popular religious sects. So far as Krsnaism was concerned, the sponsors of Brahmanism seem to have started their brahmanising operation with the epic Bharata which had, by then, almost come to be regarded as an authentic Krsnite document." (Ibid., p. 299)

"In this context, it may be incidentally pointed out that, in comparison with the methods of the Krsnite redactors, those of the *Brahmanic redactors were obviously gross. As a matter of fact the activity of the sponsors of Brahmanism ought to be described not as artistic redaction but as flagrant interpolation*." (Ibid., p. 300)

Apart from an organic sense of art, an ideal of spiritual democracy, which was lacking in the Brahmanical philosophy, was present in the Krishnite path. At the same time there was here an organic sense of a norm of the Indian national life. The historical analysis of K.M. Pannikar in this context is also revealing.

> "The object of the great redactions was therefore something totally different. It was for the purpose of eliminating the foreign and exotic elements which the Kushanas, the Greeks and the Parthians had almost imperceptibly introduced into Indian life. From the first century AD to the reaffirmation of nationalism by the Guptas there was a noticeable penetration of foreign ideals into Hinduism. The Gandharan art was its visible expression. The danger to Indian social structure was not so much from foreign conquest as from the penetration of barbarian ideals. The comprehensive rewriting of texts introducing them into large sections devoted to popular ethics was essential if these foreign and disrupting elements were to be eliminated and the useful portion assimilated into a vigorous Indian culture.

The success of the Gupta effort in this direction was complete. Till today the books edited have remained the classics of Hindu literature and the repositories of Indian traditions. As Dr. Sukhtankar, the great *Mahabharata* scholar, has said: "The fact of expurgation and addition and elaboration is only an outward indication of its being a book of inspiration and guidance in life and not merely a book lying unused and forgotten on a dusty bookshelf. These were probably just the touches that have saved the *Mahabharata* from the fate of being consigned to the limbo of oblivion which has befallen upon its sister epics like the Gilgamesh." (K.M. Pannikar, *A Survey of Indian History*, p. 56)

It may be felt-here was at work also an Indian sense of national History. The Gupta Age has the central significance in the history of Indian Culture and Civilization—which was felt to have also a protecting god Vishnu who came to represent the source of the creative as well as preservative and balancing spirit in man and human civilization. The basis of the Bhakti Movement too was laid during that age.

> "The greatest change came over Vishnu. The God of Preservation in the Hindu trinity, who was doctrinally immersed in yogic sleep,

> symbolising the static Vishnu, through the theory of avatars, became a dynamic, faith giving and hope-inspiring saviour of humanity. The legend of Dasavatara, or the ten incarnations, had been popular long before the Christian era; but the worship of the avataras become popular only after the Christian era. All the ten incarnations never received worship. The earliest which received the honour of being worshipped as a deity in temples seems for some unknown reason to be the Boar Incarnation—the Adivaraha—whose temples are popular even today. The probable reason is that *this incarnation is supposed to have redeemed the earth from the control of evil powers*. Though other avataras were also worshipped their popularity never equaled that of Krishna. The acceptance of Vishnu's supreme Godhead is connected with Krishna, the last actual incarnation, whose total identification with Vishnu is one of the major developments of Hindu religion. Krishna Vasudeva was known to Panini but his worship as an incarnation of God does not seem to have established itself earlier than the first century BC. His complete identification with Vishnu is testified by Kalidasa, a Siva worshipper, in two direct statements, one in *Meghaduta* where he was the phrase "Vishnu in his form of cowherd," and the other in *Kumara Sambhava* where he uses the name of Krishna for Vishnu. While other incarnations including the popular hero Rama—whose name *was destined later to become the name of God*—were never accepted as being anything more than partial manifestations, Krishna's identity with Vishnu and his final transformation as the Saviour and Supreme God took place in the first centuries in the Christian era. *In the Bhagawad Krishna is the One, Final and Absolute. At least two of the Gupta emperors Samudra Gupta and Chandra Gupta II were Vaishnavas, the second infact claiming to be a Bhagavata*.'" (K.M. Pannikar: *A Survey of Indian History*, p. 56).

"The Gupta period (fourth-sixth centuries A.D.) was not only the classical period of Sanskrit literature, but, it "*is also the period which truly prepared the ground for the emergence of bhakti*: For instance, the Gupta kings called themselves devotees of God (*bhagavatas*). They took the names of the gods; put the figures of Laksmi, Visnu's consort, and Varaha, his incarnation as a Boar, on their coins; made mythology a state concern, enlisting particularly Visnu and his heroic incarnations for their politics. The Guptas sponsored Visnu and believed almost that Visnu sponsored the Gupta empire. Krsna as a God with his own legends and cults emerged in the later Gupta period. Not only were the first Hindu temples built and the first

Hindu icons sculpted during this period, but the official forms of Hindu mythology were set down in great synergetic texts called the puranas. By the fifty century AD, Visnu, Siva, their families, minions, and enemies seem to have become as real as the human dynasties." (A.K. Ramanujan and Norman Culter: "From Classicism to Bhakti": *Essays on Gupta Culture*, p. 177)

The Gupta period may also be called the last representative period of a great—perhaps the greatest—age in world history; and it was the age of Aryan Culture. This age was represented in world history in the easternmost region by the Indo-Aryan stream, then beyond the Indus by the Persian, then by the Greek and Roman streams. That great age was also the age of the great religions of the world as well as of the great schools of philosophical thought. The ancient base of Indo-Aryan Rigvedic culture was Varuna-centred and it was not—as Kunhan Raja too felt—a priest-controlled culture—but that base had already been overcome in Indus valley in an ancient period by the inroads of group of Nordic Aryans led by Indra along with the brahmanical cult. There was, however, always at work in Indian civilization a counter-movement to that type of Indra-like Aryanism supported by Brahmanism and the creative and spiritual mode of Aryanism ultimately found expression in the rise the Upanishadic and Buddhist phase—as well as the phase that created the tradition of the two great epic—with a completely different idea of the Hero or Kshatriya Vira (in Krishna and Rama) from that of Indra, eulogized by the priests. However, till the Gupta age and afterwards India had to bear the brunt of many inroads of Indra-like invaders—from the Middle East—through its northwest frontier but the Gupta age evolved a basis of Indian civilization in the central way—a basis for ousting or belittling the Indra-centred cultural tradition supported by conservative Brahmanism, and showing the Krishna-centred line of creative path of Bhakti as the central path of Indian civilization.

This is however not to suggest that we have to take a simplistic or uncritical view of the Gupta age and to think that the negative aspects of the Brahmanical view of life—with its emphasis on the ideal of power at the expense of Creativity—did not at all vitiate the character of Gupta Age culture too in any way. (For a severe criticism of this aspect of the Gupta Age see Buddha Prakash's, "*The Brahminical Renaissance Under the Guptas*" in *The Poona Orientalist*:

January-April 1946, pp. 57-72). However that the Vishnu principle represented in Indian civilization what may be called (also in the language of Buddha Prakash) "the creative and constructive" principle is the main point to be noted here and the Guptas gave its a significant support. It was the collusion between the defenders of Brahmani and the Neo-Kshatriyas of the late ancient and medieval age—like the Sakas and Hunas as well as the Rajput) that endangered the cultural tradition of an ancient Indian Kshatriya society—which was basically connected with the creative and democratic ethos of the Iron age—Aryan Vaisyas (cultivators and artisans)—which ethos was originally represented by both the Upanishadic leaders as well as by Buddha on the one hand and on the other hand by the heroes of the two great Indian epics—Rama and Krishna' particularly from the days of the Sakas and Hunas we find in Indian history a different type of Kshatriyas (which type was adumbrated in the age of the Brdnamana) and it were these new-kshatriyas who contributed to a feudalization of the concept of bhakti too. It is this context that we may have to remember that another period of Indian history had emerged in which the collusion between the Brahmanas and kshatriyas became a major fact.

> "The Brahmans transformed the Scythians, the Hunas, the Sakas and other foreigners, and the Gods and Bhils and other indigenes into Rajputs; and the Rajputs paid the price of their elevation from barbarism to civilization by accepting and confirming their (of the Brahmanas) superiority." (Dr. Tara Chand: *The Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, p. 131, The Indian Press (Publications) Pvt. Ltd. Allahabad, 1963)

"When the empire of Harsa fell, the North (India) broke up into small principalities. Rajput clans starting from their original homes in the West spread north and east...The Rajputs thus were the masters of the destinies of India from the Panjab to the Deccan and from the Arabian Sea to Bengal before the Muslims appeared upon the scene.... Feudal institutions swept away the ancient councils and assemblies and tribal kingdoms." (Ibid, p. 130)

The conflict between the real creative spirit of Krishnaism or the Krishnaite principle and the Brahmanical principle was there even in the Gupta Age—though the latter principle had not appeared in the gross form which appeared in the age of the Rajputs.

> "The Brahmanical preponderance which the Gupta Renaissance sought to accomplish could only be achieved by the collaboration and support of the reigning kings. Therefore the Brahmanas adopted a flattering attitude towards the kshatriyas who in turn, were indoctrinated with implicit reliance on the former. The policy of mutual concession, born of an interdependence of interests—the Brahmana fostering by their teachings subservience to the sovereigns and the latter safeguarding the privileges and pretensions of the priests—resulted in the spiritualization of Hindu politics and the ideology of war. The Asvamedha was, thus, the link between the interests of the Brahmanas and the ambitions of the Kshatriyas." *The Poona, Orientalists*, January-April 1946, p. 63) 'Power' necessarily became a more valuable ideal in this Path than Truth and Creativity and Love.

"The apotheosis of politics and conquest inevitably resulted in some sort of deification of kingship... Thus apparently the Brahmanical Revival completely stifled the popular and plebiscitary character of Hindu kingship and left the people to the caprices and crochests of individual rulers.

The necessary outcome of these tendencies was the growth of the rigid and immobile caste-structure, in which the social organization of the Hindu, was strangled. The position of the Sudras was damned for good and it became impossible for the talent to find an outlet through social institutions... Similarly the enslavement and degradation of women was completed." (Ibid, p. 65).

The democratic ethos of the ancient Aryan society as well as that of the Buddhist Age was also being represented by the leaders of the Bhakti movement. The Bhakti Movement in the Indian society of the medieval age has to be understood also against this historical backdrop. That movement gave a freer expression to the Krishnite principle which too was given a significant place in the Mahabharata by Vyasa.

It may be pointed out here that the critical or negative sense of the word 'Brahmanical' is and has to be kept connected with a particular attitude to life. It is ultimately connected with the magical or tribal religious traditions and it is practically connected with the ideal of Power. Buddhas called his religion the "Aryan". Why and it was conflict with the "brahmanica' because of the latter's orientation to the ends of Power and Magic People—individuals and castes dependent

on Power and primarily committed to a Philosophy of Power—can be called "brahmanical' in this particular sense. On the other hand, the word 'brahmin' may be used also in a positive or good sense—as a type of man who is dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge (Iran) or the carrier of knowledge. Both these senses are valid.

The weaknesses of Indian civilization have been connected with its brahmanical tradition in the 'negative' sense and for this the tradition of the Neo-Kshatriyas since the middle age are also particularly responsible. The ancient Indo-Aryan kshatriya tradition of the days of the Upanishads and Buddha had a different character and it is this tradition which has given Indian civilization its real creative spirit and humanistic character.

> "In Pargiter's view the traditions compiled in the Puranas represent the khseatriya version of events in contrast to the Vedic literature and the Dharmashastras which represent the priestly version. But this distinction does not seem to be very sound. Whatever may have been the character of the original Puranic traditions, *Tjeu* were certainly brahmanized in course of time and were used by the priests for elevating and validating the position of the ksatriya patrons in return for which handsome rewards were given. The epics and Puranas contributed much to the normal functioning of society. (A.L. Basham: *The wonder That Was India*).

In this path of "brahmanization' the social and economic powers may ultimately become more important than God. The brahmanization or feudalization of Bhakti the essence of 'Bhakti'.

The "brahmanical' mode of Indian culture—in its strongest or purest smarta form was philosophically represented by the Smartas mimarnsa of which Kumarila became the memorable representative in the South Sankara gave a higher quality to this tradition by using the Aryan Kshatriya tradition of the Vedanta (Upanishadic) oath in a novel way through Ramanuja this novel phenomenon, Brahmanical Vedanth presented a more related type Brahmanism and assumed also an essentially Shudra oriented character—giving a more dignified place to Bhakti.

The philosophical difference between Sankara, and Ramanuja was that the ormers attempt to 'Brahmanize' the old Upanishadic tradition missed a significant dimension.

> "The Vedic and Upanishadic view was clearly theistic and for it the first

> cause is a creative, all-wise, all-powerful Spirit. Sankara (Sankaracharyya) unfortunately accepted the Sankhyan and Buddhist premises that to act must be to change and hence to be transcient." (G.C. Pande: *Foundations of Indian Culture: Spiritual Vision and Symbolic Forms in Ancient India*, p. 115, *Books and Books, New Delhi, 1985*)

> "In case the Satra (Brahmasutra) 1-1-2 is taken seriously then the Brahmasutra would have to be recognized as the source of everything that exists. But Sankara gave it a unique twist and treated the notion of Brahmasutra as radically different from that of Iswara as having no relationship to it... And it was this aspect of Sankara's though, which, strictly speaking, cannot even permit the characterization of Brahmana as *Sat-cit-ananda* that forms the focus of attack from all the non-advaitic schools of Vedanta after Sankara." (Daya Krishna: *Indian Philosophy: A New Approach*, p. 119)

It may also be seen why unlike Sankara's Brahmanical Vedanta Ramanuja's Vedanta philosophy may, comparatively, help the Indian mind also to understand more seriously the meaning and significance of Christianity too.

The face of Islam that its philosophy of the religion of Name carried and that Sufism along with a Persian-Aryan tradition of scholarship too carried—the face which can join also with the Southern or benign face of Siva—the face that went into the formation of a new Indian culture along with the tradition of the Hindu Bhakti movements during the medieval age was a face congenial to the softer face of Hinduism.

The other face—the Semitic-Arabic and 'political' face—the Turkish-Mongoloid face of power too was a reality and some of the currents of the Hindu Bhakti movements—directly or indirectly were also a response to that face of Islam in the form of Muslim 'political' power. The onrush of the newly risen political power that appeared in Arab—after the passing away of the great age of Indo-Aryan culture in World history—created new problems for the old Indian Society—cultural and spiritual, not merely political.

It was in South India, Hindu Society that Bhakti of the Gupta age could acquire a new of life and this was a process occurring almost parallelly and simultaneously with the rise of Islam in world history.

To practice Namadharma is to practise an art of being, that is

of being in a higher mode than the common or the quotidian. Enthusiasm, inspiration, ecstasy, and being in love are very much the substance of such a mode of being—the art of being that Bhakti was very much there in the Rigvedic and Upanishadic path of poetry and—the collective Indian-Aryan Superconscious—Vyasa could get the line but it had not acquired a special dimension—the emotive passionate involvement or surrender of the whole being to the Great Being or the Divine Prototype. For that there had to be—as it were—a due historical preparation of the Indian psyche and adequate historical and cultural circumstances too. It may also be said—

> "Thus *bhakti* always existed as a spiritual possibility, but for its flowering it nevertheless needed certain conditions, corresponding to a particular phase of the Hindu cycle. Every cycle has its qualitative aspects: what is possible at one moment is not possible at another, so that the emergence of a given perspective does not occur at all moments indifferently..." (Frighjof Schnon: *Language of the Self* pp. 2-3)

Bhakti may also be called a musicalization of the being of man and that is the taste of 'Brahma' for man. The emotive dimension of the Namadharma of India was developed under the influence of the South Indian example—which was strongly lyrical and musical in character.

> "In the sphere of religion, as generally in all matters of spiritual culture, *South India began by being heavily indebted to the North*: but in the course of centuries it more than amply repaid the debt and made signal contributions to the theory and practice of religion and the philosophic thought in various aspects. Its saints and seers evolved a new type of bhakti, a fervid emotional surrender to God which found its supreme literary expression in the *bhagavata-purana*, a bhakti very different from the calm, dignified devotion of the Bhagavatas of the early centuries before and after Christ in Northern India." (Nilakanta Sastri: *A History of South India*, p. 422)

It may be noticed that Buddhism, which had originated in India and spread to the Far East came to have a special appeal to the Austro-Mongoloid populations while the Dravidian psyche ultimately took more to a religious philosophy which was *theo-centred*. Buddhism or Taoism or even Confucianism do not go with the idea

of God' the creator and preserver—not to speak of the Dravidian type of enthusiasm. Why Buddhism did not survive in India was also because there was the great Dravidian reaction against a religious tradition which was not theo-centric.

The theo-centric mode became as it were the essential mode of the common Dravidian psyche.

"But soon a great change came—particularly in the Tamil country—and people began to entertain fears of the whole land going over to *Jainism* and *Buddhism*. At any rate, worshippers of Siva and Vishnu felt the call to stem the rising tide of heresy. The growth, on the one hand, of an intense emotional *bhakti* to Siva and Vishnu and on the other hand an outspoken hatred of Buddhists and Jains, are the chief characteristics of the new epoch... Parties of devotees under the leadership of one gifted saint or another traversed the country many times over, singing, dancing and debating all their way. *This great wave of religious enthusiasm attained its peak in the early seventh century and had not spent itself in the middle of the ninth*." (Nilakanta Sastri: *A History of South India*, p. 423)

It was the final rejection by the Dravidian psyche—as it were—of two non-theistic religions. Through the tidal wave of the Bhakti Movement sweeping the country the heritage of Buddhism too was, however, assimilated into the form of the new phenomena called Neo-Vaishnavism. Buddhism, in a sense, did not vanish away from India; it was assimilated into a new religious from which was theo-centred and had also a Dravidian dimension.

On the one hand it was the pressure of the Dravidian Bhakti that led to the process of its dissolution while on the other hand there was also the role of the Muslim invasions: "it was Muslim expansion which dealt the death blow by destroying in India, as outside also, the Buddhistic monasteries." (See V.) Raghavan's "Forward" in Frithjof Schuon's *Language of the Self* p. XV) It is also a significant fact that those regions of the Indian subcontinent (East Bengal and North-West Indian where was the absence of the idea of the Creator God or the ancient Indian-Aryan idea of Gopal. Narayan etc., could not prevail) also came under the domination of Islam. In East Bengal, the people who easily took to Islam were, unlike the people of the West Bengal—not connected with the Dravidian line but were Indo-mongoloids and Tantraism and the cult of power were

more attractive there. The ancient Indo-Aryan Iron-Age agrarian civilization and its representatives—the free peasantry and artisans had come under successive waves of disrupting invasions through the ages (Sakas, Huns, etc.) in the North-Westem region and the invaders with the banner of Islam were the last batch tinvaders. (The road to 'Pakistan, or the division of Indian subcontinent was connected with a long tradition of landlordism of conquering invaders from the middle East. That was not Kabir's road.

Islam too had two dimensions or two faces, like the Hindu god Siva and one of the two faces was a face—not of Love but of Power and it was primarily this face of Islam which the Hindu societies of the north-western and northern India had to face for along time. There is also the historical fact: Islam came to these regions with the conquerors or invaders but it came to the western coast of South India mainly with the traders.

The Vedic age as well as the Upanishadic age of Indian History did not represent a cultural tradition which was symbolized by the temples—there were no temples in those days nor idols and icons. All these were basically representative of a later phase of Indian history when the influence of Greco-Roman culture as well as the influence of some Mid-eastern invaders had been absorbed by the Indo-Aryan cultural tradition of North India. The new Brahmanical philosophy that ultimately emerged as a result of all these historical developments established the age of the temples and the idols and a special type of feudalism too—the Brahmin priest having a special power in it and the South India became a particular shelter-land of this particular cultural tradition. There it acquired also a dimension which was distinctly of a Dravidian character—and it carried a current of "response of the heart"—a current of emotionalism too—which was giving the temple culture itself a special character that could ultimately link up with the Bhakti movement which came on the scene at a later stage.

That the invasions of a new type of people from the Middle East or Central Asia with a conquering religion of their own—after the Sakas and the Hunas—led to the development of a new attitude to the tradition of temple culture in the North India—which had been established particularly from the fifth or sixth century AD onwards—may be realized. The new political scene definitely meant

a threat to the temples of the Hindus and the history of Somnath has a deep significance. There was also the iconoclastic or idol breaking impulse at work which came to be symbolized in Indian history by a particular, word, 'kalapahari'. This episode of Indian history—particularly of Northern Indian history too has a relevance to the context of the medieval Bhakti movement with its displacement of attention away from the temples and idols towards the ideal of 'Nama' of "Namsankirtan'. Joydeva was the last significant Sanskrit poet and the was also the representative of the coming of a new phase of Indian cultural history. The mind of the Hindu society was given a more and more inward character—a character which was in harmony with the fact of the loss of the political power by those societies or communities whose religious culture was Hinduism. The fact that Joydeva's '*Dasavatar strotta*' became popular is representative of the fact that his Neovaishnative message could give the invaded society an inner spiritual hope or courage—and this was what Tulsidas particularly offered in his idea of a higher durbar reflected in *ramacharitmanas*, higher than the durbar of the political power or the secular realm.

On the other hand, a new light in the changed historical situation could show that 'tirthas' and 'temples'—all may turn into mere externalities if the inner essence of the spirit is not at work. All 'tirthas' appear as mere waters—this philosophy of an inward intangible reality was suggestive of a new age.

Temples themselves were also symbols of a human reality. "Indian temples are traditionally built in the image of the human body" (A.K. Ramujan). So the temple could be given again an invisible human character as the Vacana poets of Karnataka came to do in their social reaction against the established Brahmanical culture of the visible royal temples in the South or the outer temple culture could be invaded by an inner current if humanistic spiritualizing influence within some established Hindu temples—as it happened particularly in the Jagannatha temple of Orissa (in which God assumes a connection with the urge to acquire new birth-periodically) where the Northern India with the Eastern stretch in particular received the Dravidian South with its intense bhakti impulse'. On the whole, the political and physical threat to the older or established Indian temple culture with its feudalism and Brahminism and all the accompanying

virtues and vices and was also an occasion for a spiritual regeneration of the Indian and particularly Hindu religious culture. This process was represented mainly by the Bhakti movements of the medieval India.

It was not a glorious age like the Gupta age; it was not an age in which we find a multidimensional cultural tradition. Something had been lost or damaged; but in spite of all these truths there is also the truth that this age of bhakti-movements—in a situation of a lowering of the light of the mind in intellectual and scientific fields—also gave the Indians an idea of how to preserve what is most valuable and precious in human life in situations of danger. This was this realization which can be behind such songs as "*payoji mene Rama-ratana dhana payoo*". It was also a kind of strength which could work not only against the Mohammed Ghoris looting and destroying hundreds of Hindu temples but also against the dehumanizing social pressure of the Indra-centred Aryanism and Smarta brahmanhood of the Hindu society. The dharma of *nam* gave the weak and the dispossessed and humiliated an inner spiritual power and it also carried a creative ideal of love' as against the ideal of powers of less spiritual character—politically, social, economic. Man can be spiritually free—even when he may remain political, socially and economically in a bondage. The basic reality or truth was revealed and stressed in the Bhakti Movement and if the movements of secondary reality—the movement of political liberation, social liberation, economic liberation are not controlled and guided by that state of Being—that is, of spiritual liberation such as Kabir stood for—the means or instruments of these other liberations themselves will endanger the essence of man that Kabir tired to identify, illuminate, cherish and defend. It was a spiritual fight and not a political-social fight—basically.

With Tulsidas Kabir represents also the medieval foundation of the culture of the Hindu-speaking society of northern India but Kabir appears generally to have a wider geographical significance. He can reach more westward as well as eastward. His words go also beyond the boundary of the Hindu society. So Kabir is nearer also to Sikhism than Tulsidas and near also to Islam.

The kind of 'nirgunism' that Kabir represented is also different from the philosophy of nirgun brahma that is found in Sankaracharyya—whose philosophy shows a different attitude to

the idea of God, when it is compared with the philosophy of Islam. The 'unity of Godhead' that Islam emphasised was also an idea not similar to the spirit of Sankaracharyya's philosophy of Monism or Nirguna brahma which was not loyal to the ideal of monotheism and could allow for the devaluation of the idea of God as well as the worship of many gods and goddesses as the word God represents—in Sankaracharyya's philosophy—a reality of a lower level than that of nirgun brahma. (In Ramakrishna's path there came to be a subtle subversion of this idea) However, neither Allah of the Muslims nor Ram of Tulsidas would accept such a philosophical position but they could very much come near in a philosophy of religion that is Name-centred—as Kabir discovered and revealed.

The Bhakti movement of Kabir's age was a movement away from the particular kind of Hindu mind which had come to be represented by the philosophy of Sankaracharyya and it was a movement also away from the worship of gods and goddesses graspable or approachable in the form of idols. It was in spirit against the age of the idols and icons and for the realm of the philosophy of *nama*. It is where Kabir and Tulsidas met but while Tulsidas's *Ramchritmanas* carries on an old Hindu tradition that had evolved in Northern India before the advent of the Muslims Kabir's path has no connection with the idea of Avataravad—that the Vaishnavism of the Gupta Age had evolved. The great age of Hindu sculptures and temples had given place to the age of the voice of the vernacular poets in the vernacular languages which were also different in character from Sanskrit with its sculpture-lime character: 'Bhasa vahta Pani'.

The bhakti-movement of India was essentially a spiritual-religions movement but it also had a social-economic dimension and so it was also a movement specially representative of the comparatively mobile artisan classes not very much dependent on land—and the cultivators' castes in conflict with the Smarta philosophy of Brahminism (with its links with Feudalism form above and with its Siva-Sakti cults and the temples) and it could bring together or nearer the Hindu and Muslim communities through the social strata represented by the artisans—who had a particularly liberating role. On the other hand' *the Bhakti movement had also a potential and hidden national consciousness regarding 'Bharatavarisha'* (to use a word used by Sankaradeva) as well as a consequent political dimen-

sion as it represented also the politically threatened Hindu society in the face of the inroads of the alien. Political dimension too was also present in Tulsidas's path of Namadhrama—in his Ramanama: his *Ramcharitmanas* was at one level also a new presentation of Kalidasa's *Raghuvamsha* which had been representative rather of the days when the ancient Hindu society of Northern India was in a somewhat glorious form. That tradition of Sanskrit poetry—which saw the emergence—during the Gupta age—the evolution of the idea of Avataravada—with the central image of Vishnu as the saviour—had been brought to a new hidden conclusion by the last important Sanskrit poet Joydeva with his *Gitagovindam*. This was a movement away from the temple and away from the sculpture as the idea of art towards the song, away from the idol and icon and towards the Word or *Nam*, away from the Smarta feudal ideology of 'mantra' towards the Vishnavite democratic ideology of the spoken language and of 'song'. But the political dimension—representative of the ancient or traditional Hindu society too was there and Joydev's "*dasavatar*" strata with its Jaya Jagadish Hare could act as voice of courage and faith in face of political threats and oppression. Tulsidas *Ramacharitmanas* in the northern India represented also this dimension while Nanak's Sikhism with its "*Sat sang Akal Bole Nihal*" could ultimately lead to the development of the Sikh regiment and the Bhakti Movement in Maharastra with its support in the Gita could also lead to the emergence of the Maratha military power and Sivaji. These were representative of a resistance movement on the part of the older Hindu society against the growing power of the Mughal Empire. In Assam the Bhakti movement of Sankaradeva could also lead to a movement of courage and heroism on the part of the Assamese people in the famous battle of Saraighat against the Mughals. Yes, the Bhakti movement, because it was also basically a philosophy of courage and spiritual virja—had also this dimension.

-Kabir's social situation makes him more representative of a mystical universal philosophy and though it carried a particular social awareness, was not connected with the political dimension of the Bhakti movement.

On the other hand, the rejection of the temple was a rejection of the path of brahminical Hinduism with its Smarta character and connection with 'feudalism from above' but the rejection of the tem-

ple could also logically lead to the rejection of the Mosque. Kabir represented such a meeting place of that substratum of the Hindu and the Muslim societies which were not connected with power or hegemony either social or political and his message could have consequently a more "universal" meaning—at least at one level.

The Hindu society of Bengal, coming under Muslim rulers and being dispossessed of the earlier political power found expression in the political resistance movements led from time to time by the Bara Bhuyas and on the other hand evolved a type of Vaisnhavism—under the leadership of Chitanyadeva—which because exclusively mystical-aesthetic in character and this mode of Vaishnavism was at a great distance not only from the Vaishnavism of the Maratha Saints as well as of the Gupta Age and but also from the Vaishnavism of Tulsidas or Nanak of Punjab. Bengal Vaishnavism has contributed significantly to the development of Indian aesthetics beyond a stage or point represented by the Kashmir philosophers of poetics—Anandabardhana and Abhinavagupta but it was not connected with a total or integral philosophy of life. Unlike Sankaradeva's Vaishnavism it did not take as the central text—the *Bhagavata Parana* of southern Vaishnavism (here the indigenous Oriya Vaishnavism with its emphasis on Sudra bhakti and the *Bhagavata Parana* is more in harmony with Assam Vaishnavism) but rather could take to *Brahmavaivartapurana* and Padmapurana—-with their emphasis on the female principle. Bengal vaishnavism acquired an intense softness and sensitivity but lost the strength—or virility of the spiritual character—which was there in Marathi, Sikh and Assamese *bhakti* movements. The Marathi saints remained centrally connected with the interpretation of the *Gita*, the founders of Sikhism recovered a spirit of the Upanishadic path (and it was not a matter of all softness) and the Assamese Vaishnavism of Sankaradeva took as support the *Gita* as well as the *Bhagavata Purana* and rather showed a resistance to the *Padma Parana* and the *Bragmavaivartapurana*. (That is Assam the artisan castes as well as the cultivator castes could not be made a "lower" type of caste while particularly under the Brahmanical hegemony of the Sena period all the productive castes had been made socially lower castes in Bengal. That social background gave a special character to Bengal Vaisnavism.) Kabir, Nanak, Sankdaradeva as well as the Maratha saints retained something that was representative of an early Indian

Hindu tradition—the tradition not of Brahmnism with its smarta ideology but rather of the old Aryan 'kshatriya' origins and of an Upanishadic-Buddhist character.

IV

That Kabir was a craftsman—that he belonged to the class of the artisans—is also, sociologically, a significant fact. He could live more at the periphery of the caste-structure of the traditional Hindu society with its brahmanical social disciplines. Kabir's mysticism also has a more syncretic character than that of some other Saints as well as a socially more open character. Hence he can lead us more easily also to the modern age.

> "He (Kabir) lived the sane and diligent life of the Oriental craftsman. All the legends agree on this point: that Kabir was a weaver, simple and unlettered man, who earned his living at the loom. Like Paul the tent-maker, Boehme the cobbler, Bunyan the tinker, Tersteegen the ribbon maker, he knows how to combine vision and industry; the work of his hands helped rather than hindered the impassioned meditation of his heart." ("Introduction": Tagore's *Poems of Kabir*). .

It is this type of Subalternism—which is connected with the creative social classes—that Rabindranath in one direction and Gandhi in another tried to support in the modern age of India.

> "Given their denial of scripture, tradition, and ritual, the majority of the *saints* were *from the lower castes*, and their medium was the vernacular commonly spoken (*bhasha*), unlike Sanskrit, which was strictly controlled by Brahmins and understood by a mere handful. Thus their message had a wider reception; and this appeal was heightened by the fact that the medium was poetry, easily memorized, easily sung. They advocated the responsibilities of house and work (*grihasti*), rather than renunciation of the world (*grihasti*), rather than renunciation of the world (*sanyas*). As a result the saints did not abandon their traditional tasks: *Ravidas remained a cobbler, Saint a weaver, Namdev a calico-printer*." (Nimal Das, *Songs of Kabir from the Adi Granth*, State University of New York Press, p. 4)

Kabir's voice strikes us with a note of liberating modernity. Kabir's voice was representative of a kind of liberated or 'modern' charac-

ter which was representative of his social distance from the feudal (-tribal) castes and classes of the Indian society.

> "Kabir's thinking is representative of an ideological change which seems to correspond to the transition from the medieval *to the modern age in* the West." (Hajime Nakamura, "the Changing Value of Man in Modern India" in Bryn, Finkelstein Maciver, Mckeon ed. *Symbols and Values*'. An Initial Study, p. 705, 1954, New York)

This is a perceptive assessment. However, it may be said that this 'ideological' change particularly carried by the artisans—the weavers, the tailors, etc. and who were also more open to the urban sphere of the Indian society. It may also be noted that the transition to the "modern age" in Europe was more representative of such classes of people and nations:

> There were predominant Protestant nations in which *the middle class, descended from the free farmer and independent guild craftsmen* of a preceding age, formed the decisive element in the popularization." (Cariton S. Coon: *The History of Man*, p. 404)

It can be easily seen that Kabir's voice was representative—at one layer—of the psyche of the artisans and the professional classes.

> "The devotional cult represented the more puritanical protest of the professional classes." (Romila Thapar: *A History of India*, p. 261)

> "The Brahmanical writings of this period attack professions where technical knowledge was essential. Medhatithi regards handicrafts as low occupations." (Ibid, p. 255)

Kabir's voice was representative of a liberation from this type of magical religion supported both crudely and sophisticatedly in a tribal-feudal Indian social path.

> "...Brahman, the tribal priest and magician." (A.L. Basham: *The Wonder That was India*, p. 241)

> "The brahmin would write puranas to make aboriginal rites respectable, while the savage chiefs of the tribe would turn into kings and nobles ruling over the tribe." (D.D. Kosambi: *The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India*, p. 51)

The voice of Kabir was the voice of the Bhakti movement and it was philosophically rather alien to the hegemony of the tradition of the tribal-feudal or magical-brahmanical mentality in Indian society and culture—particularly of the medieval age. It may also be seen—what kind of 'cause' of the 'subalterns' or lower castes' Kabir's message would uphold?

> "It can be easily shown that many castes own their lower social and economic status to their present or *former refusal to take to food production and plough agriculture*. The lowest castes often preserve their tribal rites, usages and myths." (D.D. Kosambi: *Culture and Civilization in Ancient India*, p. 15)

> "The conservative Brahmins persisted in a way of life when cultivation was relatively unimportant to food supply." (D.D. Kosambi: *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, p. 170)

> "According to Bauddhyana, the Vedas and agriculture are destructive of each other. Manu said that the Brahmans and Kshatriyas must not engage themselves in 'vriddhi', i.e. the activities of production." (D.P. Chattopadhyay: *Indian Philosophy*, p. 87)

> "The brahman was a professional priest without parallel in Aryan tradition elsewhere." (D.D. Kosambi: *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, p. 99)

So Kabir's implicit philosophical spirit was alien to such a tradition of "the monistic", magic-dominated conception of the world—

> "The parasitical, purely consumptive economy of the hunters and food-gatherers... the monistic, magic-dominated conception of the world." (Arnold Hauser: *The Social History of Art*, Vol. I, p. 16)

The "conservative" line of Brahminism has, philosophically, always been aligned in the Indian society with the philosophical culture of such castes and classes whose philosophical voice was a voice of pure Monism or of tribal 'magic'.

It may be noted in this context that in the path of the Bhakti Movement—the sound 'Om' too became freed from the form-dissolving and power-oriented magic-oriented priest-centred character given to it in the path of anti-theistic Monism favoured by the Smartas.

> "His creative word is the 'Om' or 'Everlasting Yea,' The negative philosophy, which strips from the Divine Nature all its attributes and—defining Him only by that which he is not—reduces Him to an 'Emptiness,' is abhorrent to this most vital of poets." ("Introduction" Rabindranath Tagore: *Poems of Kabir* p. XXVI)

The feudal classes representative of what D.D. Kosambi has called Feudalism from above with Siva-shakti as the support and as well as the bearers or magical religions had a different attitude.

The Bhakti movement, on the other hand, was essentially a movement representative of a stratum of the Indian society carried the ethos of what in the language of Gordon Childe may be called the ethos of the *Iron Age* cultivators and artisans. From Kabir of Uttar Pradesh to Sankaradeva of Assam to the Vacana poets of the 10th century South Indian we may notice the importance of this basic social stratum—

> "*Vacanas are bhakti* poems, poems of personal devotion to a god, often a particular form of the god. The vacana saints *rejects* not only the 'great' traditions of Vedic religion, *but the 'little' local traditions as well*. They not only scorn the effectiveness of the Vedas as scripture; they reject the little legends of the local gods and goddesses. The first of the following examples mocks at orthodox ritual genuflections and recitation and recitations; the second, at animal sacrifice in fold-religion..." (A.K. Ramanujan, "*Introduction*": *Speaking of Siva*, pp. 25-26)

It may be pointed out here that "*Speaking of Siva* is a collection of *Vacanas* or free-verse lyrics written by four saints of the great bhakti protest movement which originated in the tenth century A.D. Composed in Kannada, a Dravidian language of South India, the poems are lyrical expressions of love for the god Siva." (Ibid.)

Apart from the contribution made by Dravidian emotionalism, the Indian Bhakti movement of the medieval age had behind it another contribution and that was the silent and intangible influence of Islam, which had arrived on the Indian soil after 7th century A.D. And both these strands seem to have been combined in a synthesis in the South.

> "From the seventh century onward it is well known that Persian and Arab traders settled in large number at the different parts on the western

coasts of India." (Quoted by Dr. Tara Chand in *The Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, p. 32) "The appearance of new ideas and the emphasizing of certain old ones in Southern India from the ninth to the fourteenth century is rather peculiar. Such things did not happen in the North, for all the early medieval reformers belonged to the South. If one of the reasons was not the influence of Islam steadily and increasingly exerted during this very period and in this very region till it was suddenly eliminated by the advent of the Europeans, it would be difficult to account for the phenomenon, still more so considering that the reforming shears were applied to the very parts anathematized by Islam, and that the new acquisitions were the very features which most prominently marked that religion." (Dr. Tara Chand, *The Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, pp. 115-116) It is also a noteworthy fact that while to northern India the Muslims came as invaders, to the Southern Indian Western coasts they came as traders. This difference was there and in the South results were also somewhat different.

"Before the ninth century was advanced they [the Muslims] had spread over the whole of the Western coast of India and had created stir among the Hindu populace, as much by their peculiar beliefs and worship as by the zeal with which they...advocated them." (Ibid, p. 33)

"It is difficult to resist the inference that Lingayatism (or Virasaivism) was a result of the influence which these Muslims exerted in these parts of India." (Ibid, p. 119)

"It is more likely ... that they (ideas of 'surrender' and 'guruvad') came from Islam. Both were very prominent features of that religion. The word *Islam* means surrender, and a Muslim is verily a *prapanna*. It has been shown that submission to the will of God is an essential part of the Muslim religious consciousness. Historically also there is no separable difficulty in supposing that Ramanuja adopted it from Islam.

Absorption in God through devotion to a teacher is again an important Muslim conception. It was started by the *Shias* and from them taken by the *Suffis*...

This Sufi conception of the deified teacher was incorporated in medieval Hinduism." (Ibid, pp. 114-115)

"Certain... characteristics of South Indian thought from the ninth century onwards, however, strongly point to Islamic influence.

These are increasing emphasis on monotheism, emotional worship self-surrender (prapatti) and adoration of the teacher (Guru *bhakti*) and in addition to them laxity in the rigours of the caste system, and indifference towards mere ritual." (Ibid, p. 112)

On the other hand, we may also remember another historical truth: South India and Dravidian culture—particularly of the *shudras* had not only received a stream of Islam's influence but also one of Christianity before the appearance of Islam and at least by the sixth or seventh century. So, as R.G. Bhandarkar thought, behind the development of Ramanuja's philosophy there might have been strand of Christianity among the *Shudras* of the western coast of the South, Christianity too was a tangible reality with a Church and Christian community in the South by the 7th century. That Ramanuja's philosophy of religion can link, up thus not only with the Vedic line but also with Islam and Christianity is also a significant point. It was more oriented to the *Vaishnavide* shudras the creative path and it stressed the idea of the ultimate Brahma as a creator too.

What does the basic philosophy of Indian Bhakti movement signify and stand for in Indian history?

While Kabir was a weaver, Raidas—the Guru of Mirabai—was a cobbler and Narahari, a Maharastrain saint, was a goldsmith, Gora Kumbhar (also a Maharastrian saint) was a potter. All such facts are representative also of an 'intangible' reality.

Rabindranath and even Gandhi in another way showed a path of reading Indian history which was of deeper significance than that of many common academicians who have missed deeper truths either because of the lack of spiritual-philosophical sensitivity or through a mechanical following of the latest 'academic' catchwords imported from the American West.

> "Indian historiography naturally tended to be dominated by the idea of nationalist struggle and failed to address many things that imperialists and nationalists had in common across the divide of race and power." (C.A. Bayly, "modern Indian Historiography" in Michael Bentley ed. *Companion to Historiography*, p. 688) "Indian historians were postmodernist before their time, though often unknowingly or unwillingly. It is not surprising therefore that able young expatriate Indians have entered the historical literary culture-wars of the United States with great vigour." (Ibid, p. 678)

"Like Ramanuja's philosophy of religion Kabir too is a subject which invites an understanding of what the real Indian "history from below" may really mean. This is also a significant fact that "the [Indian] *Subaltern Studies Group of Historians and their' imitators* have had a considerable difficulty in integrating their histories from below into a picture which accounts for historical continuities and change." (Ibid, p. 688)

In Christianity 'Semitic' East or Semitism became Aryanized too-linguistically as well as philosophically and it absorbed also the great philosophical heritage of the Greeks. When we compare the essence of Christianity with that of Indaism and Islam (Islam without Sufism and Greek philosophy) we may feel a special kind of creative spirit as well as tendencies which is not present in the more pronounced Semitive character of the latter two religions. A similar kind of softness and humanism is also their particularly in the non-Brahmanical mode Hinduism such as the leaders of the Bhakti movement upheld. On the other hand, the difference between the Graeco-Roman religious tradition (with its limits and Christianity is also similar to the difference between Brahmanical Hinduism and Krishnite Hinduism of the path of Bhakti.

Seven

Saint Sankaradeva, Indian Civilization and the Philosophy of Vaishnavism

[1]

Into the Post-Secular Reality

Man cannot live by scepticism alone or even by a spirit of rationalism alone, though both scepticism and rationalism are also necessary parts of the total structure of an ideal human mind. There should be a place for faith too at a deeper level of our being; though faith may also be of different categories. Faith in man—faith in the potential creative spirit boundary Religious faith is a special kind of faith but what may be called a purely humanist faith in man or man's potentialities may by itself lead one imperceptibly towards or into the domain of religious faith in some way or other. Buddha too was a sort of atheist but his sort of humanism or rationalism or atheism went well with a sense of a transcendent realm of reality, which many humanists of the modern type may not at least obviously share. However, the example of Buddha's religious consciousness-which has also attracted many modern intellectuals who do not easily take to the idea of God of the *Bhakti Path*-would show that what is called religious consciousness may itself be of several types. Buddha's humanism and rationalism may save many religionists from a sectarian fanaticism; and that religious consciousness may take on an obviously problematic or even dangerous character may also be realised easily by those who do not accept the ideal of any theocratic state-whether it is of the Islamic or of other identity.

Hence there is a necessity for religious consciousness to rise also to a humanist understanding of the ideal of secularism in the political sphere, that is the sphere of political power. In a sense one has to go irreligious or atheist, so to say, in this sphere. However, on the other

hand, the secularist-atheist may exist at a shallow level of existence with a not so deep understanding of the adventure of human life on the earth if they do not acquire a new understanding of the significance of religion or religious experience—a new understanding which we may now call also a "post-secular philosophy";

Our understanding of Saint Sankaradeva may derive a light also from such a new perspective as well as from a comparative study of religions.

[2]

Sankaradeva of the Age of Saint-Poets

Long before he became a saint and the propounder of a type of Vaishnavism, Sankaradeva had already become a poet. In fact, he became a poet just after he had learnt the alphabets. Alexander Pope said—"I lisped in numbers and the numbers came"; likewise, Sankaradeva with his childhood composition—"karatala-kamala - kamala - dala - nayana bhava - daha-gahana-gahana-banasayana"—revealed the poet that was in him—with his delight in the music of words. For a poet that is the most elemental thing necessary.

Poetry is also celebration and so, in fact, is 'Kirtan—a word that may have lost its original numinous-poetic charge. However, the word *Kirtan*, like *Dasam*, have long become inextricably linked in the Assamese cultural tradition with the name of Sankaradeva and these books could be written only by a person who was essentially or centrally a poet. What is *Dasam*"! *Dasam* is the tenth book of *the Bhagavat Parana*, the most favourite book of Sankaradeva, who would have fully supported this view of the Indologist Professor Daniel H.H. Ingalls of Harvard University: "*Bhagavata* remains, especially in the tenth book, *the most enchanting poem ever written*... The book is a jest as well as *a geste* a jest that is serious only in that its subject is the ultimate truth, for it is told with a kindliness that I have observed in no other sermon. The poet handles this ambiguous history with consummate skill. In his pages the world appears as a magic land where every object, if only it is rightly seen, is a key to truth and to eternity. What else is poetry than just that."

To be educated in Sankaradeva with this *Dasam* as his heartland is to be educated basically in the poetic sensibility—in words that reveal a metaphorical-symbolic vision of a world beyond. Fortunate have

been those Assamese families which have preserved and delighted in such a precious treasure of world poetry made available in the Assamese language—through long periods of darkness and death of Assam's history.

Poetry is 'a key to truth and to eternity' and so it also is 'tat tvam asi'; and Sankaradeva's poetic vision and his philosophy are nearer to such a philosophy of human language which is linked also to an essentially Vaishnavite interpretation of the message of 'tat tvam asi' and is in tune with the vision present in the poetry of the *Bhagavat Purana*: "According to Ramanuja every word eventually signifies the supreme God, as everything eventually points to Him as his final essence. Hence language is richer in content for a knower than it is for the ordinary man. All words are signs to remind the wise man of God, as all objects are for him windows through which to see God. The principle thus enunciated helps us to understand what, according to Ramanuja, the meaning of the Upanishadic statement "that thou art" (Tat tvam asi) is. Here the word "That" finally denotes God having the entire universe as his body; and "thou", God having the individual soul as his body."(M. Hiriyana)

There is a way for poetry and philosophy to meet and interpetrate each other but their relations are like that of *sagun* and *nirguna* brahma, that of the heart and the mind, of *hrid* and *manasa*. It was also Sankaradeva's way. He was also the first poet in the Assamese language who had risen to a philosophical-spiritual understanding of human life and the Universe and it is given to poets of a higher type to marry the realm of poetry to that of philosophy. In modern Indian languages it is the path of Sankaradeva which we may find represented by Tagore and Iqbal particularly.

As his philosophy of life was of a basically religious character and his existence also came to carry the light of a holy realm, Sankaradeva became also a 'saint' in the minds of the people. The only other 'saint' that the Assamese society ' found in the medieval times was his closest follower Madhavadeva—who was also a poet of a high level and could unite the two realms of poetry and philosophy in a key different from that of his master. There is a deeper note of pathos-—of heart-rending softness in the wonderful words of his famous *Namghosha* while his master's basic note is that of a different character.

Saint Sankaradeva and Saint Madhavadeva may also remind us of the lives of St. Benedict and St. Francis of Assisi—Saints who created during the medieval age the basis of the cultural tradition that has come through Dante and Shakespeare. The lives of Sankaradeya and Madhavadeva show interesting similarities with theirs.

> "For almost exactly a thousand years (530-1530) the social, cultural and religious life of Europe was deeply influenced by the monastic order and by the religious orders that were to a greater or less degree offshoots of or reversions to the original monastic ideal. For five of those centuries (530-1000) monasteries of a single type, the traditional Benedictine type, predominated and formed the reservoirs of literature, learning and spirituality for their world.'

The spiritual forces that were released by Sankaradeva in the Assamese society all along the banks of the Brahmaputra ultimately led to the transformation of a social heritage of the Buddhist past into the form of the *Sattra* institutions of Assam. What distinguished the character of these religious institutions from the Buddhist monasteries of Eastern India of an earlier age was the impact of the new philosophy of Vaishnavism with its message of *bhakti* or love—which added a new dimension to the complex of the basically ascetical and mystical ideals of the earlier tradition. The lessons of asceticism or self-control and mysticism—the receptivity to the numinous oneness had been assimilated into a new philosophy in which the dominant force was love or bhakti for Krishna—the reality representating the confluence of the human and the divine.

Sankaradeva too, like Chaitanyadeva, was a Vaishnava Saint of Eastern India but he was also a Saint-poet. He was distinguished from Chaitanyadeva primarily by this fact. Sankaradeva was also more like a precursor of Rabindranath Tagore.

What distinguished Saint Sankaradeva not only from Chaitanyadeva but also from most of the leaders of the *Bhakti* movement of Medieval India is also his remarkably multi-faceted personality and in this respect too he may be seen also as a precursor of Rabindranath Tagore of Modern India. He was basically a 'poet—a saint-poet' who also wrote *Bhaktiratnakara*, a book in Sanskrit summing up his philosophy of Vaishnavism. He was a singer and a composer adept in *raga sangeet*. He was an artist who could draw and

paint and could supervise the works of artisans and give directions to them—the weavers and potters and had his musical instruments made according to his choice. He was an actor, director and dramatist and was the originator of a tradition of drama called *Ankia Nut* in the Assamese language. He had a master's hand also in writing long narrative poetry and could well have become, like Tagore, major novelist if born in the modern age. He was also an administrator and had to deal with difficult political forces and hostile camps. As Professor V.S. Agarwala said, "There are poets and composers, there are saints and religious teachers, there are musical masters, there are preachers, but Sankaradeva was a genius in whom all these qualities were rolled into one."

Sankaradeva could also link us in his sweep with the Jagannath temple of Orissa—as Shri Chaitanya of Bengal too could do and also with the tradition of the Saint-poets or *Sants* of northern India. He could in his sojourn in greater India link up with the societies of Kabir and Nanak. He connected Assam—through his brand of Vaishnavism with its *dasya bhakti* also with a South Indian tradition.

A phenomenon like Sankaradeva—a leader of the neo-Vaishavite movement as well as a saint-poet could appear in the Brahmaputra Valley only during a particular period of Indian history and against a historical background which had economic as well as political implications. He certainly could not have appeared in the thirteenth century A.D. and if he had been born after the second half of the seventeenth century he certainly could not have been what be became. There was a tide in the affairs of man in Indian history when he was born in 1449 A.D. and the sixteenth century—it may be noticed—was the peak period of that tidal movement:

> "The devotional transformation of medieval Hinduism known as the bhakti movement was a phenomenon of crucial importance in the history of Indian religion. Starting in the Tamil South in the seventh century, gradually spreading northward through Karnataka and Maharastra, and sweeping over North India and Bengal from the fifteenth century onward, the impulse towards a personal devotional faith profoundly changed both the quality and structures of religious life. From ritual observance and the performance of prescribed duties, or alternately, ascetic withdrawal in search of speculative knowledge of the divine, the heart of religion became the cultivation of a loving relationship between

> the individual and a personally conceived supreme god. Salvation, once considered unattainable except by men of the three upper castes, came to be seen as the prerogative of all, and spiritual leadership shifted from the *Brahman* priest knowledgeable about ritual and Sanskrit scriptures to the figure of the popular poet-saint who composed fervent songs of devotion in the regional vernacular. As an expanding movement energized by fresh leadership and generating new ideas, bhakti reached its zenith between the fifteenth and the seventeenth century." (Schomer) Sankaradeva too, like other saint-poets of medieval India, was born in the right time. He was born in the middle of the fifteenth century to be precise, in 1449 A.D. and passed away in 1533 A.D., that is, in the middle of the sixteenth century. When he was thirty-seven years old, Chaitanyadeva of Bengal was born and when the latter passed away Sankaradeva had still thirty five years more of his long life left to him. His life covered a longer period of Indian history.

It was a movement away from magic and towards poetry, away from the tribal or the Brahmin priest and towards the saint-poet. But who could be a 'Saint-poet'?

'Sant' came from 'Sat' and has such implications:

"The Sanskrit word *Sat* (Being) as used in ordinary speech already connotes the true and good. And the Latin *esse*, according to the old teaching of the schools, is convertible with *Verum* (true) and *Bonum* (good)." (Rudolf Otto: *Mysticism East and West*, p. 34).

'The "Being" of which they speak is to be a "Salvation." (ibid) "To attain to the realm of Being is to overcome the realm of Time and Death to attain to Ananda."

A *Saint* is consequently one who has learnt the way of transcending the realm of mere empirical existence—and it is a way of mysticism. The realm of reality the Sant enters is the realm of Amrita:

"The search for salvation, for Amrita... is clearly the motive prompting speculation about the one, eternal *Sat*. *Sat* is only a different expression for the *summum bonum* or Amrita, and often enough in India it bears the old name Amrita, as in the West the word "being" has the connotation of "life." On occasion, Eckhart can forget all his ontology and say: "When it [the soul] is wholly united with God and baptised in the divine nature, it loses all hindrances and sickness and inconstancy and is at once renewed in divine life." (Ibid)

"Historically, however '*Sant*' is the designation given to the *poet-saints belonging to two distinct, though related devotional bhakti groups*." (Karine Schemer)

The idea of the 'holy' man is directly there in the English word 'Saint' which has come from the Latin "Sanctus", which means "holy" and in Old English it was "Sanct". The equivalent Indian word "Sant" has come from sat ('truth, reality'). A *Sant* is one who knows the truth or one who has experienced Ultimate Reality or is a '*Seer*'—one who has achieved a state of spiritual enlightenment or mystical self-realization.

"Historically, however 'Sant' is the designation given to the *poet-saints belonging to two distinct, though related devotional bhakti groups*." (Karine Schomer: *Introduction: The Sant Tradition in Perspective*: *The Sants*, p.3). So the saint-poets of medieval India may lead us back to the Upanishads and then to the Rigveda *itself*.

It will be seen from the historical accounts that Sankaradeva represented a stage of Indian history at which the vision of the poet-saint was becoming a major force; and in this context we may also bring to light the long history of a continuing conflict in Indian civilization between two strands of thought from the days of the *Rigveda* onwards.

It is the conflict between the vision of the real poet-philosopher and that of the priestly vision represented by the priests called *Brahmans*. The latter represented essentially a magical view of the world and was connected also with a philosophy of Power—directly or indirectly.

"In the earliest times we read of semi-legendary *rsis*, or *seers*, who composed the Vedic hymns, while the sacrificial ritual demanded a number if priests (*rtvij*) with specialized duties,. . . . The term *brahmana* meant originally "one possessed of *Brahman*", a mysterious *magical force* of the type widely known to modern anthropologists by the Polynesian word 'mana'. It was first applied to the specially trained priest who superintended the whole sacrifice, and was ready to counteract with his magic spells any evil influence caused by minor errors of ritual. By the end of the Rig Vedic period the term was used for all members of the priestly class." (A.L. Basham)

This may be read also in connection with the following:

'*mana*, the moving spirit, is no projection, but the echo of the real supremacy of nature in the weak souls of primitive men.' (Horkheimer) (Peter M. R. Stirk)

"For Horkheimer, 'when language enters history its masters are priests and sorcerers…. He sees the *magicians* as extending the realm of the sacred and laying claim to privileged knowledge of its intricacies... The pre-animistic terror of the primitive is reinforced by the fear of the community. Earthly power is added to natural power and wedded to in the context of magic." (bid)

"Often in the Rigveda we read of a mysterious entity called *brahman*; in some contexts brahman is the magical power in the sacred utterance (*mantra*), but often it has a wider connotation, and implies a sort of supernatural electricity, known to students of primitive religion as *mana*. The possessor of brahman, by a common process of secondary word-formation in Sanskrit, became known as *brahmana*, the tribal priest and magician. In later Vedic times the connection of brahman with speech became more and more pronounced, and the Brahman's magic was thought to lie in the words he uttered." (A.L. Bsham)

> "By this time a new attitude to the sacrifice had developed, and it has become a supernatural mystery. By means of it the priests mystically repeated the primeval sacrifice, and the world was born anew. Without regular sacrifices all cosmic processes would cease, and chaos would come again. Thus the order of nature was on ultimate analysis not dependent on the gods at all, but on the Brahmans, who *by the magic of the sacrifice* maintained and compelled them. This is the basic doctrine of the *Brahmanas*, and it prevailed in many Aryan communities in North Indian from about 900 B.C. onwards, and left its mark on Hinduism in the exaltation of the brahman. (Ibid)

> "According to Kunban Raja, the Veda is a record of a great civilization and the founders of that civilization were poets, not priests" (R.N. Dandekar).

"It is suggested that the present *Rigveda-Samhita* needs to be subjected to a kind of textual criticism. It has, for instance, been averred by Esteller that the present Samhita-text does not present the original composition of the *risi-kavi* authors, but it is a modified

version of it by the redactor Sakalya. It is further suggested that it is possible to . . arrive at its pre-redaction *risi-kavi* form." (Ibid)

That there has been in Indian culture and philosophy also a conflict of this kind is at least clear in the light of a large body of historical facts.

The Upanishadic revolution consisted in a basically non-magical thrust being given to the idea of *Brahman*—in an attempt to transform it into a character that is in harmony with the discovery of the mystery of '*Atman*.' This may be shown through the following evidence:

"Though the speculations of the Upanishads differ considerably, their main purport is the same. *One entity, often called Brahman, the term used in the Rig Veda to mean the magic of the sacred word, fills all space and time. This is the ground beyond and below all forms and phenomena, and from it the whole universe, including the gods themselves, has emerged*.

The great and saving knowledge which the Upanishads claim to impart lies not in the mere recognition of the existence of Brahman, but resides in the human soul, is *Atman*, the Self." (A.L.Basham)

This description may be combined also with the following:

"The Indian speculation upon which Sankara's system is based had.... two starting points and thereby two lines of development along which it advanced.

The one was the discovery of the 'thing of wonder' (*Yaksha*) *the Brahman at the foundation of the world*, and the other the discovery of the Gandharva (*the fairy-like being*) *of the Atman within man's own self*. Only later do these two meet and their relationship, indeed their identity, is recognized in mystical identity." (Rudolf Otto)

It will be seen that an unqualified or undialectical emphasis on the *Brahman reality* will lead also to an unqualified conception of "*maya*' in Indian history. Like the magical—brahmanical—view of reality, the Sankarite type lndian mysticism or spiritualism too, in the final stage, reduces the significance of the human individual—its individual essence—to the status of 'illusion.'

The Upanishadic movement of the Indian mind was a movement away from the magical-tribal and also towards the 'individual' reality.

> "The ancient *Brahman*, the completely unrationalized indefinable magic world power, the somewhat uncanny Yaksha, was experienced as the Being of Atman, as spirit. Also *Ataman* is *Ascharyam, is something miraculous*, *but is much clearer and more nearly approaching the rational*. There is no doubt that they [the attributes by Atman] are far removed from the original sphere of ancient magic and cosmological myth and legend." (Rudolf Otto)

A distance from the magical as well as the magical-mystical realm was what the Upanishadic movement implied and it was thus a distance from the reality of *Yaksas too*.

"The worship of the Yaksas was widespread. The term is almost a popular synonym for *Devata* and there is much force in the view that *Yaksa-worship* represents, on the popular level, a continuation of Pre-Aryan religion." (G.C. Pande) In this context we may realize also the connection between *Brahman* and *Yuksa*.

"The brahmin was a professional priest without parallel in Aryan tradition elsewhere." (D.D. Kosambi) After the Upanishadic revolution had started, there developed a kind of 'mysticism' along the path of Brahmanical culture too.

Upanishadic 'mysticism' was however originally a movement against the Brahmanical cult of 'magic' and it had also a thrust towards 'reason' and logic' Hence one interpretation of that movement goes even to this extent:

> "Professor [B.K.] Motilal says, Indians did not just affirm ineffability, they agreed about it. Quite right. But why invariably and perennially about the 'mystical? There is my answer: Mysticism as a doctrine is an important theme in Indian philosophy because it plays a very special role against the unique Vedic background of Indian philosophy. Mysticism in India was not however the outburst of the 'mystical impulse' at all. Rather, I shall argue that *mysticism was originally on expression of, if anything, the most extreme kind of 'logical impulse*." The doctrine of ineffability was a revolutionary attempt to combat obscurantism and cant. It was meant to encourage one to think for oneself, to challenge authority." (J.H. Hattinangadi: "Why is Indian Philosophy Mystical?")

I would also like to reproduce here something which I have written in one of my other books:

"In India the Upanishads carried the liberating light of the Iron

Age and the Great Buddha was an exceptional type of spiritually liberating force in the whole East. 'By substituting the law of cause and effect for the caprices of demons and gods, the Buddha put the noble system of morality in the place of tribal custom and taboo.' (S. Radhakrishnan: *The Dhammapada*, p. 34.) The Buddha had a serious conflict with the priestly class and the cult of power and magic in Indian society; and though he was not ultimately adequately successful in his struggle for the truth and scientific spirit, he gave the Indian society a new light. On the other hand, the Iron Age had a greater force in the West and the 'craftsmen, the exponents of applied science' had acquired and continued to carry a greater degree of freedom in that society." (See Gordon Childe's *The Prehistory of European Society*, p. 173)

Like the basic Upanishadic movement itself the 'mysticism of poise' too originally came from the Aryan-Kshatriya tradition in India.

"The way of work and the performance of duty is the path to salvation, and the kingly sages of ancient time, like Janaka, trod this road." (Rudolf Otto) The philosophy of Gita too represented this line:

"It is a calm submission to the "necessary" task, the aristocratic ideal of the soul unmoved, standing above the play of impulse, resting assured within itself, doing the task which falls to its lot but without "clinging" to it. It has a stoic quality: the power to face alike, inwardly unmoved, joy or sorrow, misfortune or fortune, friend or foe. It is composure in quietness of soul, inner independence, self-assurance and ascendancy. This composure does indeed mean a superiority to the world and the things of the world. It comes as with Eckhart from a repose in God. And that is the meaning also in the *Gita*. *Bhakti* is here permeated with *prapatti*, which is literally a drawing near. To surrender one's works without self-interest to lsvara, to do them because He Himself is working and because He wills that we should work, to do them in His service, indifferent to their fruits and indifferent to the course of the world, especially to its evil, while the heart remains serene in God—that is bhakti and prapatti." (R. Otto)

"This utter composure which can here at times be called faith (*sraddha*) is the true ideal, the emotional background and also the

source of this ethic of the Gita. Its assurance and strength and its character of' world—surpassing tranquillity of self-control, of inward quiet and immovability, come from repose in God. *The Gita* expresses this inner relationship in the incomparably devout words: 'Man is made by his belief as he behaves, so he is. His God is reflected in his faith, and his God determines his faith. Both make the man and his character—make the idolater and the devil-worshiper, make the servant of Isvara strong, free, just and of a noble virtue'." (Rudolf Otto)

Rudolf Otto's assessment of the Indian religious tradition is present not only in his *Mysticism East and West* but also in *Vishnu-Narayana* and *India's Religion of Grace and Christianity.* His *The Idea of the Holy and Religious Essays* are also very important books in this context.

From the Rigvedic hymns through the Upanishadic meditations down through the Vaisnavite philosophy of religion propagated though the *Bhagavadgita* we do find a tradition of Indian culture which has to contend with a different tradition more connected also with a magical view of the world and also with the cult of Power. This is also a part of the whole truth about Indian civilization.

> "Man's religious faith expresses itself in harmony with its cultural environment. Hence the diversity of social conditions is reflected in the variety of religious life, and the phenomenon is particularly marked in India where heterogeneity of cultural conditions has always been striking.

Thus in India "the crudest animism and demonism still underlie the semi-philosophical and ethical concepts of the educated few. . . .the symbols of the higher thought are the awesome physical realities of the peasantry."

The *Gita* explains it by saying that faith follows the bent of men's minds; the '*Sattvika*' worship the Devas, the '*Rajasa*' Worship the Jakasa and Raksas'as and the '*Tamasa* "worship the Bhutas and Pretas." (G.C. Pande). Following Vedanta Sankarcharyya too has a civilizing influence no doubt but he was not in the real line of the Gita. There was something missing in him too.

From Sankaracharayya to Sankaradeva

Now we may examine the path in Indian history that led from Smarta and Saiva Sankarcharyya to the Vaishnava Saint Sankaradeva of Assam.

Vaishnava Reform. This reformation appears in the guise of a bitter theological controversy between the *smarta* followers of Siva and Parvati as against the Vaishnavas, who worshipped Vishnu-Narayana in some form. In Bengal the great Vaishnava name is that of Chaitanya (1486-1527). The movement came to a head much earlier in the south, with Ramanuja (twelfth century) as against the Saiva followers of Sarnkara. (D.D. Kosambi.

Can we really call Sankaracharyya's position ultimately non-sectarian and that of the Vaishnava reformers 'sectarian'? This is also a question. And great as the achievement of Sankaracharyya was in the intellectual history of India, that there was something missing or problematic or even potentially dangerous in his philosophical stand and it is against this the Vaishnava philosophers had to struggle:

> "The *bhakti* movement had rung in a new period in religion as well as in the philosophical formulation of it. No one who reads either the Bhagavata Parana or the Agamapramanaya, or any of Ramanuja's works, can fail to sense the utter difference of spirit that prevails.

In Bhaskara we have a spokesman for an old-fashioned Vedanta, in which the desire of knowing Brahman in compatible only with the performance of appropriate Vedic ritual, which excludes all but the Brahman. This attitude was *only partly* reformed by Sarnkara. Although he relegated all ritual performances to the realm of *vyavahara* or the provisional truth of process, he did not alter the spirit of exclusiveness associated with Vedanta. Precisely *this uncompromising dichotomy between the realms of supreme truth and relative process* encouraged an attitude summed up in the well-known dictum: *vyavahare Bhatta, paramathe Sarnkarah*: "in vyavahara, a follower of Kumarila Bhatta; in the respect of to the supreme truth, a follower of Sarnkara." But to be a legitimate followers of Kumarila, the Mimamsaka had in theory to be twice-born, in practice to be a Brahman." (J.A.B. Van Buitenen)

So Sankaracharyya's Vedanta was still in a stage of bondage in the

sociological sense that it had not assumed a universal spirit open to all classes of people. Interestingly, there is also this type of historical evidence and it too has a supporting bearing on the philosophical issue:

> "the rivalry between the Vaishnavas and Shaivas, taking as their starting point the teaching of Shankara and Ramanuja" (Romila Thapar.)

"The real underlying struggle is known to have been between the *great feudal landlords who worshipped Siva and his consort goddess* as against the smaller but more enterprising entrepreneurs who opted for Krishna or Vishnu-Narayana." (D.D. Kosambi)

"One of the basic characteristics of feudalism, whose ideological interests were expressed by Shankara, was its unchanging and rigidly repetitive process of production. This was reflected in the ideological sphere as a refusal to recognize the reality of changes and the rise of *new elements in life*. Shankara's philosophy expressed this tendency. The pure, qualitiless absolute Brahman of Sankara's concept stood beyond all changes and transformations. It was static, rigid and motionless. It was the only reality. There was nothing but Brahman." (K. Damodaran)

That there has been a significant conflict in the history of Indian Philosophy between the Sankarite interpretation of Vedanta and the real Vaishnavite interpretations (—there have been more than one such interpretations)—of Vedanta cannot be denied and the main bone of contention in this context was finally the activity of the Sankarite idea of *maya* beyond what I may call a legitimate or acceptable philosophical context.

It can also be realized that the philosophical position of Sankarcharyya would come into conflict in the final stage—not only with the Vaishnavist philosophers' true religious feeling but also with the common man's sense of reality—

"As (*according to Sankaracharyya*) the finite cannot be real by itself and *must vanish at the level of the Brahman*, Sankara preached the essential non-difference of the Brahman and the Jiva. But the other Vedantins were dissatisfied with this conception. Their objection has their roots not only in *religious feelings which treats the omnipotent and omnipresent God as different from his devotees*, but also in the instinct which is disconcerted by the idea that the world of things,

to which our life is attached, cannot be ultimately true. Hence the doctrine of the identity of the Jiva and the Brahman, the concept of Maya and all that it implies, were attacked, rejected, or modified." (P.T. Raju)

So it is clear that many Indians felt that Sankaracharyya's philosophy had also some menacing implications—both philosophical and social.

That was also the philosophical path of Sankaradeva in Assam. He extolled the ideal of the (Vaishnava) devotee against that of the Brahmabadi of the ultimate and unqualified type—which came to be idealized mainly in the 'brahmanical' path in Assam too. Sankaradeva, standing against the brahmanical path of philosophy, was in the right line:

"..Sankaracharyya. The theory that this latter set up. . .laid the axe at the root of Vaishnavism." (R.G. Bhandarkar):

"Ramanuja called his system 'vishistadvaita' 'non-duality in difference', and he is the first of Vaishnavite philosophers... who rejected Sankara's monism as being destructive of religion." (R.C. Zaehner)

"The doctrine of *Maya* or illusion, propounded by Sankara and later emphasized in various directions. '. .But this is not Indian philosophy as it can be gained from the Vedas and the Upanishads." (V.K. Gokak)

"The attribution by Sankara of unreality or the lowest relative reality to the world was the exact reversal of the intention of the *Gita* on which he tried ~s to foist that interpretation." (Krishna Chaitanya)

"...Mayavada, illusionism and otherworldliness are negative doctrines which distort the new age of India." (K.M. Munshi)

"... I am bound to acknowledge, after Professor Thibaut's luminous exposition, that the Vishitadvaita interpretation seems to me more in keeping with Sutras of Badarayana. It is true that Ramanuja lived in the twelfth, Sankara in the eighth century, but there were Vishistadvaita expositions and commentaries long before Ramanuja." (Marx Muller)

> "Sankara, indeed in explaining the ancient Upanishads... as soon as he gets into difficulties over it, he retreats to the position that the man who has known the one eternal Brahman is above this speculative system and

can ignore it. "We do not explain the world, we explain it away." (Rudolf Otto)

"We have seen already how the *Gita* approves an ethic of strong and manly action, and how Sankara acknowledges the value of this "on the lower level." But as a mystic and from the point of view of his true ideal, all activity and all deeds disappear completely. With an almost appalling persistency and obduracy Sankara uses all the powers of his dialectic and his penetrating intellect to *cloud and twist the clear meaning of the Gita*, which praises the deed dedicated to Isvara, and to reduce this action to a lower level than the stage of compete cessation of all willing and doing.

With Eckhart it is entirely different." (Rudolf Otto: *Mysticism East and West*) "He (Ramanuja) is at one with Sarnkara in admitting that there can be only one thing real, namely Brahman, but he allows what Sarnkara strenuously denies, that Brahman *possesses attributes*. His chief attribute, according to Ramanuja, is thought or intelligence, but he is likewise allowed to *possess* omnipotence, omniscience, love, and other good qualities. He is allowed to possess within himself certain powers (*saktis*), the seeds of plurality, so that both material objects of our experience and individual souls (jivas) may be considered as real modifications of the real Brahman, and not merely as phenomena or illusions (maya)" (Marx Muller)

We may also come to the question: has not Radhakrishnan also come to a similar conclusion both directly and at times indirectly?

"*Here and there we come across passages where Sankara holds to the right view of the relation between the world and the Absolute. But these have lost their force*, as passages pointing to an opposite view are to be met frequently in Sankara's writings, and as the interpreters of Sankara's system have practically ignored it. But there is no denying that the positive method Sankara intends to pursue as a Vedantin and the negative method he does sometimes pursue as an interpreter of Buddhism end in conflict and contradiction." (S. Radhakrishnan) So Radhakrishnan tried to strengthen the heritage of that real and older Advaitism which Sankara too at times accomodated but generally went against. P. T. Raju too has affirmed:

"Professor Radhakrishnan's chief contribution to Indian absolutism is his making it clear that the Absolute can be reached positively,

and not merely negatively as many orthodox advaitins seem to hold; and reaching the Absolute positively does not contradict the main Advaita thesis. And he contends, not without justification, that Sankara's writings themselves contain passages which depict the positive relation between the world and the Brahman. *He seems to feel, like Tagore, that the emphasis which the general Advaita tradition lays on the negative relation between the Brahman and the world has a harmful influence on the outlook of the Indian mind*. It created an indifference to the values of the world and a passivity that bred gloom. He thinks that spirituality does not mean escape from the world and its values but the transformation of them into spirit. Such an escape produces in our minds a sense of duality and so fear, but not unity, which is the strength and fearlessness born of the knowledge of truth." (P.T.Raju) So, consequently, Radhakrishnan's interpretation of Jedanta too will show where and how we have to part company with Sankaracharyya:

"The 'Advaitins', led by Sankara, try as hard as they can to be uncompromising: the Brahman, the one, is one without a second. Others deviate somewhat from this and, following Ramanuja, discover more contrast within the one and develop what amounts to the values of theism there. *It is this latter tradition that Radhakrishnan has championed and spread throughout the world*." (G.P. Konger)

In what sense Radhakrishnan too was a follower of Ramanuja should now be clear.

E. S. Brightman too has offered a similar assessment.[47] So also has Mcdermott—"Note that Radhakrishnan wants to establish a more positive relation between Brahman and the world, and Brahman and the Self, than the general Advaita tradition had previously postulated." (A. Mcdermott)

J.G. Ararupa too has shown:

"Radhakrishnan's philosophy of integral experience involves a *significant revision* of *traditional Advaita*." (J.G. Ararupa)

"Radhakrishnan performs the difficult feat of converting *maya* into the creative principle accounting for history, the universe, the individual souls, etc." (ibid). It may be also be said here that Sankaradeva had done for the Assamese society five hundred years ago what philosophers like Radhakrishnan have done in the twentieth century in the field of Indian Philosophy.

Daya Krishna has also come out with the following criticism

of the tradition of *Sankaracharyya in his Indian Philosophy: A new Approach*, which has been published in 1997:

"The most widely known and the most controversial development in the field of classical philosophy was the one given to *Advaita Vedanta* by Vivekananda, Ramatirtha and others. This gave a universalistic interpretation of *Vedanta treating all life as permeated by the ultimate reality, that is, Brahman, and hence equally worthy, particularly as it shared in the same reality which pervades everything*. The world therefore, was not to be treated as maya nor was action to be regarded as inferior to knowledge or contemplation. The 'other' was to be regarded as Brahman along with one self and not to be treated as essentially defined by the '*upadhis*' or adventitious limitations of caste, *varna*, *jati, race* or religion. Such a universalistic conception is inherent in the three great mahavakyas which are supposed to be the foundation stone of *Vedanta*. In the statement '*Sarvam khalvidam Brahman*, ' the term '*Sarvam*' includes everything, while in the statement '*tattvamasi tvam*,' '*tvam*' refers to every 'other' and not just to some particular 'other.' The fact that Sankara and his successors had not interpreted the text in such a way has been taken by many Western scholars as a ground for questioning the legitimacy of this new interpretation of *Vedanta* given by the Neo-*Vedantins* starting from Vivekananda onwards. But this is a strange objection as Sankara cannot be granted the sole monopoly of interpreting the *Upanisadic* passages, particularly when there were other great *acaryas* who had already questioned the legitimacy of his interpretations. In fact, Sankara himself had done great violence to many of the passages in the Upanishads to force his one-sided interpretation of them. And his extreme dichotomy between *uyavahara* and *paramartha* on the one hand, and *karma* and *jnana*, on the other, can hardly be accepted as the only correct interpretation of the classical '*sruti*' positions in this regard. An even more radical innovation of the Neo-*Vedantins* was to break the insurmountable barrier between *uyavahara* and *paramartha which had been created by Sankara and others to safeguard the orthodox social structure*. This radical vision was implicit in it from the very beginning but had been repeatedly sought to be denied by positing an absolute dichotomy between *uyavahara* and *paramartha* which was introduced by him.

The reality of the world and of action within it was given an even

more profound interpretation by Sri Aurobindo who took up the idea of evolution and gave it a spiritual significance and meaning which, except for Teilhard de Chardin, has seldom been the way evolution has been understood in the West.

While there is a layer at which both Sankaracharyya and Sankaradeva may meet (both were followers of the Vedanta idea of the Spirit) and while there are places in which Sankaradeva, too, like many Vaishnava saints have also used a rather Sankarite terminology the ultimate fact is that Sankaradeva's Vaishnavite faith was not of a superficial nature and the philosophy of bhakti was also a life and death matter for his spirit and mind and he consequently in essence represented a different brand of *Advaitism* than the one followed by the followers of Sankaracharyya. A description of Sankaradeva's brand of Advaitism may be given in the following words of Rudolf Otto:

"We said that between *Brahman* and *Parameswara* there was a shifting and interpenetrating relationship, and that the contrast between the higher and the lower Brahman was not clearly definable, while the relation through *jnana* and through *upasana* more clearly and precisely expresses Sankara's meaning. The discussion of this later relationship now helps us to *distinguish the character of Sankara's mysticism more definitely from a further tupe of mysticism which closely enough resembles it in terminology and which is yet again of a new aspect. This new type is also a form of "Advaita" but an advaita which widely differs from Sankara's in mood and experience. It is that advaita which for example, lies at the root of Vishnupurana and the Bhakti-sutras of Sandilya, and has an essentially different relationship of Bhakti to Jnana than that of Sankara and his disciples . . . .*"

Perhaps no better description of the type of Advaitism or Vedanta represented by Sankaradeva may be found than this:

> "The union with Brahman or, more accurately, the state of being Brahman, does not lie for Sankara in the continuance of a devotion emotionally aroused. *But that is exactly what happens in the second type of advaita mentioned. Here the example of Prahlada*, which is found in Vishnu-Purana, is instructive." "In State 2, the personal, beloved, trusted Lord of ordinary theistic relation expands into the mystical all-Being, which is the One. ... He is Me and so I am He. Object and subject glide into one another, *and he who experiences is himself this Lord of all*

> *being*. In the reverse order, this mystical experience afterwards slips back into simple Bhakti worship, and Vishnu then appears again personally in heavenly form as the gracious and merciful One in converse with Prahlada. *But without doubt, this personal intercourse is here not something lower or of less value, which could he sacrificed or must pass away, but is equal in value to the mystical experience*. One might say: The characteristic of this God is that he can be interchangeably present with the soul, either as blessed all-absorbing All, or as personal lover and friend of the soul. We have here what we must call a "mysticism of poise." (Rudolf Otto)

The type of mysticism we find in Sankaradeva's works is also this "mysticism of poise" and it is not for nothing that he extolled again and again the type of *bhakti* represented by Prahlad.

"Finally—within Bhakti mysticism itself, there are again differentiations, which can lead to sharp emotional antitheses. This is obvious, if we compare, say, *the type of Prahlada* (*who stands nearer to the quite, collected Ramanuja*) with that of the Bengalese Chaitanya. In this type Bhakti becomes "Prema," a fevered, glowing Krishna-erotism, coloured throughout by love passion; and intoxication enters into the experience. In the heat of love's emotion, which breaks through the limitations of the individual in ecstasy, and seeks union with the beloved, the state of unity is striven for. With Prahlada it is clearly different. On the contrary, for him Bhakti is the stilling of the soul before God, a trustful, believing devotion, which has more of *Eckhart's "composure in God*", than the *glowing* excitement of Prema." (Rudolt Otto)

However, we may also notice where the spirit of Sankaradeva's Vaishnavism has a connection with a spirit which is present in both Sankaracharyya and Ramanuja but is rather absent in Bengal Vaishnavism of Chaitanyadeva:

"It is true that bhakti and bhakti-marga could also be used as a name for the "way" of simple love of God and of personal relationship to Him, as for instance, with Ramanuja, who here resembles Luther. But for the most part it was just this "voluntaristic mysticism": a strongly sensual and often sexually determined emotional life, which, particularly in Krishna eroticism, has its parallel to Western "bride mysticism." *is peculiar to this "bhakti mysticism*" *as to our "voluntaristic mysticism* ", that *it seeks to attain unity with the highest through*

coalescence by an emotional exaggeration and glow of feeling and even the Highest is thought of as responding to amorous longings. In contrast to this Sankara's outlook is cool and clear sighted, serene and pure. In his writings at least we find nothing of this attitude. The path which he prescribes is in complete opposition to it and equally so is the way of Eckhart." (Rudolf Otto: Ibid) "The special character of the mysticism of both masters is that of an intellectual and not of on emotional mysticism." (Ibid)

Sankaradeva is, in this context, may be found in that path of Sankaracharyya as well of Ramanuja on the one hand and in that of Eckhart on the other as against that of 'voluntarist mysticism.' His mysticism too was a "mysticism of poise." But like Ramanuja, he differred from Sankaracharyya too in an equally important way.

Vinobha Bhave also found that of all the Vaishnavite ways of India the Mahapurushiya Assamese way of Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva is distinguished by a special 'rasa' and it is '*seva-rasa*.' It is, in fact, a rasa connected with the attitude of service. In this context too we may notice its similarity to this Christian way:

"the pure Christian emotion in its elemental chastity and simplicity without exaggeration or admixture. The relationship of love to the moment of at-one-ment with Being and essence, expressed emotionally or having effect in the sphere of emotion, is love, and also confidence, faith, surrender of the will and service.' (Ibid, p. 232)

The inner implications of *dasya bhakti* upheld by Sankaradeva may be realized also in the light of this analysis of Eckhart's position:

"Humility is to him [Eckhart] the cardinal virtue, the beginning and end of all virtue, and *this is not a concession to a lower standpoint*; but humility as an ideal and as an unmediated attitude of soul is most intimately connected with his mystical experience itself, and is indeed prompted by it.

The humility which be has as a simple Christian does not disappear in the sphere of his mystical experience, but is increased and gains an emphasis and a dignity which of itself has something mystical about it. His type of mysticism demands humility.

This distinguishes him from Sankara.'" (Rudolf Otto: *Mysticism: East and West*)

"The evils which torment Sankara are the vexations of Samsara

wind, gall, slime, sickness, old age, endless rebirth, but not *sin, unworthiness*, unrighteousness. Yet these are the meaning of Eckhart's preaching and also of his mystical doctrine." (Ibid, p. 210) Sankaradeva too put a great emphasis on his sinfulness, and 'aparadh', 'pap' are very important words in his path of *dasya bhakti*. His lament was that he had been 'a sinner guilty of a great sin' (moi bodo paper papi). Madhadeva uttered: "Moi droohiar drooh kshoma kora swami." In this path of Sankaradeva the end is a moral and spiritual purification and not merely a state of happiness.

> "If we turn again to Sankara, we can measure in full the distance between the two masters... *Least of all is his [Sankaracharyya's) atman "soul" in the sense of religious conscience, which "hungers and thirsts after righteousness*." (Ibid, p. 223)

Sankaradeva with his utterances like "moi bodo paper papi' is rather with Eckhart than with Sankaracharyya.

In Sankaradeva's path '*prasad*' is also a very significant word. This is in essence similar to the word 'grace' in Christianity in implications. Eckhart's philosophy also "embraces an extreme doctrine of grace." (Ibid, p. 217)

"he so urgently needs the *collatio esse* and therewith grace, repentance, penitence, forgiveness. He has also need of his own effort in devotion of will, in surrender, humility and that virtue which Eckhart calls poverty…" (Ibid, p. 219) Sankaradeva's path also gives importance to the word 'deen'—or the ideal of '*deenata*.'

The attitude of mind captured in the ideal of 'sarana' by Sankaradeva's religion reflects also this type of 'mysticism of the surrender'.

"A mysticism of the surrender of the personal will to the active and eternal will." (Ibid, p. 225)

Salvation in the path of Sankaradeva ultimately means upliftment to a state of sinlessness or spiritual worthiness as man.

> *Salvation* has its subjective value a ground for rejoicing, but he who seeks the salvation of his soul, *in the Christian sense, is not in the first instance searching after something to make him happy but to make him* "*holy*", that is, for something which is of utmost importance quite apart from his happiness or unhappiness. It should be salvation from objective lack of value, from, sin, guilt, damnation, into "the righteousness acceptable

> unto God," into holiness and purity, the ideal of his own Being at its very highest. It is important to realize that all religious salvation includes both elements, that of a subjective and that of an objective value, but at the same time to understand how absolutely different the search after salvation will be, according as to which of these two polar extremes is emphasized and given their prior place—the subjective over the objective, or the objective over the subjective. That is, in other words, whether I ask first of all, "How can I win perpetual happiness?" or, "How can I become righteous in the eyes of God?" There is here at once a palpable difference between Eckhart's mysticism and that of Sankara, and of Indian mysticism generally. Sankara is so deeply interested in the subjective pole of salvation that the other is scarcely noticed by him." (Rudolf Otto: Ibid, pp. 207-208)

Sankaradeva's ideal of 'salvation', too, like that Eckhart's, will be found to be basically of the objective type. And it is a remarkable thing.

It has been shown where Sankaradeva's mysticism differs not only from that of Sankaracharyya but also from that of Chaitanyadeva; he is rather in the path of Prahlad (and so of Ramanuja too) with his Upanishadic ideal of *meditative poise* combined with *dasya bhakti* or prapatti-like sarana. Indian mysticism does not mean only Sankarcharyya's mysticism, there is also, a different type of mysticism called "bhakti mysticism' in a basic sense and within itself there are more than one type and Sankaradeva's type of mysticism was not like Chaitanyadeva's type of mysticism. From Sankaradeva we can more easily go not only to Ramanuja but also to an European mystic like Eckhart or a seventeenth century English metaphysical poet like George Herbert. Such is the great significance of the heritage and type of mystical thought that Sankaradeva and his closest follower Madhavadeva have left in the Assamese language and such a heritage is not easily available in all the modern Indian languages.

> "Eckhart thus becomes necessarily what Sankara could never be: the profound discoverer of the rich indwelling life of the "soul" and a leader and physician of "souls", using that word in a sense which is only—possible on a Christian basis. ...It is upon this calling us a curator animarum (Shephered of Soul) that finally everything which Eckhart has said or done as a schoolman or a preacher, as a simple Christian or as a profound Mystic, depends." (Rudolf *Otto*).

The most striking fact about Sankaradeva's Vaishnavism was its connection with a particular kind of *bhakti* as the ideal. Here Sankaradeva like Ramanuja opted for *dasya bhakti*. This has given Mahapurushiya Vaishnavism also a temperament that may harmonize with Islam's ideal of God as the Master as well as Christianity's ideal of God as the Father. It could at a later period of history could harmonize well also with the character of Brahmoism, although unlike Ramanuja and Sankaradeva, the Brahmos did not accept the idea 'of 'avatara'. However, because of a balanced attitude towards the concepts of Nirguna and Saguna, Sankaradeva's religion could remain more in the central Indian line of Vaishnavism that had come through Bhagavat-Gita and Bhagavatpurana and carried an balanced and integral type of philosophy of life. Unlike Bengal Vaishnavism, where emotion predominated and the ideal of jnana or awareness of the Impersonal dimension of Reality and the idea of human action too came to lose all importance—Sankaradeva's religion could more conveniently be in tune with the line of Devendranath and Rabindranath—as Lakshminath Bezbaroa in his life could show. On the other hand—

> "The Bengal Vaishnavism rejects knowledge, and action and stresses the supremacy of emotion—(*bhava*). Debendranath was always against such devotional excess and later his son Rabindranath Tagore also repudiated such devotion in one of his prayers..." (Sisir Kumar Das)

Sankaradeva's Kirtanand Dasam and Madhavadeva's Nam-Ghosha and *Bhakti-Ratnavali* are the four pillars of Mahapurushiya Vaishnavism of Assam. The key-note of the philosophy of Sankardeva and Madhavadeva is sounded very clearly at the beginning of *Kirtana* and *Namghosha* the more famous of these four books.

Prothome Pronamo Brhamorupi Sonatono
Sorvo Avotaroro Karono Narayana.

These are the first two lines of Sankaradeva's *Kirtan* puthi and they clearly declare that "*Narayana* is the Brahmorupi sanatana and also the Cause of all the avataras." Serious students of Indian philosophy would immediately recognize that such a statement cannot be made in the path of Sankaracharyya who did not accept the idea

of Narayana as the Brohmarupi Sanatana in a final sense. That it is rather in the line of Ramanuja will also be quite clear to him.

What Sankaradeva said at the beginning of *Kirtana* is also present in another form in the following lines from his *Dasam*, in which the sight of the human form of the newborn baby Krishna inspires the father Vasudeva to say—

Jito Brahma-rupa Nirakara niranjana
Tente tumi janilo sakshata narayana.

What is human and earthly is not as poor as to be deprived of the light and significance of the immanent mystery of the Nirgun Brahma. It is the poet-philosopher's vision which sees how Time and Eternity intersect and it is also a mystical or supra-mundane vision, though it may come into conflict with that type of mystical vision which ultimately leads to a devaluation of the human form and the earth. Sankaradeva's vision revealed the poetry of the interpenetration of the *saguna* and *nirguna* aspects of the ultimate Mystery.

The Vaishnavite use of the language of Sankarite Vedanta philosophy gave to it a new dimension of meaning and as a result there was often a qualitative transformation of the original Sankarite philosophy. That is also what happens in the writings of Sankaradeva in many places.

Sankaradeva's "Ek Deo Ek Seo Ek Bine Nahi Keo" sounds a note that is central in his philosophy and it too may even be mistaken for a following of the path of Sankaracharyya if we are not careful to be philosophically aware. Only when we realize that this Upanishadic deal of 'oneness' is silently or invisibly counterpointed by the ideal of Bhakti (which has come from the urge of the Upanishadic One to break into two or many and which also means "to adore" as in "bhaja Govindam") that we may realize where Sankaradeva's path differs from that of Sankaracharyya as well as Islam. On the other hand, the emphasis on loyalty to one God only' in Sankaradeva's Vaishnavism (as against the Brahmanical attitude to god and gods) is rather connected with an influence of the ideal of Islam with its emphasis on 'the unity of God.'

Similarly, at the beginning of Madhavadeva's *Namghosha* it is clearly declared that the ideal devotee is one who merely delights

in the path of devotion only and is indifferent to the prospect of 'mukti'—that bhakti is more precious than mukti.

Muktito nisprihajito sehi bhakataka nomoo
rasarnoy magoohoo bhokoti.

This statement too could not be made—in the final stage—in the path of Sankaracharyya and this is also basically representative of Ramanuja's line. What distinguishes Sankaracharyya's path from that of Sankaradeva is the fact that in Sankaracharyya's path "Ishvara cannot be accorded the status of the highest ontological reality of Brahman, the only non-dual reality without a second." (Y. Masih: *Shankara's Universal Philosophy of Religion*, p. 113)

For Sankaradeva Iswara or God is a 'creator' in a different sense from that in which Sankaracharyya's Brahman may also appear as a 'creator':

> "It should be remembered here that Shankara speaks of *Brahman* as the cause of world-order from the finite or relative standpoint only, and not from the ultimate or *paramarthika* standpoint. *Brahman*, according to Sankara, projects the appearance of the world-order... by its intractable power of *maya*. In explaining how *Brahman* as the creator can create the world of multiple existence.... Sankara gives us the analogous illustration of a magician..." (S.N.L. Shrivastava: Sankara and Bradley, p. 44)

For Sankarcharyya Eternity is Eternity and Time is Time and never the twin do meet in reality.'

Judged by Sankaracharyya's *theory of paravidya and aparavidya*, Sankaradeva's *Namadharma* with its the *Kirtana* of Krishna will have to be identified rather as a religion of 'the lower level'!

> "*The sphere of lower, or profane knowledge (aparavidya) in Sankara's system includes*... also ordinary religious practice, where the object or worship (Upasana) is the personified God the Creator, or Isvara, having numerous merits and accomplishments. Owing to its interpretation of the higher Brahman, [Shankara's] *Advaita* occupies quite a unique place among other Vedanta Schools, since for them the higher reality is Saguna Brahman (most often this role is assigned to *Narayana-Visnu*.)" (Natalia Isayeva, *Shankara and Indian Philosophy*, p. 226) "Just as Sankara's self comes dangerously near to the Purusa of Samkhya, similarly his illusionism approaches the Mahayanic position closely. The

> Vedic and Upanisadic view was clearly theistic and for it the First Cause is a creative, all-wise, all-powerful spirit. Sankara unfortunately accepted the Sankhyan and Buddhist premises that to act must be to change and hence to be transcient. (G.C. Pande: *Foundations of Indian Culture; Volume*: *Spiritual Vision and Symbolic forms in Ancient India*, p. 35).

The Neo-Vaishnavite Movement in Indian society was almost an inavitable response to the fact Sankaracharyya's philosophy ultimately ran counter to the ethos of the creative spirit working in Indian Civilization "for Sankara Brahman is to be understood not as the 'first cause' or the creator of the world, but as the 'self. And the 'self is to be understood not as the individual experiencer and agent but as the eternal ground of subjectivity presupposed in experience as such." (G. C. Pande, Ibid, p. 134)

The conflict between the philosophical position of Sankaracharyya and that of Sankaradeva may be understood also in the light of this finding:

"Surendranath Dasgupta also criticizes Sankara seriously at the conclusion of his study of his philosophy....

Sankara spoke of the Lord (Isvara) as a useful image, a help for those who need him, as the Yoga writers said, but with no ultimate reality. But in the *Bhagavad Gita* the Lord is the ultimate reality, beyond *Brahman* itself, transcendent and eternal. It is this eternal God who manifests himself personally and visibly, showing grace and compassion to his creatures. The Avatar doctrine, therefore, demands a more positive theism and a more thoroughly religious exposition than some of the classical commentators gave to it." (Geoffrey Parrinder, *Avatar* and *Incarnation*, p. 62)

From this Mahapurushiya Vaishnavism of Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva its Damodariya development—a brahamanical path—come to differ—in which Vaishnavism too came to be tied to the philosophy of Sankaracharyya. This could be possible only under the pressure of the *Smarta* tradition of some Brahman members. The stamp of conservative Hindu tradition too was particularly in evidence in this path.

It is here that we may bring to light also the conflict between the liberal (real Vaishnavite or Bhakti). Hindu 'context' and the conservative Smarta Hindu 'context' in the interpretation and assessment of such philosophical matters.

[4]

The Significance of Bhagavata Parana and Ramanuja

There were the Brahmananical-Sankarite "context" to the *Bhagavad Parana* as well as the basically Sudra-centred Vaishnava "context". Sankaradeva's approach to the great texts of Indian theology was of the second type and it was basically shudra-centered like that of Ramanuja.

> "For Bhaskara the "context" to the Vedanta "text"—literally the Brahmasutra and the *Bhagavad Gita*—is his own traditional *Smarta* way of life. But for Yamuna (if we are to consider him already a Vedantin), *and certainly for Ramanuja*, as later on for Madhva, the "context" was the Vaishnava bhakti way of life." (Thomas J. Hopkins)

The *Smarta* way of life of the Saivite brahmin Sankaracharyya was also behind his conceptions of the lower and higher brahman. Against this trend Bhagvata Parana carried this essentially *shudra-centred message*:

> "The most important figure in the Bhagavata apart from Bhagavan himself is the saintly ascetic Narada, the prime expositor of *bhakti* religion and one of the best examples of the devotional life. Significantly, although in his previous life he was a *Gandharva* (a class of demigods), in the Bhagavata he appears as a Sudra, the son of a servant girl, who obtained devotion from hearing the praises of Hari celebrated by the scholars whom he and his mother served." (Ibid)

Narada's connection with the reality of *Gandharva* (instead of *Yaksha*) is also significant and it was this *sudra* ideal of *bhakti* that both Ramajuna and Sankaradeva emphasised.

"In the labors of a Nathamuni, a Yamuna, a Ramanuja, we observe a consistent effort to promote the Sanskritization of the *bhakti* religion The God of the *bhakta* is equated with the supreme principle of the Upanishads..." (Ibid) Sankaradeva too used Advaitic terminology but what he could not accept was the Sankarite idea of the Nirguna Brahma as the only higher and ultimate reality because he could not regard Godhead in human form as a lower reality. He, like all Vaishnavaite philosophers, rejected this very dichotomy or gradation between the two Brahmans. His *Kirtana* by itself would show that he

never supported the idea of Krishna as the representative of a 'lower' brahman.

Except perhaps one single reference to the name of Sankaracharyya in a particular context (in which Sankaracharyya does not bring in his idea of the higher and lower Brahmans) there is no other proof of Sankaradeva's acquaintance with that philosopher of Vedanta. On the other hand, although unlike Sankaracharyya and rather like Ramanuja he accepted Vishnu-Narayana or Krishna as the Supreme Reality it may also be possible that he had not read or studied Ramanuja's philosophy either. There is no mention of Ramanuja anywhere in Sankaradeva's work.

If we go by inner implications of the fact that he differed from Sankaracharyya on the central point (the relation of the nirguna and saguna brahmans) and showed a different relation between 'jnana' and 'bhakti'—never allowing "bhakti' to be of subordinate or instrumental value—it would logically follow that even perhaps without studying Ramanuja he hit upon a formula which is basically of the type evolved by Ramanuja in opposition to Sankaracharyya. However, the essential Vaishnavite philosophy too had already been there as the major influence in the atmosphere of the temple of Jagannatha of Orissa when Sankaradeva had gone there and it is there that is said to have gained his climatic vision. And what was the dominant nature of the philosophical atmosphere there?

> "From his (Ramanuja's) advent till date Jagannath is considered an exclusively a Vaishnavite deity." (Godavarish Mishra)

Orissa is not only a part of Eastern India, Orissa is also the gateway to South India for Eastern Indians. The connection with the temple of Jagannatha of Orissa was a major event in Sankaradeva's life and it also led to a new state of illumination for his mind and what he came to do in Assam after his return from the long sojourn in Greater India which included the temple of Jagannatha—shows also a basic sense of the great India—or Mahabharata. He was the representative of a great Indian cultural movement too and his significance in the field on philosophy too cannot be realized in an insular regionalist or narrow Assamese spirit, disconnected from the original place of the Bhakti movement—the South. The connection of the *Bhagavata Parana* too with South India has been accepted by many scholars.

It may also be noticed that in Sankaradeva's path of Mahapurushiya Vaishnavism the *Bhagavata Parana* is the Holy Book and either the *Bhagavata Parana* itself or the most valuable part of it—*Dasam* came to replace the icon or idol in the temple or deoghar (devagriha). It was also a process of the Word replacing the Image—the Name ousting the Form—Nama replacing Rupa. *Sarai, Medhi,*—words that had been there in the pre-Sankaradeva Assamese tradition were given a new significance. The word 'saaj' was there and from it had come such a word as 'sajtola' or satoola'—all brought under the control of a philosophy of Vaishnaism basically discovered within the *Bhagavata Parana*—discovered with the discerning vision of a poet-philosopher. Deoghars in Assam became Namghars and Namghars on their parts also came to be supported by a parallel type institution called the Sattra, which carried the light of the *Bhagvata*. Assamese Vaishnavism has had also an interesting system of diarchy—the namghars on the one hand and the *sattras* on the other hand.

The *Sattra* is an old Sanskrit word that was there in the Vedic age but it came to be used also in the *Bhagavata Parana* with reference to Naimisharanya, known also as Vishnu-ksetra where from Suta recounted the whole *Bhagavata Parana*. It has been rightly inferred that Sankaradeva evidently copied the term from the *Bhagavata Purana* and used it to indicate the seat of the Vaisnava guru whose duty was to perpetually disseminate the teachings of the *Bhagavata*.

The use of the word *Sattra* in Assam had been there, however, in a pre-Sankaradeva period—in the days of the Pala dynasty and this fact too may be noticed. So this question too may be raised: When did the *Bhagavata Purana* enter the Brahmaputra Valley? Sankaradeva's *Uddhava-Samvada*, which contains the essence of the *Tenth Canto of the Bhagavata Purana* is said to have been composed by the Saint when he was only nineteen years old. Certainly the *Bhagavata Purana* had come already to have some influence on that Assamese Society too. Dinesh Chandra Sen wrote in his *Chaitanya* and His Companions: "We find in the *Bhaktiratnakar* that Visnu Puri, a disciple of Jayadharma, the 1Oth leader of the sect, popularised the *Bhagavata* amongst the Bengalis about the middle of the 13th century by his celebrated Sanskrit work Bhatiratnavali." So it may be seen that already a trend centering round the Bhagavata

Purana had started in Bengal and Assam before Sankaradeva's time and through Sankaradeva it received a solid and final character.

How much Sankaradeva's mind came to centre round the *Bhagavata Purana* may' be realised if we notice that of the two works of Sankaradeva considered as the most precious—Kirtana and Dasama—both have come out of that Purana. Kirtana—that is, the episodes contained in it are mainly based on that Purana and of his six plays five are based on it. So it is also a very interesting fact that *Sattra* as the place of the dissemination of the light of the *Bhagavata Purana* came to acquire in the path of Assamese Vaishnavism a special connotation while the old heritage of the Buddhist Viharas was also assimilated into the new type institution called *Sattra*.

Assamese Vaishnavism, solidly based on the *Bhagavat Purana*, had of course to resist the onslaughts of a different type of Vaishanavism that had been coming from Bengal and was connected also with the *Brahmavaivarta Purana*, with which the ideal of *dasyabhakti* was not connected. Padma Puran too was more representative of Bengal.

It was rather with the South Indian cult of *dasyabhakti*—its Bhagavata Purana as well as Ramanuja that Assam or Mahapurushiya Vaisnhavism remained basically connected.

The importance given to the word '*sarana*' in the Mahapurushiya tradition of Vaishnavism is also interesting. It is a word that connects both an old Buddhist tradition and the philosophy of Ramanuaj with its ideal of *dasyabhakti*. Saran goes with the tradition of *Nam* while the word *diksha* more favoured in the Brahmanical path goes with the word *mantra*. Sankaradeva's *Namdharma* had an essential conflict with the whole ethos of mantra as well as tribal *deodharma* connected with such words as *deodhani* and *deothai*—all connected in the Assam valley with the cults of Shiva-Shakti. The essentially democratic temper of Sankaradeva's movement represented a philosophy which was in conflict with the *Smarta-brahmanical* as well as tribal-feudal line which was basically connected with Siva-Shakti (Deo and Deodhani) in the Brahmaputra valley. Loyalty (*sarana*) to the four ideals Nam, Deu, Guru, Bhakat are enjoined in this path and that the interpretation of the significance of the word 'Deu' and 'Guru' may not be directed towards a Smarta or undemocratic life there is the significantly Sant-like emphasis also on the two other ideals of *Nam* and *Bhakat*. The context that determined the

essentially Mahapurushia interpretation of these ideals was the non-Smarta and truly Vaishnava ideal of the Sudra and Ati-sudra ethos. The Mahapurushiya ideals of Four Loyalties are in essence the old '*Trisrana*' tatva of Buddhism with the idea of Deva Vishnu added to it.

The presence of the ideal of "saran" gives a special character to the ideal of "bhakti" in Sankaradeva's Vaishnavism. In this Vaishnavism we do not find the use of the word "prapatti" but the scholar Banikanta Kakoti made an interesting observation: "The *prapatti* of the South corresponds to *saran* in Assam". Sankaradeva too, placed an emphasis on the idea of Vishnu Narayana like Ramanuja and unlike Chaitanyadeva or the North Indian saint poets. In Sankaradeva's Vaishnavism too both Vishnu Narayan and the ideal of 'saran' have a central place. In the context of Ramanuja's philosophy too we may find: "The ideal is the attainment of the world of Narayana, and the enjoyment there, under his aegis, of perfect freedom and bliss. The means to it is of two kinds—one called *prapatti*, which is meant for all and whose source is to be traced mainly to the Vaishnava faith; and the other called *bhakti*, which is based upon the teaching of the Upanishads and whose adoption is restricted to the higher castes. The former is absolute self-surrender, coupled with complete trust in the mercy and power of Narayana; and one variety of it is believed to bring release at once." (Hiriyana)

The ideal of *prapatti*-like *saran* too is there in Assam's Vaishnavism (which is absent in Bengal Vaishnavism or in that of North India) and *bhakti* here remains connected with a calmness and control and does not easily become an emotional affair. The Bhakti path here is also connected with the philosophical Upanishadic temper. On the other hand "*prapatti*' associated with *dasya bhakti* as it is carries also a mood of *santa* rasa is congenial for a sober mental process: "This means to salvation, because it represents a certain mental attitude, is explained (by Ramanuja) *as a form of jnana*', and Ramanuja maintains that in recommending *prapatti*, he does not swerve from the teaching of the Upanishads that knowledge is the chief, if not the sole means to salvation. Ramanuja's idea of bhakti, on the other hand, leads him to assimilate the spirit of the teaching of the Gita.

Assamese Mahapurushiya Vaishnavism, Lakshminath Bezbaroa stressed in several places, is basically connected with the *Bhagavata*

Gita as well as the *Bhagavata Parana*. How, comparatively speaking, this type of Vaisnhavism is nearer at least in certain significant aspects to the philosophical temper of Ramanuja's line than Bengal Vaishnavism may be realized on the basis of such findings too. The combination of the *dasya-bhava* ox *sarana* or self-surrender ultimately transforms the character of bhakti too. "So great is the influence of the old Vaisnava creed on the doctrine. It envisages the possibility of achieving the goal by *prapatti* without resorting the *bhakti*, but not that of doing so by *bhakti* alone." (Hiriyana) *Bhakti* in the path of Ramanuja was not a predominantly emotional affair: it was also the cultivation of an attitude of mind and it was connected with a due emphasis on the ideals of *jnana* or knowledge and *karma* or one's work or duties in the world. "The significance of this emphasis on karma is that householders also can strive for and attain salvation." (Ibid.)

The idea of *jnana-yoga* as propounded by Ramanuja also fits in with the ethos of Mahapurushiya Vaishnavism: "*self-realization is not by itself the goal of man as in Advaita, but only a precondition to it, viz. God-realization*. Even the word "*bhakti*" has a special connotation in Ramanuja's philosophy: "The third terms, *bhakti-yoga*, means constant *meditation* on God. The word *bhakti* here does not have its popular meaning of blind faith. *It stands for loving meditation* for its own sake, based upon the highest knowledge, and is the same as *upasana, which is so prominent a feature of the practical teaching of the Upanishads*." (Ibid)—Madhavadeva's Namghosha may be read as a book of meditations of this nature. The original Upanishadic path—though not its Sankarite interpretation—is also important here.

Jnana of this character and consequently a *nirgunism*—meditation on the Impersonal dimension of the Ultimate Reality too has a role in Assamese Mahapurushya Vaishnavism and this also distinguishes it from Bengal Vaishnavism of Chaitanyadeva which was more connected with the *saguna* pole of reality as well as with *bhava* or emotion. Assamese Mahapurushiya Vaishnavism gave importance to the *saguna* reality and hence also to the human form but it retained something of the old Indian Vaishnavism of the Gupta age—it took the idea of Vishnu as four-handed too—not as confined to the normal two handed human form only.

Why the *saguna* ideal and the ideal of *bhakti* important? Because

the role of the human heart is important. So we may cite also this interpretation of Bhakti: "It is the involvement of the heart that is *bhakti*. *Bhakti* is essential to all kinds of effort." (Vinova Bhave) "In work without heart, there is neither strength nor satisfaction." (Ibid) On the other hand, the heart should not overpower the mind but rather allow it too to play its role in an integral understanding of a problem or of life in general. The heart is necessarily connected with the personal and the *saguna* but mind leads us beyond that sphere. "*Saguna*, the personal, needs the nirguna, the impersonal. Now and again, we should learn to get out of the personal, the visible... It is true that the river of inspiration rises in *saguna*, but it should reach perfection in fidelity and principle, it should flow into *nirguna*. From the womb of *bhakti*, *jnana* should be born. From the creeper of *bhakti*, the flower of *jnana* should blossom."

We may find Sankaradeva in a mid-position between Chaitanyadeva on the one hand and the North Indian Saints on the other hand. Sankaradeva was also like the saint-poets of North India in some respects but he differed from them too. The North-Indian Hindi-speaking saint-poets were at a greater distance from *The Bhagavata Parana* as well as Ramanuja in that they believed "in a Supreme God conceived as beyond all qualifications (nirguna)" and "rejected all concrete saguna ('qualified') manifestations or incarnations of the divine". This is not true of Sankaradeva's path. In the *Sant path* the 'nirguna' mystical tendency was more dominant while in the path of Assamese Vaishnavism of Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva this tendency was less in evidence. The concept of '*nirgun bhakti*' is too consequently not applicable to Sankaradeva's path and, comparatively speaking, his path showed a lesser degree of *nirgunism* of that type too.

So there is this difference between the philosophical position of Sankaradeva and that of the representatives of Sant Mat in that unlike them and rather like Ramanuja Sankaradeva does not belittle the idea of avatar that Krishna represents.

> "Rejecting as they do the plurality of gods as well as the Vaishnava doctrine of the avataras of the supreme Lord, the Sants appears seekers of the absolute, conceived as the One Godhead, the Ultimate Reality. In Indian tradition *sant mat* has been equated with '*nirguna bhakti*', a term which

would seem to define bhakti according to its objective: the nonqualified (nirguna) aspect of the supreme Brahman, the one non-personal, all-pervading, ineffable Reality which can only be spoken of in negative terms. This notion of the *Absolute as nirgun* coincides with the Upanishadic concept of the Brahman-Atman and the *advaita* (monistic) interpretation of the Vedanta tradition, which denies any real distinction between the soul and God and urges man to recognize within himself his true divine nature. *The northern Sants, led by Kabir, mostly seem to adopt this stance*, speaking of merging or re-absorption of the finites soul, the *jiva*, into the infinite ineffable reality—or state—which is the ultimate goal." (Vaudeville).

In Sankaradeva's philosophy and poetry nirgunism was well qualified by a respect to *sagunism* and here he was more like Ramanuja in this respect. On the other hand the north Indian poets too were not in the line of Sankaracharyya; their type of *nirgunism* too extolled the path of *Nam*. But unlike them Sankaradeva accepted Ramanuji idea of Avatara.

"In Epic and Puranic Hinduism, one finds numerous examples of resistance to the *nirguna* ideal. Avatar is a prime example. Theoretically one cannot reconcile *nirguna* deity with avatars" (O. 'Flaherty)

Sankaradeva's *nirgunism* was a *nirgunism* qualified at the conscious philosophical level.

However, the philosophical implications of the very expression "Nam Dharma" used for Sankaradeva's Vaishnavism may be examined also in the light of this character of the Sant Path.

"Frits Stall, equating the *nirguna* god of the Sants with the ineffable nirguna Brahman or Absolute-without-qualities of the monistic Vedanta tradition, demonstrates that *nirguna* bhakti is a logical impossibility. Yet mystical traditions everywhere have sought and affirmed the possibility of a relationship with the ineffable. Therefore, he concludes, in India as elsewhere, devotion and philosophical reflection are not compatible activities. Wendy O' Flaherty suggested that the concept of *nirgun* god is a creation of monistic philosophers and fundamentally at odds with the natural *bhakti* impulse of the Hindu masses, which has always been resolutely saguna. There exists in Hinduism, as is clear from the Epic and Puranic texts as well as the structure of temple architecture, an unresolved tension between

nirguna and *saguna* images of deity. *The contribution of the Sants was to challenge the whole distinction with a conception of deity that transcends it*.

Guru, Deva, Nam, Bhakat are central concepts of Assamese Mahapurushiya Vaishnavism while "the three pillars of the Sant sadhana" are "the Name, the Divine Guru and the sat sang." The appellation "Namdharma" used for Sankareadeva's religion has thus also a connection with the North-Indian Bhakti tradition.

"Whereas traditional Hinduism conceives God (or gods) as endowed with both "name" and "form" (name-rupa) as objects of bhakti, the Sants as a whole reject the cult of 'form (with the exception of the god Vithova of the Maharastrian Sants) to cling to the sole Name as the hypostasis of the supreme Being". (Vaudeville). +

"Tuisi Das, a non-sectarian Vaishnava, does not hesitate to vindicate the superiority of the Name over the *nirguna brahman* and over the *Saguna* (visible) form of Rama himself. (Ibid)

"Thus the power of the Name is immeasurably greater than the impersonal (nirguna); and I declare that in my judgment the Name is greater than Rama too...." (*Doha*: 23) "Therefore the Name is greater than both the Absolute (Brahma) and than Rama and blesses even those that bless."(Doha: 25) (Ibid) It will be noticed that thus *Namdharma* could show a realm in which the conflict between the idea of Nirgun brahma and the cult of bhakti could be transcended.

From the South Indian *Bhakti* movement there came the idea of a Shudra-centred philosophy; and Sankaradeva, like the Sants or Saint-poets of Northern India, was also a non-Brahman—a shudra. But his position shows a less radical character in this connect. He was well acquitted with Sanskrit and was also a scholar who could beat some of the Brahmans found in the opposite camp and *Bhagavata Parana* became his major support and he himself wrote a philosophical treatise in Sanskrit. The Northern Indian Sants had a somewhat different voice and social background:

> "Who are the Sants? Socially, they belonged to the lower strata of Hindu and Muslim society: nearly all were Shudras, some of them even Atishudras, i.e. Untouchables. They were poor, mostly uneducated or even illiterate; quite a few were women. They had no access of right to Brahminical knowledge, were not acquainted with Sanskrit and could only express themselves in the local languages of the people, the archaic

> Indo Aryan vernaculars of Hindustan and central India... The poetry of the Sants largely contributed to the development of 'northern' vernaculars into 'literary' languages. It was especially the case with Hindi, which was to become the national language of India in modern times."[93]

The language of Sankaradeva and his disciple Madhavadeva does not represent that common or rough colloquial character we find in Kabir. It is a *sista* language—not disconnected from a Sanskritization—the language of a stratum of Shudra whose social position was not so low and carried a higher standard of cultural life. However, the Sant-like sudra impulse too was there in Sankaradeva's life and it found expression in a liberal attitude to the ati-sudras' and could bring him such a Muslim disciple as Sandsai. The *Sufi* non-Sanskrit strain was not there in Sankaradeva but his religious philosophy—if mixed with the Sufi Strain—could come very near the Islamic ideal of his Assamese Muslim successor Azan. Pir of 18th century.

Sankaradeva may lead us upto Kabira but to go to the Bauls or a Lalan Fakir of Bengal we may have to start mainly from north Indian Kabir's position. The dhrupad-like or shista character of Sankaradeva's *Borgeets* (Divine Songs) belong to a more rarefied atmosphere and unlike Kabir's *Bhajans* are at a distance from the common earth of the spoken languages.

Where Sankaradeva's line differed from the North Indian *Sant* line too may be noticed in the light of such a matter:

> "The cult of the Name as an hypostatis of the supreme divinity and especially of the Name of Ram, though it probably *owes much to the Tantric tradition*, is present in most forms of Vaishnava bhakti at least from the time of Jnaneswar. . . The exaltation of the Guru as the interiorized Satguru, whose powerful mantra is conceived as the mysterious 'Word' (sabda) which provokes the disintegration of the soul itself and its instant reapportion into the undifferentiated Reality of State, is clearly a *Yogic concept unfamiliar to the southern sants who retain a link with traditional Vaishnava bhakti*. The Sant sadhana or the Santa ideal of sanctity therefore may be viewed as a subtle blending of two main traditions of Hindu mysticism, apparently antagonistic to each other: Vaishnava bhakti and an esoteric Tantric tradition, whose most popular representatives are Gorakhnath and the Nath Yogis, often referred to by Kabir and his followers." (Vaudeville)

Although Nam, Dev Guru, Bhakat are there in the Assamese path of bhakti movement it was less or little connected with the "esoteric Tantric tradition" and it was because the character of the mainstream Assamese sudra society of tillers and artisans—with whom Sankaradeva's Vaishnavism was basically connected—was of a much less peripheral position and in the Assamese society their position had a rather central significance. Sankaradeva's position too was more like the Southern sants and was in a way different from the Sants of the Northern India. This fact too may be noticed. On the other hand, however, when the mahapurushia Vaishnava line of philosophy was combined with the esoteric tantric traditions too the result was a kind of *nam* called *Tokari-geet* or *Boragi-geet*.

South Indian Ramanuja's type of idealization of the form or image of Nararyan was also characteristic of Sankaradeva's path—which consequently differed in a way from the Sant path:

"The hypothesis of this essay is that the *nirguna* image of deity is an embarrassment to Puranic and temple Hinduism, that the nirguna line has been force-fed to grass-roots Hindus with a strictly limited degree of success. Charlotte Vaudeville has elegantly and clearly stated the Sant paradox which is at the heart of this problem: The Sant not only wavered between *nirguna* and *saguna* images of deity, but purposely challenged the very distinction between these categories. The logical outcome of merging with a *nirguna* deity—moksa would be the disappearance of bhakti. This conflict results, at least in part, from the merging of several different Indian traditions (Sanskrit Vedanta, vernacular bhakti, other traditions)—a merging that was not always willing or conscious. For *nirguna* bhakti is an Irish bull (or, as the Hindus, say, vandhyaputra '(as meaningless as) the son of barren women'). It is a concoction of monastic scholars, artificially imposed upon Sant tradition. Indeed, one might even go further and say that the idea of a *nirguna* deity itself was imposed by monistic Hindu philosophers upon a saguna bhakti tradition that managed, somehow, to absorb it." (Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty'

Without the 'nirguna' dimension Indian bhakti poetry as well as the philosophy of Vaishnavism would have been poorer—it would have been divorced from the Upanishadic meditation, contemplation and the philosophical grasp of the realm of the Impersonal. However, there has all along in the Indian cultural tradition the

counter-assertion too. Sankaradeva's philosophy as well as poetry too shows a particular regional form of the resulting dialectics—a dialectics though the key-note is that of *bhakti* philosophy with its emphasis on the human form or the concept of Man. Sankaradeva's type of resolution of the "nirguna' and "saguna" problem or Indian philosophy was definitely not of the line followed by the Sankarite monks but on the other hand it was not also of the path of the North Indian shudra *Sant* poets.

"This tension is even more evident in the Puranas, where the Brahman authors attempted to channel the emotional current of *prema bhakti* into the classical furrows of *advaita* monism, stubbornly ignoring the basic incompatibility. (The philosopher Ramanuja tackled the problem in a far more sophisticated way; though the Puranas do not quote him as much as they quote a kind of third-rate version of Shankara, Puranic thought owes much to Ramanuja's resolution of saguna with nirguna.)

Like such Sants as Kabir, Sankaradeva also stood against "idol-worship"—and in Mahapurushiya Vaishnavite path there is no place for "murti-worship" but while the Sant tradition shows a mocking attitude towards the cult of avatars—in certain respects—Sankaradeva's philosophy was at a distance from this type of idea of *nirgunism* generally found in the Sant Path. It may also be noted that Sankaradeva's Vaishnavism was intimately connected also with the significance of Vishnu in the political history of the Brahmaputra Valley:

> "The son of Vishnu and the Earth Goddess was Naraka Asura and Bhagadatta was Naraka's son. This tradition the Assam ruling houses never forgot through the centuries." (Suniti Kumar Chatterjee)

In my '*Suryya Kumar Bhuyan Memorial Lecture*' I have also pointed out the significance of Sankaradeva's thoughts in this context:

"Sankaradeva was perhaps the last important representative of this ancient Hindu or Indian tradition of historical thought relating to Assam. Not only did he propagate the ideal of *Bharatavarisha* in the Brahmaputra Valley, in his *Parijatharana* Nat he even went out of the normal periphery of the subject-matter to bring in the history of the Naraka-Bhagadatta line. In the latter period of his life Narakasur had deviated from the Aryan way but through Bhagadatta that way came to be reestablished. Krishna and Bhumidevi were active partic-

ipants in this great event. *Parijatharan* Nat thus has also a dimension (which is obviously of political import) not normally present in plays of this type."

The Assamese *Bhuyans* of the medieval age—to which society Sankaradeva too came to be connected,—were the inheriton, of the Bhauma political and cultural tradition in Assam history.

How the significance of the word "Mahapurusha" (from which has come the word "Mahapurushiya") was originally connected with the Buddhist tradition and ultimately with the Aryan-Kshatriya tradition of the ancient age may be shown also by a book like J. Evola's *The Doctrine of Awakening* (pp. 18-19). How this word came to be connected also with the line of Ramanuja at one stage and with Sankaradeva's religious path is also a very interesting question. Anyway, in this whole tradition we may notice the importance of a non-brahmanical and Aryan kshatriya-sudra line of consciousness.

To understand Sankaradeva's position we have to understand also the political history of medieval India.

Like South India and unlike North India extending up to the easternmost part of Bengal, Assam remained on the whole free from the domination of Muslim rulers and hence Assam Mahapurishiya Vaisnhavism did not take the character of an intense type of spiritualism solely connected with the Dance and Song Division of life and unrelated to the other areas of national life. Neither Kabir nor the Bauls had anything to do with the idea of the Krishnaavater—particularly the idea as it had evolved already in the Gupta Age or the pre-Muslim Age. Assam Mahapurushiya Vaishnavism had the ideal of a God who was believed to have been a saviour also in the political sphere. Assam Vaishnavism could also be there in Assam's political history, behind the battle of Saraighat against Mughals as well as behind the Moamoria Rebellion against the autocracy of Ahom rule as well as the behind the Non-cooperation Movement of Gandhi Age in the Brahmaputra Valley. The Assamese Mahapurushiya shudras—who were the real backbone of Sankaradeva's religious movement—fought against the Mughal invaders as well as against the autocracy of Ahom rule and had kept the banner of a democratic Shudra philosophy of life flying against all the confusions created by the Brahmanical-Mongoloid political-religious tradition in Assam's history. Sankaradeva's was a spiritual fight against that tradition too

and was not merely against the prospects of the Mughals taking over also the Brahmaputra valley.

[5]

Vaishnavism, Sikhism, Islam and Christianity

"Indian cosmology, for instance, accepts the existential oneness of all aspects of being. According to one phase of the early Vedic thought, the same magical potency, *asu*, permeates through everyone and everything—god, man, animal, trees etc.—and the apparent manifoldness of form and type is due to quantitative differences. The later doctrine of *advaita* is but a metaphysical expression of this original cosmic-magic view. It is further believed that the universe, vast and complex as it is, is by no means chaotic: it is governed by and regulated by an all-pervasive universal law, *Rta*. Nothing is higher that this cosmic law. Even gods are subservient to it and cannot outgrow it." (R.N. Dandekar)

The implications of the Advaitism propounded by Shankaracharyya—"only *Brahma* is the truth and the *Jagat* is untruth (mithya)"—is, in fact, ultimately is a conflict with the idea of Advaitism which shows the whole Universe—being a part of the invisible Transcendent Reality—is also sacred. Brahman really cannot be isolated from the universe in the path of this original Advaitism of India.

It will also be seen that the philosophical implications of this Advaitism will be that jnana, important as it is, cannot replace the central significance of the ideal of *bhakti* or love and place it at a lower level of reality.

> "The inner unity of the Indian peoples—a unity all the more striking because of the multiplicity of races, languages and local customs—is dependent on a spiritual atmosphere, hard to define but omnipresent. There seems to be a religious attachment to the very soil itself, a devotion which makes mountain and river sacred and unites animals with mankind. The attachment is bound up with the thought of God as immanent in the universe and in man, and is found most strongly in those who are nearest to Nature." (C.F. Andrews)

> "India, throughout its history which has been assailed so often by forces inimical to love, has in its metaphysics, its social customs and the temperament of its people always been dominated by love. It has believed that all life is sacred and among its ideals are those of Ahimsa which will cause no injury, Karuna which has compassion on all beings, and Maitri which gives itself in practical love and charity.... The future of India depends on the degree in which its traditional love-energy can continue to dominate its civilization." (Verrier Elwin)

"Along with love there must be faith in India's historic mission to the world which is so great...*Love illuminates knowledge*; it gives meaning to beauty; it is the dearest guest of home." (Ibid)

There was something of a deep significance in the very concept of Vishnu for Indian civilization and it is in the path of Vaishnavism that the ideal of love received the most memorable expressions and the image of the human form acquired also a dimension of divine significance. Indian Vaishnavism, much more than Christianity, came to connect the realm of matter or prakriti as well as life in general with human life. There was the role of Jainism with its ideals of *ahimsa* and *anekantavad*; there was definitely the greater role of Buddhism with its idea of Karuna, Maitri and Pragjna in the humanization of the Indians' idea of life in general but it was through Vaishnavism that this process was carried forward to a more developed stage. So it is no wonder that the Indian psyche discovered in the idea of Vishnu—originally a Sun God—and ultimately in the story of Devakiputra Krishna a kind of final point. The Indian psyche had been making subtle explorations into the mystery of Man in various ways—but here was something which brought together along the older path of Vishnu or Vaishnavism several strands of consciousness. More than Christianity Vaishnavism makes us feel the mysterious process of biological evolution emerging into man's historical evolution and the story here started with the Fish *avatara* of God and ended with the story of Krishna. Man and the animal world and in fact the whole of the plant life too are intimately and subtly connected: this is the message of India and it has received through Vaishnavism its most remarkable expressions. It is in the context of Vaishnavism of India that we feel in a deep way the significance or truth of the following reflections:

> "the continuity of biological and historical studies, that the story of evolution is in series with that of humanity, and that if the whole record down to and including Christ is accepted as covering a single process, it discloses a remarkable coherence and can be interpreted consequently in terms of what St. Paul declared to be its end, the manifestation of the son of God."(Charies E. Raven)

> "Properly viewed, the urge of the loving organism from its primitive origin at the unicellular level to its present culmination in the saint can be seen as the attainment under similar conditions and with increasing range, of the fullness of life appropriate to it; and if the organism remains sensitive and responsive, this urge is capable of manifesting new and unforseeable possibilities." (Ibid).

Literally taken, the Vaishnavite theory of Avatars may sound unrealistic or appear a fantasy but if approached with the right type of spiritual sensitivity responsive to the poetic-symbolic-mythical mode of expression it may be felt to the expression of a subtle and deep truth relating to the very process of biological evolution on the earth. A book like Lecornte du Nouy's *Human Destiny*, too, may be found to touch on this grand theme, though even in that book there is no reference to the Indian Vaishnavity Philosophy.

While different types of religion and philosophy have contributed their shares to the total pattern of Indian culture, the Vaishnavite religious tradition and philosophy has ultimately a centrality in this field. Advaitism of the *mayavadis* belongs to a different path and represents the exaggerety on of a part of the whole Truth. Vadanta, however, canot be allowed to be detached at its deepest level from the central Indian ideal of *life and love*.

> "*Basically, it is in the schools of the non-adavitic vedanta that wara comes into its own*, though they are greatly influenced by the Pancaratra and other non-sramanic agamic schools of India. The drama, in fact, had begun earlier without the knowledge of the professional philosophers who came into the arena only later, after becoming conscious of what had already happened. It was the writers of the epics who had created counter personalities to those of the Buddha and the Mahavira, the two most outstanding personalities to have created new religions after attaining enlightenment through sheer effort. Rama and Krishna are the answer to Buddha and Mahavira, men who are God incarnate on earth, come to save humanity by fighting and destroying evil through action

> and not by merely preaching as the Buddha and the Mahavira did. They were examples of a different sort, examples through the life they loved, the life of not only a householder but of a king who had always to fight evil-doers on a more concrete and external plane than anyone else, and in a more sustained way as well …

The counter-reply, however, did not unambiguously establish the idea of God or Iswara

He even displays weaknesses and faults, and considers them an integral part of being born a human being. He is a child, a friend, a brother, a lover, a husband, a king, a warrior—all rolled into one. Such a conception of God has never been attempted in any civilization, and the replacement of God by God-incarnate in human form is the distinctive character of the Indian civilization. (Daya Krishna)

Upanishadic mysticism was a reaction expressed predominantly by some Kshatriya-Aryan thinkers against the Vedic Brahmanical cult of 'magic' with its mantra tradition which had became the over-whelming force in the times of the Brahmanas. Language too had been made a part and parcel of that ground Brahmanical system of magic. Upanishadic mysticism was also an expression of the urge to transcend that realm of magic and magically determined idea of language: it basically expressed a creative—transcendent urge—not merely to know but also to revere and adore and create. It represented a poetic philosophical and not a magic-oriented power-oriented line of human thought.

India discovered—more than other countries—the mystery of life. India also, discovered the mystery of the individual. The two mysteries are organically connected.

In the Upanishadic path the Indian mind discovered the ultimate value of the Atman and so also the value of the Individual and of liberty.

> The theoretical purpose of the whole social and political structure of classical India was to promote *moksha*—to help as many individuals as possible to achieve it. The complex social order of Hinduism existed primarily to serve this end, and the state was there to promote the well-being of society. *Prior to the state was the social order, and prior to the social order was the individual, striving in the best way he could for salvation. We emphasize the word 'individul'* here, because despite all appearances to

> the contrary the thought of India is essentially individualist. The ancient Indian seer, unlike the Chinese sage or the Hebrew prophet, thought not in terms of the salvation of the whole people, an aim which he believed to be impossible in an age of decline, but of the salvation of individual men and women. *This fundamental individualism is perhaps the reason why India, unlike most other former colonial countries, has taken so enthusiastically to parliamentary democracy*, where ultimate political power is in the hands of an enormous number of individuals, each casting his vote alone and in secret.

The Indian quest for *moksha* goes on, and there is no reason why it should not remain the aim of the India of the future. It may express itself in new, non-religious terms, but this concept, which has been the desire of India for so long, and the search for which has given direction and point to many of her best minds through all her vicissitudes will not, we believe, disappear, whatever the technological or political forces which affect India in the latter part of the twentieth century. *The highest common factor of the various legacies of India is simply the message that there are values more important than material ones, that prosperity and political power are not the ultimate tests of a nation's greatness or of the greatness of an individual, that there are aims and purposes in man's existence which override even the claims of society and the state. Alone, as best he can, whether by acceptance or detachment, the wise man strives for a harmony transcending the temporal, a peace passing all understanding. Few reach that goal but the secret of the good life is to travel hopefully towards it*.

When Aristotle spoke of 'man' as 'a political animal' (*zoon politicon*) or when Marx defined 'human nature' in his Thesis on *Feuerbach* as 'the ensemble of social relations' a view of man—though important—came to be given a supreme or exclusive significance. The Indian-Upanishadic mind did not make this mistake. It takes Christian philosophy to correct that mistake in the West.

The Upanishadic revolution had also paved the way for the emergence of such non-Vedic or heterogeneous religions like Jainism and Buddhism with their emphasis on the ideal of *ahimsa* and the implicit *idea of the sacredness of life in general*, as well as the importance of the *human form*. The culti of Rama and Krishna appeared as a counter-movement to some extent but they also represented a more yes-saying and positive attitude towards life. Both became the

matter of the great epic tradition of India while the Krishna matter became also the central matter of the *Puranic* tradition. This whole epic-and-puranic tradition was not Brahmanical in origin and spirit and was essentially connected with the Aryan kshatriya ethos—like the Upanishadic movement itself.

> "By its very nature, however, it was the latter (Hinduism-Krisnaism) which held the filed after the decline of the heterodox religions. But once the danger of avowedly anti-Brahmanic religions was past, the sponsors of Brahmanism again began gradually to assert themselves.. In this context it may be incidentally pointed out that, in comparison with the methods of the Krishnaite redactors, those of the Brahmanic redactors were obviously gross. As a matter of fact, the activity of the sponsors of Brahmanism ought to be described not as artistic redaction but as flagrant interpolation." (R.N. Dabdekar)

Where Brahmanism harmonised with the basic character of the Krishnite material the Upanishadic idea of Brahman too became inextricably connected with the idea of "immanence" and "avatara". This is something we may add in this context.

This is how we may take also the following part of Dankekar's reflections: "All credit is, indeed, due to the remarkable ingenuity and resourcefulness of the Krishnite redactors, who brought about the basic changes in the older epic in such a manner as not to give any cause for even a faint suspicion that the character of Krishna was really extraneous to the original epic. *But the real cornerstone of this Krishnite superstructure must be said to be the Bhagavatgita... The Krishnite redactors, who seem to have been great literary artists, conceived a very dramatic background for this Lord's Song so as to render it more appealing to the people. In a sense, it made the people realise that philosophising is not something to be practiced in isolation by a select few; philosophy rather dealt with problems which confronted the common man in his normal life. One may, therefore, say that, just as the Bharata represented the literature of the people the Bhagavatgita represented the philosophy of the people*." (Ibid.)

The path of the Krishnite transformation of the Upanishadic tradition of philosophy leads us at another stage through the *Bhagavata Purana* and it is this central philosophical path of the Indian people and Indian civilization that Sankaradeva too represented and fought

for in his Vaishnavite movement carried in the sixteenth century A.D.

Indian Civilization of the Gupta Age has a great significance for any sensitive student of the history of the Indian mind. It was during that age that a really dynamic conception of life and a dynamic conception of Vishnu too were being discovered by the Indian.

The Hindu gods underwent a transformation truly revolutionary and under familiar names and ancient forms assumed dynamic qualities which made their worship more alive to the people. The greatest change *came over Vishnu*. The God of Preservation in the Hindu trinity, who was doctrinally immersed in yogic sleep, symbolising the static, Vishnu *through the theory of avatars became a dynamic, faith-giving and hope-inspiring saviour of humanity*. The legends of Dasavatara, of the ten incarnations, had been popular long before the Christian era; but the worship of the avatars became popular after the Christian era. While other incarnations including the popular hero Rama—whose name (Ram) was destined later to become the name of God—were never accepted as being anything more than partial manifestations, Krishna's identity with Vishnu and his final transformation as the Saviour and Supreme God took place in the first centuries of Christian era. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, the final text of which could not be later than the Gupta period, Krishna is the One, Final and Absolute.(K.M. Pannikar)

In this context however we may come to another question. To what kind of God should we give the central place.

The three systems [Vaishnavism, Saivism and Saklism] did not constitute three religions for the essential reason that they were different only in the outer forms, characteristics and symbols of the deity, and not in the philosophy, doctrine or formularies of worship. The philosophy on which all these sects were based was the Vedanta. The object which all the three sects had was the same—Moksha. But apart from claiming for Siva or Vishnu the position of being the One and the Supreme God, there was no essential difference between them. That it was only a question of nomenclature was emphasised in all texts: that all the three—Brahma, Vishnu and Siva—were different aspects of the same Godhead, was taught but the difference was prominent in the mind of the ordinary worshipper by the difference in attributes. (Ibid)

This whole matter, however, has to be examined in a deeper perspective. That Vaishnavism has generally been exerting a humanizing and softening influence on the Indian society throughout the ages and that many of the Siva-Sakti cults continued to be of a crude character may be gathered not only from Rabindranath's assessments of Indian history but also from A.L. Basham's. *The Wonder That Was India*. There was something problematic and even at times demological with the Siva-Shakti cults in general and this should not be forgotten even in those moments when we come to the wonderful works of Kalidasa, who religions is indeed revealing of the very Cosmic Plan itself." (Swami Chidbhavananda).

Like the philosopher Radhakrishnan's Vedanta, Saint Ramakrishna's Vedanta became—primarily under the pressure of his Vaishnavite sensibility with which he started his journey—a Vishnu-centred Vedanta although in a very subtle or a hidden way. Otherwise Christianity and Islam too could not so easily be assimilated to the Vedantic Brahman. It is an non-sectarian interpretation of Vedanta in a deeper way than that of Sankaracharyya's interpretation—which obviously cannot accommodate the basic truths of Christianity and Islam.

Ramakrishna, Gandhi as well as the philosopher Radhakrishnan were the representative of a new historical situation in India in which such a subtly new interpretation of Vedanta had become possible but it may be noticed directly or indirectly that *this was but a development of the tradition of Vaishnavite Vedanta and not of the Vedanta which the Smarta tradition of Hinduism have projected.*

Radhakrishnan's philosophy as well as his interpretation of Vedanta may be called a Vishnu-centred one although in a subtle and modern way while that of Sankaracharyya was basically a Siva-centred one and he was also a Smarta Saivite Brahman. Like the name Radhakrishnan the name Ramakrishna too is a name representative mainly of a Vaishnavite culture or family and he in fact grew up in a Vaishnative family atmosphere.

The Indian path in which philosophy is penetrated and impregnated by the poetic vision is the path that has come from the *Rigveda* through the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Bhagavad Parana*, the poetical works of the medical Saint poets, and ultimately the writings of Rabindranath of the Modern Age. It is to this path the

Gita too belongs and it shows more than any other traditional books how Hinduism, Islam and Christianity, can come near each other and meet at a fundamental level of reality. Behind him of the author of the *Gita*} was the fervor of a great religious poet which transcended the narrow framework of contemporary social and religious of the *Bhagavad Gita* has been widely felt in India from the time of the Guptas to the present day and it has been commended by Christians and Muslims, as well as by the Hindus, whose most influential scripture it is." (A.L. Basham)

Sankaradeva's path was nearer to the ideal of Gita with its image of Krishnavatar.

Nirgumism of a purer type—unconnected with the idea of Avatar—is representative of Sikhism or the path shown by Nanak too like the other sants of North India. Sankaradeva did not reject the idea of avatar but like Nanak he too went against the line of pure Advaitism of Sankaracharyya. In Nanak's case we may notice:

"Parmeshur (God) is essentially without qualities (*nirguna*) consequently, sat (truth) or *akal* (beyond time) or other negative terms such as *ajuni* (not becoming) are among the least inadequate descriptions. However, Parmeshur or Sat is also personal, manifest and possesses qualities (Saguna) though his attributes are never physical, even though anthropomorphisms are used in the Adi Granth's poetry." (W. Owen Cole: *The Sikhs*, p. 67.)

> 'Maya is a term used to denote the temporal word in the broadest sense and attachment to it." (Ibid, p. 82)

"*Maya* is not the Cosmicillusion of Classical Vedanta. It is a materialistic interpretation of reality, it is natural for unregenergle man to be ignorant of God or to view the world in a dualistic way." (Ibid, p. 84-85.)

This is also Sankaradeva's viewpoint regarding the phenomenon called *Maya*. This is different from Sankaracharyya's ultimate idea of *Maya*. From Bhai Jodh Singh's description of the path of Sikhism too we may realize a basic similarity between the path of Sankaradeva and that of Nanak.

Behind Sikhism we may feel also an impact of Islam on the Indian culture.

Sankaradeva's Mahapurushiya Vaishnavism too with its emphasis

on the idea of one God, which differentiates it from Brahmanical Hinduism, has to be seen also in this historical perspective of the influence of Islam on Indian culture.

> "One of Islam's greatest blessings to East and West alike has been the emphasis which at a crucial period of human history it placed upon the Divine Unity. For during those Dark Ages both in East and West, from A.D. 600 to 1,000, this doctrine was in danger of being overlaid and obscured in Hinduism and Christianity alike, owing to the immense accretion of subsidiary worships of countless saints and demi-gods and heroes. *Islam has been, both to the Europe and India, an invaluable corrective and deterrent. Indeed, without the emphasis which Islam gave to this truth from its central position facing India and facing Europe it is doubtful whether this idea of God as One could have obtained that established place in human thought which is uncontestated in the intellectual world today. This idea of the divine unity, which has thus been preserved by Islam, is not merely an abstract postulate; it is the most vital of all experiences and the very soul of pure religion*. More perhaps than anything else in Islam it has been this idea of the Divine Unity which profoundly satisfied Raja Rammohan Roy. The note that is struck (is a Puritan note; it is as a purifying element in religion that Islam has brought the greatest benefit to mankind." (C.F. Andrews)

On the other hand, as Wilfred Cantwell-Smith's *Islam in Modern History* would show, Vaishnavite culture and Christian culture has a deeper connection with the idea of 'the human form.' 'God-incarnate in human form', became the distinctive character not only of the Vaishnavite spirit of Indian civilization but of Western Civilization too through Christ and it is here we find an underlying spiritual link between India and the deeper West. From Rammohan to Rabindranath, Gandhi, Radhakrishnan many spiritually sensitive new Indians have discovered this hidden link in various ways—some direct—some indirect.

> "Bengali Society took nearly one hundred years to discover a new "religious" ideal. The striving for such an ideal began with Rammohan. Tagore described this story of spiritual search in his novel Gora.... Gora spoke what the nineteenth century Bengal was struggling to speak.

It was no longer necessary to speak of an Oriental Christ. The educated Indians created a new Myth of Christ. *Christ became a*

symbol of man struggling in the darkness and searching for truth. His death symbolises the bewilderment, anguish and faithlessness of man and his birth symbolises the hope and victory of man. Tagore's Child sums up most beautifully the image of Christ in Indian life and literature:

The poet strikes his lute and sings out:

> Victory to man, the new born, the ever-living.
> They kneel down—the king and the beggar, the saint and the sinner,
> The wise and the fool, and cry
> Victory to man, the new born, the ever-living.
>
> (This poem was written immediately after the poet witnessed the Passion Play at Oberammergau. It was published from London in 1931.)" (Sisir Kumar Das)

This was however also a process of new discovery of the depths of Vaishnavism by some Indian philosophers who became close to Tagore in particular:

> "Judged by these two primary factors,—in other words, from a historic-comparative survey of the Vaishnava and Christian idea of Godhead (symbolized in their Trinities), and the Vaishnava and the Christian view of man's relation to the world and society, these two religions, in spite of marked racial differences, belong to the same stadium in the development of the absolute Idea and the unfolding plane of Universal History.

"Besides this theoretical interest, Vaishnavism must possess a deep practical significance, as it is fitted to contribute very valuable elements to the European Renaissance of the coming century.." (Brajendranath Seal:)

"The cultivation of love of humanity was one of the dominant characteristics not only of the *Gita* and Buddhism and Jainism, but also of Yoga and most systems in Indian theism, such as those of Ramanuja, Madhva, Nimbarka, and others. The *Vishnu-Parana* says that to look upon all beings as equal to one's self and to love them all as one would love one's self is the service of God; for God has incarnated himself in the form of all living beings. *The Christian principle of love and equality is anticipated in Buddhism and Bhagavatism, which flourished in India long before Christ*. (S.N. Dasgupta)

What connects India with the West is apart from the Indo-Aryan linguistic heritage—is also the deep link between Vaishnavism and

Christianity. The central significance of Vaishnavism in Indian Civilization and the central position of Vishnu in relation to Brahma and Siva in the idea of the Trinity in the Hindu religious tradition will be realized if we realize the deep philosophical implications of the following assessment given by Radhakrishnan in his *An Idealist View of Life*:

> "If we combine the ideas we are led to posit from the different directions of metaphysics, morals and religion, we obtain the character of God as the primordial mind, the loving redeemer and the holy judge of the universe. The Hindu conception of God as Brahma, Vishnu and Siva illustrates the triple character. Brahma is the primordial nature of God.. If the rational order of the universe reflects the mind of God, that mind is prior to the world. But the thoughts of Brahma, or the primordial mind, should become the things of the world. This process of transformation of ideas into the plane of space-time is a gradual one which God assists by his power of productive and self-communicating life. In the world process all things yearn towards their ideal forms. They struggle to throw of their imperfections and reflect the patterns in the divine mind. *As immanent in the process, God becomes the guide and the ground of the progress. He is not a mere spectator, but a sharer in the travail of the world. God as Vishnu is sacrifice. He is continuously engaged in opposing every tendency in the universe which makes for error, ugliness and evil, which are not mere abstract possibilities, but concrete forces giving reality to the cosmic strife. God pours forth the whole wealth of his love to actualize his intention for us. He takes up the burden of helping us to resist the forces of evil, error and ugliness, and transmute them into truth, beauty and goodness*."

This whole process may be seen as a clarification, under the impact of the Christian tradition of the West,—from Rammohan to Rabindranath—of something which had been hidden or implicit in the Indian tradition of Vaishnavite philosophy. The new understanding of Vishnu *as the God of love and sacrifice, his connection with the human world, the human form divine*—could be discovered in a new phase of Indian philosophy. And Tagore, Brajendranath Seal and Radhakrishnan represented this phase.

In this context we may bring to light the following findings too: "two such diverse Western theologians as Rudolf Otto and Ninian Smart have felt that the *bhakti marga* provides the closest Indian approach to the 'shape' of Christian reality. Smart writes, 'A natural

theology of religious experience seems a necessary aim of Christianity, and in the Indian context finds one supplied in Ramanuja's interpretaion of the Vedanta." (Robin H.S. Boyd: *India and the Latin Capticity of the Church: The Cultural Context of the Gospel*, p. 96, Cambridge University Press)

Raymond Panikkar's *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* also contains the thesis "that Christ has been at work inside Hinduism, though in a hidden way, so that his name has not yet been revealed there."(Robin H.S. Boyd, Ibid, p. 126) At this point we may bring to light something more.

India discovered the mystery of life in a significant way and also moved ahead towards an understanding of the life of the individual being. However, as there is a difference between the Aristotelian or pre-Christian Western view of life' and the Christian view of'human' life (which includes the specific significance of human' life)—just as there is a difference between the pre-Christian view of history and the Christian view of history—there is also a difference between the Christian-Western view of life' and the traditional Indian view of life.' Vaishnavism however shows a break-through here and with its special emphasis on 'nara—tanu' (human form) may link us also with this western tradition of thought:

"Life in the usual sense of the term is the common predicate of the living creature; it is the creature's created possession, but the creature does not have "*the Life*." What the creature has and is in itself, as Eckhart would say, is not true life; it is rather *basar*, flesh,—death and impotence. Only the "living" God has "*the life*", and He is that Life Himself. This life is Salvation, light and truth, ruach or pnevma, and He imparts it through His own spirit. To have part in life and spirit is somehow to share in the divine."(Rudolf Otto: *Mysticism East and West*, p. 190)

'Life' in the realm of 'human beings' represents a higher kind of life' and the significance of the words life or 'human form' here should not on the other hand be reduced completely to that of 'spirit.' In short, we should not completely *spiritualize* life' away. The mystery of 'human life' has to be understood also as that of speech-maker and 'maker':

"Besides the linguistic capacity, another capacity that differentiates us from *subhuman* creatures is our technological capacity. It is no

wonder that the two most widely known definitions of human being are 'sign-using animal' and '*Homo technikos*." (D.P. Chattopadhyaya: Interdisciplinary Studies in Science, *Technology, theosophy and Culture*, p. 309)

It may also be observed that from the days of Sophocles to that of Shakespeare of 'The Tempes' such an idea of 'man' had become dominant in the west.

As Paul Tillich has also shown, "the Christian background of the Renaissance" led to "a high valuation of technical sciences and the beginning of that fertile interaction between pure and applied sciences—which immensely contributed—and is still doing so—to the fast development of both of them." (*The Future of Religions*, p. 40)

There are further philosophical implications of the Biblical-Christian path of theWest:

"The Biblical-Christian historical spirituality triumphed over classicism when it became apparent that the classical doctrine of recurrence made it impossible for men to deal creatively with the endlessly novel situations and vitalities, which arise in history." (Reinhold Niebukro: *Faith and History*, pp. 220-221)

An Indian spiritualism which centres round the Dance of Siva (the symbol of Recurrence) too can not lead us to a proper understanding of 'the human individual' and human history. It was such a new historical situation in India that Rabindranath and Radhakrishnan had to be sensitive to. The result was—

> "As a matter of fact, the acceptance of the Kantian approach by many Indian academic philosophers, following the trial of Radhakrishnan, has already caused the starting point to shift from *Brahman* to the human individual." (P.T. Raju in 'Radhakrishnan and Indian Thought')

However, the deeper spiritual mystery of 'the human individual' including the real significance of his concrete historical existence may generally escape a type of Indian mind—which may go for a liquidation of the sacred mystery of the human 'individual' either in the 'rightist' way of an unqualified Indian 'spiritualism' or in a 'Leftist' way of some Marxist-Maoists—insensitive to the real human-spiritual dimension of human existence.

Questions raised by Albert Schweitzer as well as the philosopher Jacques Maritain regarding the whole matter of Indian 'spiritualism'

have generally been ignored or not understood properly not only by a leftist' (and spiritually shallow) brand of Indian individuals but also by another brand which is spiritualist rather in a non-human way.

Books like Sri Swami Satchidanandendra's *The Method of the Vedanta*, S.N.L. Shrivastava's *Sankara and Bradley*, Y. Masilis *Shankara's Universal Philosophy of Religion, Natalia* Isayeya's *Shankara and Indian Philosophy* do not face up to all such questions while discussing Indian spiritualism or Shankara's Advaitism.

The truth that Sankaracharyya was concerned with basically is only a part or a whole truth—

The context in which Sankaracharyya's system of regatory metaphysic can be accepted is a particular one and the following description would show what this particular context may be:

> "*Cosmic Unity* can be realized only through a system of negatory metaphysics—the progressive negating of all attributes and relations, *until a residuum remains that reveals a Oneness devoid of time, space, causality*, and all other of our physical conceptions. It is only [through] the admission of the existence of this *indescribable cosmic entity as an unchanging substratum* that a unified experience and transfiguration of the world of appearance into a completed understanding of ultimate Reality can be effected." (Ruth Reyna: *The concept of Mays from the Vedas to the 20th Century*, p. 88, Asia Publishing House, 1962).

Yes, Sankaracharyya's philosophy too does in a sense give us such an ultimate perspective in which to see the universe (including the human world) but it is an 'ultimate' perspective—to a great extent also in a deceptive sense. Such an 'ultimate' perspective is ultimately free from a great part of the reality of 'human values' (what Sankaracharyya would call the reality of the lower Brahman) and it is 'ultimate' in the sense in which the findings of the Physicists too may be the 'ultimate' truths for 'man'.

It is ultimately the perspective of the non-human reality—of an utterly Impersonal reality in which the creative mystery of the reality of the Person Vanishes into nothingness.

The quintessence of Sankara's *mayavada* is just this—that the world of our common everyday experience, which we are wont to take as absolutely real in the very form in which it appears to us, is not really so. It is not the revelation of *Reality in the absolute and*

ultimate nature but as reflected through the prism of our 'sensorial and intellectual equipment.' *Science has not been able to tell us anything about the Absolute as such, but it has pronounced its verdict on the world of our everyday experience in terms which vindicate the validity of myavada*. Maya literally means 'that which is not' (*ma ya*) the world is *maya* in the sense that it is not what we are wont to take it, an absolute reality or 'the touchstone of reality.' The world to—our common experience appears a multicolored reality and colours are taken as completely objective—contemporary realists are fighting every inch of the ground to maintain this. But what is the scientific account of colours? The different coloures are nothing but the different effects of radiation of different wavelengths striking against the human age." (S.N.L. Shrivastava: Sankara and Bradley p. 259, Motilal Banarasidas 1968).

"*Thus by penetrating to the ultimate undifferentiated unity behind the apparent diversity of the world, men of science have realized not only "the grand aim of all science ", but also the ultimate goal of the philosopher and the mystic*. A philosopher and mystic of Sankara's type would tell the scientist today: "Deeper down, what you call ripples in the four dimensional continuum are ripples of *Sat-Chid-Ananda*. Realize *Sat-Chid-Ananda* in the depth of your soul, and you shall come to that unity which is the goal of all knowledge." (Ibid. p. 26)

Sankaracharyya's philosophy could have fully satisfied us only if we could look at the universe mainly as mathematicians and physicists; but to a great extent, like mathematics and physics, Shankara's philosophy too gives no satisfying answers to many central questions relating to the real realm of 'human life', 'human world' and Tiuman history.' We cannot allow only mathematics and physical sciences the status of the higher Brahman and relegate the real field of the Humanities to the position of lower Brahman in this age of the predominance of science and technology. Sankaracharyya's type of spiritualism or mysticism too cannot help us to a great extent in this world.

However, the Advaitism of Sankaracharyya may be transformed into the Advaitism of Gandhi—who also represents a deeper link between India and the West:

"For advaita the supreme reality is Brahman, or *sat* or being, and this implies that the practical and the *paramarthika* levels are onto-

logically different. What happens if we apply here Gandhi's insight that truth (satya) and love are one? Reality then becomes Love, and passes from the realm of being into the realm of action. We shall then find that we indeed have two-levels: first the 'practical' level, the level of science, of sociology, of created life; and above that—not ontologically but spiritually and morally—the realm of love, the realm where God is, and where we too can, by his grace, find ourselves.

If we go back, then to *Saccidananda Brahman*, we find that it is simply—Love. Reality (*sat*), truth (*satya*) and love (*prema*) are all one. And we remember the Johannine 'God is love' (I Johan 4. 16), and Jesus' words, 1 am the truth' (John 14. 6). An Indian theologian Dhanjibhai Fakirdhai, has written: 'After pondering deeply on the nature of God, philosophers have said that God is *sat*, *cit*. and *Ananda* ... He is self-existent and eternal; He is conscious, aware and intelligent; and He abounds in joy. But beyond all this we can say *something further* about God, and that is that He is Love—filled with Love, and Himself the very form of Love. This does not mean simply that God shows Love, or that He is merely like a loving Father. It means rather that God's very essence or being is Love', His nature is Love. He Himself is Love.'

"What is the *bridge* between these two realms, which are still separated, though no longer ontologically? The bridge is surely the Logos, The *Cit.* of Saccidananda, who proceeds in love from the Trinity, and in love comes to the world of men, to assume their nature, and to change them into his likeness, for 'if any man is in Christ there is a new creation' (2 Cor. 5.17). *In him* we see *love in action*, for here *being and action* are brought together; the Logos comes forth from the being of the Father to bring the world of men back into the fellowship of love. In the words of Narayan Vaman Tilak:

> So, Love itself in human form,
> For love of me He came.

There are three things to be said about this exposition of *Saccidananda* and the 'types of existence'. First, I think it brings us rather close to Athanasius, the great Greek theologian of the fourth century. In Prof. Torrance's words, Athanasius '*rejected cosmological dualism and the notion of the Logos as cosmological principle*, for the Christian notion of the Logos or Son *by whom God created the uni-*

verse and through whom he interacts with it in redemption', and then worked out a "*logic of grace*", in the light of which he 'expounded the interrelation of creation, incarnation and redemption, and went on to lay the scientific foundation upon which the theology of the Christian Church has rested ever since'. Here too, in this Indian insight, we have *the rejection of cosmological dualism* and the '*logic of grace*' working through the love Christ.

> "Secondly, we have discovered here a fusion of being and action. Indian thought tends to concentrate on being at the expense of action, but here, through the outgoing in love of Logos, we find action linking God and the world. We are reminded of Gandhi's words, 'God appears to you not in person but in action. "And thirdly, by describing the *work of Christ* as we have done, we have arrived—as did Athanasius—at the doctrine of incarnation, which is not normally associated with advaita." (Robin H. S. Boyd, *India and the Latin Captivity of the Church*, pp. 98-99)

Why is Vishnu and the ideal of love' of central significance? The question may be examined in the light of Sankaracharyya's Siva-centered Vedantism. Radhakrishnan, implicitly or indirectly, provides also such an examination.

> "God is more the saviour and redeemer than creator and judge... In all true religion: we have faith in and experience of a living God who saves and redeems us from our sins. The love of God is more central than either his wisdom or his sovereignty. The latter may lead to predestination theories which reduce the world process to a sham, where the freedom of man and love of God are both illusory. If predestination is true, then the creation of novelties, the loving trust and surrender of man to God and the grace of God are illusions" (p. 270) "Love reveals the nature of God more than infinitude and sovereignty. The theory of predestination is repudiated in favour of the love of God and the freedom of man." (p. 271)

A Saivism in which Siva becomes centrally the god of love and Reason—or a Saktism in which Sakti basically represents Love and Reason may become one with the central philosophy of Vaishnavism. On the other hand, there is a place for Sankarcharyya's Siva and the connected idea of his Nirgun Brahma too. This is how this final truth too may be accommodated:

"God is not simply truth and love, but also justice. He is the per-

fection which rejects all evil. The sovereignty of God is indicated in the character of Siva... The one God creates as Brahma, redeems as Vishnu, and judges as Siva... God loves us, creates us, and rules us. Creation, redemption and judgment are different names for the fact of God." (Srdha)

"While the character of God as personal love meets certain religious needs, there are others which are not fulfilled by it. In the highest spiritual experience we have the sense of rest and fulfilment, of eternity and completeness. These needs provoked from the beginning of human reflection conceptions of the Absolute as pure and passionless being which transcends the restless turmoil of the cosmic life. If God is bound up with the world, subject to the category of time, if his work is limited by the freedom of man and the conditions of existence, however infinite he may be in the quality of his life, in power, knowledge and righteousness, he is but an expression of the Absolute. But man wants to know the truth of things in itself, in the beginning—may, before time and before plurality, one 'breathing breathless', as the Rg Veda has it, the pure, alone and unmanifest, nothing and all things, that which transcends and definite form of expression, the one in which all is found and yet all is lost. *The great problem of the philosophy of religion has been the reconciliation of the character of the Absolute as in a sense eternally complete with the character of God as a self-determining principle manifested in a temporal development which includes nature and man.*" (Ibid, p. 271)

> "We call the supreme the Absolute, when we view it apart from the cosmos, God in relation to the cosmos. The Absolute is the pre-cosmic nature of God, and God is the Absolute from the cosmic point of view." (Ibid, p. 273)

How 'tathagata' might turn into the way of 'thou art that' was shown by Sankarcharyya. He was in a sense also a secret Buddha. However great as both Buddha and Sankara are in two different ways in the history of Indian thought—we may learn much from both—ultimately there is also the deeper significance—for Indian civilization—of the line represented by the *Bhaghvatgita* and the *Bhaghvat Purana* and it is this line which may help Hinduism link up more conveniently also with the reality of Islam as well as with Christianity with its significant sense of the Person as well as human

history. Hinduism has to be connected more deeply also with the mainstream of world civilization in the future and in this path the lessons of Islam as well as of Christianity will be realized as important. Hinduism can evolve into a more integral type of philosophy of religion.

Human life may be seen as a *vivarta* or mirage, it may also be seen as a *lila* or sport, it-may also be seen as a *drama* of spiritual significance. An integral philosophy of human life can make room for all these truths three different levels of our existence and I think there is a necessity for such an integral philosophy. Judaism, Islam and Christianity—all are connected also with a Semitic character of exclusiveness or seriousness. Hinduism may offer a softening effect—which is also necessary for a well-balanced view of human life. On the other hand, it is the vision of human life as *drama* which a new Hindu-Christian dialogue may bring to life in a new phase of Indian philosophy and culture. Tagore and Gandhi have indirectly prepared the Indian psyche for such a development while the images of Ramakrishna and Mother Teresa in India may also help us to realize the significance of this human drama on our earth. This is the path Sankaradeva's inherent message would ultimately lead us to in the modern age.

References

1. Phillip Blond, *Post-Secular Philosophy: Between Philosophy and Theology,* (University of Cambridge, Routledge, London 1998.
2. Milton Dinger, *Krishna: Myths, Rites and Attitudes*, Daniel H.M. Ingals, "*Foreword*," p. 7 (294.563)
3. M. Hiriyana, Essenptials of Indian Philosophy, p.
4. Edited by ..., *Saints and Scholars*.
5. Karine Schomer and W.H. Neleod, *The Saints: Studies in a Devotional Tradition on India*, Motilal Banarasidas, 1987.
6. Rudolf Otto, *Mysticism East and West*, p. 34.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Karine Schomer, The Sants: *The Sant tradition in Perspective*, "Introduction".
11. Ibid., p. 3.

12. A.L.Basham, *The wonder that was India*.
13. Peter M.R. Stirk
14. Ibid.
15. A. L. Basham
16. Ibid.
17. R.N. Dandekar
18. Ibid.
19. A.L. Basham
20. Rudolf Otto
21. Ibid.
22. G.C. Pande
23. D.D. Kosambi,
24 J.H. Hattinangadi, *Why is Indian Philosophy Mystical*
25. Gordon Childe, *The Prehistory of European Society*, 173.
26. Rudolf Otto.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. G.C. Pande
30. D.D. Kosmbi
31. J.A.B. Van Buitenen
32. Romila Thapar
33. D.D. Kosambi
34. K. Damodaran
35. P.T. Raju
36. R.G. Bhandakar
37. R.C. Zaehner
38. V.K. Gokak
39. Krishna Chaitanya
40. K.M. Munshi
41. Max Muller
42. Rudolf Otto
43. Rudolf Otto, *Mysticism East and West.*
44. Max Muller
45. S. Radhakrishnan
46. P.T. Raju
47. G.P. Konger
48. J. G. Ararupa
49. A. Mcdermott
50. Ibid.
51. Daya Krishna, *Indian Philosophy: A New Approach*, published in 1997 (1814 D33I)

52. Rudolf Otto
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid, p. 232.
59. Rudolf Otto, *Mysticism East and West*.
60. Ibid., p. 210.
61. Ibid., p. 223.
62. Ibid., p. 214.
63. Ibid., p.219.
64. Ibid., p. 225
65. Ibid., pp. 207-208.
66. Ibid.
67. Sisir Kumar Das
68. Y. Masih, *Shankara's Universal Philosophy of Religion*, p. 113.
69. S.N.L. Shrivastava, *Sankara and Bradley*, p. 44.
70. Natalia Isayeva, *Shankara and Indian Philosophy*, p. 135.
71. G.C. Pande, *Foundations of Indian Culture*; VoL *Spiritual Vision and Symbolic Forms in Ancient India*, p. 135.
72. G.C. Pande, Ibid., p. 134.
73. Geoffrey Parrinder, *Avatar and Incarnation*, p. 62.
74. Govinda Chandra Pande, *Life and Thought of Sankaracharyya*, p. 379, Motilal Banarasidas
75. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*.
76. Dr. Tara Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, p. 98. The Indian Press (Publications) Privated Ltd. Allahbad, 1963.
77. V.K. Gokak, *India and World Culture*, p. 108.
78. Krishna Chaitanya, The Mahabharata, *A literary study*, p. 384.
79. G.C. Pande, *Foundation of Indian Culture: Spiritual Vision and Symbolic Form in Ancient India*, p. 115, Books and Books, New Delhi, 1985.
80. Daya Krishna, *Indian Philosophy: A New approach*, p. 119.
81. D.S. Sarma, *Hinduism through the Ages*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, p. 33.
82. Ibid., pp. 37-38.
83. Mircea Eliade, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*, p. 122, Collions, 1968.
84. Thomas J. Hopkins
85. Ibid.
86. Ibid.
87. Godavarish Mishra
88. Bhaktiratnavali

89. Hiriyana
90. Ramanuja
91. Hiriyana
92. Ibid.
93. Ramanuja
94. Ibid.
95. Vinova Bhave
96. Ibid.
97. Ibid.
98. Vaudeville
99. O'Flaherty
100. Wendy O'Flaherty 101.
102. Vaudeville
103. Ibid.
104. Ibid. 105.
106. Vaudeville
107. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty
108. Ramanuja
109. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee.
111. R.N. Dandekar
112. C.F. Andrews
113. Verrier Elwin
114. Ibid.,
115. Charles E. Raven
116. Ibid.,
117. Daya Krishna
118.
119. R.N. Dandekar
120. Ibid.,
121. K.N. Pannikar
122. Ibid.,
123. Swami Chidbhavananda
124. A.L. Basham
125. The Sikhs, W. Owen Cole, P. 67.
126. Ibid., p. 82.
127. Ibid., pp. 84-85.
128. C.F. Andrews
129. Sisir Kumar Das
130. Brajendranath Seal
131. S.N. Dasgupta
132. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*.

133. Robin H.S. Boyd, *India and the Latin Captivity of the Church: The Cultural Context of the Gospel*.
134. Ibid.
135. Rudolf Otto, *Mysticism East and West*, p. 190.
136. D.P. Chattopadhyay, *Interdisciplinary Studies in Science, Technology, Theosophy and Culture,* p. 309.
137. Paul Tillich, *The Future of Religions*, p. 40.
138. Rainhold Niebukro, *Faith and History*, pp. 220-221.
139. P.T. Raju, *Dadhakrishnan and Indian Thought*.
140. Ruth Reyna, *The Concept of Maya form the Vedas to the 20th Century*, Asia Publishing House, p. 88.
141. S.N.L Shrivastava, *Sankara and Bradley*, Motilal Banarasidas 1968,
142. p. 259.
142. Ibid., p. 26.,
143.
144. Robin H.S. Boyd, *India and the Latin Captivity of the Church*, pp. 98-99.
145. Ibid., p. 270.
146. Ibid., p. 271.
147.
148. Ibid., p. 271.
149. Ibid., p. 273.

Eight

Indian Renaissance: Tagore and Literature

Indian Renaissance means to me a phenomenon of wider connotation both geographically and historically, than Bengal Renaissance. The expression may be taken to suggest, consequently, the whole historical process of renascent Indian society from Ram Mohan Roy to Jawaharlal Nehru.

However, the story of, Bengal renaissance, which was predominantly nineteenth-century affair, is a very important and vital part of the story of Indian renaissance. It was mainly in Bengal of the nineteenth century that the 'Modern' Indian society as well as a modern India mind came to evolve. Tagore was not only the greatest spokesman of this process and hence of the whole phenomenon called Bengal Renaissance but also the most significant figure who helps us to come from Bengal Renaissance to the age of Gandhi and Nehru as well. Among all the great leaders of Bengal, Tagore links us significantly with Gandhi and Nehru of modern India. These three leaders have given us also a new approach towards the whole problem of Indian nationalism: from Tagore's *Gora* to Nehru's *The Discovery of India* I find a very significant line of modern Indian thought. The story of this discovery has not, however, come to an end; it is in reality an ongoing process which has to be relearnt or rediscovered in new historical situations.

Compared to European Renaissance, Indian Renaissance which started in historic conflict of the 19th century has certain obvious limitations. Without the impact of the West which came through the British rule, this renaissance would most probably not have come in our history; but some of the negative factors attending the colonial rule also had an effect on the character of Indian renaissance.

However, this is only a part of the whole truth and the very phenomenon called Rabindranath which became possible in British India should give us an idea of the whole truth.

Moreover, although by about 1914 Indian renaissance had lost its distinct 19th-century world-view which attended its development (-by 1914 Western civilization itself had entered into a new age), it continued beyond 1914 and beyond Bengal in a new or different form. By that time Bengal had lost its prime importance in the Indian scene but the story of Indian renaissance does not end with the story of Bengal. So from Bengal we have to go to Gandhi and Nehru too.

Susobhan Sarkar in his *Studies in Bengal Renaissance* rightly criticised a brand of leftist historiography for its rather debunking attitude to Bengal Renaissance. He also defended what he called the strand of Westernism in that Renaissance in these such words:

> "Westernism has a greater appropriateness and relevance in the task of building up the Indian Nation, for logically it implies the rights of man in the secular sense; its rationalism undermines change-resisting religious and social orthodoxy; its social reform holds out the prospect of emancipation for the oppressed. Its potentiality has by no means been exhausted and is capable of being extended to fresh fields beyond the range of the 19th century vision.
>
> "The inherent weakness of Traditionalism, from this point of view can be detected in embryo even in our Political Extremism. This contributed to an immediate popularity, but the price had to be paid in the future. A legacy was left to hinder the building up of new united India. Indeed the has persisted to our own days, and again and again to choice has still to be made."

I am in full agreement with all this; but I think that in his discussions of the relations between what Sarkar identified as Westernism and Orientalism (or traditionalism) in our society he has not taken proper note of the fact that Orientalism itself, on deeper analysis, reveals two opposing schools of thought. Now this is an important distinction which we have to make and without its help we cannot properly evaluate also the deeper links between Tagore and Gandhi in modern Indian life.

Indian Renaissance was the reawakening of the Indian mind and

the Indian society under the impact of the influence of the West: the English language and literature, Christianity, a tradition of philosophical thought and scientific outlook that came down from the Greek or Hellenistic sources of Western to civilization were some of the riches that came over to the Indians in this process. However, it was equally a process of rediscovery of the foundation of Indian civilization—a foundation that rather links the Indian to the West in a subtle but harmonious way.

In fact there was the rediscovery through our Renaissance, of the whole Buddhist age of India. As Annadasankar Roy observed, "Our renaissance recovered for us a continuity with the ancient India. We are greatly indebted to the European philologists for the rediscovery of the Ancient India. The whole of the Buddhist 'Age had been lost." (Translated from Annadasankar Roy's *Banglar Renaissance*, p. 88). This is how the Renaissance in its true or essential character worked: it clarified and strengthened in India what was good and valuable in the tradition of Indian culture and society, it strengthened the traditions of humanist and theistic thoughts. So the impact of hellenistic or Western humanism reawakened also our old Buddhist humanism which lay hidden as a foundation of India culture.

And there as" a reawakening also of the true tradition of Indian theism: Indian Renaissance also brought a new life to the spirit which worked behind the *Bhakti* movements of medieval India—although it also gave to it a new character in the process. The history of Indian Philosophy would show, as Radhakrishnan noted: "The influence of Ramanuja is visible throughout the later history of Hinduism. The movements of Madhva, Vallabhja, Caitanya, Ramanda, Kabir and Nanak, and the reform organizations of Brahmanism are largely indebted to Ramanuja's theistic idealism."

There was thus a meeting or mingling of the Western and the Eastern or Indian traditions the Theism and Humanism in the Indian Renaissance; and here lay the most valuable contributions of the Renaissance to the Indian society. The distinctive philosophical character of the vital part of the Indian Renaissance may be consequently brought to light in a clear manner with the help of some other remarkable observations made by sensitive scholars.

"He (Ram Mohan) substituted theism for classical monism and denounced sutte, infanticide, idolatry and polygamy. From the West

he borrowed the book Christ an ethic, expounded in his book. *The Precepts of Jesus* a belief in modern science." Thus our 'renaissance' was a process in which 'Westernism' became linked not only with Buddhist humanism but also with theistic or Vaishnative Vedanta. Thus we can also discover with Albert Schweitzer this truth: "Rabindranath Tagore is completing what Ramanuja undertook to do." R.C. Zaehner also confirms such an observation: "The vision of Tagore is the vision of Ramanuja, and he, more than anyone else, had captured and expressed in words that even Western man can understand, if he will, the subtle flavour that pervades the whole majestic fabric of Hinduism." Now there is an important truth in these observations. That the foundation of Hinduism can link up not only with Buddhism but also with Christianity is a truth Tagore as the great representative of Indian renaissance would help us to understand.

Rabindranath saw in the idea of universal love a meeting round between Buddhism, Vaishnavism and Christianity. He always held the personality of Jesus in the highest reverence. Like Mahatma Gandhi, he believed that there is no basic conflict between Christianity and Hinduism... Apart from the idea of universal love upon which Christian ethic is founded, Rabindranath was impressed by two other features of Christianity. First, there is the recognition of the individual's worth and dignity. 'Nobody had exalted man more, in every sphere than Jesus Christ had done'. Second, there is the concern with historicity, with social process in time. In this respect, Rabindranath felt, Christianity had something to offer which the Indian tradition, with its indifference to time and history, seems to lack. Tagore's Hindusim had this valuable 'western' character and is in conflict with the 'orientalism' of many educated Indian of today. So the word 'spiritual' had different connotations for Tagore. "Modern Western thought influenced Rabindranath through its rationalism, its critical and analytical approach to ethical and religious as well as social questions, and the scientific outlook...As we have seen earlier, he deprecated the practice of dubbing Western civilization as 'materialistic' and therefore inferior to the Indian civilization which is supposed to be 'spiritual'."[7]

That the Indian Renaissance in its central form brought a new life to the humanistic and theistic traditions of Indian religious and

philosophical culture there is no doubt. This is how a section of the Indian society gradually learnt again how to reject not only the 'materialistic' type of religion but also a tradition of spiritualism that among others things allowed the oriental societies to live comfortably well with such materialistic religion. Here Gordon Childe may help us to understand the truth. "As the converse of this inevitable confusion, between theology and science, the aims of Oriental religions seem to us materialistic."[8]

So Tagore, who represented the basic spirit of the Indian Renaissance in a living form and also saw through much of the deceptive surfaces of Western civilization and looked at its spiritual foundation could say: "Revaluation must come and man must risk revilement and misunderstanding, especially from those who want who to be comfortable, who put their faith in materialism, and who belong truly to the dead past and not to modern times, the past that had its age in distant antiquity when physical flesh and size predominated." It was also against the 'materialism' of the Orient that Tagore was raising his voice.

In India or the East we have not only a tradition of extreme 'spiritualism' but also some traditions of materialism to fight against. Tagore was one of the few Indian writers of this age who was acutely aware of this serious problem.

So the basic line of theism and humanism that lies behind Tagore may be attacked in our society not only from the rightist direction of an Oriental 'spiritualism' but also from the leftist direction of a philosophy of 'new-materialism.'

The Renaissance in India meant not only a purification of the Indian religious tradition—a movement towards a truly 'theistic' Vedanta but also a humanism with its intimate connection with the 'empirical' reality of facts and history. It also meant for the Indian a newly acquired capacity of think well, that is, clearly and logically, and to respect facts. That all genuine thinking as well as the art of real discovery is possible only when man becomes free from collectivistic ideologies and ritualism, that is, when the real individual is awakened, is one of the most important lessons the story of the Renaissance can teach us.

However, there is also the ideology of the "Indian Mission" which may prevent us from trying to move further in the field Tagore

had revealed for Indian writers. Here I would like to recall some observations of Schweitzer: "Because the thought of India is still unsophisticated, it is still self-conscious and busied with its mission to the world. The deepest thinking is humble. It is only concerned that the flame of truth, which it keeps alive, should burn with the strongest and purest heat; it does not trouble about the distance to which its brightness penetrates."[10] But unlike the spiritualism of Vivekananda or Aurobindo which may sound more Indian', it is Tagore's path which can be helpful for us in this field too. "The pathway from imperfect to perfect recognized truth leads through the *valley of reality*. European thought has already descended into this valley. Indian thought is still on the hill on this side of it. If it wishes to climb to the hill beyond, it must first go down into the valley."[11]

The renaissance saw the development in the Indian mind of not only a new capacity for thinking but also of a new capacity for creation. Tagore remained basically loyal to the central philosophy of Indian Renaissance and became also the greatest representative of the new creative urge that the new Indian society had acquired. He is in fact the greatest literary representative of the Indian Renaissance and his major works can tell us what really happened to the tradition of Indian literature through him. The process of renewal of that tradition which we find in Tagore's work is really astounding; and in fact, while his *Gora* has been called by Sukumar Sen *The Mahabharata* of modern India, we may also call Tagore the Vyasa of modern India—a Vyasa who would include within him Sudraka and Kalidasa in one direction and Kabir in another.

What came to the tradition of Indian literature through the Renaissance, and to a significant extent through Tagore, its greatest representative, is not only a new life but more life, which also means more of literature'.

The Renaissance in Europe brought a new autonomy for the study of the humanities and in this process literature also acquired a valuable autonomy. Literature as an appendage of religion and Philosophy is one thing but literature standing land operating in its own light is another thing. Tagore is the Indian leader who had taught us to fight also for the autonomy of literature of poetry, and

in I this way he had helped literature in India to acquire more life distinctive of its own character.

That like a significant part of Oriental Spiritualism, a large part of Oriental or Indian literary tradition was not adequately connected with any vital creative imagination which is ultimately an expression of life in its vital and creative forms, cannot be denied. Literature in the East had to be freed from the imprisoning grasp of Medievalism and Orientalism; and here the spirit of the Renasissance came to work as the major liberating factor in the Indian scene. We may also recall a few historical truths in this context: "The stream of pure literature can be easily followed as it emerges clear and fresh in ancient Greece. Its course can be traced through the earlier centuries of imperial Roman Rule. But then, gradually, it buries itself in the gorge of early Christian and Medieval Europe, coming to view from time to time in fragments of Saxon of French literature, in Troubadour or Provencal poetry, in the mystic wirings of saints, in A. remnants of ballad poetry, and prose and verse romance. At least, after devious, hidden wanderings, it came into the open again at the Renasissance." It may be seen from this account how renaissance meant a liberation for literature with its A own rights and how there was in the West a spirit coming down from the Greeks which was more favourable to the life of literature'.

What was characteristic of European Medieval ages was more characteristic of the Oriental societies in general. That is why we find here a in strong mentality that refused to take literature seriously on its own terms. "The East is of course different and here man's highest intelligence is immersed in spiritual spiritual speculation. As a result poetry is here either an insubstantial material for entertainment or a receptacle of Philosophy."[13]

I would like to say that there are glorious moments in the Indian tradition of literature like *The Mahabharata* itself or Sudraks's *Mritchhakatika* or Kalidasa's *Sakuntala*, but it is also true that in a sense we can describe much of the oriental tradition of literature' as a tradition of romance. Much of it is also incantation, decoration or ornament or rhetorical flourishes; and this is a tradition which may be easily renewed for use by neo-collectivist ideologies.

Tagore gave us a new tradition of literature in India which is ori-

ented to a significantly new approach to life. I would also like to say here that while Tagore showed us an ideal approach it does not mean that we have to follow or imitate Tagore mechanically. That will pave the way for a new ritualism, and this is a problem which some of the sensitive successors of Tagore in Bengal became particularly aware of. So there is an important truth in what Susobhan Sarkar said in this context: "On most poets, however, Tagore's genius had a baneful effect which discouraged individuality and produced a depressing atmosphere of cheap imitation."[14] We may also say with Dhurjyotiprasad Mukherjee. "His stress on spontaneity of creative impulse created an army of untutored geniuses; his lyrics canalised Bengali literature into one channel: his abundant use in prose of metaphors, analogies and similes stood in the way of the logical, argumentative prose of statement: his music and dance led to an epidemic of musicians who did not know the difference between Bhairavi and Asawari, and of dancers who were deaf to rhythm."[15] Thus 'Tagorism' itself can also be an obstacle in the way of discovering the real and vital Tagore.

Tagore remains, however, the greatest Indian writer of the modern age. He also gave us those wonderful songs in Bengali which are a class by themselves, and here Tagore's achievement stands, I should like to say, unparalleled in world literature. What the poetry of words can attain through the electrifying connection of expressive melodies, Tagore's songs—at least four or five hundred of them out of more that than two thousand songs—clearly demonstrates. He has also summed up in his poetic career several ages and several schools of Western poetry; and he has also given us some wonderful poems. Music and the philosophy of a new Hinduism were very much there in the atmosphere Rabindranath grew up. Like the Neo-Vaishnavite or Bhakti Movements of medieval India, the Indian renaissance of the 19th century came to show through Tagore a regeneration of a great lyrical tradition of spiritual import. So we find: "Rabindranath is the only poet who had left for us in the world literature a world of the Song which has four dimensions." "Today, the songs of Rabindranath are almost incomparable. No other man of letters of anywhere in the world, not even Burns, has come near this achievement. Can anyone else stand any comparison with him in this sphere?"[17] "I consider his

songs as the most valuable achievement having an immortal character among his various streams of creations."[18]

Rabindranath's songs represent like the phenomenon of Gandhism, itself, a deep lyric voice that lies at the heart of Hindusim itself: like the poetry of the Neo-Vaishnavite movement Tagore's songs were a new type of expression of that deep Indian tradition.

Tagore's typical lyrics were generally the expressions of an authentic personal voice while his poems were also the expression of a public voice. This is where he may strike us as 'Victorian' and his poetry seems to lack sufficient poetic life. So far as modern Bengali poetry is concerned there was, I think, a healthy reaction against this Tagore or this voice of Tagore. Ultimately this reaction was not directed against Tagore as such: it is rather a development or extension of the very principle Tagore had released in Bengali poetry. Jivananda Das, Amiya Chakravarty, Suddhindranath Datta, poets of the post-Tagorian modern phase, may be seen in this perspective. This is the only sphere of modem Bengali literature where Tagore has been somewhat improved upon. (All these really important modern Bengali poets were born during a particular time-span—between 1898 and 1910).

Several studies have confirmed these truths: "Much of the public evaluation is ture? Tagore is the greatest poet of this generation and his lyric poems are of the best in the world."[19] "One can show that although Bengali poetry had existed for nearly a thousand years before him, his was the first to exploit the full resources of the language. One could undertake a piece of "research" in order to ascertain whether Tagore alone, or all the English romantics put together invented the greater variety to stanza form."[20] The greatest Indian poet of the modern age also remains not only the greatest Bengali novelist, as Annadasankar Roy has said in one place, but also the great Indian novelist. His *Gora, Ghare Baire*, *Chaturanga Char Adhyay* are great Indian achievements although Tagore is not a great novelist like Dickens or Tolstory of Mann. He also remains I think the greatest Indian short story writer.

Though he highlighted mainly the Bengali Indian village life in his memorable stories, his novels were an exploration into the new age that had appeared on the scene. His exploration in such a modern direction revealed a new dimension in his paintings which he

started doing after he had written his major novels. Tagore's songs and lyrics would go together with the stories—and they appeared in the late nineteenth century; on the other hand, his major novels and paintings, both of which appeared in the 20th century were indicative of still newer directions.

Tagore was an explorer and the conventional and the quotidian realities could not give him satisfaction. Interestingly, while his novels in general show an acceptance or adaptation of the novelistic realism of the West, as a dramatist he refused to follow the path of realism. There is a significant difference between the two literary genres—the novel and the drama; and Tagore showed the right instinct of rejecting 'realism' in the field of drama. He was also the Indian dramatist who discovered a deeper reality. Sambhu Mitra is right when he said about Tagore: "Tagore is the only modern Bengali or Indian dramatist who has been able to establish a connection between the new age and the golden age of Indian culture—there is an intervening age of darkness in between." Similarly, we may find, it had been claimed on behalf of Tagore the painter: "What Ram Mohan Roy was in India in the field of thinking Rabindranath has been that in India in the field of painting—the pathfinder of modernism and the first self-created genius."

All this can be taken as witness to the great creative genius that Tagore was and to the range and quality of this contributions to Indian Renaissance.

References

1. Susobhan Sarkar: "*Conflict within the Bengal Renaissance": On Bengal Renaissance*, p.75.
2. S. Radhakrishanan: *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II p. 161.
3. Percival Spear: *A History of India*, p. 161.
4. Albert Schweitzer: *Indian thought and its Development*, p. 193.
5. R.C. Zaehner: *Hinduism*, p. 192.
6. V.S. Navarne: *An Introduction to Rabindranath Tagore*, pp. 32-22.
7. Ibid., p. 33.
8. Gordon Childe: *What happened in History*, p. 137.
9. Rabindranath Tagore: *The Religion of an Artist*, p. I.
10. A Schweitzer: *Indian Thought and Its Development*, p.248.
11. Ibid., p. 248.

12. R.A. Scott-James: *The Meaning of Literature*, p. 65.
13. Sudhindra nath datta: *The Emancipation of Metre and Rabindranath in the World of Twilight*, p. 160.
14. Susobhan Sarkar: *On Bengal Renaissance*, p. 68.
15. Dhurjotiprasad Mukherjee: *Tagore, A Study*, p. III.
16. Sukumar Sen: *Ravindrer Indradhanu*, p. 144.
17. Susobhan Sarkar: *Prasanga Rabindranath*, p. 31.
18. Abu Sayeed Ayub: *Pathna Janer Sakha*, p. 11.
19. Dhurjyotiprasad Mukherjee: *Tagore, A Study*, p. 65.
20. Buddhadeva Bose: *Tagore, Portrait of a Poet*, p. 45.
21. Sambhu Mitra: *Prasanga Natya*, p. 98.
22. Sibnarayan Ray: "Potua Robi Thakur O Chitra Biplov" *Desh*, 10 May 1986, p. 58.

Nine

Shakespeare, Indian Renaissance in Bengal, and Assamese Literature

Helen Gardner wrote: "Hamlet is the quintessence of European man", "who holds that man is ordained to govern the world according to equality and righteousness with an upright heart, and not to renounce the world and leave it to its corruption." (Helen Gardner: "*The Historical Approach: Hamlet*".) However a sensitive Indian reader of Hamlet may easily find himself at some level of his mind relating the problem of Hamlet to the problem of Arjuna as it was posed in the *Gita*. Hamlet's melancholia too can be related to the Indian Arjuna's bishad-yoga. And does not Hamlet on his part too learn the great lesson of "renunciation" that Krishna taught Arjuna? And what was the ultimate human and poetic significance of that idea of "renunciation" as it came to the hero (Arjuna) in the Indian scene? On the other hand, the movement of Hamlet from "O cursed spite that I was born to set it right" to "there is a Providence in the fall of a sparrow" may become meaningful to an Indian in the light of the message of Krishna in the Gita itself. Hamlet's detachment or renunciation in the last movement of that play contrasts significantly with his earlier state of being but the new state too is not fatalism or the detachment of a machine: it is rather the detachment of a "man" and through his attainment of that spiritual development—we may say-his activity "for the good of the world" becomes free "from the subtler egoism-the egoism that "you were born to set right things". (N.A. Nikam, *Some Concepts of Indian Culture*, p. 70).

It is my feeling which has become stronger and stronger through the years that there is an inner passage for the Indian mind into Shakespeare at one level through the *Gita* and at another level even through the poetic drama of Kalidasa—however different the char-

acter of Indian drama may be from Shakespearean drama in a certain direction.

And it is also my feeling that Rabindranath in particular made his way into the heart of Shakespeare mainly along such an inner or secret Indian road.

> The foundation on which the greatness of European culture has been built is a spiritual one: it has not risen due merely to its technical efficiency in products, but due to its high ethical ideal. And this is the deep-seated difference between Europe and Japan ...As regards this [devotional] attitude, Europe has more in common with India than with Japan. The palace of Japanese civilization is one storied: there is a condition on its ability and a limit to its strength. In its account books the item most worthy or praise and reward is skill in work, and in its temples the god most highly revered is national self-interest (Rabindranath Tagore: *A Visit to Japan*, p. 98: translated by Dr. Shakuntala Rao Sastri, East West Institute, 1961).

Here Tagore was expressing his critical attitude also towards Japan's fascination for Nietzche's idea of heroism.

Simplistic ideas about the 'East' and the 'West' may however go on creating confusions particularly in the context of our assessments of the most valuable ideas and the deeper spirit of the Indian mind; but that they need a rather critical look may be gathered at least from this very revealing judgment expressed by Rabindranath in the second decade of this century.

Even such an idea as the following needs some modification in the light of the above revelation:

All men are aware of tragedy in life. But tragedy as a form of drama is not universal. Oriental art knows violence, grief, and the stroke of natural or contrived disaster; the Japanese theatre is full of ferocity and ceremonial death. But that representation of personal sufferings and heroism which we' call tragic drama is distinctive of the Western tradition. (George Steiner: *The Death of Tragedy*, p. 3).

Here is both a truth and a simplification. Such an account of the West ultimately may hide the truth that Tagore felt—the truth of India—its inner link with the West. We may really pause again and try to understand the implications of the whole chapter of *Bishad-yoga* in the *Bhagavadgita* set in the very heart of the *Mahabharata* as

well as the implications of what is also perhaps one of the few greatest chapters in World Literature—the last journey of Yuddhisthira. Where the spirit of these great moments of Indian literature differs from the spirit of Japanese heroic theatre a monolithic and slippery use of the word "Orient" cannot show.

The area or level of mind where India rather links up with the West as distinguished from the Semitic-Arabic Middle East too may be seen in the light of the following historical truths.

> Liberalism and humanism are profound movements in the Western world, deriving partly from Greece, partly from the Bible, and brought to fruition through the great upsurge in the eighteenth century with its willingness to suffer martyrdom, to effect revolutions, and to push strenuous creative intellect for this cause. Classical Arabic Civilization *Allall* jajdndnndn adopted the rationalist tradition of Greek philosophy and science upto a limited point, but refused altogether the humanist tradition of Greek art and poetry; and that tradition never penetrated Muslim society. Again, religiously Islam repeats many of the basic doctrines of Christianity but not the humanist one; it rejected and still rejects with all the force and even horror that it can muster the affirmation that God Himself can best be known in a human embodiment. A statue of Praxiteles, which seeks the perfection of beauty in the human form, and a doctrine of incarnation, which portrays God there, provide foundations on which the West could and did build a humanist movement but which are not immediately available to Islam. (Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Islam in Modern History*, pp. 303-3)

A Treasure of Asian Literature, edited by John D. Yohannan, also shows along with the significance of the tradition of Sanskrit drama "to total neglect of that literary form [drama] in Islamic letters".

Here too it is with the West, as Tagore saw, India links up rather than with the Arabic Middle East.

Krishnalila and *Ramlila* were in fact sorts of Miracle plays, and regular plays could easily have sprung from them or from their imitation, given appropriate encouragement by the court. The Mughal rulers, otherwise ideally situated, failed miserably to take these up and utilize them for their own religious and even political purposes. What stood in the way was the Islamic sanction against such imitation". (Jagannath Chakravary: "Elizabethan Drama and Mughal

court" in Viswanath Chatterjee ed. *Word for Word*, pp. 146, Papyrus, Calcutta 1944).

In its zeal to assert that Allah is the only Creator, Islam was always ready to belittle man and deny him creative power lest it might give rise to a misconception about the position of man vis-a-vis his God." (Ibid., p. 141).

It was—during British rule—that Indian drama started acquiring a second life. There was a logic in the new historical situation for this historical event:

The performing tradition for Sanskrit plays maintained itself from perhaps several centuries before Christ until around the twelfth century-that is for a period of twelve hundred to fifteen hundred years. . . .The exact historical sequence cannot be documented, but we are not much in doubt as to the factors that contributed to the death of Sanskrit theatre....New Islamic rulers shunned the classic plays, for they were steeped in Hindu philosophy and mythology. Also, according to orthodox Islamic belief, it is blasphemous to portray the human figure, as the actor does in the theater In time, the troupes of players who embodied the performing tradition dispersed into countryside or disbanded. (Baumer & Brandon, *Sanskrit Drama in Performance*, pp. X-VIH-XIX). As Sambhu Mitra has seen, it is Tagore who has linked our present with that past of the India drama. Not unexpectedly!

It is against such a historical and philosophical background that the subject-"Shakespeare in India"-has to be seen.

But before coming to the stage of Tagore's discovery of Europe and India which shows a greater awareness of the Christian dimension of Western culture, Indians—we may notice—had already discovered an underlying link between India and the West, which was connected with the fact that linguistically India had an important share in the Indo-Aryan cultural tradition too. Max Mueller's works had paved the way for it and Aurobindo too in his *The Foundation of Indian Culture* drew our attention of some significant similarities between the Indian and Western cultural traditions of poetry. He wrote that Indian poetry "like the poetry of Europe, is the creation of an Aryan or Aryanized national mind, starts apparently from similar motives, moves on the same plane, uses cognate forms". (p. 254)

That India with the Indo-European linguistic heritage stands

within the East itself in a specially intimate relation to Shakespeare's West is thus a truth which we may gather also from Aurobindo.

What could be the special attraction of Shakespeare for the Indians of the new age is also an interesting question; and to it too Aurobindo, ultimately as a representative of the new Bengal of the 19th century provided an indirect answer, placing a particular emphasis on 'the essential force and beauty' of the poetry of Homer and Shakespeare as 'poetry'-he wrote:

When I said that there were no greater poets than Homer and Shakespeare I was thinking of their essential force and beauty-not the scope of their work as a whole; for there are poets greater in their range. (*The Future Poetry and Letters*, p. 517)

Shakespeare was introduced to India during the age of Johnson and Garrick; to be precise, in 1775-the year of the American War of Independence. *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and other plays of Shakespeare were produced at the Calcutta Theatre during the year and subsequently Shakespearean drama was produced also at the Chowringhee Theatre, which was founded in 1813 by a number of eminent citizens including Dwarkanath Tagore-the grandfather of Rabindranath. The audience at such theaters, predominantly consisting the Englishmen, contained also some Bengali gentlemen. Just after the establishment of the Fort William College in 1800, Gary and his colleagues began to feel that not only books like Aesop's Fables but also the poetry of Shakespeare needed to be assimilated into Bengali language. And in 1817 was established the Hindu College at Calcutta and the School Society in 1818-the two institutions which 'took a leading part in teaching Shakespeare and printing and publishing books on him.' Derozio and Richardson, who taught in that college, 'instilled in the hearts of the students an abiding love for Shakespeare.' It too has been recorded that Lord Macaulay, who had the experience of listening to Richardson's reading of Shakespeare while in India, later wrote to him: "I may forget everything about India, but your reading of Shakespeare, never. "After the Senior Department of Hindu College had been reorganized as 'Presidency College' of Calcutta, Richardson continued as a teacher of English literature there for a year 1860-1861.

It is also a very significant historical fact, which may be recalled in this very context, that all the Englishmen placed in high posts in

India had been opposed to Indians taking to English as the medium of higher education as they considered Indians incapable of using that language with proficiency. It now appears that it was the pressure of those Bengalis, who had learnt English and Shakespeare at Hindu College, that helped in turning the tide by exerting an influence on Lord Macaulay. Derozio died in 1831 but the influence of his spirit was there and 1835 was the year in which English was declared to be the medium of instruction in British India. English became important and a receivers' language and the Indians had to receive a dynamic attitude to life in the sphere of language itself. The new Indian mind was discovering something dynamic in the English language and that something was most in evidence of Shakespeare. (Is it not for same reason that goaded many new Indians to take to English? Vidyasagar too came to give more importance to new Indians learning Western philosophy than their going to the traditional Indian philosophical lore)

H.M. Percival, an Indian Shakespearean scholar, was a Professor of English at Presidency College, Calcutta for thirty years from 1880 upto 1911. Manomohan Ghosh, the brother of Aurobindo Ghosh, was there from about the last decade of the nineteenth century to 1921; and P.C. Ghosh, another famous teacher, was there for about thirty years upto 1939. And that was in a sense the end of a long chapter of the Indian' academic reception of Shakespeare.

There was the pioneering role played by the Parsi theatre in the Indianization of Shakespeare in Western India for this process. Indian literatures like Gujarati and Kannada definitely benefited from such processes. Shakespeare in the Dravidian-Southern belt has been made memorable for people like me by Raja Rao's *The Cat and Shakespeare*, with a character making speeches 'in the manner of Hamlet' while secretly assimilating Shakespeare to the South Indian Tengalai-Vaishnavite philosophy of the 'cat' that is an Indian way of dealing with the Denmark of our existence. There is also the interpretative work of Srinivasa Iyenger running parallel to this creative process in the South while the name of Amarnath Jha has been connected in my mind with the image of Shakespeare in the region of the Hindi-speakers.

However, it is also a fact that 'Shakespeare in India' for a long

time meant) for many, predominantly 'Shakespeare in Calcutta' and it was on two fronts: the theatre and the Presidency College. Parallel to the line represented by the Presidency college tradition of Shakespeare teaching there was the tradition of the new Bengali theatre; and from Girish Chandra Ghosh through Amarendranath Datta this theatre was connected with a process of Indianization of Shakespeare. Whatever the deficiencies this line of Shakespearising may show, it is interesting to notice that Professor P.C. Ghosh was also a sort of 'historian' with his Shakespeare in the classroom while the other Ghosh of the last century also took Shakespeare as his 'Guru' and inspired Vivekananda to make the comment (although it was an absurd one) that some of Girish Ghosh's plays were 'superior to those of Shakespeare'! And from Amarendranath Datta the modern Bengali poet Suddhindranath Datta may have inherited his nineteenth-century type of declamatory-dramatic style: at least that is what one may feel tempted to suggest. By 1878 Haraprasad Shastri could write that of all the books read by the educated Bengali youth those of Shakespeare topped the list. That Shakespeare did come to find a significant reception at least in Bengal may be gathered also from other sources. Nirad C. Chaudhury, in *Bangali Jibane Romani* (Woman in Bengali Life), presents a long historical account of the process in which a new conception of love entered the Indian society in Bengal and how Shakespeare was the central force which carried that new philosophy of life. "That it was from Shakespeare and the Romantics the new idea of love came to Bengal there is no doubt. All through the writings of Bankimchandra respect for Shakespeare was clearly visible." (pp. 189-190). In *Atmaghati Bangali* (p.38) he tells us that his father taught him *King Lear* in English when he was only ten years old. In another book, written in English, Chaudhury tells us: "although we had heard the story of King Lear from our mother and knew who it was by, our first notion of Shakespeare was of a man whose writing all grown-up persons were expected to discuss and, what was even more important, to recite. It did not take us long, however, to pass from the ranks of spectators to that of participants in the Shakespearean procession." (Nirad C. Chaudhury: *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, p. 103).

The following articles too help us in understanding the way

Shakespeare had an influence on Bengal or Bengali Culture: Tarakanth Sen's ("Presidency college and Shakespeare"; Jasodhara Bagchi's "A Note on Bengali Translation"; Viswanath Chatterjee's "Tagore as a Critic of Shakespeare" and Alokeranjan Dasgupta' "Shakespeare O Adhunik Bangal Kabya-Jignasa".

The spirit of modern Bengal with its Shakespeare was carried on into the Post-Independence era, on the academic front, in Bengal mainly by Tarakanth Sen, who joined Presidency college in late thirties and worked there till the sixties. His Shakespeare's Short Lines is perhaps the best piece of Shakespearean scholarship that an Indian has produced till now. The writings of two of his colleagues at Presidency College-S.C. Sengupta and Amal Bhattacharj-too may be taken note of in this context.

However, the quality of the available translations made of Shakespearean drama into Bengali does not generally give us any indication of the fact that Shakespearean poetry did really touch the hearts of some Indians at a serious level, although Suddhindranath Datta and Bishnu Dey in their translations of some of the sonnets of Shakespeare did something memorable in two somewhat different ways.

From such an area of Indianization of Shakespeare to a work like *Bhanumatichittabilas* by Hara Chandra Ghosh of the 19th Century is a long journey. That was an adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice*. Here is an analysis of that adaptation and it shows an interesting process at work:

The centre has been shifted from Antonio, the Merchant of Venice, to Bhanumati, who is a Bengali counterpart of Portia. As the name makes amply clear, the play had been made into a kind of Romantic drama narrating the love between Bhanumati (Portia) and Chittavilas (Bassanio). Belmont and Venice have been rendered as Ujjain and Gujarat, both names redolent of narrative fiction of the past. No pains have been spared in converting the independent, glittering figure of Shakespeare's Portia into a coy heroine belonging to the Sanskrit tradition of drama. Instead of having gone attendant Nerissa, Bhanumati is given a pair called Sulochana and Sushila, in imitation of Kalidasa's Skuntala, one presumes. She has two very anxious parents: they play, after opening with the conventional 'nandi', and an introduction by an actress, invoking spring, the season of

lovers, in fact begins with Bhanumati's parents quarreling with one another. The nagging mother complains that the father is neglecting his duties, he is not taking the necessary steps for arranging the marriage of Bhanuati who had grown over-ripe for marriage. (Jasodhara Bagchi: "A Note on Bengali translations of Shakespeare: 1850-1900" in Naresh Guhaed. *Jadabpur Journal of Comparative Literature*. Volume Five, 1965, p. 30).

So Shakespeare could be translated in such a 'reverse' direction away from the focal point of Shakespearean drama holding a mirror up to age of European renaissance. This type of Indianization was, however, an interesting feature of the reception of Shakespeare in India-particularly in the nineteenth century. Nineteenth-century Indianization of Shakespeare at a better level is represented by Vidyasagar's fictionalization of the *The Comedy of Errors*.

Shakespare in the play, talking of Aegean's marriage with Amilia, writes this language of a essentially dramatics mode:

> In Syracuse was I born and sed
> Unto a woman, happy but for me
> And by me, had not our hap been had (1 .1.1 1 37-39)

This 'terse reporting' is expanded by Viddyasagar in his Bhrantivilas into "a detailed leisurely prose, appropriate for narrative fiction." The English rendering of the concerned prose passage from Vidyasagar's work has been given in the following styles.

> I was born in the city of Hemakuta. On having attained my youth I accepted the hands of a beautiful woman in marriage. Her name was Labanyamayee. She came of a good family and was endowed with good virtues. Both of us spent our days in great happiness in each other's company. I had extensive trade in Malapur which brought me a lot of money. If my luck had not given way, I could have continued my family life in undiminished happiness. (Ibid.)

Here is a very significant and characteristic instance of the way Shakespeare was generally translated into Indian literature in the 19th century.

> While Vidyasagar's prose is remarkable for its picturesque vigour

> it is quite clear that the language is of a different genre from that of Shakespeare although it is so largely derived from it. . .

In fact Vidysagar's use of Shakespeare points to a more fundamental aspect of Shakespeare translation in general in Bengali: the story element seems to have appealed most to these early adapters of Shakespeare. The nineteenth century in Bengal was a time of vigorous fiction writing when all kinds of Romances and extravagant stories were set afloat for the consumption of the newly educated Bengalis. The flamboyance of Shakespeare's stories was a thing that was easily accepted in this atmosphere. (*Ibid*.).

While the Elizabethan dramatists like Shakespeare had transmuted a great deal of narrative literature that had been available into the dramatic mode, Bengali writers in the nineteenth century were directly or indirectly transforming Shakespeare's drama into narrative literature: "what these early adapters of Shakespeare did was, in a sense, to take him back to the relatively greater chaos of his narrative sources".

However, there was something more or something deeper in this process of which Vidyasagar was a representative. Vidyasagar showed the way of transmuting Shakespearean poetry into a mode of narrative as well as into the medium of prose; and this Shakespeare became a dominant inspiration also behind the fictions of Bankimchandra with their 'poetic-romantic' situations and here the link between Vidysagar's pioneering work in linking creative imagination to Bengali prose and Bankim's fictions may also come to light:

Later writers, such as Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay who created a prose-literature that could rival poetry, accepted the basic structure of Vidyasagar's prose. (Sisir Kumar Das: "Vidyasagar and Bengali Prose" in Manik Mukhopadhyaya and others ed. *The Golden Book of Vidyasagar*, p. 180). Vidyasagar's experiments reached their final stage when Rabindranath Tagore created a new form of literature known as *gadya-kavita*, the prose-poems. (Ibid).

Vidyasagar was greatly enamoured of the 'poetry' of Shakespeare. He felt that "the highest perfection of poetry and diction in noticed in Shakespeare's plays". He showed one way of translating Shakespeare and the inspiration of Western poetry into an Indian language while his friend Michael Madhusudan Dutt, who spoke

of "the splendid Shakespearean drama," showed another. However to transmute the essence of this Shakespeare into Bengal was not an easy matter. The very dream of catching the spirit of something like 'the grand Shakespearean drama' made Michael think of playing at least a role in Bengali similar to the one played by Sakville in 1527 A.D. through his introduction of'blank verse' in English with his *Gorbaduc* hoping that in the future Indian poetry might come closer to the dramatic energy and spirit of Shakespeare in a developed poetic way. And Michael did introduce in Bengali poetry the famous "amitrakshar" chhanda: and it is here that he tried to link an important spirit of Western poetry and so Shakespeare too in an immediate form-of the tradition of Indian poetry. This was an event of great significance in the cultural or literary history of India. This instrument went through a process of refinement lending it greater sensitivity through poets who came afterwards: Rabindranath to Sudhindranath. Michael freed the language of Bengali poetry from the dominance of the "payar" chhanda-which had also "retarded the possibility of experimentation with prose". So, both Vidyasagar and Michael attacked the same problem from two different directions. There is also a deeper connection-it has been suggested between their literary adventures:

Milton and Shakespeare were certainly inspiring models and examples to Madhusudan, but given the huge gulf between English and Bengali rhythm and sound, should we not look for influences nearer to him? In fact there is nothing in Madhusudan comparable to Milton's long periods: the music of his verse if altogether quicker and more animated, with much shorter phrases and sentences. I suggest that the real source of Madhusudan's blank verse was Vidysagar's prose, as perfected by Kaliprasanna Sinha in his translation of the *Mahabharat* which Madhusudan must certainly have read when it appeared serially. His admiration for Vidyasagar was immense. (William Radice, "Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Sakuntala and *The* Liberation of Bengali" in *The Golden Book of Vidyasagar*, p. 199).

Michael considered the tradition of Indian literature to be a tradition of softness or romance. Bankimchandra compared Kalidasa to a garden in contrast to Shakespeare who appeared to him to be a sea. Regarding the tradition of Sanskrit drama of Kalidasa, Aurobindo wrote: "At the same time it is true that it does not rise to the great-

ness of the Greek or the Shakespeare drama". (*The foundations of Indian Culture*, p. 304-5) He also gave an explanation: "It is due to the absence of any bold dramatic treatment-of the great issues and problems of life. These dramas are mostly romantic plays." (Ibid.)

It is in the two Indian epics-in which the heroic spirit of the ancient Indian kshatriya too was celebrated in a deep way-that Aurobindo saw such a bold dramatic treatment of the great issues of life. The idea of tragedy too was deeply accepted in epic tradition. (Iravati Karve's *Yuganta* too expresses—in our times a somewhat similar view.

Vidyasagar stands also as a link between Madhusudhan and Rabindranath, both of whom were great admirers of him. Michael felt that Vidyasagar had 'the energy of an Englishman" while Vidyasagar was also like an 'European' type of 'hero' for Rabindranath! The 'heroic' spirit in Vidyasagar—a spirit connected also with a deep moral sensitivity was what Rabindranath found most appealing in him.

As the impact of Shakespearean drama on the Indian mind in the 19th century was connected also with the image of the 'hero' of the European type-this point, which may at first sight seem to be a bit obscure, may be given some attention here.

Tagore wrote a book entitled Charitrapuja in which he virtually developed a new concept of the hero. He singled out Raja Rammohan Roy and Vidyasagar for special admiration. Vidyasagar had a 'European' type of heroic spirit in him-he was a 'man': that was Tagore's view. On the other hand, Tagore was critical not only of the Indian *Kshtriya* of the later ages but also of dominance of the Mother-cult and the type of mysticism connected with it. He was also critical of the dominance of the feminine element in what he would consider to be wrong places. He was working for a new ideal of the hero in Indian culture; he was also trying to resurrect what he could call the image of the Indian hero of the ancient times. (In his Bharatbarsher Itihaser Dhara, written in 1912, he spoke also of the degeneration of the idea of the Indian Kshstriya in the Middle Ages).

Tagore's *Raja O Rani* (1889) and *Visarjan* (1890) were more connected with the 19th century Bengali ideas of the heroic and was consequently also more Elizabethan-Shakespearean in character. His career as a dramatist through *Raja, Dakghar and Raktokorobi* shows

a movement away from that earlier mode. It was also a movement away from the 'historical' mode of drama towards a new kind of 'symbolical' drama.

In this context we may pay some attention also to such observations on the Indian renaissance: the so-called Indian renaissance had also a militaristic aspect. If the Bengali novel which came into being then had love in the European sense as its theme, it also had war as an accomplishment, (Nirad C. Chaudhury: *The Continent of Circe*, p. 113).

This vicarious militarism gave a strong military colour to the first outburst of the nationalist movement in Bengal in 1905, and the Bengali revolutionary movement in its ideological inspiration was wholly military. It was at first conceived of as « incipient military uprising. (Ibid., p. 114).

Tagore wrote about the 19th-Century Bengali idea of the heroic: "Our attempts to imitate the blast of a hurricane led us easily into exaggeration." (See Anand Lal's *Rabindranath Tagore*.) He became rather suspicious of that idea of the heroic-there was more sound and fury there; on the other hand, Tagore became more sensitive to the meaning of Christ-the idea of 'suffering' than many or most of his predecessors and contemporaries in Bengal. Not only his writings on Christ but also a poem of the later phase like "Sishuttirtha" bear witness to this dimension of Tagore's mind. He, after reading "Journey of the Magi" made a wonderful Bengali version of it in 1930. It may also be noted that while such writers of the nineteenth century Bengal as Michael Madhusudhan Dutt and Bankimchandra—as well as Aurobindo—had a more romantic or mystical idea of the heroic; Tagore was developing an idea that showed at least a new direction or a deeper moral sensitivity. It is rather the real 'Christian' sensibility of Shakespeare than his 'Elizabethan' character that came to appeal more to Tagore.

The meaning of the Shakespearean tragic heroes can be properly understood only if we take into account also the background of the Christian philosophy of life and its idea of the problem of evil which Shakespeare inherited. We cannot divorce that cultural background from Shakespearean drama, however disturbed a character the Elizabethan age had; but in the nineteenth century Romanticism was also leading readers towards such an interpretation of Shakespearean

drama and of the heroes of Shakespearean tragedy. The idea of the hero that many Indians tended to accept in the nineteenth century was such a romantic idea and among Indians Tagore gradually developed a critical attitude towards that idea.

Tagore thus had his reservations about the way the Western idea of the hero, (already divorced from the original Greek religious sense as well as the Christian religious sense and its understanding of the problem of evil) was being assimilated into modern Indian thought by some of these contemporaries. In Bengal this process led Indian thought also to a connection with Nietzche's idea of the Superman, directly or indirectly. Two important observations made in two histories of modern Indian philosophical thought may be quoted in this context. "Vivekananda performed the extraordinary feat of breathing life into the purely static monism of Sankara. In Europe and America he proclaimed from the housetops the absolute divinity of man and the sinfulness of the Christian preoccupation with sin. This obsession with sin and its corollary, the helplessness of man and his absolute dependence on the grace of God, he, like Nietzche, saw as something debilitating and degrading." (R.C. Zaehner: *Hinduism*, p. 168). "The result of the modern positive attitude to the world and the doctrine of self-affirmation is the idea of the Superman. In Western philosophy, this idea is associated with the philosophy of Nietzche, and is being connected with the doctrine of dictatorship. In India, Aurobindo Ghosh among the Hindus and Iqbal among the Muslims are preaching it. But in either the Superman is not so aggressive as in Nietzche. The Superman for Iqbal may also be a tyrant; but he is a tyrant, only because he ruthlessly enforces the will of God, not his own... Of course, the Superman of Iqbal is aggressive when compared to the one of Aurobindo." (P.T. Raju: *Idealist Thought of India*, pp. 398-399).

Tagore was on the whole rather more critical of Nietzche's hero and his cult of the Power and it is here that Tagore's idea of the hero' shows, unlike the idea in the thought of Michael or Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Tilak and Iqbal, a link with the spirit of the Christian understanding of the problem of evil. Here he is also in the company of Gandhiji and Andrews. The ultimately religious experience of 'wonder' as well as the human experience of 'fear and pity' become more meaningful only in such a path.

Tagore entered into Shakespeare quite early in his life when he translated *Macbeth*. Tagore has his question regarding the West of Nietzsche too as well as regarding Shakespeare 'the Elizabethan': but he-among his contemporaries in India-had also a deep affinity with the deeper self of Shakespeare the poet. Taraknath Sen also made such an assessment of Tagore in 1961:

Though Tagore did not write plays after the Shakespearean pattern, it is with Shakespeare that he belongs rather than with any other English writer. No words are needed about his knowledge and deep appreciation of Shakespeare. ("Western influence on the Poetry of Tagore" in A Literary Miscellany, pp. 135-136). Is not Rabindranath also near the Shakespeare revealed in the following assessment?

> Shakespeare had been the darkest of the pessimists, as Satanic as Marston, as self-divided as Chapman, bloodthirsty as Webster, sinister as Tourneur, mordant as been Johnson. But he escaped damnation by the vigour of his lyrical gift and no doubt by the superior balance of his genius. (Henri Fluchere: *Shakespeare and The Elizabethans*, p. 64)

They (Beaumont and Flecher) differ from Shakespeare in that they had read Shakespeare-the Shakespeare of the tragic period rather than the Shakespeare who wrote the Last plays. (John Danby: *Elizabethan and Jocobian Poets*, p. 202) Shakespeare's enthronement of woman as queen of comedy is not mere accident, and no mere gesture of conventional gallantry. ..Their (of Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, etc.) personality is a mass of mighty forces out of equipoise: they lack the balance of a durable spiritual organism. It was in women that Shakespeare found this equipoise, the balance which makes personality in action a sort of ordered interplay of the major components of human nature (H.B. Chariton: *Shakespearean Comedy*, pp. 285-86).

In the light of such readings of Shakespeare it may also be said that while Indians like Michael and Bankimchandra (and following them in the 20th century Mohitlal Mazurndar) were attracted by a different idea of the heroic and the romance of the European storm that was the Elizabethan drama with its blank verse and high rhetoric, Tagore-with his deeper lyric sensibility-was in communion with the spirit of Shakespeare at a deeper level of creativity as well as moral sensitivity. Tagore's suspicion of the high rhetoric of the Elizabethan age had also ultimately and even paradoxically a Shakespearean qual-

ity; and Shakespeare did transcend the limitations of that age with a deeper type of poetic sensibility which was also spiritually more reliable. What the Indian society in Michael's times needed was first and foremost a jolt-a new dynamic attitude basically a new awakening of the spirit of rajas. While he, followed by Bankimchandra as well as Aurobindo, had a more open or receptive attitude towards the Elizabethan spectacle of Shakespeare, Tagore's relation to Shakespeare was not such a clear or easy one. He, unlike them, came to raise some interesting questions regarding an aspect of the very mind of the West in his comparative study of Kalidasa's Sakuntala and Shakespeare's Miranda. Tagore felt that the West has also to learn something from India for the evolution of a better philosophy of 'Man and Nature' as well as 'Man and Woman'. What he had in mind was something other than the mystical spiritualism.

Tagore's comparison between Kalidasa and Shakespeare should not lead us astray. When Joseph Wood Krutch wrote some memorable words in praise of Indian drama as seen in Sudraka's *Mricchakatiak*, while contrasting it with Elizabethan Drama he was also stressing a truth which Tagore valued and Shakespeare too in a way expressed in the majority of his comedies, romances, and even histories and also within Cordelia in *King Lear*.

Running from Vidyasagar, who translated not only Shakespeare but also Kalidasa, to Rabindranath there was at work in fact an inner tendency to connect Shakespeare and Kalidasa in some way or other: either for a subtle synthesis in the body of a new philosophy (or creation) or for a critical comparison.

Rabindranath in particular tried to accept or assimilate Shakespeare's lesson in a new way. The masculine dynamic spirit of the West that the Nineteenth century Bengal tried to imitate came to be inwardly connected by Tagore with the lyric sensibility in a deeper way-even the lyric sensibility of Indian women of 'Chhele Bhulanoo Chora'. Tagore had his questions also about Shakespeare the Elizabethan; but these questions were not like those of Voltaire of France and of Tolstoy, of Russia. His attitude was distant from a type of 'rationalism' as well as a type of 'rationalism' that ultimately may militate against the poetic impulse in life.

Tagore was at one with the poet in Shakespeare. Shakespeare inspired Tagore to feel his way towards the deeper man-the hidden

or the inner man. That was a lesson he among his contemporaries learnt more from Shakespearean drama. He himself linked his own drama with Shakespeare in such word: "The human soul has its inner drama which is just the same as anything else that concerns man and Sudarsana is not more an abstraction than Lady Macbeth, who might be described as an allegory representing the criminal ambition in man's nature."

III

About twenty seven years ago, in an article written for a Commemoration Volume published on the occasion of the birth centenary of Lashminath Bezbarua-the father of Modern Assamese Literature-presented in a context the following 19th century background:

Modern Assamese literature came into existence in the middle of the nineteenth century. This event was distinctly a result of the cultural impact of the West on Assam. However, for certain historical reasons, the West did not have on the Assamese Society an impact as profound and disturbing as the one it had on the Bengali. Consequently, the beginnings of modern Assamese literature do not betray the mood of 'Storm and stress' that may be felt behind the poetry of Michael Madhusudan and the novels of Banikimchandra.

The West appeared in the Indian scene with a Janus face, and Calcutta-the heart of modern Bengal-became the centre in which this dual face showed itself at its most distinct. In one way, the West meant a liberation-the liberation of the individual from the shackles of traditional Indian Society; and in another way, it meant a slavery-the slavery of the national soul. (Bhaben Barua: 'The Road to Lakshminath Bezbarua' in Maheswar Neog ed. Lakshminath Bezbarua, *The Sahityarathi of Assam*, p. 26, Gauhati University, 1972). I wrote further:

The modern Assamese literary tradition arose out of the efforts on the part of the Assamese to understand the new age that had been brought to them by the coming of the British, but such efforts to understand this new age had already been made in Bengal since about a century earlier with a greater sense of compulsion because of obvious reasons. (Ibid., p. 28).

> One important feature of this impact of English education on Assamese was this: Shakespeare when he did come to touch the Assamese psyche it was generally in an indirect way—through the via media of Bengali literature of the new age. Secondly, very interestingly, it was rather the mode of a patriotic or historical consciousness which turned to be the dominant mode of the Assamese encounter with Shakespeare's mind. It is also an interesting historical fact that while the tradition of Assamese literature can show a line of prose writings from the seventeenth century onwards and a clear heritage of historical writings-the tradition of Bengali literature was innocent of such a type of writing. And it too may be a historical fact that the first man who wrote a history in Bengali in the nineteenth century was an Assamese gentleman.

The patriotic urge-connected with a sense of the special history of Asom-often prevented many Assamese from going deep into the questions of 'art and philosophy' and such a type of literature as Shakespeare tragedy. This is a truth which I pointed out about twenty-seven years ago in these words:

To the Assamese in consequence, the issues of literature and culture often appeared in the context of the problems of the distinct cultural and linguistic identity, and the larger and ultimate issues relating to the confrontation with a West too were often observed at a remove...(Ibid, p.28).

One may take the case of historical romances in Assamese which obviously had the inspiration of Bankimchandra behind them. Although it was mainly Rajanikanta Bordoloi who is more famous in Assam for this genre of writing, Lakshminath Bezbarua and Padmanath Gohain-Barua too wrote historical romances,' however, what differentiates these works in Assamese from the fictions of Bankimchandra is the fact that while Bankim was mainly inspired by the romance of love and a Shakespearean sense of mystery of the 'drama' of life, in the Assamese works the comparatively dominant sense is a sense of a generally troublesome period of Assam's history which preceded the coming of the British rule. Most of these historical romances in Assamese give us images of man in the times of Burmese invasions or the Moamoria rebellions. Such works however remain at a distance from a novel like Kapalkundala and are more like a new kind of chronicles containing the human stories of love or romance. Reading Bankimchandra's fiction one feels also the presence of the

poetry of Shakespeare at some level or other but this connection with Shakespeare cannot be felt in the Assamese historical romance in such a way. A sense of poetry which is connected with a sense of mystery is there in Bankimchandra and this evocative prose.

Bezbarua was nearer the Shakespearean moment in Bengal but the Shakespeare that became connected through him with Assamese Drama was also interestingly the Shakespeare of the history plays—and particularly of the history of England. Here it was he who assimilated something of the living spirit of Shakespeare into Assamese literature through his three histories plays Chakradhaj Sinha, Joymoti Kunwari and Belimar. Through these plays he established by 1915, as I wrote on another occasion "the chronicle play as a viable genre and patriotism as a major theme. "In the first play the ideal king reminds us of the image of Shakespeare's Henry IV although the sense of the limiting' or spiritually troublesome character of 'power' which Shakespearean poetry evokes or suggests is rather absent. An Assamese version of Falstaff ultimately duly placed in a right place is also there. These plays give us on the whole images of some periods of Assamese history till the coming of the British. The acceptance of the British rule-like the one we find at the end of Bankimchandra's Ananda Math-is what this series of plays ends up with. However, Bezbarua is able to give at the end an idea of the Janus face that the British rule was-through a rather complex note that contains a comic element. Bazbarua expressed a rather critical attitude towards the brand of extremist and terrorist politics with its cult of the bomb which Bengal's mixture of the 'mothercult' mysticism and politics gave birth to in the first decade of this century. Bezbarua's three history plays-written in 1915-were also (like Tagore's *Ghare Baire*) an answer to that danger with all its Elizabethan Nietzschean theatrical gesture. The age of the Moamoria Rebellions and the Burmese invasions in Assam history had remained a presence in the Assamese minds in the age of Bezbarua. And it is against this background that we can properly understand Bezbarua' a reading of Assam history in his three historical plays. It is a reading similar to Shakespeare's reading of the history of England.

> What seems to set off the values of these plays most markedly, from those of the tragedies is the importance given by the histories to the

> virtues of prudence and economy. For in the chronicle plays these are the essential qualities, together with strength of character—kingliness—for a ruler's governance both of himself and his realm. To what degree the importance of these qualities in Shakespeare, up to the turn of the century, is related to the poet's response to crises of he is own day, or to the spectacle of an older England wasted for a hundred years through the incompetence or violence of a succession of weaklings, usurpers, and tyrants it is difficult today. But it is clear that the fullest exploration of the significance of prudence and economy in state affairs, and thus also of their opposites-carelessness, excess waste, and disease-to be found in the sequence running from Richard II through Henry V. (R.J. Dorius Little more than a Little in Eugene M. Waich ed. *Shakespeare the Histories*, pp. 113-14).

The ending of Bezbarua's Belimar gives us the final perspective in which to see the course of Assam's history leading to a new dawn in the new age brought by British rule that freed Assam from the Burmese oppressions. The Play ended on this note-' 'Who says the dark night does not come to an end'?

It has been said by H.B. Chariton about Shakespeare's English history plays that "the real hero of the English history-play is England", similarly we can say about Lakshminath Bezbarua's there history plays that the real hero of these plays is 'Asom'.

Bezbarua has also given the Assamese the sweetest Assamese anthem that unfailingly touches the Assamese heart. Its spirit is dominant in the three historical plays of Bezbaruas. I do not think that anybody can say similar things about Dwijendralal's history plays like *Mebar Paton or Sirajudulla*. They do not evoke similar patriotic feelings in the heart of the Bengali-speaking people. Such plays do not give us the music of Tagore's "Moor Soonar Bangla-Ami Tornai Bahlobasi".

Bezbarua touched a level of tragedy particularly in the play—*Joymati Kanwari*—which is a story of self-sacrifice. Joymoti becomes as it were an embodiment resonant with the very tragedies of Assam's history—that is what Bezbarua makes us feel ultimately. There is the idea of the continuity of the society of Asom at the end and her death may remind us of the story of Kamala Kunwari of folklore. That is almost how Jyotiprasad Agarwala too interpreted the meaning of that historical play of Bezbarua in the first-ever Assamese film he

made on its basis: "the girls of Asom-The ladies of Asom-shed a drop of tear. The waters of Luit will ever flow on."

This myth of Asom is a valuable myth-although it has come to be used in a blind and almost foolish and comic way on several occasions by demagogues and journalists who do not feel the deep human significance of poetry that deals with the age of Bezbarua.

Bezbarua felt inspired however, not only by Shakespeare's idea of England (England, my England) but also by his sense of the comic. It is through these who lines that he showed a new pattern of assimilation of Shakespeare-distinct or different from the Bengali pattern. There is a special kind of connection between Shakespeare's history plays and comedies and this connection we may bring to light in the context of Bezbarua's use of these to resources.

Its (of pure comedy) rhythm is the rhythm of the life of mankind, which goes on the renews itself as the life of nature does. The rhythm of tragedy, on the other hand, is the rhythm of the individual life which comes to a close of a tragedy we look back over a course which has been run: 'the rest is silence.' The end of a comedy declares that life goes on: "Here we are all over again". (Helen Gardner: *As You Like It*).

A Shakespearean sense of the comic is very much there in the spectacle of Assam's history presented by Bezbarua that we find it. Regarding the short stories written by him I wrote about twenty seven years ago:

> In the short stories, representative of the new variety of realism the comic spirit is more or less always present. Like Beatrice, Rosalind, Viola-the heroines of Shakespeare's comedies-the writer in these stories often appears as both extrovert and introvert, both falling in love and mocking at love, both a romantic and a satirist of the romantic. Commonsense, which appears in the form of his sense of humour, is constantly by his side to warn him of any probable excess in the inward direction towards sentimentality, always giving his inward look into reality an essentially realistic character (Lakshminath Bezbarua's Contribution to Assamese Poetry "in Lakshminath Bezbarua, *The* Sahiyarathi of Assam, p. 126).

Bezbarua—the father of modern Assamese literature—was thus a unique figure in Assam in that had a genuine connection with the inner spirit of Shakespeare in more than one area: Histories, comedies

and lyric poetry in particular-while he also touched at least a level of tragedy within the frame of a chronicle play. This legacy left by him greatly benefitted his successors like Jyotiprasad Agarwala in the field of drama and others in the field of lyric poetry and prose fiction. One of his contemporaries or successors in Assamese literature were, however, connected with the Shakespearean source like him or in his manner. It may be pointed out that he gave the Assamese people not only their modern and standard prose style but contributed substantially to the development of new life in the Assamese language through a feeling for the lyric in one direction and sense of the comic in another direction. It is the touch of Shakespeare which appears to have worked like magic here.

A few histories of Modern Assamese Literature may be examined for the light they may shed on our subject. Here is this account given by Birinchikumar Barua in his Modern Assamese Literature:

The Comedy of Errors was rendered into Assamese as *Bhrama Ranga* in 1888. This was followed by the Chandravali (As You Like it) of Durgeswar Sarma, the Tara (Cymbeline) of Nabinchandra Bordoli, the *Bhima-Darpa* (Macbeth of Devanda Bharali and Amar Lila (*Romeo and Juliet*) of Padmadhar Chaliha. But none of them really made a mark on the stage in Assam. (*Modern Indian Literature*, p. 69).

However, we may add to this list also a few more titles: Benudhar Rajkhowa's *Seuti Kiron* which was written in 1894 and was a adaptation of Othello as well as his Chooror-sristi, which was an adaptation of Comedy of Errors. There is also Atui Chandra Hazarika's *Banij Konwar* which is an adaptation of The Merchant of Venice.

None of these translation and adaptations are memorable as recreations of creative literature. However, some interesting features of some of them may be indicated.

The *Chooroorsristica* lighter comedy, is patterned on Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*. The two husbands, Dhumuha and Mauram, lead unhappy lives with their respective wives due to temperamental incompatibility. One night a thief who enters their house gets to be aware of this unhappiness, and with the help of a charm which he knows, he gets the wives exchanged. The two men now enjoy their lives to the full. In spite of the presence of several scenes to provoke

laughter, the story resembles a folk tale. (Birinchi Kumar Barua: *History of Assamese Literature*, pp. 153-154).

That at least was one type of adaptation in which not only the spirit of folktale dominates but also perhaps an interesting expression of a subconscious mind which is not characteristic of the tradition of folktale comes through.

Another adaptation is also representative of a similar interesting trend: *The* Banij Kowar is an Assamese adaptation of Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice in five acts of blank verse. In the Assamese adaptation, Amiya Kumar (Antonio) and Chandanmal (Shylock) are representative of the Assamese and the exploiters from outside, between who there is deep suspicion and profound distrust and sometimes even passionate schism on linguistic and cultural grounds. In adapting this play in Assamese, the Assamese playwright has brought to bear a wealth of racy phrases and idioms which give the work the dignity and strength of almost an original work. (Birinchi Kumar Barua: *History of Assamese Literature*, p. 157)

Chandanmal is obviously a businessman from the Marwar region. This is also use of the local folk-mind in the interpretation of that play of Shakespeare. A local patriotism armed with a racy idiomatic language virtually submerges the bright or positive or poetic human impulses of the dramatist do not come to the fore.

Most of the Assamese adaptations of Shakespeare do show a process of such localization and they generally fail to make us feel that Shakespeare was a poet or the work involved was the result of a process of creative joy too.

A higher type of impulse-a sense of the idea that "drama" too is a species of "poetry" which was clearly expressed by Bezbarua in the prefaces to his three historical plays-seems to have guided him towards assimilating certain new things from Shakespeare into the tradition of Assamese dramas. His first venture itself shows such an impulse.

While a student Bezbarua tried his hand in translating *Hamlet and Mid-Summer Night's Dream* of Shakespeare into Assamese. But having completed one or two scenes, he abandoned the idea.... (Satyendranath Sarma)

It is evident that Shakespeare touched Bezbarua at least at a somewhat deeper level than the one seen in the case of the other

Assamese writers of his age. The results of his attempts at translations of Shakespearean drama could also be seen within the body of the three historical plays that he wrote about 1915:

> The Characters of Gajpuria and Priyaram in *Chkradvaj Sinha* easily remind one of Falstaff and Prince Hall is Shakespeare's Henry IV. Bhumuk Bahua and Pijou of *Belimar* are echoes of the Fool and Ophelia in Hamlet. The Dramatist has afforded comic relief by inserting lighter scene in the midst of tragic ones. (Birinchi Kumar Barua: *History of Assamese Literature*, 151.)

The dramatic technique and devices of Elizabethan dramatists, specially of William Shakespeare, appear to have a strong hold upon Bezbarua's dramatic conception. Development of the plot in five stages, juxtaposition of comic and tragic elements, long soliloquys by characters of sneakish and intriguing type, use of light anticipatory scene before a tragic or serious incident, and comic relief are some of the devices employed by Bezbarua which he naturally imbibed from Shakespeare's plays. (Satyendranath Sarma: *The Historical Plays of Lakshminath Bezbarua* in *Lakshminath Bezbarua ed. Lakshminath Bezbarua, The Sahityarathi* of Assam, p. 138)

Now we may come to the problem of the post-Bezbarua age of Assam in relation to Shakespearean sense of history-which may be called Shakespearean 'wisdom' was more in evidence in Tagore's *Ghare Baire* than in the brand of anarchist or terrorist philosophy of history which in league with the rhetorics of Elizabethan drama gripped Bengal during the days of the Swadeshi Movement. Bezbarua's understanding of Assam's historical present and future was definitely influenced by an historical awareness of a political past of Assam that was a spectacle of oppression, terrorism and anarchy and he obviously found in the line of Shakespearean wisdom a helpful guideline. Shakespeare's explorations in the field of history however, had led him to a deep and passionate inquiry into the genesis of that spiritual disorder called 'evil'. Although perhaps because of the heritage of 'mayavad' in philosophy, many Indian readers of Shakespearean tragedy generally did not to seep into this area-the problem of evil-nevertheless a new sense of this problem of spiritual disorder did come in some form from the encounter with Shakespearean drama in the new Indian mind. However, this sense

which was a new type of moral and spiritual sense came soon to be submerged in the upsurge of a new type of mysticism mixed with nationalist and political passions by the end of the second decade of the twentieth century. Although Gandhiji managed to save in a new form this newly developed spiritual moral sense which among modern Bengali writers was most in evidence in the most morally sensitive poet-Rabindranath, it came to be overpowered very often by political patriotic passions. In such an atmosphere the deeper implications of Shakespearean drama-its investigation into the problem of evil-(which had behind it the tradition of Christian thought) could not properly come home to many Indians. The political or the nationalist perspective has become the primary category of Indian thought: Krishna Kriplani, after the passing away of Devendranath Tagore in 1905, rightly predicted:

I henceforth political ends and not moral or intellectual ideals with dominate the Indian scene, despite the great dreams of a Gandhi or a Tagore. (Krishna Kriplani: *Tagore: A Life*, p. III).

After the age of Bezbarua we notice a quantitative degeneration as well as simplification of the complex idea of patriotism in Assam too. On the other hand the Assamese mind generally has not shown any significant encounter with the realm of Shakespearean-Tragedy its deep poetry and metaphysical mystery-the ('sense of the tumultuous drama that the human soul at a certain depth of existence or at a certain level of experience may go through. The numinous mystery of the individual life, the terrible mystery of the fact of death-should rightly be a part of the experience of a new type of Assamese poetry-that I feel is not impossible of achievement; but generally) Assamese writers and readers remain at a distance from that poetry of a spiritual philosophical awareness of the deeps.

So Shakespearean tragedy does not appear to have touched Assamese literature in nay meaningful way. I have not found any Assamese predecessor who became attracted by this area of poetry either in the manner of Michael Madhusudan Dutt and Bankimchandra and Aurobindo or in the manner of Rabindranath. On the other hand, the character of modern Assamese poetry that had evolved after the age of Bezbarua too in general remained rather 'philosophically' innocent to any genuine experience of Shakespeare at a deep level and consequently it, along with the public mind

that feed on it, had not gone to that deep level which we find in a Sudhindranath Dutta or a Jivananda Das who show in their poetry, although in a hidden way, a new dialogue with Shakespeare. They assimilated lessons from Shakespeare within the body of their poetry. The philosophical or ideational level of modern Assamese literature as well as Modern Assamese literature criticism has been in need of necessary reinforcements from the deeper spiritual life of the Shakespearean sea. In Assam's case there is the constant danger of the patriotic or political impulse becoming over-powerful in a way that may disconnect the study of Shakespeare itself from the meaning of the deeper levels of Shakespeare and the none-too-praise worthy part of Bengal may come to play its role here; so in this age when either a process of technological Americanism or a crude politicalization of life is a constant danger even within the so-called cultural field, the spiritual meaning of Shakespeare may recede further from the field of our literature. This problem has to be seen also in the light of the following historical truth:

The period between the Wars marks a decline in the development of human culture if it is compared with that sustained and truthful period which makes the nineteenth century seem a unique human achievement so powerful that it persisted, even during the War which broke it. To a degree which seems astonishing to us now. The quality of literature, for example, which is surely one of the most reliable criteria of intellectual and moral vitality, was incomparably higher during the war 1914-18 than it has been after 1939 (Isaiah Berlin: "Churchil and Roosevelt" in John Gross ed. *Essays*, p. 556, Oxford Press, 1991) Once Shakespeare too became an inspiring force in the life of at least a significant section of the Indian intelligentsia. The serious body of modern Indian literature from the times of Michael Madhusudan Dutt to Jivananda Das in Bengal had remained connected with a vital and living experience of the mystery of Shakespeare. Now the trouble, I think, is that even modern Bengal literature has been fast losing that contact with Shakespeare. The new generations of poets and writers directly or indirectly betray an 'intellectual' level, which cannot be compared with what had been there till the generation of the poets who appeared in the thirties in Bengal the predecessors of the present generations were also serious students of English literature. Now while the study of English literature and

so consequently or Shakespeare becomes more and more a kind of professional or 'technological' type of academic work (an experience of such a hell can make that famous poem of Years on "bald heads" which Jivananda Das too translated into Bengali—a poem full of real tragic significance) it may cease to be connected with any vital creative impulse or any creative philosophy of life in our national life. At least in certain regions of India there may be a great probability of such a danger. There is here some matter of serious spiritual as well as historical significance for the cultural historian. The Decline of the West has been paralleled by decline of the spirit of Shakespeare in modern Bengali literature too in the second half of this century; and the pressure of this whole historical process has almost led to a new qualitative change in modern Assamese literature too. Something has been lost which was there in the age of Bezbarua-which was also the age of Rabindranath-and that something has to be recreated and or rediscovered. In this process we will have to rediscover the significant of that age or century which at least made the discovery of a life-giving Shakespeare both within England and outside it.

Ten

Aesthetics and Poetics in Modern Indian Culture

A new type of Indian religious and philosophical consciousness was developing particularly in the nineteenth century Bengal from the times of Raja Rammohan Roy to Vivekananda and the history of this movement of modern Indian consciousness has been recorded by both Max Muller and Remain Rolland in two memorable books. It was towards the last decade of the nineteenth century and particularly through the first two or three decades of the twentieth century that this religious-philosophical mode of thought became significantly connected also with the realm of the arts and poetry; and it was mainly Rabindranath who contributed most to the development of this line of modern Indian thought in which the ideas of art came to occupy an important place; and this idea of art as evolved by Tagore not only gave a very important place to the realm of poetry but also gave a new dignity to other arts such as music, painting, drama, dance, etc. In the field of modern Indian aesthetics and poetics Rabindranath may be seen to occupy the most central and extensive place.

The phase or layer of modem Indian culture which is centrally represented by Tagore has not merely a new spiritual-philosophical character be also a distinctly aesthetic-poetic character and it is he who contributed most towards the development of a body of modern Indian aesthetics and poetics before the coming of the Gandhi age. A new phase of modern Indian history may be said to have started by 1921, by which time the centre of gravity of modern Indian culture had started to move away from Bengal or the Eastern India centred in Calcutta—in both cultural and political terms.

Tagore's *Viswabharati*, established by 1921, may also be seen to

represent an effort to preserve and consolidate the final results of a phase of Indian Renaissance which had been centrally an affair of modern Bengal (and in which a new development of religious-philosophical aesthetic-poetic consciousness had become the most valuable achievement) against the onset of the pressures of a new historical phase which had become more politically loud and less philosophically-intellectually as well less aesthetically-poetically tuned.

The phase of modern India culture—with a distinctly aesthetic and poetic mode of thought—was predominantly representative of the renaissance that had developed mainly within Bengal and through the medium of the Bengali language—although it could find expressions not only through Tagore's English *Gitanjali* but also through the English poetry of Sarojini Naidu and ultimately in English writings of Sri. Aurobindo, who too became representative of the realm of poetry, poetics and aesthetics—and not merely of religion and metaphysics. Whether through the medium of the Bengali language or through English some eminent thinkers directly or indirectly connected with Bengal of the new age contributed to the development of a new current of ideas in the sphere of aesthetics and poetics. Tagore was the central figure in this field and through him the predominantly intellectual-philosophical heritage of the path of Rammohan to Vivekananda had become transformed—mainly from first decade of the twentieth century—into a current of thought which became full of a new life—mainly because of a sensitivity to the aesthetic and poetic dimensions of Reality. Neither Rammohan Roy, who was representative of the beginning of the 19th century nor Vivekananda, Who had expired when the 20th century had begun, could touch the theme of art and poetry—at least in a vital spirit. Art and poetry came to be living issues of man's spiritual life too in modern Indian culture in a significant way mainly from the first decade of the 20th century and first two decades of this century were mainly Tagore's decades in Indian history.

It was when the aesthetic and poetic impulses of modern Indian life had begun to acquire, centrally through Tagore, a sudden vitality and light that the expression "*Indian renaissance in India*" appeared on the scene.

C.F. Andrew's *The Renaissance in India* appeared in 1912 and it

was followed by James H, Cousins' *The Renaissance in India* and finally Sri Aurobindo published in the August, September, October and November issues of Arya during 1918 a series of articles which were also given the title The Renaissance in India. (Aurobindo's: *The Significance of Indian Art* was written that book and between 1918 and 1921). Shri Aurobindo's *The National value of arts'* was written in 1908 and foundations of Indian Culture essays before 1921.

In the first phase of the 20th century we may notice not only this sense or idea of "renaissance" in the field of Indian culture but also the idea of "Swadeshi"—which links together such thinkers as Rabindranath, Aurobindo and Coomaraswamy. Although he hailed from Ceylon, Coomaraswamy came to represent not only Hindu civilization but also the idea of "Swadeshi" and his Art and Swadeshi is an evidence of that historical fact. By the end of the first decade in which the idea of Swadeshi had become dominant in Bengal—Coomaraswamy had also joined the company of the Tagores. Without that perspective of an aesthetically—poetically resurgent India discovered mainly in modern Bengal Coomaraswamy's journey into the realm of aesthetics would not have acquired the life it possessed.

What had been lacking in the typical Victorian-administrative attitude towards the civilization of India was something which is ultimately connected with a deep philosophy of life which gives importance also to the deep aesthetic and poetic dimensions of human understanding of life. This was the shortcoming of the Macaulian philosophy—although it too had a good side to it. The idea of the Renaissance in India was connected with the discovery of a deeper philosophy of life than that of Utilitarianism or Positivism or Scientism or Darwinism. Those who opted for a deeper philosophy of life also had the sensitivity to respond to the deeper reality of Indian civilization—the reality which cannot be understood properly without a living aesthetic and poetic sensibility—which invariably is connected also with a spiritual attitude towards life—its meaning and significance. It was such an attitude—which a living Christian could posses—which led to such a new understanding of Indian civilization:

"India can point to one of the most imposing civilizations and religious development in the world. The Indian past is no blank page. It

is rather like an illuminated manuscript, partly worn away and needing revision, but still most precious for the subject-matter it contains to neglect the past of India is to fail to utilize the deepest springe of Indian national life. The idea of Anglicizing over three hundred million people scattered in thousands of villages needs only to be stated to reveal its inherent impossibility." (C.F. Andrews: *The Renaissance in India*, p.38 Edinburgh 1912)

To opt for such an idea of "renaissance" in India was also to opt for a deeper attitude to the realm of aesthetics and poetics than what the Victorian Occidentalism of a "ruling" class could show—it was to go also to a region in Indian life where Tagore and Gandhi could meet.

To opt for such an idea of "renaissance" in India was also to opt for a deeper attitude to the realm of aesthetics and poetics than what the Victorian Occidentalism of a "ruling" class could show—it was to go also to a region in Indian life where Tagore and Gandhi could meet.

"The work of the renaissance in India must be to make this spirit, this higher view of life, these sense of deeper potentiality once more a creative, perhaps a dominant power in the world. But to that truth of itself it is as yet only vaguely awake; the mass of Indian action is still at the moment proceeding under the impress of the European motive and method and, because there is a spirit within us to which they are foreign, the action is poor in will, feeble in from and ineffective in results, for it does not come from the roots of our being. Only in a few directions is there some clear light of self-knowledge. It is when a greater light prevails and becomes general that we shall be able to speak, not only in prospect but in fact, of the renaissance of India." (Shri Aurobindo: *The Renaissance in India*, pp.33-34, 1918)

This was the spirit which was more or less active till the end of the Nehru Age in Modern India and this is the spirit which needs recovering in a new form by the beginning of the 21st century. The realm of Art and Poetry in India can be enlightened again with the greater light in a new phase and if that happens our Indian Universities will again vibrate with a new creative cultural life that will give life and grace to the use of intellect too.

The currents of modern Indian thought in the field of aesthet-

ics and poetics found some remarkable expressions in the writings of Tagore, Aurobindo and Coomaraswamy during the second and third decades of this century and this body of writings requires an examination in the perspective of the idea I have presented above. This is what I propose to do in a study to be entitled *Aesthetics and Poetics in Modem Indian Culture*. These three thinkers have given us a new path for understanding and practicing the arts in a serious philosophical spirit. They also represented not a narrow 'nationalist' idea of Indian culture but an idea which has a strong link with the spirit of universalism. It was a liberating idea of India'.

I want to explore also the inner connections between these three eminent thinkers who may be taken as representative of a great moment of discovery or epiphany in the modern phase of Indian history. As I have studied the writings of Tagore in the original Bengali-in which I may claim to be well versed—I think I have access to a layer of Tagore which I most probably would not have discovered if I had to rely only on the English translations of his works. I have also discovered Tagore's sensitivity to the life and mind of Aurobindo and Tagore seems to have written two very perceptive assessments of Aurobindo. On the other hand, the cultural milieu in which Coomaraswamy too received his idea of 'swadeshi' and its ultimate developments needs some new explorations.

1914 also helped the modem Indian mind to break free from the perspective of the Victorian-Romantic philosophy of art and poetry and not only to rediscover the deeper significance of the tradition of Indian arts but also to respond to a new age in the West, in which there was a rediscovery of the deep significance of the Christian philosophy in the realm of. Art of Poetry (as the writings of Jaques Maritain, T.S. Edwin Muir or Helen Gardener would show) and on the other hand an understanding of what life the Western Civilization may receive from the deeper currents of the life in Asia (see Remain Rolland's 'Foreword to Ananda Coomaraswamy's The Dance of Siva:

> "Asia, the great land of which Europe is but a peninsula, the advance guard of the army, the prow of the heavy ship. Laden with a thousand wisdoms...from her have always come to us our gods and our ideas.

Zimmer's Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization

too has expressed such an understanding of the depths of Indian civilization.

Western Civilization will, die—will lose its real life, if it loses touch with the life—nourishing depths of the Human Unconscious which lies more securely in Asia—the deep reality which is also the ultimate source of the arts and poetry.

E.M. Forster's post-First World War novel—*A Passage to India* was also an exploration into a reality which has however its ambiguous character. Indians on their base too have to learn a lesson from the West.

The aftermath of the First World War also saw the development of new currents of thought in the West in the fields of aesthetics and poetics as we may very well realize if we remember the works of such critics as Hulme (Speculations, edited by Herbert Read), T.S. Eliot (Particularly with his essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent*") or his friend Herbert Read with his Form in Modem Poetry.

In the light of such post-1914 Western aesthetics and poetics we may see the significance of such an evaluation of the tradition of Indian art:

> "What is new arises constantly in Indian tradition without purpose or calculation on the part of the craftsman, simply because life has remained over long extended periods and immediate experience. Tradition is a living thing, and utterly unlike the copying of styles which has replaced tradition in modern life. No such failure of energy as archaism represents appears in Indian art before the twentieth century." (Ananda K. Coomaraswamy: *Introduction to Indian Art*, p.VIII).

"A race producing great art, however, does so, not by its love of art', but by its love of life." (Ibid.)

Eliot as well as D.N. Lawrence—in their different ways—too were reacting against the ideal of what may be called "art in the head." The Western view of art and poetry had become very often detached from a sensitivity to the reality of man that lay outside the mind or the conscious mind and beyond the purely 'human' mode of life. Tagore, Aurobindo, Coomaraswamy—each one of them—in their aesthetics and poetics always spoke of the importance of a layer

of reality which the Western modes of art and thought had come to ignore in the age ending up in 1914.

Sri Aurobindo's *The Significance of Indian* Art represents in fact a series of articles originally published in the Arya from 1918 to 1921 and these articles was a reply to a work by Mr. William Archer criticizing and attacking Indian civilization and culture in all its domains. The Swadeshi or Indian spirit had come to be asserted in the field of aesthetics at such a stage of world history at which the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 also inaugurated the end of a particular phase of the mind of the West. The West after 1914—particularly in the domains of art and poetry—aesthetics and poetics—was no longer in the typical Victorian-rationalistic mode. It began to open up, under the pressure of the new phase of World history—at which phase the coming of Gandhi into the erena of world history was also an event which had to be accepted as significant.

While Abindranath represented, like his cousign Gaganendranath, an aesthetic impulse of the modern Indian life before the coming of Gandhi, and was connected mainly with the recovery of a sense of the Indian past in the field of Art, Nandalal Bose, carried that spirit into the discovery of what Gandhiji came to represent to the Indian nation and the world. His aesthetics consequently show a new development ever within the school of Abindranath, while, reacting against Western 'realism' Jamini Roy opened up in the second phase of his life as an artist another reality—the reality which could be understood in the light of the aesthetics and poetics connected with the tradition of Vaisynavism of Bengal. On the other hand,' a new generation of poets and artists became more open to a line in which 'dissonance and conflict' became essential elements in aesthetic or poetic experience.

The proposed project will be mainly a record and assessment of the major ideas and evaluations expressed by Tagore, Aurobindo and Coomaraswamy in the fields of aesthetics and poetics and will also be an attempt to present an integral picture of the ideas that evolved through their three lines of explorations.

On the other hand, ideas expressed by Abanindranath, Jamini Roy, Nandalal Bose as well as the thoughts of such philosophers and critics in the field as S. Radhakrishnan, Surendranath Dasgupta, M.

Hiriyana, S.K. Saxena, and or Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, Hazariprasad Trivedi, Taruknath Sen, Buddhadeva Bose, V.K. Gokak, Nisim Ezekiel or Rukmini Devi Arundale, Kapila Vatsayan, Chandra Rajan, V.Raghavan and S.K. Dey, Mulk Raj Anand Niharranjan Roy, Ajneya and Vinda Karandikar, D.P. Mukherjee, Abu Sayeed Ayub, Sudhindranath Datta, Bishnu Dey, Sambhu Mitra and Satyjit Roy, and others in the fields of aesthetics may also come for discussion to show the line of evolution of modern Indian thought in the fields of aesthetics and poetics after the age of Tagore.

A comparative understanding of the Indian scene after 1914 in the light of the ideas introduced and made current in the fields of poetics and aesthetics in the post 1914 age in the West—by such thinkers as Jacques Maritian (*Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry, Art and Scholasticism*, etc.), Herbert read (*Form in Modern Poetry, The Philosophy of Modern Art, The Grass Roots of Art, Icon and Idea*, Forms of Things unknown, The Art of Sculpture) Susanne Langer (*A Philosophy in a New Key, Feeling and Form*, etc.) Andre Malraux (*Voices of Silence*), Panofsky, Hauser and others.

The main idea of the project—which has been presented here in a tentative form—may be developed further and also somewhat altered in the real process of the research work.