

## ABOUT THE BOOK

INTELLECTUAL sophistication does not yield the goods Indian tradition is basically concerned about. The pursuit of *mokṣa*, and indeed the position of *mokṣa* as the most exalted of the *Puruṣārthas* disqualifies its votaries from intellectual sophistication in the sense of an attitude of relentless analysis at the possible cost of one's own cherished traditions. On the other hand, the esoteric traditions of India and of the religions directly tutored by India are the only safeguard of freedom of intellectual and psychological experimentation in so far as they are indigeneous and not imported from the West. Agehananda Bharati explores in this monograph the potentialities of these traditions. The findings are challenging in the extreme.

His magnum opus, *The Tantric Tradition* has been recently published by Rider & Co, London.

\*

\*

\*

AGEHANANDA BHARATI, Austrian, turned Hindu; taught in Indian Universities; at present at Syracuse University; his autobiography was published under the title *The Ochre Robe*.



Library

IAS, Shri la

Rs 2.00



published

00017979

P. C. MANAKTALA & SONS PRIVATE LIMITED  
6, Fair Field, Road No. 4, Churchgate, Bombay 1

*I. R. I. ESSAYS AND MONOGRAPHS—5*

---

# **The Philosophical Potential of Indian Esotericism**

---

AGEHANANDA BHARATI

*Syracuse University*

**181.4  
B 469 P**

INDIAN RENAISSANCE INSTITUTE

11

12

13

14

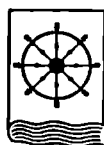
INDIAN RENAISSANCE INSTITUTE

I. R. I. ESSAYS AND MONOGRAPHS—5

# The Philosophical Potential of Indian Esotericism

AGEHANANDA BHARATI

*Syracuse University*



MA ENTERED

MANAKTALAS : BOMBAY

CATALOGUED

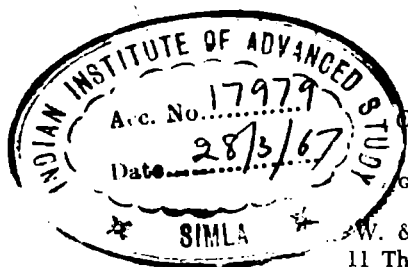
P. C. MANAKTALA AND SONS PRIVATE LTD  
6 Fair Field, Road No. 4, Churchgate, Bombay-1

*First Published, November 1965*

© AGEHANANDA BHARATI

181.4  
B469P

Price: Rs. 2.00



Library IAS, Shimla



00017979

Overseas Distrib:

GREAT BRIT

W. & R. Chambers Limited  
11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh 2

AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

Australia & New Zealand Book Co. Pty. Ltd  
12 Thomas Street, Chatswood, N.S.W.

PRINTED IN INDIA BY KRISHNA S. KURWAR AT MOHAN MUDRANALAYA,  
ACME INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, SEWRI BUNDER ROAD, SEWRI (EAST)  
BOMBAY 15 DD AND PUBLISHED BY A. B. SHAH ON BEHALF OF INDIAN  
RENAISSANCE INSTITUTE, 13 MOHINI ROAD, DEHRA DUN, U.P.

# THE PHILOSOPHICAL POTENTIAL OF INDIAN ESOTERICISM

*'bhukti-mukti-pradāyinyai  
ādiśaktyai namo namaḥ'*

## I

THIS STUDY has been prompted by three interests: the Indologist's quest for unstudied elements of Indian culture; modern philosophical analysis and the anthropologist's quest for cultural motivations which are either unknown to, or only dimly averred by, the subjects; or which are suppressed by them. Unfortunately, there are not too many scholars who combine these three interests; nor are there many who feel that philosophical analysis and anthropological research are compatible. There are scholars, however, who combine textual, critical, theological training in an Orientalistic tradition of learning with the methods of contemporary analytical philosophy. Dr Herbert V. Guenther (University of Saskatchewan), author of several outstanding books on related subjects<sup>1</sup> is at this moment perhaps the only scholar who efficiently co-ordinates all these interests; Dr Richard Robinson of the University of Wisconsin, Dr Daya Krishna in Rajasthan, perhaps half a score of other scholars in Europe,

<sup>1</sup> *The Life and Teaching of Naropa* (Oxford University Press, 1964); *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation* (Rider & Co., London, 1959), *Yupanaddha—The Tantric View of Life* (Chowkhamba, Banaras, 1952).

America, and Japan, and I myself at Syracuse University, New York seem to form an emerging, though by no means as yet consciously organized, core of research analysing Indic and other Asian esoterica by methods of modern philosophical analysis.

It must be quite clear from the outset that I use the terms 'philosophy' and 'philosophical' throughout this book in one sense only, unless I extend its coverage specifically: by 'philosophy' I mean what the majority of modern teachers of philosophy, especially in the English-speaking world, mean by the term—the analysis of problems, frequently, though by no means exclusively, linguistic, whose axioms have been made explicit; or, of problems which arise from linguistic expressions which give rise to speculative puzzlement. By 'philosophy' I do *not* mean (a) what pre-analytical, metaphysically oriented Western system-builders meant by it; (b) what religious philosophers (that includes Hindu, Christian, and Platonizing writers) do so call; and (c) what a wide range of people call 'philosophy of life'. To be more concrete, I use 'philosophy' and 'philosophical' as Russell, A. J. Ayer, J. O. Wisdom, Daya Krishna, and most readers of *Mind* (Oxford) use it; I do not use it as Plato, Kant, Hegel, Bradley, Radhakrishnan, Vivekananda, and the late S. C. Dasgupta would have and are using them. I would also add that my restriction to this use of 'philosophy' is purely methodological, and that I do not consider other uses of 'philosophy' invalid. For the purpose of this study, however, I have found the analytical, language-oriented method the most adequate. I may or may not regard analytical philosophers' ethical and aesthetical ideas as either more valid or more moral and more beautiful than the ethical and aesthetical ideas of traditional, metaphysical philosophers—for this is beside the point. These remarks must suffice to exonerate me for my narrow use of 'philosophy' in this presentation. It must not annoy readers, especially Hindu

and Buddhist readers, when I make such statements as 'x in Hinduism or y in Buddhism are naïve' or 'y and z in the Indian traditions are unsophisticated'—for these epithets are given from the analytical vantage-point. I have been noticing very often in my discourse with Indian scholars that the suggestion of a lack of intellectual sophistication irritates many of them more than it does their Western colleagues. This should not be the case. Intellectual sophistication does not yield the goods Indian tradition is basically concerned about. The pursuit of *mokṣa*, and indeed the position of *mokṣa* as the most exalted of the *Purusārthas* disqualifies its votaries from intellectual sophistication in the sense I use the phrase: that is, as the attitude of relentless analysis at the possible cost of one's own cherished traditions, combined with a heuristic passion—to use Michael Polanyi's excellent idiom—for experimenting with material which does not have social and traditional sanction, and which does not necessarily have moral sanction by any person or school of moralists. This is particularly important in the study of the tantric tradition which defies traditional moral claims almost axiomatically. I shall try to show in this study that the esoteric traditions of India, and of the regions directly tutored by India, are the only safeguard of freedom of intellectual and psychological experimentation in so far as they are indigenous, and not imported from the West like psychotherapy or the Jungian type of *ex imaginatione* speculation on contemplative experiment. For apart from the esoteric schools which roughly coincide with the Śākta-Vajrayāna traditions, there is no traditional method of contemplative experimentation in India which ignores the quasi-ethical directive of the orthodox preceptor.

Furthermore, the Hindu (or Buddhist) scholar *qua* Hindu or Buddhist has long given up the claim to the status of an intellectual in the sense this word is used by professional teachers of philosophy in European and American univers-



ities. I believe Swami Vivekananda was the first of a long line of teachers who inveighed quite vociferously against 'intellectual jugglery'—the scores of monks who somehow manage the English medium for good or bad, as well as most of the teachers of philosophy at Indian universities underwrite the statement pattern first pronounced, in English, by Vivekananda: that discursive, intellectual knowledge, the quest of empirical verification, the desire to establish neat, sober, perhaps uninspiring logico-analytical propositions, the search of discursive clarification as an end in itself, i.e. *without* reference to an ultimate eschatological or theological target—are not of final importance, and that the quest of *mokṣa* is the real thing. Thus if we define 'intellectual sophistication' as the pursuit of what Indian teachers who communicate in English, beginning with Vivekananda, regard as of secondary importance, it follows logically that they do not qualify for 'intellectual sophistication'. And again, I state that I use 'naïve' 'unsophisticated', 'nonintellectual', etc. for all these types of quest which do not regard discursive knowledge as their final aim.

As to the nondiscursive, 'spiritual' implications of the tradition I shall be concerned with in this study, I hope that sensitive readers will feel rather than spot my own personal commitment to them. Without my own participation in the nondiscursive, 'spiritual' patterns of quest and without my commitment to the disciplines and queries implied in the involved traditions, neither this study nor my *magnum opus* would have been written.<sup>2</sup> However, for pedagogical rather than any other reasons, and in opposition to the style used by most of my Indian colleagues, I believe that this personal element should not slant a presentation like this.

Tantrism has been slanted and disparaged to a degree

<sup>2</sup> *The Tantric Tradition* (Rider & Co., London, 1965).

where it seems difficult for the Indian student of comparative religion to extricate hearsay invective from relevant information. I propose to spell this out and to do away with a number of preconceived notions which beset the modern Hindu mind and which have, strangely but not inexplicably, affected the occidental indologist as well—as one of the few instances where scholarly influence went from the Hindu pandit to the occidental scholar. Today, tantrism is nearly as much taboo with occidental students of comparative religion and indology as it is with their Hindu colleagues; the scholars in Europe and America who have written sympathetically about the tantric tradition are very sparse—not more than ten among a sizeable number of orientalists. The following pages will trace this insouciant transference of critically unfounded attitude.

It is difficult to define Indian orthodoxy—the procedure closest to such a definition would be of the extensive sort: one would have to list a large number of features which constitute Indian orthodoxy in the mind of the contemporary Indian religious. In using 'Indian' in such contexts, I do so in a somewhat diachronic sense, i.e. as Hindu-Jain-Buddhist through the ages, but predominantly Hindu in more recent times. Buddhism, unfortunately, is an export-religion like Christianity: it did not survive in the country of its origin; the small indigenously Buddhist section of the Barua group around Chittagong is not sufficiently significant and the recent converts to Theravāda Buddhism do not yet figure as a factor for this study. Also, the one-sided emphasis on Theravāda in these recent conversions makes it a somewhat insipid effort—I doubt whether pristine Buddhism in India was ever so 'pure', read desiccated, as the type of Buddhism some eager and well-meaning, but not too imaginative men have been trying to import and establish in India.

However, there is one feature Indian orthodoxy consist-

ently displays, and it is by that token that we can distinguish between orthodoxy and heresy, or heterodoxy, if one prefers a less pungent term. Indian orthodoxy is patrilistic, man-oriented; it is for this reason that it has always been suspicious of matrilinear social forms, in Kerala, Assam, and elsewhere, with their matrifocal tendencies in ritual and religious practice. The Indian puritan feels apologetic of textual and folkloristic evidence of any matrifocal sort of religion. I shall have to define 'puritanical' and 'puritan' presently. My use of 'heresy' or 'heterodoxy' in the Indian context follows by direct obversion: all texts, folklore, and religious trends which are not patrilistic, and which are not puritanical, are heterodox, or heretical; this being a semiotical statement, it is just as simple as it sounds.

I use 'puritanism' and 'puritanical' in one specific sense, and only in this sense—there are other usages of the term, which is differently loaded in different milieux; nowhere should it be confused with 'purist' or 'puristic'—this latter term is always one of praise except perhaps in a specific use by some facetious art-critic; 'purist(ic)' means 'evaluating or producing some artifact, socifact, or mentifact in line with a chosen tradition, without admixture of extraneous traditions' (this is my definition of 'purist'—there may be others). The purist in Indian music, for example, is the *ustād* or *bhāgavatar* who composes and reproduces music only in the *Sāstrīya* styles, and does not compromise, say, with *thūmri*, *thappā*, let alone *filmi*—and who scorns the *bāja*, banning it from his vision, using the *tānpurā* only. The distinction between 'purist' and 'puritan' is important for our study, for I found frequent confusion in classes when I used the terms side by side without this specification. A *vāmamārga* tantric *sādhaka* may, and perhaps ought to be, a 'purist', i.e. he will eschew purely Vedic mantras, and will avoid 'contamination' with Vedic ritualistic procedures; but of course he cannot be a

puritan, for puritanism is precluded in the entire *vāmapantha* form of tantric meditation and practice. १

A puritan, in my definition, is a person who attaches ethical significance to such psychosomatic functions as sex, food, drink, sleep, etc.; in addition, he holds the axiomatic view that pleasures *per se*, i.e. not sanctioned by some traditional authority, are *heya*, i.e. to be avoided, and that they are wicked; he condemns hedonic behaviour, particularly in the erotic realm, which does not conform to the patterns acceptable to the tradition which happens to be his own. Let me emphasize once more that I use the term 'puritan(ical)' *only* in this sense throughout this study. It is an important term, particularly for my Asian readers. There is no single term in any Indian language including Sanskrit which would connote the term—of course, it can be paraphrased in an Indian language just as I paraphrased it here above. The fact that there is no Indian term for it may be significant: if the Whorff-Sapir theory is right,<sup>3</sup> it would follow from the fact that Sanskrit and its derivatives have no concept, because Sanskritic culture at the time of the codification of the language—say, between Pāṇini, Hemacandra, Vararuci—did not attach any such meaning pattern as 'puritanism' to its available vocabulary. I would also warn the present-day Sanskritizers, or Hindūizers not to use the root '*śuddh*-' or its semantical equivalents when attempting to render 'puritan(-ism, -ical)', for it has nothing at all to do with the 'pure' in such lexicographical environments as 'purity' in the sense of cleanliness, or voidness of blemish, etc. The English word 'puritan' derives its existence from a culture-historical accident—the Puritans in Britain and early America happened to despise pleasure as sin-

<sup>3</sup> E. Sapir, the late German-born American anthropologist and linguist, and Benjamin Lee Whorff arrived independently at notions later on codified as the 'Sapir-Whorff Theory', *vide* L. Spier (ed.), *Language, Culture, and Personality* (Menasha 1941, U.S.A.).

ful due to a particularly fundamentalistic reading of the Christian Scriptures. Modern, sophisticated uses of the term took their point of departure from the designation of a particular group of people or a period in Anglo-Saxon history, possibly because the Puritans' suspicion of pleasure was a powerfully potent and conspicuous feature of their way of life. One might of course draw some Indian parallels—say, the Viraśaivites in mediaeval Karanāṭaka, or the Ārya Samājists in modern Northern India, but such parallels are vacuous.

## II

Occidental philosophy has only very recently reached a point where syndromes of the psycho-experimental kind such as envisaged by the tantrics could be acceptable as objects of study. Let me give a short run-down on the development of Western philosophy so far as the inclusion or exclusion of psycho-experimentally oriented religious practice is concerned.

Mediaeval European philosophy, inspired by the Judæo-Christian dogma and the Aristotelian categories and, on the ethical side, by the exploits of the Stoics, regarded philosophy as the *ancilla theologiae* and blocked the development of independent philosophical speculation. Even the Renaissance, which no doubt freed a substantial portion of the clogged human mind, assumed the ontological reality of the divine, and thereby perpetuated the noxious fusion of religion and philosophy. The famous edict at the Sorbonne in the fourteenth century, which assigned religious matters to the theologians and secular matters to the lay scholars, though in itself salutary, did not do much to change this, largely because the promulgators of the edict were no doubt believers. Modern philosophy since Descartes (but not recent philosophy)—though it made bold of intellectual freedom,

predominantly verged on religious sentiment—for whether the absolute is postulated by reason of practical judgement, or as the synthesis of a dialectic process, theology is still a strong, though unadmitted part of such speculations. The same holds for anti-theological speculation (Diderot, Feuerbach, Voltaire). The paradox is but apparent and easily dissolved: so long as God *or* no-God is still an object of philosophical thought, theology remains its integral portion. The counter-proof comes from Asia: it would be sheer intellectual adolescence to call the writings of Dharmakīrti, Aśaṅga, and the other Buddhist philosophers nontheological just because they refute the Brahmanical notion of a divine being or an absolute. 'Theology' is a style of writing and speaking, and the fact that it contains '*theos*-' does not mean that there is no 'theology' where atheistic or nontheistic doctrines are concerned. Buddhism and Jainism are nontheistic or atheistic, but their writings are theological all the same, because their argument is theological, and their aim is ultimately theological. The Indian scholars' fascination with the English term 'philosophy' does not really justify the use of 'philosophy' for Indian thought with the exception of, say, logical writing (*nyāya* and *navya-nyāya*, *tarka*), poetics and aesthetics (*kāvya* and *alamkāra*). Although even these pay homage to religious motives, they can be called philosophical with impunity, because one might show that the initial panegyrics about the religious end, about *mokṣa*, etc. in these writings were sheer politeness in deference to the prevailing etiquette. Yet the Indian logicians and grammarians were philosophers at least in some of their products, whatever their personal feelings about *dharma* and *mokṣa* might have been. It is virtually impossible for an Indian intellectual—now as before—not to be emotionally affected by the pervasive *dharma*-orientation of his environment. To put it somewhat facetiously, it has been very hard in India to talk about anything

intellectual, scientific, or about aesthetics keeping out divinity all the while. Somehow, the oceanic feeling and the *brahman*, or the *śūnya* with the Buddhists, or other emotional equivalents keep creeping in; the main reason is perhaps accidental in the sense of non-consciously guided: grammarians, artists, lexicographers, mathematicians, physicians—all of them had to use religious paradigms at every step, simply because the literary corpus of India until the turn of the last century was religious.

Back to Western philosophy inasmuch as it touches our problem. After the Renaissance, most professional philosophers—which, now as then, means people engaged in the teaching of philosophy at an academy for a salary however paltry—no doubt felt freer to inveigh against theology, but not free enough to jettison theological argument in its entirety. It seems that most of them needed a God-surrogate of sorts; be that a moral law, a dialectical synthesis, some sort of a charismatic magnum, or 'Man' as a principle, not as an individual. It was only late in the nineteenth century that some philosophers finally broke away in the Western world: pre-eminently the mathematical thinkers, Peano, Frege, and then in this century their followers, Goedel, Russell, and the philosophical analysts. Outsiders—both lay and philosophical—tend to confuse analysts with positivists, and they would bracket logical empiricism, analytic philosophy, and the various branches of linguistic philosophy with logical positivism or, worse than that, with 'positivism' in general. But in order to get at the merit of tantric thought in India, we have to find a new line of categorical demarcation: positivists *v.* methaphysicians will not do any longer, because there are a good deal of theologically and ontologically inclined people among the positivists; also, there are philosophers, positivist and other, who make it their life's work to counter and fight theology and 'God'; but unfortunately, they still

belong to the metaphysical lot, because 'God' is a problem to them different and more important than, say, the problem of *a priority* or of logical functions. The only people to whom God and theological questions are *really* no more important than the perception of objects v. the perception of sense-data are the linguistic philosophers, the Cambridge and Oxford schools inspired by the Viennese Wittgenstein, and their American epigones; it is these who hold the largest number of philosophy chairs in the North Atlantic world today, a fact that is profoundly resented by the remaining metaphysicians, and more so by theologians and existentialists.

It has been pointed out by some scholars, most recently by Professor J. L. Mehta<sup>4</sup> of Banaras Hindu University, that Indian philosophy is closest to existentialist modes of thought, or rather that the existentialist's approach may be more beneficial to Indian thought and vice versa; in other words, that there is more kinship between Indian thought and modern existentialism than there is, say, between the former and nineteenth century idealism or modern linguistic analysis.

While I am inclined to accept much of this, it seems to me that linguistic analysis—the most value-free of the Western philosophies so far—may yet provide a better instrument than any other, for dealing with Indian thought in general, but more specifically with tantric thought and with the esoteric ideology which surrounds tantrism proper. This claim may seem far-fetched, and requires some explaining:

Scholastic and Aristotelian philosophy no doubt show certain similarities with Indian thought in general—I am thinking particularly of the syndromes of theological authority;

<sup>4</sup> J. L. Mehta, *The Philosophy of Martin Heidegger*, a large unpublished manuscript. Mehta is the only Indian scholar who has had intensive personal contact with Heidegger at Freiburg, Germany, during the past few years.



the *śruti-smṛti* dichotomy has its exact formal parallel in mediaeval Christian thought. Then there are, of course, certain rather obvious similarities in the theistic notions of both, but by and large they are quite trivial and not really interesting except to those somewhat depressing savants who cannot live happily without seeing diffusion and mutual influences everywhere.

Idealistic and other nineteenth-century European philosophy, particularly Berkeley and his *esse est percipi* has equally flat and annoying similarities (not 'points of contact') with Vedānta, and one might have predicted a lot of enthusiastic writing in India even before it appeared, basking in the obvious, the writers assuming an ancient clandestine feeding mechanism from India to the West, or what is worse, a universal truth, first stated in India, but latterly grasped by others as well.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, these Western systems really come to a halt where tantrism is concerned. In the first place, Western philosophers until this day have hardly heard about tantrism. Indian philosophers (that is, teachers of Western and Indian philosophy from secondary sources and translations, at Indian universities—not the *paṇḍits* with whom I have no quarrel) who have heard about it will rather bite off their tongues than mention it to the visiting Western colleagues. Also, they do not regard tantrism as 'philosophy', for reasons anthropologically important: anything that smacks of ritual, or of implied polytheism, is automatically anathema to Indian modern 'philosophers,' who suffer under the notions that the Vivekanandian and post-Vivekanandian musings on neo-Vedānta preclude absorption with ritual, and that ritual stands 'lower' than philosophical speculation and 'meditation'. Of course, teachers of philosophy at Indian universities share with their

<sup>5</sup> I am particularly dismayed by the writings of P. T. Raju, A. C. Mukherji, and college-chair holding Aurobindites.

Indian fellow-intellectuals all the fears of pollution through involvement, as well as the fear of opprobrium by the spokesmen of the official, puritanical culture of India which they share and which pays their college salaries, however meagre. Also what has not been written about in English does not really exist for them—the strange, and not too healthy history of appreciation of Indian thought through reimporting cuts right across all branches of the Indian tradition for all people who know English in India: the Indian sophisticates at the turn of the century turned their interest to Indian thought, because they had learnt that Max Mueller (punned into *mokṣa-mūla* by the pun-loving *paṇḍits*) and other Western savants had studied and propagated Indian literature in the West. Then came Vivekananda and Ramatirtha, and many after them—men not too well-versed in the Sanskrit lore, but energetically promoting whatever knowledge of the tradition they had acquired through vernacular and English ponies, and bolstered by the adulation of a relatively small, but obtrusive audience in the West: the *swami* and *yogi*-loving middle aged in America and Europe, the Theosophical and Anthropogophical Societies, the Divine Life Society, Self-Realization League, the Ramakrishna Mission patrons, and the other frustrated, but not too bright men and women in the West who gobble up everything that is Asian as gospel truth, in the manner best described by my colleague Professor Hurvitz: ‘the East must be mysterious, else life has no more meaning’. Appreciation and the study of Indian thought by Indians, then, is largely due to this unique feedback, much as *pizza* became known and eaten all over Italy after its being reimported from the United States. The English-reading pious in India inhale the products of Western philologists and of Indian writers and speakers returned from the West; from the West in so far as it is *not critical* of the East. They are upset with Koestler’s *Lotus and the Robot*, Naipaul’s *An*

*Area of Darkness*, and, to a lesser degree, with my *Ochre Robe*. Now the Western adulation of things Indian, except for the work of thoroughgoing Western Sanskritists and anthropologists, falls in line with the official culture of India—the puritanical, ascetical, anti-hedonistic flavour surrounding the Indian canonical writings that had been translated into Western languages and then fed back into India through the ‘modern’ Indians, i.e. those who read English translations and treatises on the *Gītā* and the *Upanishads* in order to fend off the fear of cultural alienation. This process has several forms: most of the Eastern-wisdom supporting occidentals look for non-hedonistic edification, so long as it sounds different from what people around them think about religion; these Westerners are total admirers of Vivekananda, Gandhi, and Vinoba Bhave. Then there are some—the new ‘beatnik’ type in North America belongs to them—who seek a different, non-ascetical value-system, definitely opposed to the Judaeo-Christian one, and it is these people who would like to know more about tantrism; but apart from Avalon’s meagre writings, nothing has been available until about two years ago; this has changed,<sup>6</sup> but it will take, I presume, at least two decades until the new solid knowledge about tantrism and kindred non-ascetical, hedonistically oriented Indian lore seeps through to a wider Western audience. It will be then only that it may feed back into India, for apart from people like Mulk Raj Anand, Ajneya, Satyajit Ray, and a small number of genuine artists and earnest seekers of the Indian lore which opposes the official culture, there simply are no people who would espouse the tantric cause on a sophisti-

<sup>6</sup> The works of H. V. Guenther (*Campopa*, *Naropa*) and my *Tantric Tradition* may change things, hopefully, for the better. Sporadically quite a lot has been written about tantrism, but spread over learned journals without special announcement, hence hard to get unless a person specializes in the field.

cated level. Paṇḍit Gopināth Kavirāj has indeed written an excellent book on tantrism in Hindi,<sup>7</sup> but even this is full of the painful apologetic both Indian and Western writers (that includes Avalon) have kept at the basis of their tantric readings. There are no teachers of philosophy at any Indian university who teach tantric thought, and no tantric text has even been put on the reading lists of any department at an Indian university—I put this radically with a hope to elicit proof to the contrary, which I would relish. The criticism I am likely to hear from the more learned and lenient will be of this sort: tantrism, if it has any value at all, is *sādhana-śāstra*, religious exercise at best, debauchery in the name of religion at worst—but it is not philosophy. The rejoinder to this stereotype formulation is that *all* Indian thought is *sādhana-śāstra*, and is ‘philosophy,’ i.e. intellectual speculation only secondarily, apart perhaps from *navya-nyāya* which is studied by some specialists, but not by teachers of philosophy at Indian universities. The official culture of India, stated by Vivekananda in English for the first time, lays down that true philosophy is the quest of Truth, but as Truth is identified, directly or deviously as the case may be, with the thoughts and works that are conducive to *mokṣa*, the implication is that a purely discursive quest such as that of academical philosophers does not qualify as philosophy. And indeed, Vivekananda and his followers refer to all the hard and minute work that goes into academical philosophy as ‘intellectual jugglery’ or ‘acrobatics’ or similar unflattering appellations. Any knowledge that can be acquired by cognitive means is inferior to the sort of knowledge that is intuited, supposedly, by people with special gifts and special *sādhana*s.

But here its own contradictions catch up with India’s offi-

<sup>7</sup> Gopinath Kavirāj, *Tāntrik Vāṅmay men Śāktadṛṣṭi* (Bihar Rashtra-bhasha Parishad, Patna, 1963).

cial culture: *tantra-sāstra* is *sādhana-sāstra* par excellence, and there is no tantric teacher, Hindu or Buddhist, who would have held it differently. In other words, the tantric tradition is very much on the same level as all other Indian religious traditions, because it shares with them the notion that *mokṣa* is the ultimate target of every thought and every practice contained in it. The question arises as to who—which schools, which individual authors in the Indian literati tradition—were serious when they taught that their specific interest (logic, love, grammar, rhetoric, etc.) was subordinate to their main aim—*mokṣa*, and that their own specialized skills were only meant to facilitate the acquisition of *mokṣa*, and which schools and authors were *not* serious. Or more succinctly, which authors really meant it when they said ‘my subject is a feeder service to *mokṣa*-realization’, and which authors said so because of etiquette and traditional expedience. And here, of course, my guess is as good as any other learned guess—one has to rely on one’s hunch. I believe that the logicians—at least of the older schools—were serious when they wrote that logic and inferential methodology were aids to *mokṣa*; that their claims that logical and epistemological clarifications were methods (*vidhi*) towards that realization just like the meditations of the yogis. I think Pāṇini, Hemacandra, Vararuci and the other top grammarians felt the same way. About the *ālamkārikas* (Mammaṭa Bhaṭṭa and the classical greats) I am not sure at all. About the *kāmaśāstris* (Vātsyāyana, Kokkoka, Jayadeva) I am quite sure that they did *not* mean it, and if I can ascribe a sense of humour to them, I would think they were simply laughing into their sleeves when they stated that their study was *mokṣa*-oriented. What I am driving at is not a list of traditional writers who did or did not mean to be taken literally when they payed the usual homage to *mokṣa* as the one great science declaring their own discipline ancillary to it, but I insist that it should

be understood that some writers and some traditions were serious, others were not—in a facetious or metaphorical way, that is beside the point; I do not so much care to know *which* authors or schools held it one way or the other, but I contend that there was a breakdown into these two groups. I reject the pious notion held by the official culture of India that all of the greats meant it when they said that their science was less important than, or subsidiary to, the directly *mokṣa*-oriented genres.

The matter is much more complicated with regard to tantra, and before we enter into this material in the third and last section let me summarize what I regard as the tantric preceptors' attitude in this important and hitherto completely neglected matter.

1. More explicitly than Patāñjali and the subsequent orthodox *yoga*, the tantric *ācāryas*—the Buddhists more than the Hindus—did not believe that mystical experience confers any existential status on its objects. In analytic translation, the correct statement 'I have seen (heard, touched, experienced ...) God (the Absolute, divine, the form of the god or goddess.....)' does *not* imply, for the tantrics, the proposition 'God (the Absolute, the divine, the god or goddess...) exists'. Or, in less technical terms, the mystical experience is known to be subjective, its ontological corollary is thought to be possible but unimportant (by the Hindu tantrics), or impossible and unimportant (by the Buddhist Vajrayānists). This is radically opposed to the orthodox Hindu view where divinity or the Brahman is thought to have ontological status on the basis of *śruti* and of the individual adept's experience. Clearly, this is poor philosophy compared with the tantric viewpoint, for what is not universally verifiable or falsifiable, but is verifiable only by some gifted (or pathological) individuals, has no ontological status; it does not 'exist' as tables, chairs, or stellar systems exist.

2. For the tantric, religious practice (*sādhana*) is conceived in a psycho-experimental fashion; the experiment is important, not its derivability from a canonical text; tantric literature therefore does not use '*iti śruteḥ*' or '*iti smaryate*' and their equivalents, and where such phrases do slip in, they are not meant to prove but only to strengthen the experiential statement. This accounts for the fact that no type of experiment is excluded nor is any sort of ritualistic 'ingredient' (*padārtha*) tabooed—potent drugs, wine, meat, sexual intercourse, all these are used because there is no authority with which they could conflict; authority (of the *guru* or the text or the shrine, etc.) is saluted and mentioned by courtesy as it were, and quite as frequently as in orthodox literature; but its function is etiquette, *not* proof (*pramāṇa*) as in the Vedic-orthodox texts, Vedānta, etc.

Of course, tantra is *mokṣa-śāstra*, just like all other religions, texts and traditions in India. It does not claim to be anything else even in a subsidiary fashion—unlike, say, *nyāya* which pays lip-service to the *mokṣa*-complex and then goes on to tell logic—tantrism's only avowed purpose is the achievement of *mokṣa*, and of course in this sense it is much closer, thematically, to Vedānta and the *bhakti*-schools than it is to Indian logic and epistemology. But if, as students of what is best in India, we are persuaded that subsidiary things are important and interesting, then we can ignore the *mokṣa*-parlance in tantric literature just as we can ignore the (much less frequent, and purely prefatory) *mokṣa*-parlance and sermon in *nyāya*, etc.

Once this is the case, we can indeed give a new and salutary interpretation to tantrism in all its forms, but particularly of the left-handed variety. Just as the modern Westerner does well not to be overly impressed by the psychiatrist's threats and his use of language as an instrument to achieve 'one-upmanship', the Indian and occident-

al student of tantric material should learn not to be too impressed by the tantric's constant references to *mokṣa*. No doubt, tantrics by and large did take *mokṣa* seriously in a teleological sense, but they got thoroughly absorbed in the intermediary matters—hedonism, sex, the enjoyment of things albeit transubstantiated—and it is these matters we have to attend to, if we want to work out the philosophical potential of tantrism. For *mokṣa* apart, the doctrine of the *pañcamakāra* and the magnificent modes of ritual and the aestheticized meditation incumbent on the worshipper afford an intensive and extensive model for a way of life. Viewing tantrism in this light, autonomously, we can here find a system, not dialectically crude like *Lokāyata*, which permits hedonism as a world-view, without ascetical, official censorship, which views divinity as female, and as the giver of pleasure *and* of salvation (*bhukti-mukti-pradāyinī*).

### III

The brilliant Indian anthropologist Professor Surajit Sinha reports on a contemporary Vaiṣṇava variety of the seminal retention or resorption pattern.<sup>8</sup> The *rati sādhan* seems to form an integral part in monastic and lay Vaiṣṇava practice among the Bhumij of the districts of Purulia and Singhbhum in West Bengal. It appears that the Vaiṣṇava monks attract their audience by alluding to the possibility of copulation without seminal discharge. In common with all esoteric and orthodox Indian traditions, they teach that semen (*bastu* or *bīrya* in the Bengali spelling) is the basis of spiritual prowess, and that its loss causes decay and disintegration. This specific group of monks, however, seem to give a peculiar

<sup>8</sup> Surajit Sinha, "A Note on the Concept of Sexual Union for Spiritual Quest among the Vaiṣṇava preachers in the Bhumij Belt of Purulia and Singhbhum"; *Eastern Anthropologist*, XIV/2, 1961, pp. 194-5.



interpretation to the process: whereas the regular tantric *māthuna* either does not achieve, or does not mention orgasmic consummation for the male yogi, this *rati sūdhan*, as the name implies, does actually inculcate the consummative experience. These teachers move around with their initiated female consorts (*mātās*), and the proof of their pudding seems to be the fact that they practise ritualistic copulation without impregnation. Sinha reports:

In the village of Madhupur in Chandil Police Station, between 1897 and 1928, nearly a dozen Bhumij were drawn to practise this cult by two Vaiṣṇavite sadhus, who were staying in their village with their spiritual consorts. We were told that out of them only two succeeded in attaining their goal, as they had no children even up to old age.

One of these persons gave Dr Sinha a description of the procedure, that tells that *bastu* (*bīrya*) originates inside the male body, and that *rati* is generated in the female body through the intake of food. (Note the unique modification of the usual view, according to which the female counterpart of *vīrya* is *rajas*, the menstrual fluid; from this statement it would seem that the Vaiṣṇavas in question view *rati* not as a principle, i.e. sexual pleasure as the function of the Goddess Rati, but as a substance like *rajas*; I am tempted to believe that those not-too-learned monks simply confuse '*rati*' with '*rajas*'; I do not know of any tantric or other tradition that uses *rati* in this material sense.) Food is converted into blood which again generates *bīrya* and *rati*. Whenever the male becomes aware of a woman, his *bīrya* becomes active, and conversely, *rati* becomes active in the woman when she apperceives a male. Kāmadeva and his spouse Rati are the epitome of this process; the former is symbolized by the *liṅga*, the latter by the *yonī*. For reasons of sheer stylistic delight, I proceed quoting verbatim (*ibid.*):

The friction of phallus and vagina results in discharge of *bīrya* and *rati* inside the vagina. *Bīrya*, being the more powerful element, rushes forth

in great speed and mixes with *rati* inside the vagina. A good part of the male *bīrya* is unfortunately wasted as it comes out of the vagina after the sexual act of *rati śrīṅgār* (sic). The Sadhus concerned with the spiritual training of the body place a good deal of importance to saving this wastage of vital *bīrya*. They therefore prescribe that efforts are made to draw inside the channels of the penis the vaginal discharge of the female. A person who attains this quality becomes immensely powerful and gains unlimited youth and thereby becomes a real Sadhu. By repeatedly indulging in sexual union with his spiritual consort in the above manner, the Sadhu attains his spiritual salvation, just as Lord Krishna had ecstatic union with his beloved Rādhā. The heart of such a Sadhu is ever full of joy. He sings *jhumur* songs depicting the celestial love of Lord Krishna and Rādhā. ... This is why the Sadhus regard *bīrya* as the same as *Brahma Bhagabān Bhag* means *yonī*<sup>9</sup> or vagina and *bān* means *liṅga* or penis; that is why the word *Bhagabān* or Supreme Being actually means whole-heartedly enjoying the *bhag* with *bān*.

This takes us into one of those very intimate types of speculation which scholars tend to pass on to other scholars or to future research; but I feel this is the point where some serious thought should be given to the matter. It appears that one of the chief technical distinctions between *vāmācāra* Hindu and Vajrayāna Buddhist *sādhana* patterns is that retention of semen is part of the actual process of the *sādhana*, judging from the texts which list instructions for retaining semen (vide *nispīḍya kamale vajram bodhicittam notsṛjet*, a *sandhābhāṣā* statement easily understood by the student of tantric literature; its literal meaning being having brought down the *vajra* into the lotus, let him not eject the 'illumination-mind' *bodhicitta*<sup>10</sup>). None of the *vāmamārga* Hindu man-

<sup>9</sup> This is a somewhat more radical, or cruder version of the frequent folklore and/or tantric etymology of *Bhagavān* as 'in control of (i.e. the proprietor-index suffix—*vān*) *bhaga*-s ('female organs', women by metonymy)'. There being only one b-v phoneme in Bengali, the confusion of -*vān* with *bān* (arrow) is evident.

<sup>10</sup> *Subhāṣita-saṃgraha* Guṇa-vrata-nirdeśa, in Bendall, *Museon* IV—V, 1905 (Louvain), p. 77. Padmavajra's *Guhyasiddhi* similarly enjoins *bhage* lingam *pratiṣṭhāpya bodhicittam ca notsṛjet* (fol. 59 in the late H. P. Sastri's collection at the Oriental Institute, Baroda).

uals I have seen enjoins retention as part of the nuclear contemplative procedure, i.e. in apposition with the *mantra*, *maṇḍala*, and *nyāsa* instructions listed in the manuals. However, it is quite evident to me that retention of semen is very much the essence of Hindu *vāmamārga* practice as well. This does not exclude the possibility that some lefthanded tantrics do practise ritualistic copulation terminating in seminal emission. Though I have not found any text literally stating this view, the numerous passages throughout the Hindu tantras which describe the bliss the *yogi* and his *śakti* experience during initiation and further *sādhana* might well imply ejaculation as part of the *sādhana*—which would be an alternative to retention. At the Kumbhamela at Prayāg 1954, a tantric *sādhaka* formulated this alternative in a personal communication: ‘whether the semen is directed upward or downward at the end of the *sādhana* Brahma/bliss is the result’ (*urddhvaṃ pacched va adhaḥ pated retaḥ brahmānando bhavaty-ubhayoḥ*<sup>11</sup>). In Vajrayāna literature, on the other hand, I have found at least one passage which might be interpreted to mean that even some Buddhist tantrics ejaculate terminally to the *Yuganaddha-sādhana*, viz. ‘having performed union with his consort-initiate (*mudrā*) the most fortunate master has brought his *bodhicitta* into the lotus-vase, the abode of the victorious ones’, *mudrā-yogam tataḥ kṛtvā ācāryaḥ subhagottamaḥ/niveśya padmabhāṇḍe tu bodhicittam jīnālaye*.<sup>12</sup> Though it may be argued—in fact I took this stand in a paper some time ago—that this was a metonymical way of saying ‘having brought the *vajra* into the lotus’, the *bodhicitta* being contained within the *vajra*. With *sandhābhāṣā* all such interpretations are permissible and perhaps desired by the original authors. However, it does seem likely that this passage may be hinting at a procedure in which the Vajrayāna

<sup>11</sup> Communication February 18, 1954, by Sri Vijayamuni Ghoshal.

<sup>12</sup> Prajhopayaviniscayasiddhi, 3rd Patala, G.O.S. XLIV.

*sādhaka* does not retain his *bodhicitta*: I do not know how conversant the Vajrācāryas were with male anatomy, but an even slightly facetious modern votary may say that the *bodhicitta* really is not, or not yet, in the *vajra* at the time the latter is inserted into the lotus; and *bodhicitta*, in all the efferent *sandhā*-passages known to me always means 'semen', and it is not semantically identified with the *vajra*.

Now to come to the crucial point: it is of course not possible to actually 'draw up' any matter originally located in the female body through the urethra; nor is it actually possible to draw up semen along the spinal column—let us emphasize again that *ūrdhvaretas* cannot be meant to connote any biological process—it is one of the contemplation models completely divorced from biological reality. This is a *bête noire* even with intelligent and otherwise educated Hindus—somehow, they tend to resent the suggestion that the ancient Indian descriptions of somatic configurations are quasi-descriptions. An anecdote<sup>13</sup> about Swami Dayānanda Sarasvatī is a point in fact: he is said to have inspected a corpse in order to see whether the 72,000 ducts (*nāḍīs*) about which the yogis speak were really there—and their absence was one of the reasons, according to my informant, why he turned away from the *sanātani* tradition; this ranks in line with his horror at a mouse crawling over a stone-*linga*, from which he deduced the defensive impotence of Śiva. The trouble is that Hinduism when taken narrowly and literally in a naïve sense (as opposed to reading tantric injunctions as *mukhya*, literarily, which is sophisticated reading), becomes a medley of edifying and scientifically jejune lore. So long as the

<sup>13</sup> I did not find this episode in any of Dayananda's writings nor in any of the official Arya Samaj literature about the founder. However, my informant was a very learned Arya Samaj pandit in Rajasthan, and I adduce this trusting my judgement of that savant's general sincerity.

modern Hindu insists on the Vivekanandian—and more recent—claim that Hindu scriptures are ‘scientific’, the chip will stay on his shoulder; so long as he does not realize that it is totally wrong and quite unimportant to the continuity of sophisticated, learned Hinduism as a way of life among other modern, intellectual ways of life, whether or not there are 40 or 72,000 ducts in the human body, or whether or not the semen moves up the spine *kuṇḍalinī-yoga* and in tantric *sādhana*, he will get polite shrugs from the cosmopolitan intellect, and the raised eyebrow treatment from the psychologist and the analyst. Neither Swami Vivekananda nor his modern votaries in India, and their name is legion, realize that a statement like ‘Hinduism is a scientific religion’ is damaging not only to Hinduism, but to every religious tradition. I have dwelt on this point at length in another publication.<sup>14</sup>

To go back to the tantric pattern of reabsorbing semen or whatever female substance is supposed to be resorbed *in actu* or *post actu sacrale*, if we can learn to see that these are important props of meditation, pregnant with aesthetical stimulants which conduce to enstasis, and if we can at the same time learn to insist that these are *not* descriptions of any somatic process, we have a most exquisite aid to meditation, and through its aesthetical corollary, a fresh corpus of philosophical thought.

The idea of literally manipulating semen in the manner believed by the naïve *sādhakas* who form the religious majority, is extremely persistent and lingers in the minds of modern Indians, particularly of modern Indian ‘seekers of truth’—which phrase I put into facetious quotes of those well-meaning, but desperately naïve preachers who use it seriously, upholding the philosophically untutored and de-

<sup>14</sup> *The Ochre Robe, passim* (Allen & Unwin, London, 1961).

pressingly archaic view that there is a 'Truth' apart from truths. A Sikh 'saint' self-styled in the perfectly normal Indian manner of status ascription through status choice (the term translates the North Indian colloquial '*saṃt*'), who had succeeded in entering the mainstream of mendicant success and had reached American shores, tried to vindicate his right to call himself a *sanyāsī*; he was married, and his wife was a *sanyāsini*, too, he said. When I asked him whether he had performed the *virajā-homa*<sup>15</sup> marking his entry into *sanyāsa*, he replied in an apologetic tone 'we did control our semen, but one can be a *sanyāsī* although one does not always retain it'. Now on the face of it, this statement may seem like that of a genuine tantric who had his experience, and his argument for either retaining or discharging semen in the ritualistic copulative situation. This appearance, however, is quite delusive. This particular *sant* had simply misunderstood, or rather, not understood my question—he obviously did not know anything about the *virajā-homa* as a formal prerequisite to *sanyāsa*, and he confused the term *virajā* with *vīrya*, as the Punjabi morpheme sounds '*birj*' which for a Punjabi speaker who does not know Sanskrit, and who is not aware of the phonemic status of an *-a* as in *virajā*, sounds just like *virajā* when heard in a Punjabi phonetic pattern. Of course, the interesting thing about this episode is not the delightful linguistic confusion, but the Freudian slip involved—the Sikhs, just as all Indians of the orthodox, puritanical Hindu Renaissance, shun and abhor any lefthanded tantric reference, and the notion of the need for retaining semen being as powerful as it is, such a confusion is perfectly natural. Also, in spite of the fact that a Sikh *santī* professes to oppose the very highly *sanātani* concept of *sanyāsa*, the chip again remains on his shoulders: for complete retention of *vīrya* has

<sup>15</sup> The ritual whereby a Hindu enters the fourth stage, *sanyāsa*.

the highest prestige even where its social implications are not accepted.

Closely tied in with the above is another confusion, linguistic on the surface: deity as the absolute has been referred to as *ūrdhvharetas* 'having (his) semen turned upward' a genuine *bahuvrīhi* compound in the *saṃhitā* texts already, and it is a common epithet of the supreme through the Upaniṣads, though, paradoxically, it seems to become less frequent in tantric literature proper. I interviewed the preceptor of the Saskya House, a highly tantric Vajrayāna school, on this point. Lama Kunga Labrang<sup>16</sup> seemed to understand the notion of *ūrdhvharetas*, and after some tough bits of communication effort he wrote down and explained the Tibetan Vajrayāna term *steng gi sa bon*, which means *ūrdhvharetas*, *ūrdhvhavījas*. I could not find out whether he used this term on the basis of a textual occurrence in the Tibetan codices or whether the concept was simply very close to him as an advanced tantric adept. However, I am fairly confident that I correctly understood his explanation to imply that the Buddha or Bodhi-sattva who has achieved union (Tibetan *zung 'jug*, Sanskrit *yuganaddha*) has his semen, not 'upward', but 'uppermost', which might probably mean something like 'concentrated in the upper region', be that in the cerebral region of the postulated yoga-body, or in a *gaṇa* sense, in the brain, i.e. controlling his passions through containing its objects in his mind only.

Proceeding on the model which I have adumbrated before, the concept of *ūrdhvharetas* is philosophically potent, if we rid ourselves of the idea of a somatic upward-flow of semen—there is no such flow; nor is there any somatic conversion of semen into some kind of brain-matter, as most Hindus, however intelligent, seem to hold. The conversion of con-

<sup>16</sup> At Seattle, Washington, September 1960.

trolled libido into *ojas*, when somatically conceived, is one of the many jejune, as well as experimentally unnecessary, and philosophically harmful fictions deriving from the same rather fatuous desire to have Hinduism and Buddhism be 'scientific'; but the conversion of energy derived from control into a sort of converted energy storehouse is highly useful as a postulate, and this reading of *ojas* conduces to intellectual integrity as well as to 'spiritual' strength, if by spiritual strength we mean the intellectual certainty that a set of postulates is instrumental either in immunizing the agent against pain—pain in the existentialist sense or in the cosmic sense of the *samsāra-cum-kleśa* pattern (I am not so sure whether these two cannot be shown to be two ways of talking about the same thing, or at least that they imply a very similar *Gestalt*)—or else whether this set of postulates helps toward a balance of emotions, toward emotional security, away from the need for the analyst.

If, as frequently in this book, we claim that the *yoga* and *sādhana* pattern may provide a replacement for the analyst or even for psychotherapy, the highly specialized techniques of tantrism, especially of the *vāma*-divisions might *a fortiori* help resolve that wide range of puzzles and agonies which centre in the libido, or more specifically, in the sexual component of the human individual. The *ācāryas*, both tantric and other, constantly speak of their methods as methods of healing, and of their systems as essentially therapeutic systems—their parlance utilizes established patterns only, i.e. redemption from *duḥkha*, relief from *samsāra-roga*, (of the metaphorical functions of Śiva as Vaidyanātha, not only as the tutelary deity for the medical profession or whatever its Indian predecessors and parallels). There is no reason why the modern thinker should not translate this into modern idiom—not only through a postulational 'as if' but by taking tantric suggestions as seriously, as he would take the ana-



lyst or the psychiatrist seriously.

In the case of the notion of the *ūrddhvaretas*, for example, it seems conceivable that the conceptualized upward flow of semen, realized through practices which are in fact ritualized uses of sexual technique, therapeutic possibilities in the psychiatrist's sense could be suggested. This, of course, does not preclude the possible, and even probable, catharsis intensive sexual experience may bring, but this is beside the point. The concatenation of specifically religious experience, and of such euphoric states as mystics of the world connect with their religious discipline and its fruition, rests on specifically religious assumptions: the notions clustering around the retention of semen, the diffuse mention of *ūrddhvaretas* as a divine epithet and, by implication, as a state to be achieved by the individual *sādhaka* emulating the deity, or identifying himself with the deity, is a ubiquitous postulate in India's 'big tradition'. If thus understood, it is indeed philosophically potent; if understood literally, in the sense of a somatic correlation, it is not only nonsense to scientist and philosopher alike, but it harms the devout, fecund mystic: he is disappointed to find that there are no 72,000 ducts in the corpse, and that there is no canal for the semen to pass through the spinal cord into the brain, when he happens to see a dissected corpse.

This intensive *Gestalt*, with its delicate and profound structure, provides a powerful paradigm for the importance of philosophical models: Vaihinger's obsolete philosophy of the 'as if...', and the modern existentialists' suspect doctrine of 'possibility more important than actuality', whatever their individual merits for philosophical speculation, would seem to be important as heuristic props: for if we can put aside for a moment our misgivings about eclectic procedures, we can construct an unprecedented model with these elements—a

model which I have discussed in detail in a different study.<sup>17</sup> Its formulation is relatively simple: retention of semen or complete suspension of the ejaculatory process during controlled *maithuna*, does add to the emotional security and the 'spiritual' well-being of the agent. There might be some sort of an ethnological corroboration for this claim: in the Christian world, there have been sects, until very recently, that practised nonejaculatory intercourse as part of their discipline; The Oneida community in midstate New York, some of the Rollers, and some small anabaptist groups in America and probably also in eastern Europe at a slightly earlier period, to mention only those of which I have definite knowledge. Their men claimed 'great powers of holiness' and they described their experiences in terms that would point to a strongly euphoric state. Now no Christian theology, however abstruse, hit upon the construct of upward-going semen; this seems to be a specifically Indian and, probably through Indian influence, Taoist<sup>18</sup> specialty. Yet the notion of some spiritual benefit through techniques of controlled intercourse is diffuse. On the other hand, where there is no ascription of spiritual value to the identical act, no such religious use occurs and no mystical and euphoric state seems to result. In Italy, and in France, among some highly sophisticated groups with no religious interest of any sort, the practice of *carezza* has been fairly common up to this day, and the Italian male tends to boast of this particular skill even in mixed company, a boast which would be an abomination to most Anglo-Saxon ears, and an incomprehensible felony of words to the modern Hindu. The sophisticated Italian lover does *carezza* for entirely secular, aesthetical reasons or for a sheer display of skill: prolonged intercourse with no emission gives

<sup>17</sup> *The Tantric Tradition* (London, 1965).

<sup>18</sup> *Vide* M. Maspero. *Journal Asiatique*, pp. 177-252, 353-430 (Paris, 1937).

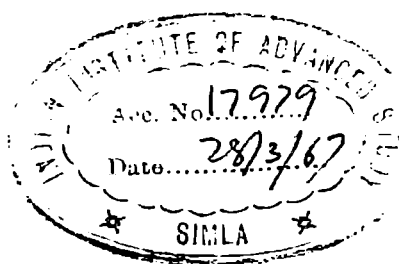
greater delight to his partner, and thus becomes an instrument of more efficient courtship and consummation. There being no mystico-religious significance in the latter case, as opposed to the tantric and similar *sādhana*s which involve or enjoin retention of semen during sexual contact and effect a state of mind which *postulates*—but does not *believe* in a discursive, objective, somatic sense—the status of *ūrdhwaretas*, with its concomitant notions of power over nature and self, and of unique achievement; it thereby confirms a process of identification (i.e. with the *ātman*, *brahman*, Buddhahood, etc.) which is stipulated by *sādhana*s of the Hindu and Buddhist traditions. This will clinch the canonical warning that intellectual identification is not what is meant in the various *phala-śruti*-statements. In the frivolous-sounding, but unfavourably meant, parlance of popular American psychology, the achievement of retention of semen during the tantric *sādhana* confers ‘one-upmanship’ on the *sādhaka*: as very few people can indeed copulate effectively without terminal ejaculation, the capacity to accomplish such a feat in the religious context and the knowledge of its extreme infrequency among fellowmen, matched with the certainty of achievement through the prescribed *sādhana*, create precisely the state of mind the texts postulate and describe by such terms as *niṣṭha*, *ekāgratā*, etc., viz. terms denoting spiritual security. It would also seem to follow from these considerations that such security is objectively better founded than, say, the security of the Billy Graham or other neo-Christian types of conversion to the feeling of ‘being saved’, which to most modern Western philosophers appear as delusive and fraudulent, and to the psychoanalyst as pathological. Both the analyst and the philosopher are probably right in their assessment, but both the philosopher and the analyst will hardly object to the use of tantric *sādhana* and its philosophical justification as adumbrated in the above. The philosopher will

be satisfied by the fact that the proposition 'the *sādhaka* who has learnt to perform ritualistic coition is an *ūrdhwaretas* and has achieved full control' is an analytical proposition.

The psychoanalyst and the psychiatrist—at least the Freudian and Sullivanian, though probably not the 'clinically' oriented—may be impressed by the possibilities of the sexual and the consequent emotional correctives inherent in tantrism. The one supreme difficulty at this time is to present empirical evidence to the psychologist, and rationally inclined practising tantrics to the philosopher. Of the practising tantrics I have met, hardly one would qualify as a rationalist—with the orthodox, puritanical, ascetical 'saint', the popular *swami* or lay *bhakta* so dear to the official culture of modern India, most of the tantrics of India, and, unfortunately, the few remaining tantrics who escaped annihilation in Tibet would share the extreme dislike for radical logical and empirical analysis of the premises of tantric lore and practice. However, I am not too much perturbed about this vacuum: I see signs among some young intellectuals in India, both monastic and lay, of bowing out from the anti-intellectualism of their teachers. The basic tenets of the official religious culture of India 'religion begins where philosophy ends', 'how can a person be pure if his mind goes after impure things', etc., statements which fit into a completely predictable pattern, into what modern psycholinguists would call a 'restricted code',<sup>19</sup> have to be cut down by the modern thinker who feels sympathetic toward the tantric doctrines and their philosophical as well as psychological potentials. The unctuous gibberish of the Hindu Renaissance inaugurated by Vivekananda, but presaged since the beginning of the nineteenth century has to be shown for what it is worth: a facile, inexpensive sedative for the fearful and the un-

<sup>19</sup> Vide Special Issue *Ethnography of Communication*, American Anthropologist, 1965, passim.

informed—for the 'alienated, as modern sociologists call all people who are happy in ways in which sociologists do not want them to be happy. If one of the most beautiful and worthwhile themes of the Indian tradition is to be preserved and if it is to be a medium of placing India on a level with the achievements of occidental humanism, the modernized, intelligent tantric will have to be given an honourable place.



OTHER I. R. I. MONOGRAPHS IN THIS SERIES

---

ESTHETICAL NORM AND VALUE-MODIFICATION  
IN MODERN INDIA

Professor A. Bharati, Syracuse University, N.Y.

RATIONALISTS OF MAHARASHTRA  
Tarkateerth Laxman Shastri Joshi and others

EAST-WIND WEST-WIND  
Professor Sibnarayan Ray

A PROBE INTO THE GANDHIAN CONCEPT  
OF AHIMSA  
Adi H. Doctor

POWER AND PURPOSE  
Professor Stanley Maron

MARKISM AND HUMANISM  
Erich Fromm, Mexico

*available from:*

P. C. MANAKTALA & SONS PRIVATE LIMITED  
6, Fair Field, Road No. 4, Churchgate, Bombay 1