

NEOHUMANIST Review

Issue 1 *September 2023*

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Inflation

Origins of Yoga and Tantra



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From the Editor-In-Chief



THIS INAUGURAL ISSUE of Neohumanist Review honours and puts on record the great contribution of Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar—the propounder of Neohumanist philosophy. Shrii Sarkar was a philosopher-seer besides being a spiritual giant. He made many path breaking contributions in different fields of knowledge. This journal owes its birth to his desire to establish a global neohumanist university called “Ananda Marga Gurukula” that would focus on research, teaching and service. In his words the purpose of Ananda Marga Gurukula is to serve humanity with a neohumanist spirit and to acquire knowledge for that purpose. The Neohumanist Review is a small step to further the goals of the Ananda Marga Gurukula University.

Most of the articles of this inaugural issue seek to situate neohumanism; what sort of philosophy it is and what it may mean in today's world and in future. The authors selected for this issue are all celebrated neohumanist scholars and help us enlighten the neohumanist perspective.

Historian Marcus Bussey discusses the crisis of modernity and the need for human beings to draw on their deeper, timeless spiritual resources. Linguist Marco Alexandre de Oliveira views neohumanism as promoting both a reformulation and a revision of classical humanism, being transmodern while reinforcing the foundations of modernity from a position of alterity, and decolonial, for deconstructing the bases of coloniality from a condition of subalternity. Educationist Kathleen Kesson deliberates neohumanism as a revolutionary philosophy of a required all-round education of the whole human being and human society. Aditya Mohanty, professor of philosophy, offers neohumanism as a panacea for the global malaise. The world famous economist Dr. Ravi Batra shares a treatise on recent cycles of inflation, and his views on neohumanist economics expounded in an interview with Neohumanist Review staff. Ramesh Bjonnes draws from the works of Shrii Sarkar and expounds on the unconventional view of yoga history.

For the benefit of our readers, we have added a theme, Shabda Cayanika, where we get a glimpse of Shrii Sarkar's omni-telepathic vision in his famous extempore Sunday discourses delivered towards the end of his mortal life.

The Neohumanist Review comes to you with a fresh perspective on creating a new world based on love, compassion and universal spirit. After all, “Neohumanism is fundamentally extending the love of the human heart to embrace the entire living and the so-called non-living world.”

- *Acárya Shambhúshivánanda Avadhúta*

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The mission of the Neohumanist Review journal is to explore a new paradigm on how the global human society can reorganize, from the local to the worldwide level, to promote the integral well-being and flourishing of all human and non-human beings. This journal invites multiple disciplines to address the most vexing planetary issues, such as social and economic inequality, ecological collapse, war and peace, mass migration, and technological transformations, from the joint perspective of art, science, philosophy, and spirituality.

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Fatal Logic and the Neohumanist Response

Modernity is fatally wounded. Neohumanism is the socio-spiritual response to the fatal logic of modernity which privileges growth and the human species over the broad kinship networks of the planet. Sarkar's articulation of Neohumanism offers a subtle and powerful spiritual alternative logic to counteract the materialist worldview of the present. Drawing on deep cultural traditions of Tantra and Humanism, Sarkar finds hope in just and joyous planetary futures.

Keywords: Neohumanism, Logic, Prabhat Samgiita, Hack, Tantra, Humanism, Kincentric, Spirituality

By Dr. Marcus Bussey

WORLDVIEWS ARE NOT IMMUTABLE. They grow out of the collective experiences of people in dialogue with the world around them. Thus, they are evolving with the communities they support. Each contains a logic which sustains the world-building enterprise but which at some point ceases to be generative and becomes increasingly toxic over time. Logic and its inherent reason are both subject to the contexts which they explain. Put this way what is logical to a neoliberal economist is not so to an Amazonian shaman. The essential insight here is not new. For example, Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar in one of his lesser-known works, the *Shabda Cayaniká*, tells the Bengali folk story of a merchant who is solely intent on profit. The merchant, the Shethji, is very ill and decides that it is cheaper to die than call a doctor:

So if we call the doctor," the Shethji said, "it will cost about fifteen rupees. And if I die it will cost about ten rupees, which means a saving of five rupees. I'm a businessman. What I understand is profit, the rise and fall of prices, so Munsiji [his assistant], please arrange it so that I die! (1996, p. 102).

In classic folktale mode this illustrates how the logic of a worldview leads to the total inversion of reason in the blind commitment to a bankrupt belief system. This story of course is relevant for today as we as a planetary civilisation face the impending fatal logic of late capitalism. As always with situations like ours many are pouring their creative energies into trying to escape the 'fatal logic' trap with the logic that created it. In this they follow the logic of the Shethji in



Dr Marcus Bussey, Senior Lecturer in History and Futures, School of Law and Society, University of the Sunshine Coast, with tarragon flowers in his garden

remaining committed to a way of managing the world, its people and natural resources as though a profit and loss balance sheet and a raft of clever managerial processes designed to mitigate, regenerate, repurpose and sustain the unsustainable will succeed. So the Shethji in Sarkar's story succeeded in reducing costs but at what price? Ironically, the tools for rethinking this dilemma are all around us. They are bubbling up in creative agitation as the enormity of the planetary crisis dawns on many of the more aware of us.

Yet we have more to learn from the Shethji. His passion is perversely admirable. He expresses a sense of delight in performing his fatal logic. This delight is self-fulfilling. He thinks he can escape his situation by the ritual of the spreadsheet and the play of profit and loss. This is an important insight for those of us working to escape this logic. What we see in the Shethji is a total merger of his identity with an ideological position. His identity position is premised on a damaged reasoning. It is easier for him to die in self-righteous certainty than to admit error and thus escape from the logical straight jacket he inhabits. Rationality here betrays him. We must admit that there are those amongst us who are ready to die, even kill, rather than commit to a transformation of worldview. Yet our worldviews are transforming all the time, they are traveling with us as we head towards a set of very new conditions. We are all at the growing edge of a planetary realignment. For some of us this is terrifying and being expressed in denial, passivity, and even the violence of war, ecocide, racial and

gender tensions. For others, we can sense a refreshing sea change in worldviews.

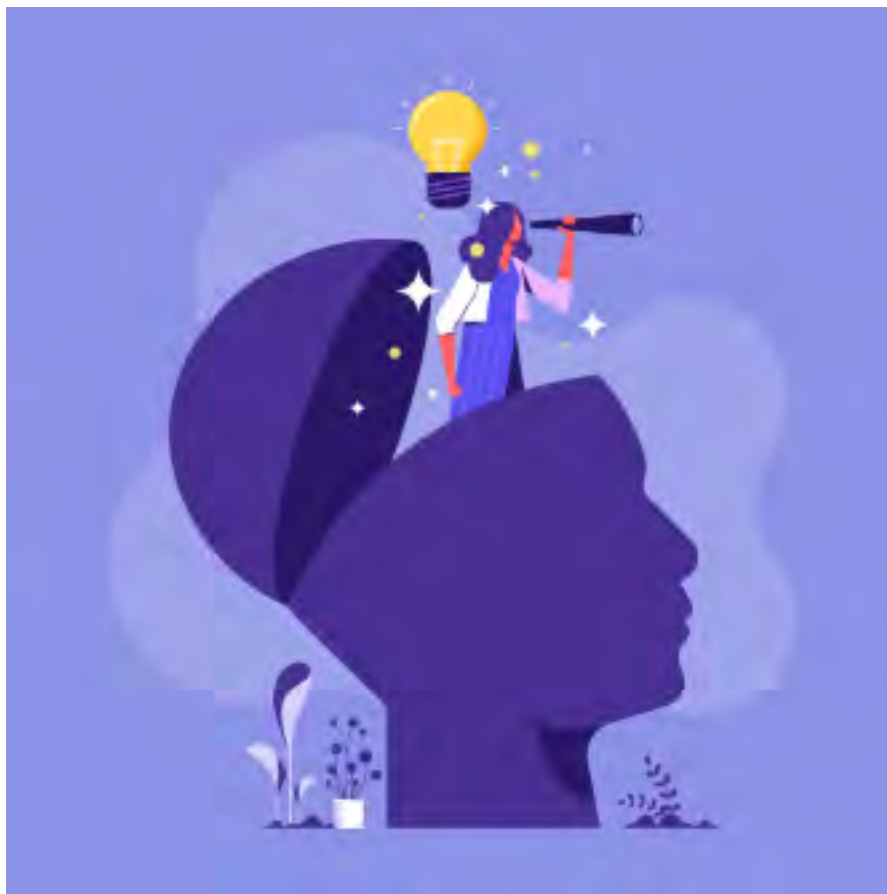
Crimson Dawn

Expressed poetically this sea change can be framed as a 'crimson dawn'. This is the term Sarkar (1982) uses when he described *Neohumanism* in 1982 through his corpus of songs known collectively as *Prabhat Samgiita*: 'songs of the new dawn'. Neohumanism is Sarkar's response to this fatal logic. It is a confluence of devotion, the love for all aspects of creation mixed with a sense of intimacy in relationship to the Divine, with the growing sense that our transformation, the transformation of worldview, calls for social and ecological justice, not however 'justice' as understood within our dominant logic, but a justice informed by the heart, by love and a deep sense of what it truly means to be kin in a world that refuses separation and calls for partnership. This is a world where spirituality is vibrating consciousness and alerting us to our deep embeddedness in planetary and cosmic flows of Being. There are layers to this shift, and it is finding expression in so many ways across the planet (Fremeaux, 2021; Hawken, 2007; Inayatullah, 2017). But for Sarkar this shift begins deep within the human heart as a yearning to return to the fountainhead of Being. A yearning to fall in love again with creation and to return 'home'. In his words, offered as a gloss to one of his first Prabhat Samgiita, this is a deeply inspiring moment:

Darkness has come to an end, crossing the threshold at the edge of light. Now is the proper time to call all and announce that the crimson dawn has come. The beautiful sky is studded with so many stars, the air is sweetly scented. The atmosphere, lithosphere, hydrosphere, everything is closely related to me. All the flora and fauna I must preserve; I must save them from premature extinction, because I love everything of this earth. I am a Neohumanist. I call one and all to come and create a new rhythm.¹

In this way we are given a mytho-poetic map for the transition in worldview. This devotional expression of course may seem out of step with the grim realities of climate change and the

¹The text for this song can be found here: https://xn--prabhata-sagiita-rjb5298j.net/lyrics/ps_3.htm



We need to get curious about these emergent aspects of transformation. It is happening, has been happening and will continue to happen. ””

socio-economic, ethnic, gendered and ecological violence and disparity which characterise the current moment. Not so for Sarkar, who is arguing for the creation of a ‘new rhythm’. This rhythm must begin in the human heart, it must express our longing to transform, to throw off the constraints of the fatal logic of modernity. The logic of modernity limits our human potential. The Neohumanist call Sarkar is describing is giving voice to the evolutionary logic which has inspired human transitions in the past. For him,

evolution is about overcoming limits. We meet an obstacle, and we evolve to overcome it. When we fail to do so, we fail. Ultimately this is a spiritual process, but for Sarkar the spiritual is never separate from the material world which provides us with so many opportunities to evolve and so many rewards.

To remain satisfied with the minimum achievement is contrary to human wants. That is why, since the dawn of creation, human beings have been

worshipping the Supreme Entity. They longed for supreme knowledge, for indirect and direct spiritual realisation. The fundamental human yearning for supreme expansion led them to discover the practical cult of spirituality. Moreover, it created in the human mind the sense of inquisitiveness, the spirit of dedication, and the thirst for knowledge. It is because of these noble qualities that human beings have become what they are today (Sarkar, 1988, p. 649).

For Sarkar, this spiritual yearning is what is missing from the dominant worldview promoted by Western economics, science and philosophy. Yet it can be understood through these lenses as sublimated to a materialist paradigm. The energy is still there. The desire to overcome limits materially as resulted in amazing achievements in city building, economic prosperity, technological innovation and even life expectancy. The yearning of Modernity however is fatally flawed as it is blind to aspects of growth that have had incredibly harmful effects on generations of humanity and the natural world. What we gained in terms of material achievements we lost relationally. We have become spiritually anorexic. We have trashed our home, harmed innumerable species and created vast numbers of impoverished peoples whose impoverishment was the price for our affluence.

Getting Curious

Neohumanism invites curiosity. It offers as many pathways into richer futures as there are human beings on the planet. It also invites pathways beyond the species that we are towards species that we can become. It does so because it offers visions of rich relational networks for us to co-create futures truly worthy of the title 'crimson dawn' with the more than human. Neohumanism is relational. We are in relationship with soil, microbes and mycelium. We are in relation with quarks and atoms and cosmic vibrations. We are in relation with cephalopods, algae and star fish. We are in relation with reptiles, mammals, fish and amphibians, trees and herbs and moulds and lichens. We are in relation to the weather, the lithosphere, the hydrosphere and the atmosphere. The stars and moon, and the sun are our relations too. Not only that but the Tantric vision offered by Sarkar as a dimension

of Neohumanism (see, Bussey, 1998) introduces a subtle spiritual ontology that includes *devas* and vibrational entities he calls Microvita (Sarkar, 1991). Linear time is also up for grabs (see, Inayatullah, 2017) as we have multiple temporalities working across and between cosmic time, eternal time, biological time, human time and even, because I am writing in Australia, Dream Time.

We need to get curious about these emergent aspects of transformation. It is happening, has been happening and will continue to happen. Worldviews and the cultures they sustain hold the seeds of transformation within them, traditions rise and fall and leave messages for future generations to revisit, refresh and reframe experience and the choices we make collectively and individually (Bussey, 2015). They also contain their own fatal logics that will challenge us to be selective in what we chose to engage with for positive futures. This is very evident in Sarkar's creative traditionalism as he approached his own Tantric tradition which he re-invented in many ways to meet the challenges of colonialism, caste, globalisation, nationalism and capitalism. In Sarkar's treatment Tantra offers a critique of power (Sarkar, 1993). Tantra aims at liberating individuals from the bondage of cultural convention. It recognises that much we take as culture actually is pseudo-culture that supports elites who place self-interest before collective welfare.

Furthermore, Sarkar's imaginative grasp on culture and spirituality was such that he looked beyond his own cultural roots to that of the West, and he found in the aspirations and philosophy of Humanism the seeds of universalism that resonated with the universalism of the Vedas and Tantra (Bussey, 2023). Yet he also identified Humanism's fatal logic, which was its specist identification that put human needs, values and agency at the centre of the Western cultural project. His rethinking of Humanism as Neohumanism removes that impediment making way for an expanded culture based on spiritual connection, love and a kincentric ecology. This shift in focus brings to Neohumanism a new logic of relationship. Such a logic is at the heart of cutting-edge systems and kincentric thinking. In such work we often find the challenging and dynamic tension of a materialist ontology grappling with the ineffable. Nora Bateson (2016) does a great job of handling this blurring of

What is happening on the planet at the moment is significant. Humanity is struggling to find a new story, a new song. ”

categories with her work on warm data. Others such as Niklas Luhmann (1998) and Humberto Maturana (1980) struggle to manage this tension between materiality and spirit but the eco-logic at the heart of their work is affirming. The co-creative messiness of it all is what matters and indeed, there is a sense of awe, wonder, possibility, even the sacred in much work being produced today (Harjo, 2019; Krawec, 2022; Simard, 2021; Yunkaporta, 2019).

A Neohumanist Moment

So as modernity moves towards the climax of its fatal logic, we are living in a world that is becoming increasingly strange to itself (Bussey, 2021). We do not know where we are headed beyond this historic moment, but we have choice. We have enabling narratives pulling us towards transformation and we have disabling narratives cutting us off from agency and from futures that promise more-than-human possibility. This is a Neohumanist moment for sure (Bussey, 2006, 2023). One where with a set of transitional logics, those that formulate wonderful ‘what-ifs?’, we have the choice to move towards a culture of kincentric co-creation. John O’Donoghue spoke to this power of openness when he observed:

We all live in a pathway in the middle of time, so there are lots of events, peoples, places, thoughts, experiences still ahead of us that have not actually arrived at the door of our hearts at all. This is the world of the unknown. Questions and thinking are ways of reaching into the unknown to find out what kind of treasures it actually holds. The question is the place where the unknown becomes articulate to us. A good question is something that has incredible grace and light and depth to it (2018, pp. 80-81).

Neohumanism asks good questions of us: Who am I? Where is my home? Who are my relations? What is my purpose? What is Consciousness? As Sarkar developed responses to these questions, he drew upon his own

traditions of Tantra but focused on issues of social justice, leadership, inclusive economics, governance, resilient spirituality and spiritual practice. He summed these principles up as “Self-realisation and service to humanity.” Beginning with spiritual practice he asserted that each one of us work towards self-realisation as a personal and collective sine qua non for transformation. Such work for him begins with meditative practices, a system of yogic ethics and practices but is shaped in response to the world we inhabit. Such personal practices however must engage with the world. Neohumanism is world affirming. Its relational ethics requires that we work towards collective wellbeing. The collective here is not anthropo-centric but Gaia-centric.

‘Humanity’ in this sense is an expanded concept that holds consciousness at its centre and devotion as its key expression. This is summed up in the phrase ‘Love is all there is’, which is the meaning at the heart of the cosmic mantra: *Baba nam kevalam*. Sarkar offered this mantra as chant, or kiirtan, promoting it as an individual and collective world affirming and embodied practice for generating Neohumanist consciousness. Kiirtan, like many of the practices Sarkar promoted, is a tool in fostering inner transformation and a sense of alignment with the world. The subjective is always in dialogue with the objective, and vice versa. The spiritual imagination takes flight and ignites a world affirming commitment to collective evolution.

PROUT

In the collective movement of Neohumanism we have an ecological revisioning of the concept of Hindu concept of *samaj*. Samaj affirms the social in all things. It also implies movement. From Sarkar’s perspective it calls on us to engage in social progress for all. This is at the heart of his concept of PROUT: *Progressive Utilisation Theory*. Futurist Sohail Inayatullah says of PROUT that it:



...is not only a theory of social change and transformed leadership, but an alternative political economy; an emergent alternative to Capitalism, a vision and comprehensive model of a new future for humanity and the planet (2017, p. ii).

PROUT is the logic of Neohumanism expressed through socio-political praxis (Bussey, 2010). Because Neohumanism has relationship at its heart, it requires each of us to develop a relational consciousness. Such a consciousness is spiritual and grows out of personal meditation and yogic practices. The ancient science of Aśtāṅga yoga with its eight limbs, has at its heart practices that seek to reunite the practitioner with Cosmic consciousness. Tantra brings energy to this process by tackling elements of society that constrain the yogi within conventions that do not serve this goal of union. Union with the source of consciousness needs to be understood as the ultimate goal of Neohumanism's relational logic.

Yoga, as conventionally understood, is an individual practice aimed at liberating the individual from the cycles of birth and death. Sarkar (1961) reframes this, as noted above, and links self-transcendence with service to and in, the world. In this way his reimagining of Tantra can be understood as spiritual pragmatics working in the world and fomenting a radical consciousness that critiques social situations through the lens of relational logic. Critique is the struggle to free the mind from the bondages of time, place and person (Foucault, 2002). Critical spirituality moves the focus from the traditional social and political realms to the Cosmic (Bussey, 2000). It asks not simply who benefits and who is marginalised but what is the quality of our relationship and what can we do to deepen our relational consciousness? In this it directly acknowledges the affective domain and the power of devotion and an open heart in achieving more inclusive, just and joyful futures.

Neohumanism as cultural hack

Sarkar offers us a world of wonder and paradox. He is not looking for answers but for transformation. He works across traditions, synthesising new formulations of past wisdom traditions, and through engagement with the massive struggles that characterise our world offers new pathways, new strategies and new spiritual techniques for hacking the cultures we inhabit and for challenging the fatal logics that hold us in this limited present. The fatal logic of modernity will run its course. We cannot trust to technology and the politics of the present. We need to imagine alternative futures and work towards these. Neohumanism provides us with tools to do just this.

To hack is to see alternatives to the present that allow for new expressions and experiences. All working with consciousness can be understood as ‘hacking’ in this way. To devise new stories, imagine alternative futures, sing new songs with new melodies and rhythms are all hacks. Culture is alive and open, and can be understood as an algorithm that is always in revision; always open to the hack (Bussey, 2017).

Neohumanism is a philosophical and aesthetic hack that works its way into our hearts because it is in the heart, not the head, that we find the resources to shift worldviews. The heart of course needs a compass. So the head has a role to play. Love and attachment can lead us astray, so the head can supply new forms of logic. Sarkar understood this. His earthy roots in the soil of Bengal come to the fore here as he offers song after song to weld together heart and head. For instance, in Prabhat Samgiita 2192 he gives voice to the Neohumanist call to overcome geo and social attachments and see ‘one human family’ as the foundations for a flourishing future. Thus, he sings:

*Mánusa jeno mánuśer tare, sab kichu kare jáy
E katháo jeno mane rákhe pashu, pákhi tár par nay
Taruo báncite cáy, sab kichu kare jáy*¹

¹ Let human beings do everything for the sake of other human beings, and let them also remember that animals and birds are not distant from them, and that the trees also want to survive.

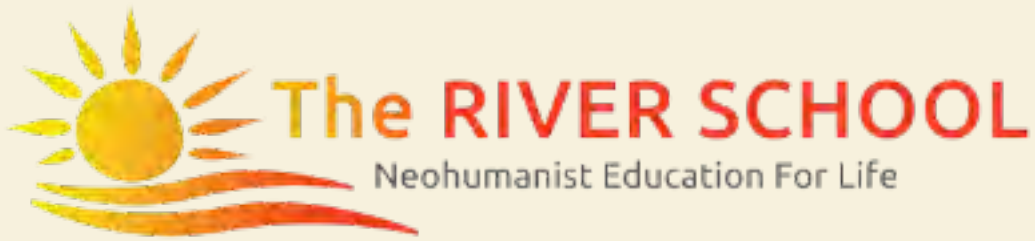
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What is happening on the planet at the moment is significant. Humanity is struggling to find a new story, a new song. One that fits with the knowledge that what we are doing currently is unsustainable. The complexities before us, the inherent uncertainty of life, and the yearning to realise both our personal and planetary potential all conspire to foment in us as a species, and as individuals, realizations worthy of such a moment. We live at a turning point in history, a Neohumanist moment. We are turning away from compulsive consumption and a desperate need to control and finding stories worthy of our deeper aspirations. Such stories bear in them the relational logic to energise our transition to a world where we experience a deep sense of kinship with planet and people. This of course is not a comfortable moment, and many are not yet ready to accept this new historical trajectory, however what we want and what we get are rarely the same thing. That is the paradox of being human.

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Changing the Story: **A Neohumanist Educational Philosophy for the Anthropocene**

When the underlying spirit of humanism is extended to everything, animate and inanimate, in this universe – I have designated this as Neohumanism. This Neohumanism will elevate humanism to universalism, the cult of love for all created beings of this universe.

~ P.R. Sarkar (1982)

By Dr. Kathleen Kesson

I AM WRITING this article from my home in Vermont (USA), which has often been touted as a potential “safe haven” for climate refugees. Located inland, with 75% of its land forested, and a reputation for neighborliness and progressive politics, it has until recently avoided some of the catastrophes we hear about daily in the news. A long and snowy winter – yes – and the occasional power outages and muddy back roads in spring when the snow melts. And a couple of major floods in the living memories of people here.

I watch the steady rain that has poured for days now, falling into a ground already saturated. This should be good news for a state that has

*Kathleen Kesson,
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recently been experiencing drought conditions. But torrential rains this past week destroyed bridges and roads throughout the state, and hundreds of businesses and homes have been lost to the raging waters of our overflowing rivers. The two towns closest to me, Barre and Montpelier (the state capitol), are devastated. All this, on the back of continuing smoky days from Canadian wildfires, and an unusually late freeze that destroyed the crops of many of our local farmers. It is probably safe to say there are no safe havens. While those (individuals as well as nations) with the fewest resources are likely to suffer the most, we are all in this.

A new narrative is emerging in the ongoing story of Planet Earth. We have lived for the past 10,000 years in the relatively stable (climatically) Holocene Era, a period that enabled the rise (and fall) of numerous civilizations (GR: *Holos*, ‘whole’ + *cene* ‘new’ ‘recent’). A significant number of scholars from the sciences and the humanities now agree that we have entered the Anthropocene, a new era in geological history (GR: *Anthrōpos*, ‘man, human’ + *cene*, ‘new’

‘recent’). While debates about concerning the chronological boundaries of this era, the geological indicators, and the details of the complex dynamics of interacting systems (atmospheric, climatic, geothermal, hydrological and biological), it is clear to the majority of the world’s scientists that human impacts on the earth are causing perhaps irreversible damage to the planetary ecosystem. We are witnessing the “great acceleration” — unprecedented species extinction and loss of biodiversity, increasingly dangerous weather patterns resulting in loss of life and property, and extensive pollution of our waters, air, and soil. New assaults on planetary life come to our attention daily. The question posed succinctly by American philosopher Roy Scranton (2018), is “We’re doomed. Now what?” How do we make the shift from the Domsday scenario in which we currently find ourselves towards the optimistic future promised us by Shrii P.R. Sarkar, in which “Neohumanism will elevate humanism to universalism, the cult of love for all created beings of this universe?” (1982).

Neohumanism requires the cultivation of an ontology that is relational, that understands there is no separation of self and other, of knower and known, of subject and object, but rather endless flows of being and becoming in which we are deeply interconnected with everything in creation, visible and invisible, material and molecular, objective and subjective.



While action on all fronts is urgent, education is a primary vehicle for cultivating the “new human,” those who embrace this love of all created beings and align their actions with such deeply felt convictions. This urgent need for a new story, a paradigm shift in education, has finally been recognized at the very highest level of policy, in a recent (2020) report from UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), titled *Learning To Become WITH The World: Education for future survival*. The working paper on the future of education was commissioned from the Common Worlds Research Collective, an interdisciplinary network of researchers “concerned with our relations with the more-than-human world” (CWRC, 2020). Anyone familiar with the tenets of Neohumanism will note the nearly seamless alignments of their “seven declarations” with the vision of Shrii Sarkar, articulated in his 1982 book *The Liberation of Intellect: Neohumanism*.

First, as Sarkar did, they advocate for the preservation of the best ideals of Humanism — namely that of justice — but state that it must be extended beyond the exclusively human framework. They note that we must begin to think of ourselves as ecological — not just social — beings. Education, they say, must no longer be a vehicle for promoting human “exceptionalism,” but rather help young people develop a more relational ontology in the face of the catastrophic times that are upon us. We must, in this sense, discard conventional individual and social developmental frameworks in favor of fostering collective dispositions and convivial, reparative

human and more-than-human relations. We must learn to become with the world, not stand apart from it, and a spirit of universalism must embrace multiple and diverse human worlds as well as the multiplicity of our entanglements in multispecies ecologies. To facilitate this transformation, we need to adopt an ethics that is collective, more-than-human, and reparative. See CWRC, 2020 for a more comprehensive articulation of this summary.

As you will see in the remainder of this paper, Neohumanist education shares the essence of these educational aims. Predating the UNESCO report by some three decades, it takes us even further down the road with its focus not just on transformational aspirations and theories, but the pedagogical practices that might enable us to attain these ideals. Below, we take a comparative look at the philosophies relevant to the Humanist era and the Neohumanist era.

Educational Philosophy in the Humanist Era

Philosophy is the love of wisdom (GR: *philo*, ‘loving’ + *sophia* ‘knowledge, wisdom’) and education is a very practical activity. A practical philosophy of education, then, should help us to make wise judgements about our teaching practice. Philosophies of education define what it means to be human and the nature of mind and consciousness, and articulate the aims and purposes of education. They explore how knowledge is constructed and how people learn. They help us to clarify our values, and provide visions of the “good life.” For example, the



“Knowledge is not a “thing-in-itself” that can be transmitted from one isolated mind to another, or from a digitized environment to a human brain via language or image. Knowledge is part of an ever-changing system, a pattern of relations, and is embedded in culture.”

Cultural Transmission model of education values knowledge of the past, and understands the primary aim of education to be inculcating the values, beliefs and knowledge systems of the existing culture into the new generation. The individual is seen as something of a “blank slate” ready to be molded into the form of human valued by the existing society, or at least by the dominant classes in a society. Teaching methods, in this model, are characterized by a prescribed curriculum, the teacher as an authority, regular testing, and behavioristic methods of control such as rewards and punishments.

Sometimes radically differing ideologies, values and beliefs give rise to new philosophies of education. For example, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries there was a reaction against

modernism, with its mechanistic materialism, science, new technologies, and emerging bureaucratic society. The Romantics, as they were called, did not accept the idea of the human being as a blank slate, rather they believed us to be born with innate powers, or a divine spark, and they thus embraced the deep feelings of the individual soul and its emotional, spiritual, poetic and artistic nature. Romantics bemoaned the disenchantment of the world, and sought to reestablish the mystery, magic, mysticism, and myth that had characterized much of human history. Teaching methods, in this framework, lean towards the “drawing out” (LA: *ēdūcere*, ‘lead out’) of the inclinations and potential of the child and of pedagogies that encourage awe, wonder, and the imagination. This philosophy

influenced the development of what would later be known as Holistic education (for its attention to the whole child).

Pragmatic (or developmental) theories of education associated with such thinkers as John Dewey and Jean Piaget sought to reconcile the contradictions between the emphases on outer experience (the Cultural Transmission model) and inner experience (the Romantic model) with the notion of learning as a transaction between inner and outer modes of knowing. Pragmatic approaches to education value democracy as the most efficacious form of social arrangements, and teaching methods in this framework are characterized by inquiry-based and experiential curricula, cooperative group learning, and the cultivation of reflection, logic and reason as primary forms of problem-solving.

Challenges to Pragmatism and Romanticism came with the advent of Critical Pedagogy, a philosophy of education that takes a hard look at the social structures that construct our worlds. Drawing upon a Marxist conceptual foundation, Critical Pedagogy insists that we acknowledge the ways that capitalist relations, racism, sexism and other forms of oppression have limited the full development of human powers, and that we shape an education grounded in the development of critical thinking in order to understand and overthrow these limitations.

In the 1980's a Holistic education paradigm (with roots in the preceding century) began to take its place as a recognizable way of thinking about education. Holistic educators focused on the interconnectedness of experience and reality, the relationships between the whole and the part, the student as an active, participatory and critical learner, and respect and reverence for the inner life of the child (See Mahmoudi et al, 2012). Many holistic thinkers subscribed to the notion of "ultimacy" – the idea that inherent to human development is a drive toward wholeness and the capacity to attain a "peak state" of realization, with resultant attainment of primary human values such as compassion and integrity,

accompanied by an overarching state of well-being (Forbes, 2003).

It's important to note that all of these existing philosophical approaches, the spiritual and the secular, are very much grounded in Humanistic concepts and classic liberal traditions, ways of thinking that place human beings in the center of the picture (anthropocentrism), and which value the autonomous individual with their capacity to gain self-knowledge through reflection and to better understand the world through the application of reason. The old philosophies of European Humanism provided humanity with a vital service by liberating us from much of the superstition and irrationality of the medieval Christian Church and initiating an era of scientific thought and rationality, and

the contributions of Humanistic philosophy to individual rights, freedom, and self-determination should not be understated. But just as these philosophical commitments are necessary but not sufficient to guide us through the Anthropocene, existing educational philosophies, even the progressive and holistic ones of the 18th, 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries are inadequate to steer us through the era that is upon us. Neohumanism, while drawing upon many of the important tenets of Humanism as well as many of the best practices of modernist education, emphasizes new ways of thinking/being that are uniquely capable of educating the "new human" — persons with the knowledge and dispositions to care about the welfare of all the species of the planet and to live in harmony with the ecological constraints that we are only now coming to terms with in the Anthropocene.

Educational Philosophy in a Neohumanist Era

Neohumanism and Ontology. Ontology (GR: *ōn, ont-* 'being' + *-logy* 'study of') is the study of what it means to be human, including the broad categories of being, becoming, existence, and meaning. Neohumanist educators are fortunate



In Neohumanism, the process of cultivating a deeply ecological, post-human mindset depends on more than just new content; decentering the human requires a proto psycho-spirituality, that is, the conscious mental effort to expand the radius of one's care outward from the limiting sentiments of Humanism to a universal love for all and a concern for the common welfare.

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in that Shrii P.R. Sarkar articulated a comprehensive philosophy of Being to draw upon, a philosophy that encompasses the mundane and the cosmic, which understands the known universe as dynamic, and that defines the human as a multi-dimensional being engaged in a quest for realization and spiritual understanding.

One main idea that profoundly shaped Humanist thinking is the idea of the individual, the “I” as a bounded entity, surrounded by stable substances and objects in space that constitute separate “others” to manipulate, utilize, and transact with. This concept developed in the context of the Western Enlightenment along with the subjugation of nature and the application of reason and logic to all of the problems of existence. This sense of separation, mastery, and control in concert with an economic system predicated on resource extraction, endless growth, and needless consumption has led us to the ecological tipping point at which we find ourselves. Neohumanism requires the cultivation of an ontology that is relational, that understands there is no separation of self and other, of knower and known, of subject and object, but rather endless flows of being and becoming in which we are deeply interconnected with everything in creation, visible and invisible, material and molecular, objective and subjective. It requires that we learn to be with the world, as the UNESCO paper advocates, not stand apart from it.

In the context of relational being and becoming, virtually all aspects of education

require reconceptualization: everything from our notions of individual achievement to our valuing of independence and autonomy, from our theories of human development and cognition to theories of experience and academic subject matter. If everything is in process, or relational, then we must awaken to the profound interdependence between the human organism and the environment, the life histories and trajectories of ‘objects’ and our own implication in these, as well as the human connection to transcendent levels of mind. A Neohumanist curriculum would embrace this multi-dimensionality, the whole of ontological experience.

Neohumanism and Epistemology. Epistemology (GR: *epistēmē* ‘knowledge’+ *-logy* ‘study of’) asks fundamental questions about the nature of knowing. How is knowledge constructed? What are the sources of know-ledge? How do we come to know anything? How can we know what is true?

Throughout our Humanist history, Western models of education have spread across the planet, resulting in the loss of language, tradition, culture, and indigenous ecological knowledge. Some scholars aptly call this “epistemicide” (Santos, 2014). In the process of valuing a particular version of scientific investigation and reason over all other forms of knowledge creation, and in the context of conquest, patriarchy, and economic imperialism, ways of knowing that exist outside these contours have been marginalized or suppressed: embodied knowing, contemplative knowing, intuitional

The study of meditation or “contemplative science” is a young field, but the hundreds of neuroscientific studies on meditation and brain function in recent years are leading to some remarkable conclusions. Even beginning meditators experience less reactivity to stress, better focus, less mind-wandering, improved memory, and increased capacity for empathy.



knowing, narrative knowing, aesthetic knowing, mythic knowing, and intergenerational knowing. Neohumanist educators need to cultivate an epistemological pluralism, while understanding that all ways of knowing are not necessarily equal, and that different epistemologies are suited to different tasks and purposes.

Knowledge is not a “thing-in-itself” that can be transmitted from one isolated mind to another, or from a digitized environment to a human brain via language or image. Knowledge is part of an ever-changing system, a pattern of relations, and is embedded in culture (Bowers, 1993). Language shapes how we perceive and understand the world, and we transmit worldviews and taken-for-granted cultural habits with every word we utter. A relational philosophy asks more of us than that we simply “teach” or “acquire” neutral facts about academic subjects. To truly know anything, in a deep way, we must embrace the occasion of knowing in its temporal multiplicity: understanding the past (how the knowledge was made) the present (what does it mean to me in this moment?), and the future (what are the consequences of this knowing?) We must expand the boundaries of our sources of knowledge: What might it mean to discard a notion of an “us” who think and a “them” that do not? Can we learn to “think like a tree?” Can we learn to put traditional ecological knowledge (much of which has been exterminated along with the people and cultures who have acquired it) alongside empirical science?

Neohumanism, unlike some spiritual pedagogies, does place a value on rationality and

critical thinking. Rationality, in its deepest sense, is the capacity to question the sources of knowledge, to be skeptical about truth claims, and to be mindful of the ways in which knowledge has been used to manipulate, subjugate, obfuscate, and render powerless. It encompasses more than simple reason and logic: true rationality must be informed and tempered by contemplation. To speak of contemplation is to open up horizons of knowing of which humanity has only has the faintest of glimpses. In this regard, we can say that our understanding of Neohumanist epistemology is in its infancy. P.R. Sarkar refers to *parā vidya* (spiritual, or intuitional knowledge) and *aparā vidya* (mundane knowledge). While there are certainly sages and enlightened people who are gifted in the ways of spiritual knowledge, and many excellent educators who are adept at leading young people to deep intellectual understandings of the world, there has yet to emerge a comprehensive pedagogy that seamlessly integrates these two poles of wisdom in ways that do justice to the integrity of both domains. That, I believe, is the task of Neohumanist educators.

Neohumanism and Axiology. Axiology (GR: *axia* ‘value’ or ‘worth’ + *-logy* ‘study of’) encompasses questions of value, and includes the study of both ethics and of aesthetics. What do we consider to be of worth? What constitutes the good, the true, the beautiful? How should we live? For educators, this extends to important questions of what is worth knowing and what should be taught.



Millions of young people are rising up, shouting out that they will no longer tolerate the destruction of their planet. It is up to all of us who care about these “new humans” to support their yearning.

Cultural pluralism has brought about a sense of ethical relativism, and there is uncertainty about what if anything, can be considered a cardinal value. In our late-Humanist society, in which ‘Man is the measure of all things,’ capitalist ethics have become the dominant social value, and the market is the ultimate arbiter of ethical questions. Should we endanger fragile habitat in order to drill for oil? Of course, if profit is the main value. In the relational, process philosophy of Neohumanism, in which the inherent value of all living things is acknowledged, ethical principles need to evolve to regulate these many and varied relationships. Sarkar rejects the kind of simple rule-based morality encoded in many traditions, yet subscribes to the notion of overarching ethical principles under the broad umbrella of the question: Does this contribute to the welfare of all?

The curriculum can no longer be constructed to serve dominant economic and political interests, as it is currently, but must address the deep interconnections that we are coming to understand between and amongst humans and

all ‘other’ life forms. In a Neohumanist curriculum, ethics are infused across the curriculum; every subject from biology to history is approached through an ethical study framework. In the study of ethical dilemmas (and we face countless of them in this new era), it is important to cultivate the arts of reflection, deliberation, and discriminating judgment, to invoke, as Sarkar suggests, both reason and intuition. In this way, ethics can become, as he proposes, a facilitator of personal and social transformation – a tool for expansion.

In modern Western societies, the arts are commodities, with ascribed value based on notions of uniqueness and scarcity. In a Neohumanist world, the arts could serve more ancient and life-preserving functions, involving young people in participatory aesthetic experiences that create and recreate the fundamental stories of our existence – our human bonds, our relationships with plants, animals, sea and sky, and the mythic stories that carry forth and transmit the blueprints of a moral universe (see Kesson, 2019).

*The sense of universalism should
be awakened in the child.* ”

Changing the story

Worldviews and paradigms are narratives – stories about the world, about human possibility, about relationships, and about meaning. Central to both the UNESCO report and Neohumanist education philosophy is the emergence of a new story, a “cosmic creation story” (Swimme, 1988) conceived to inaugurate a new era of human and planetary health, a “transformation out of a world that is...mechanistic, scientific, dualistic, patriarchal, Eurocentric, anthropocentric, militaristic, and reductionistic” (Ibid. p. 47). A story that tells us “that the universe is not static; that the universe is expanding each moment into a previously nonexistent space; that the universe is a dynamic developing reality” (Ibid. p. 50). A story that tells of our “entanglement” in a web of life, one that understands all of creation to be alive, intelligent, and self-organizing, one in which we have been freed from the false sense of separation from the rest of nature, one in which we have awakened from the slumber imposed by capitalism, materialism, consumerism, conflict, spectacle, and all the other distractions devised to convince us we are alive. The great opportunity before us today, says Swimme (2011) is

To tell this new universe story in a way that will serve to orient humans with respect to our pressing questions: Where did we come from? Why are we here? How should we live together? How can the Earth community flourish? (p. 5)

Indeed, these are the questions at the heart of Neohumanist education theory and practice. Together they form the core of a curriculum designed to prepare young people for the challenges of the Anthropocene, to provide hope, and enable them to survive and thrive into the future. The UNESCO report is an aspirational document, written from a perspective of an imagined future in which humanity did make the right decisions, took the proper fork in the road. It calls for a number of conceptual shifts, mostly to an understanding of humans as ecological beings – full participants in a larger web of life.

They speak of abandoning totalizing epistemologies in favor of “pluriversal perspectives” and linking education to the logic of ecological survival.

From Shrii Sarkar’s perspective, the adoption of a set of beliefs is necessary but insufficient for the deep paradigmatic transformation to this “new humanism.” In Neohumanism, the process of cultivating a deeply ecological, post-human mindset depends on more than just new content; decentering the human requires a proto psycho-spirituality, that is, the conscious mental effort to expand the radius of one’s care outward from the limiting sentiments of Humanism to a universal love for all and a concern for the common welfare. From a Neohumanist standpoint, “the ‘baby’ of spirituality was thrown out with the ‘bathwater’ of organized religion (Vedaprajananda, 2006, p. 28), and we must cultivate a non-dogmatic spirituality based on contemplative practices and authentic morality in order to truly realize the high ideals promoted by the Humanists. Alongside this, the attribution of moral standing and rights must be extended to all creation in order to overcome the anthropocentrism fostered by classic Humanism: “The recognition of the existential value of plants and animals,” and even more recently, of bodies of water and land, “adds an ecological dimension to Humanism” (Ibid., p. 29). Only with such a “deepening of Humanism with a psycho-spiritual approach and the widening of Humanism, with an ecological component” (Ibid., p. 29) might we finally have the effective tools we need for tackling the enormous ecological and socio-economic problems facing our global society.

The study of meditation or “contemplative science” is a young field, but the hundreds of neuroscientific studies on meditation and brain function in recent years are leading to some remarkable conclusions. Even beginning meditators experience less reactivity to stress, better focus, less mind-wandering, improved memory, and increased capacity for empathy. For longer term meditators, the benefits are even

greater, including a “greater neural attunement with those who are suffering, and enhanced likelihood of doing something to help” (Goleman & Davidson, 2017, p. 273). It is here that we begin to glimpse the transformative possibilities of contemplative practices. People who have attained a level of contentment with their lives, in whom the transcendent states achieved in moments of contemplation have become enduring traits are able to extend kindness, care, and generosity outward, in ever expanding circles, and “these positive altered traits have the potential for transforming our world in ways that will enhance not only our individual thriving but also the odds for our species survival” (Ibid. p. 291). We can see here the necessity for engaging in disciplined contemplative practice in order to realize the Neohumanist aim of extending the feelings of love to all creation.

In Shrii Sarkar’s words, “The sense of universalism should also be awakened in the child. Etiquette and refined behaviour (sic) are not enough. Real education leads to a pervasive sense of love and compassion for all creation” (1981). This “love for all creation” is not an abstract, sentimental emotion. It is a deep commitment to the common good, not just the common human good, but the good of all beings. It is a recognition of our “entanglement” – the inescapable fact that human flourishing does not occur in an individual vacuum; it is the result of our interdependence in an ecosystem that includes all life, animate and inanimate. The air we breathe, the water we drink, the rocks that seem so solid, the mycelium networks in the soil, the creatures who crawl, the creatures who fly, the creatures who slither, and those who swim in the waters – human beings share spiritual kinship with all of creation.

Neohumanism asks us to reconsider the fundamental aims and purposes of education. Rather than educate so that a tiny sliver of people rises to the top of the global income chain, we need to educate all people for the art of living well on a fragile and sacred planet. The new vision of reality is one of relationship, the cultivation of deep relationship with all of creation and between the past, the present moment, and the future. Millions of young people are rising up, shouting out that they will no longer tolerate the destruction of their planet. It is up to all of us who care about these “new humans” to support their yearning for an

education that is relevant, meaningful, purposeful, just, and joyful, which nurtures the human spirit and its innate love for all creation, and which enables humanity to create a survivable and “thrivable” future.

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What's Neo About Neohumanism? The Transmodern and Decolonial Philosophy Of P.R. Sarkar

Neohumanism promotes both a reformulation and a revision of classical humanism; a way of thinking and acting which is at the same time transmodern and decolonial. With its visionary and even revolutionary discourse, neohumanism represents another form of knowledge, an “other” thinking, the renewed expression of the ancient tantric epistemology – or science of yoga – from which it was conceived and elaborated as a primarily spiritual and profoundly mystical philosophy.

Keywords: Neohumanism, Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, Transmodernity, Decoloniality

By Dr. Marco Alexandre de Oliveira

*Sam'gacchadvam' sam'vadadhvam', sam'vomanam' si janatam,
devabhagam' yatha' purve, sam'jana'na' upa'sate,
sam'ani va' akuti, sama'na hridayani vah,
sama'nama'stu vomano, yatha vah susaha'sati.*

— Rg Veda 10-191

THE MEANING OF the Sanskrit mantra is: “Let us move together, let us sing together, let us come to know our minds together, let us share, like sages of the past, that all people together may enjoy

the universe, unite our intentions, let our hearts be inseparable, our mind is as one mind as we, to truly know one another, become one.”
- Source: <https://ampsnys.org/samgacchadvam>

Neohumanism is a philosophy developed by the eminent Indian thinker Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar (1921-1990), better known as the spiritual master and tantric guru Shrii Shrii Anandamūrti (“The Embodiment of Bliss”). Founder of the socio-spiritual organization Ananda Marga, whose motto in Sanskrit — *Atma mokṣartham jagat hitaya ca* — means “self-realization and service to humanity,” Sarkar developed some of the principles of neohumanism in the book *Liberation of Intellect: Neohumanism* (1982), a volume composed of a series of discourses elucidating the theme in question. Based on a form of love that is expressly universal (*universalis* = related to the universe, to all) and progressively radical (*radicalis* = related to root, origin), neohumanism promotes both a revision and a reformulation of classical humanism, and can ultimately be characterized as a way of thinking and acting that is at the same time transmodern, for renewing the foundations of modernity from a position of alterity, and decolonial, for deconstructing the bases of coloniality from a condition of subalternity.

As the name already indicates, neohumanism was basically defined by Sarkar himself as a continuation or extension of the humanist project:

[...] when the underlying spirit of humanism is extended to everything, animate and inanimate, in this universe – I have designated this as “Neohumanism.” This Neohumanism will elevate humanism to universalism, the cult of love for all created beings of this universe. (2020, p. 25)

Humanism, in turn, was a Renaissance movement based on the Roman concept of *humanitas*, coined by the philosopher Cícero, and corresponded, in part, to the Greek concept of *paideia* (education), which in antiquity referred to the classical education system characterized by the study of disciplines such as philosophy, grammar, rhetoric, music, mathematics, geography, natural history, and even gymnastics, all of which would contribute to the training of the ideal citizen. *Humanitas*, which is related to the current terms human and humanity, concerns the cultivation of virtues and ethics by promoting the balance between thought and action, on the one hand, and between the individual and the social, on the other. During the Renaissance, when the European intelligentsia (re)discovered Greco-Roman



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classical literature, *humanitatis studia*, or “studies of humanity,” (re)surfaced through disciplines such as grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, and moral philosophy, which would all later form the basis of the so-called “humanities” or “human sciences” curriculum in modern and contemporary universities. Founded on the concept of *humanitas*, therefore, humanism has always emphasized education for the complete development of the human being, with all of its apparent or inherent qualities.

As in humanism, both study and reason (or logic) are fundamental in neohumanism, which likewise prescribes the all-around development of the ideal human being and society. Whereas humanist scholars emphasized particular disciplines of knowledge, Sarkar defines study in general as “intensive intellectual analysis,” or more specifically, the “internal assimilation, subjective assimilation of objective happenings” or events (Ibid., p. 79-80). In fact, there are two types of study, both of which are equally important and necessary: the “literal” (i.e. from reading) and the “non-literal” (i.e. from listening to others and from observing the material world). Knowledge is therefore found not only in books but also in people and in the world itself. In sum, for Sarkar “the importance of study is tremendous” and “knowledge must be disseminated throughout all sections of society,” not only “for all people to judge everything in the light of truth,” but also for them to “enjoy the sweet taste of intellectual freedom” (Ibid., p. 84).



If the first “step” towards the establishment of neohumanism would be study, the second would be “rationalistic mentality,” which is created from a “rational analysis” of the demonstrably positive and negative aspects of knowledge and the “logical decision” to accept it or not based on its merits and demerits. The next and final step would be to arrive at the “discrimination” to implement the decision or not for the promotion of universal well-being (Ibid., p. 86). The completion of this process of “logical reasoning” would thus result in an “awakened conscience” (Ibid., p. 87). Ultimately, and in (neo)humanist terms, “[t]his state of awakened conscience is what is called ‘rationalistic mentality.’”

In the wake of the so-called “Dark Ages,” thus named by the very humanists who fashioned a cultural rebirth, Renaissance humanism, seeking to universalize its knowledge, would begin to preach individual formation and social transformation in the light of Reason, initially in Europe and later around the world, through its pretentious civilizing mission. Unfortunately, this presumptuously enlightened humanism suffered from what Sarkar would call “geo-sentiment”

(i.e. identification with a particular geographical place) and “socio-sentiment” (i.e. identification with a particular sociological group), while its presumably civilized universalism reflected a predominantly white, male, and Judeo-Christian Eurocentrism that conquered the space(s) and time(s) of the Americas, Africa, Asia, and even Oceania through the imperialism and colonialism established during modernity, which was inaugurated with the Renaissance of the 15th to 16th centuries and instituted with the Enlightenment of the 17th to 18th centuries. In an ironically inhuman manner, other human beings were either (de)classified as non-human or (de)characterized as subhuman through what Sarkar would call “pseudo-humanism,” as in the cases of the exterminated and/or acculturated Amerindians, the enslaved and/or discriminated Africans, and the exploited and/or exoticized Asians.

Such a false, or rather pseudo humanism inherent in the various forms of imperialism/ colonialism would compose what the Peruvian sociologist Aníban Quijano (2005) termed the “coloniality of power,” a “matrix” that would

“As is the case in any and all forms of colonialism, the history of humanity could thus be summarized, from Sarkar’s perspective, as the “continuous and cunning attempt to create inferiority complexes in the minds of the exploited.””

actually constitute the basis of modernity and the current world system. Uncovering or unmasking this “darker” side of modernity, as the Argentinian semiologist and decolonialist Walter Mignolo (2011) would say, the concept of transmodernity developed by the Argentinian liberation philosopher Enrique Dussel (2016), among others, seeks to transcend (or decolonize) the rhetoric of a single Eurocentric and universal modernity to realize (or imagine) a decentered and pluriversal modernity. According to Dussel, trans-modernity refers specifically to the other, otherwise “universal” cultures that “maintain an alterity with respect to European Modernity, with which they have coexisted, responding in their own way to its challenges” (Dussel, p. 42). Such cultures are furthermore “not dead but alive, and presently in the midst of a process of rebirth, searching for new paths for future development.” To be trans-modern is to effectively be pre-modern, modern, and post-modern at the same time, but in different spaces. In other words:

[T]he strict concept of the “trans-modern” attempts to indicate the radical novelty of the irruption—as if emerging out of Nothing—from the transformative exteriority of that which is always Distinct, of universal cultures in the process of growth and that assume the challenges of Modernity, and even of European/North American postmodernity, but which respond from another place, another Location. They respond from the perspective of their own cultural experiences, which are distinct from those of Europeans/North Americans, and therefore have the capacity to respond with solutions that would be absolutely impossible for an exclusively modern culture. A future trans-modern culture, a new age of world history—that assumes the positive

moments of Modernity (as evaluated through criteria distinct from the perspective of the other ancient cultures)—will have a rich pluriversity and would be the fruit of an authentic intercultural dialogue, that would need to bear clearly in mind existing asymmetries [...] But a post-colonial and peripheral world like that of India, Africa or Latin America in a position of abysmal asymmetry with respect to the metropolitan core of the colonial era, does not for this reason cease to be a creative nucleus of ancient cultural renewal that is decisively distinct from all of the others, with the capacity to propose novel and necessary answers for the anguishing challenges that the Planet throws upon us at the beginning of the twenty-first century. (Dussel, p. 42-43)

Whether (co)incidentally or not, Dussel specifically names “Vedic” (or Indian) culture as an example of a transmodern culture, which is “something very different” from a Eurocentric modern culture “as a result of [its] distinct roots” (Dussel, p. 42). Inasmuch as Sarkar’s neohumanism is a product of Vedic (or else Tantric) culture, it may in fact signal such a “process of rebirth,” a renaissance that foresees “new paths for future development” and that heralds a “new age of world history” by responding with “new solutions” to modern problems and proposing “novel and necessary answers” to global challenges.

As a transmodern, decolonial philosophy in its own right, neohumanism (re)presents not only a “renewal” but also a revision of the classical humanism of modernity/coloniality. Indeed, despite its explicitly humanist principles, Sarkar’s neohumanism constitutes an implicit critique of a (pseudo)humanism historically characterized by inferiority complexes on the part of the colonized and complexes of superiority on the

The struggle is both spiritual and material, for beyond the liberation of the mind from its internal enemies and its external bondages, there is socio-economic and political-cultural revolution. ”

part of the colonizers. According to Sarkar, these “perpetuate exploitation in the social sphere by injecting a fear complex in the minds of those whom they want to exploit” (2020, p. 59). The purpose of this “injection” of an inferiority complex in the minds of the colonized would evidently be exploitation in its multiple forms, not only psychic (or psychological) but also economic, political, and cultural. The history of the world would clearly demonstrate that “whenever one group exploited another in the economic sphere, they first created psychic exploitation by infusing inferiority complexes in the minds of the exploited mass” (Ibid, p. 61). In other words, one must observe that “in each case of economic exploitation, psychic exploitation was the foundation.” As is the case in any and all forms of colonialism, the history of humanity could thus be summarized, from Sarkar’s perspective, as the “continuous and cunning attempt to create inferiority complexes in the minds of the exploited.”

Once coloniality is conceived as the other side of modernity, barbarism is likewise perceived as the other side of humanism, whose historical manifestation is revealed to be “an ideology of lies, a perfect justification for pillage” according to the French existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre in the preface to the book *The Wretched of the Earth* (*Les Damnés de la Terre*, 1961), which was written by the Martiniquan psychiatrist Frantz Fanon, an intellectual and militant of the decolonization movement (Fanon, p. 25). A contemporary of Sarkar, Fanon associated the process of decolonization with the birth of a “new humanity” and the rise of a “new humanism:”

This new humanity cannot do otherwise than define a new humanism both for itself and for others. It is prefigured in the objectives and methods of the conflict. A struggle which mobilizes all

classes of the people and which expresses their aims and their impatience, which is not afraid to count almost exclusively on the people’s support, will of necessity triumph. The value of this type of conflict is that it supplies the maximum of conditions necessary for the development and aims of culture. (Ibid., p. 246)

According to Fanon, a new humanism would thus be “prefigured” in the revolution enacted by a new humanity that must be liberated in order to transform “the heavy darkness in which we were plunged” into the “new day which is already at hand” (Ibid., p. 311). Yet even before Fanon called for a new humanism, the Indian philosopher Manabendra Nath Roy had already proposed a “radical humanism” akin to decolonial theories and practices and apart from capitalist and communist ideologies. Interestingly enough, Roy is even said to have originally used the term “decolonial,” implying a process of economic and political independence.¹ In the aptly titled manifesto *New Humanism* (1947), Roy acknowledges that “the civilized world needs a new hope, a new faith, a new ideal – a new philosophy of revolutionary theory and practice suitable for the conditions of the time” (p. 6). Combining aspects of individualism with tenets of socialism, such a new and “revolutionary” philosophy would be defined by rationalism, moralism, and universalism. Nonetheless, as Fanon would later affirm, the new humanism was yet to be realized and could only be established by force of will. As Roy states in the manifesto:

¹ In an article titled “Process of Social Change in India Under The Colonial & Decolonial Era – An Analysis of Changing Rural-Urban Complex,” the authors K. C. Panchanadikar and Jalu M. Panchanadikar affirm that “the term decolonial was originally used by the late M. N. Roy” (p. 9). See *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (September, 1965), pp. 9-26 (18 pages).



But a new philosophy of revolution, suitable for our age, is yet to arise as the beacon light for civilised humanity. The new philosophy must be able to destroy what remains of the moral sanction of the status quo, by providing an idea of a new social order to inspire all those disgusted with the present state of affairs. It must also indicate new ways of revolution appropriate to the needs of the time. While the concrete steps for social transformation must differ from place to place in accordance with prevailing condition, the movement for freedom, if it is to succeed, must outgrow its sectarian class character and be inspired by the Humanist spirit and cosmopolitan outlook. (p. 32).

With its idealist rhetoric of freedom, therefore, such a “new philosophy of revolution,” according to Roy, must ultimately be inspired by “the traditions of Humanism and moral Radicalism” (p. 33).

The revolutionary, decolonial perspectives that gained strength as of the 1950s and 1960s are reflected in the neohumanism proposed by Sarkar, who is rumored to have known or even mentored Roy in his youth, precisely when the latter was elaborating his radical new humanism.¹ Regardless of any unresolved

questions of influence, Sarkar indeed echoes the thoughts and feelings both of Roy regarding a “new hope” and of Fanon regarding a “new day” by saying that “[h]owever dense the cimmerian darkness may be, the crimson dawn must follow.”¹ In Sarkar’s view, we are actually at the threshold of a new era, the “age of Neohumanism:”

So ours is the age of Neo-humanism – humanism supplying elixir to all, one and all. We are for all, and with everything existent we are to build up a new society, a Neohumanistic society. (Sarkar, 2020, p. 221-222).

If Roy’s new humanism would promote freedom “for all” and Fanon’s new humanism would characterize a new humanity “for itself and for others,” Sarkar’s neohumanism would be for “one and all.” While Roy strives for a “new social order” and Fanon aspires to “cultural development and invention,” Sarkar aims at

¹ This information about contacts between P.R. Sarkar and M. N. Roy is based on unverified accounts from the Ananda Marga Archives published in *Shri Shri Anandamurti: The Advent of a Mystery*, by Pranavatmakananda, Prabhat

¹ Excerpt from Shrii Shrii Anandamūrti, *Ananda Vārūi*



“building a new society.” Finally, and acknowledging their respective differences, all of them assert the need for “conflict” and “struggle,” both externally and internally, for the advent of a “new” culture or society. For Roy, the fight is both individual and social, with morality and rationality serving as the basis for the “quest for freedom” and the “search for truth” (Roy, p. 53). For Fanon, the conflict is both physical and psychological, since in addition to the use of force for the emancipation of the body, there is the use of effort for the decolonization of the mind. Finally, for Sarkar, the struggle is both spiritual and material, for beyond the liberation of the mind from its internal “enemies” (*śadripu*) and its external “bondages” (*aśtapasha*), there is socio-economic and political-cultural revolution.

Ultimately, as Sarkar emphatically states: “struggle is the essence of life” (Ānandamūrti, 2013, p. 323).

In one way or another, and just as in humanism, cultural development plays a significant role in the neohumanist society idealized by Sarkar, who founded Renaissance Universal (RU) in 1958 to inspire a “re-awakening” and establish a “new human society based on the principles of universal humanism” (Sarkar, 2012). As a fundamental part of this organization, the Renaissance Artists and Writers Association (RAWA) specifically promotes activities devoted to the dissemination of literature and the arts. Seeking to inaugurate a cultural rebirth through a new and other form of Renaissance humanism, Sarkar himself can

Neohumanism is definitely (re)configured as another form of knowledge, an “other” thinking, a transmodern and decolonial expression of the ancient tantric epistemology from which it was conceived and elaborated as a primarily spiritual and profoundly mystical philosophy.

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actually be considered a “Renaissance man,” or else a *homo universalis* (“universal man”), since in addition to discussing philosophy, linguistics, psychology, biology, ecology, sociology, history, politics, economics, etc., he composed a collection of over five thousand songs called the *Prabhāt Saṅgīta: Songs of the New Dawn*, several of which address neohumanist themes. The third song in the series, “Navyamánavatáder Gīta,” can precisely be translated as the “Song of Neohumanism:”

Calling all, I will sing the glories of this crimson dawn in the kingdom of divine light beyond the threshold of darkness.

The sky above is studded with stars, The air is intoxicated with fragrance. With all entities I exist, anointing my mind with the pollen of flowers.

Calling all, ...

This earth on which I walk is purer than the purest gold. In its green shade, all creatures are cherished Dancing, blessed with new life.

Calling all, ...¹

As in his other musical and poetic compositions, Sarkar even provides his own interpretation of the “purport” of the song as follows:

Darkness has come to an end, crossing the threshold at the edge of light. Now is the proper time to call all and announce that the crimson dawn has come. The beautiful sky is studded with

so many stars, the air is sweetly scented. The atmosphere, lithosphere, hydrosphere everything is closely related to me. All the flora and fauna I must preserve; I must save them from premature extinction because I love everything of this earth. I am a Neohumanist. I call one and all to come and create a new rhythm.

In the specific field of arts and literature, Sarkar also elaborated on what he terms aesthetic science (*nandana vijñāna*), which corresponds in many ways to the modern Kantian aesthetics of the Enlightenment, and supra-aesthetic science (*mohana vijñāna*), which dialogues with the ancient metaphysical philosophy of yoga. In a seminal discourse given in 1957 titled “The Practice of Art and Literature,” he also discusses literature (*sāhitya*), whose characteristic would be “to move with (*sahita* = “with”) the trends of life” (Anandamúrti, 2013, p. 276). For the Indian philosopher, a (neo)humanist par excellence, literature would not be “the invention of the superficial side of social life” or “the colourful spell of fantasy,” but rather “the portrait of real life, an external expression of the internal workings of the mind, a bold and powerful expression of the suppressed sighs of the human heart.” To fulfill its artistic and social role, literature must thus “maintain a rhythm that reflects the dynamic currents of society.” But there would still be another way of interpreting the word *sāhitya*, according to Sarkar: “*sa + hita* = *hitena saha*, ‘that which co-exists with *hita* [welfare].’” As such, literature would be an art that “moves together with society and leads society towards true fulfillment and welfare by providing the inspiration to serve.” Accordingly,

¹ Source: [https://sarkarverse.org/wiki/Songs_1-999#3_\(17/9/1982\)_K_NAVYAM%03%81NAVAT%03%81DER_GIITA](https://sarkarverse.org/wiki/Songs_1-999#3_(17/9/1982)_K_NAVYAM%03%81NAVAT%03%81DER_GIITA)

Neohumanism defends the extraordinariness of human beings and aspires to liberate them from inferiority feelings and defects, thus inspiring the construction of a “new world.” ”

and in contrast to an aestheticism founded on classical humanism, the philosophy of ‘art for art’s sake’ is rejected and replaced by the principle of “art for service and blessedness,” which differentiates a transmodern and decolonial neohumanism from its modern/colonial predecessor and counterpart.

In addition to cultural creation, social development is also a fundamental aspect of neohumanism, whose universal realization would depend on the implementation of a new socioeconomic theory. For that purpose, in 1959 Sarkar conceived the revolutionary system of PROUT, the acronym for the Progressive Utilization Theory, which was expressly designed and propagated for the happiness and well-being of all of humanity. Conceived as a kind of “third way” or alternative to both capitalism and communism, two arguably (neo)colonialist and demonstrably flawed systems, PROUT aims at economic democracy through the “maximum utilization” and “rational distribution” of the full potential of planetary resources and those of the individuals and groups that form human society. Recalling the ideals of the “radical democracy” proposed by Roy, which would presuppose a “progressive satisfaction of material necessities” and prescribe a “progressively rising standard of living” (Roy, p. 59), the basic principles of the theory establish that the minimum necessities of a given time and place should be guaranteed to everyone, that any profit should be distributed to individuals according to criteria of merit, that socioeconomic success should only be defined as an increase in the minimum standard of living, and that physical wealth should not be accumulated by any individual without the prior consent of society as a whole (Cf. Anandamúrti, 1967).

Through initiatives such as RU or RAWA and theories such as PROUT, which effectively address and encompass the human and social sciences, Sarkar laid the foundations for a new,

other renaissance founded in neohumanism, a universalist philosophy that would represent not only a revision and reformulation, but also a renewal and reconsideration of classical humanism, especially with regard to the aforementioned “distorted” (pseudo)-humanism. In Sarkar’s own words:

Neohumanism is humanism of the past, humanism of the present, and humanism – newly explained – of the future. Explaining humanity and humanism in a new light will widen the path of human progress and will make it easier to tread. Neohumanism will give new inspiration and provide a new interpretation for the very idea of human existence. It will help people understand that human beings, as the most thoughtful and intelligent beings in this created universe, will have to accept the great responsibility of taking care of the entire universe, will have to accept that the great responsibility for the entire universe rests on them. (2020, p. 101)

Just as “there is nothing new under the sun,” according to the biblical book *Ecclesiastes*, there is apparently nothing new about neohumanism, defined by Sarkar as humanism “newly-explained and newly-sermonized” (Ibid.). However, as the renowned art critic Hal Foster argues in his famous essay “What’s Neo About the Neo-Avant-Garde?”, which examines how the so-called neo-avant-garde artists of the 1950s and 1960s revisit the so-called historical avant-gardes of the 1910s and 1920s, the repetition of a momentous movement may actually ensure its difference and enable its success (Cf. Foster, 1994). That being said, neohumanism is presumably a philosophy as new as it is old, which defends the extraordinariness of otherwise ordinary human beings and aspires to “liberate” them from “all inferiority feelings and defects,” thus inspiring the construction of a “new world.” (Sarkar, 2020, p. 102). If one considers that the current world is on the verge of a political-

By reiterating that human essence is actually divine and is not distinct from animal, vegetable, or mineral essence, neohumanism thus proposes that the same universal consciousness, the same immaterial energy, is both transcendent and immanent in everything and everyone, and that it is based on love.



economic crisis and on the brink of a socio-environmental catastrophe, it must be recognized that “human beings of today are following a defective path” and that there is “a desperate need for a change in direction” (Ibid., p. 106). Perhaps the “only remedy” is really neohumanism, in a strict or broad sense. By reiterating that human essence is actually divine and is not distinct from animal, vegetable, or mineral essence, neohumanism thus proposes that the same universal consciousness, the same immaterial energy, is both transcendent and immanent in everything and everyone, and that it is based on love. With this visionary and even revolutionary discourse, neohumanism is definitely (re)configured as another form of knowledge, an “other” thinking, a transmodern and decolonial expression of the ancient tantric epistemology – or science of yoga – from which it was conceived and elaborated as a primarily spiritual and profoundly mystical philosophy:

[A]ccording to Neohumanism, the final and supreme goal is to make one’s individual existential nucleus coincide with the Cosmic Existential Nucleus (nádabindu yoga, in the language of Tantra). As a result, the unit being’s entire existential order becomes one with the Controlling Nucleus of the existential order of the Supreme Entity of the Cosmological order, and that will be the highest expression of Neohumanism. That Neohumanistic status will save not only the human world but the plant and animal worlds also. In that supreme Neohumanistic status, the universal humanity will attain the consummation of its existence. Then nothing will be impossible for human beings; they will be able to do anything and everything. (Ibid., p. 107-108)

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Neohumanism: **Panacea for Global Malaise**

By Professor Aditya Mohanty

THE GLOBE IS engulfed in an unprecedented crisis. Scientific and technological advancements have turned the planet into a global village, as it were. Natural barriers posed by mountains, oceans, deserts and intractable terrains have thinned into insignificance. Limitations of space and time have been greatly overcome. People have access to the global corpus of knowledge through the web. But the striking irony is that man has created artificial divides in the name of race, nationality, language, religion, sect, and community. For our ancestors, wandering in the forests in quest of food and shelter, the obstacles were posed from without, in the form of extremities of weather, wildfire, ferocious animals, natural barriers like mountains and forests.

But today, the threat has its genesis from within. Though globalization has become a stark reality in the physical sphere and economic domain on account of international trade and commerce, exchange of technical know-how, digital revolution the artificial divides stand as veritable constraints on the way to global co-existence and harmony. The paradox is that though humans have become enormously empowered, the means of empowerment threaten our very survival on the planet. The social and political institutions, created for the good of man work out towards their detriment.



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At the end of the day, mankind is left with two exclusive alternatives, i.e. either to live together as part of a global community or court mass extinction. But this does not have to lead to pessimism.

The darkest part of the night awaits a new dawn. The cosmos emerged out of primeval chaos. In the social domain, crisis serves as the

Actuated by socio-sentiment, fundamentalists give the clarion call to their fellowmen regardless of the regions they live in, 'Hindus world unite. Muslim of the world unite'. It leads to clear polarization in the form of religious divides.

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In the cosmic labyrinth, every fabric is bound up with every other. Any rupture in a micro part is sure to have its bearing on the whole. The wellbeing of the whole presupposes the wellbeing of parts.



catalyst of transformation. Given the fact of extreme decadence in every walk of life and that the social structures are falling apart, these are, perhaps, pointers to the coming of a new era. Interestingly, cure precedes crisis. The antidote of a malady exists before the onset of the malady: food precedes hunger. Food is prepared in the mother before a newborn sees the light of the day. Food and water were available much before the advent of humans on Earth. The new age ideas are already in place to address the crisis, looming large before humanity.

In the frantic bid to come out of the blinding darkness, humanity has tried alternative paradigms which have betrayed their inherent inadequacies and limitations leading to a paradigm crisis. There is the necessity of a holistic paradigm which can pave the way for global co-existence. The crisis today is neither lack of natural resources, nor overpopulation because Mother Earth cannot have a population that she cannot feed. The crisis pertains to human psyche. It is essentially a crisis of values. Values serve as the protasis of synthesis. Values constitute the core of 'culture'. Culture is the elan vital of civilization. Devoid of culture, a civilization meets its inevitable doom. Values bring about the sense of refinement and subtlety in our thinking and action. They impart sense of goal, thereby, the sense of direction. They help one perceive unity beneath the apparent diversities, and serve as the axis for resolution of conflicts. The nature of value depends on the nature of composition of the collective body and exigencies at hand. Given the fact that we live in a globalized world that calls for the necessity of a holistic 'value-paradigm'.

Neohumanism is a holistic socio-economic-spiritual paradigm enunciated by Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar which spells out the modalities of

the ethics of 'live and let live'. It is based on the metaphysical vision that the Universe has its origin from a singular source and the gamut of evolution tends to converge to a singular destination. Interestingly, the point of origination and destination are one and the same. Creation is the progression from one to many and many to one, rightly termed as *Advetadvadetadveta Vada* by Sarkar.¹ Since the universe has its origin from a primordial matrix which is of the nature of pure-consciousness, everything animate and inanimate is potentially conscious and possesses 'mind'. This serves as the ontological basis for building a society whereof human beings, the most developed creatures on the planet, have the capacity to perceive this pristine truth and act accordingly. Though apparently things and beings are different and disparate, they share identical essence at the core. This lends rationale to the ethical claim that everything has its *existential-value* or *intrinsic-value*, irrespective of its utility-value for the humans. Every part, howsoever tiny and microscopic, does contribute to the harmony of the whole. Any harm to the part is sure to jeopardize the health and harmony of the whole. Neohumanism is based on the perception that everything is related to every other thing and Nature is an organic whole. In the cosmic labyrinth, every fabric is bound up with every other. Any rupture in a micro part is sure to have its bearing on the whole. The wellbeing of the whole presupposes the wellbeing of parts. Though apparently different, things and beings are wedded to one

¹ This view of progression is part of Sarkar's concept of *Brahmacakra*, the cycle of Brahma, which the movement of creation away from God, from the "subtle" to the "crude", from consciousness to matter, and then from the crude to the subtle, back to God again. From *Baba's Grace, Discourses of Shrii Shrii Anandamurti*, Ananda Marga Publ. 1973.



another either proximately or remotely. Besides, it underlines the fact of interdependence of things and beings. In the food chain, the higher lives on the lower. Knowingly or unawares, we share underlying affinity with one another. Human beings give out carbon dioxide which sustains plants and plants give out oxygen which has survival-value for human beings. We live on vegetation. The trees and plants live on nutrients available under the soil. *As above, so below.* All existents, from a tiny atom across solar system and galaxy have striking structural identity. The state of nature exhibits grand design, characterized by harmony and uniformities. The fact of inter-dependence and inter-relatedness provides the rationale why man must play the role of a steward in extending his protective love and nu for much of this for the non-humans.

Such a social order can be in, only when we succeed in addressing the constraints or bottlenecks that foster distinction, disparity, and artificial divides in form of geo-sentiments, socio-sentiments, and humano-sentiment. Man is a creature with instincts, sentiments and reason. Instinctive propulsions are bound up with

organic nature of man. Sentiments are more psychic than physical. Under the sway of sentiments, 'mind' runs after the pleasurable, irrespective of consequences. 'Sentiments do not have the backing of 'reason'. 'Reason' is the faculty of discrimination that helps one have the sense of right and wrong, propriety, and impropriety in respect of both 'ends' and 'means'. When sentiments exert their spell on human mind, 'reason' or rational considerations get eclipsed. On the contrary, when 'reason' is in command, the influence of sentiments gradually get weakened. 'Reason' is a double-edged sword. It can be used and abused as well. When abused, man degenerates to a state which turns out to be more harmful than the animal counterparts. Faculty of 'Conscience' is nothing other than the 'awakened-reason' wherein 'reason' is harnessed in the pursuits of the 'righteous', 'good' or the 'noble'.

The sentimental attachment for a geographical region prevents one from thinking beyond the interests of the people living in one's region. Under the sway of 'geo-sentiment' one remains obsessed with the wellbeing of people

belonging to one's region, having been blissfully oblivious and indifferent to the concerns and interests of people living in other regions. Geo-sentiment finds its expression in the form of geo-religion, geo-economics, geo-patriotism and so on. When one is driven by geo-religious sentiment one tends to consider a particular place to be holy and a particular river to be sacred. If God is omnipresent, then every place is place is holy. The very idea of going on pilgrimage to holy places is devoid of any rationale whatsoever. The belief that a holy dip in a particular river shall cleanse our sins is grossly unfounded and misleading. Goaded by geo-economic sentiment, a politician, in order to woo the electorate, may go in favour of establishing a steel plant in his area, even though the raw materials like iron ore and ancillary facilities are not available in the vicinity. Under the influence of geo-patriotism, people think in terms of securing and promoting the interests of people living within a national boundary, ignoring the interests of people of the neighboring countries.) Geo-patriotism takes the form of jingoism (blind national sentiment).

Geo-sentiment can be countered by arousing the dormant rationality in people and encouraging them to have access to knowledge of 'truth' through proper study and critical reflection. Rationality is the unique possession of human beings which distinguishes them from the non-humans. Animal existence is more physical than psychic whereas human existence is more psychic than physical. Presence of rationality helps one distinguish between right and wrong, good and bad, pleasurable and the preferable. With the rise of rationality, the influence of geo-sentiments begins to wane.

Wider than 'geo-sentiment' is 'socio-sentiment, where man thinks in terms of the interests of the community one lives in. Though wider in scope, it results in ethnic, religious, communal discords and dissensions and turns out to be more baneful for the society at large. Actuated by socio-sentiment, fundamentalists give the clarion call to their fellowmen regardless of the regions they live in, '*Hindus world unite. Muslim of the world unite*'. It leads to clear polarization in the form of religious divides. Socio-sentiment takes the form of colonialism when people of a particular country try to use another country for providing raw materials for production and in turn, use it as the market for

the finished goods, The imperialists inject inferiority complex in the minds of ruled so that they consider the ruling class to be superior in respect the language they speak, their costumes and customs. Spread of Pseudo culture is part of the malicious strategy of the rulers to divert the minds of the youth from the vital issues so as to perpetuate their exploitation. 'Dogma' is another artifice by which people are prevented from access to proper knowledge and consequent allegiance to truth. Dogmas regiment human mind and stifle free flow of human intellect. Dogmas and superstitions are to be fought out in fronts at every cost so that it makes room for a healthy and holistic human society. Socio-sentiment can be countered by fostering proto-spirituality whereby human mind, having been immune to the limiting influence of the geo-sentiments and socio-sentiment the thoughts and actions of people at large, are goaded by the principle of social equality (*samasamaja tattva*). There are two basic principles that trigger the rise of social, economic and political institutions and practices, namely, the 'Principle of selfish pleasure' (*atmasukha tattva*) whereof the interests of a particular group, community or section of people remain paramount and the sole driving force and the principle of social equality whereof every form of social venture is initiated and sustained by the vision of unity or oneness underlying apparent diversity and disparity.¹

Higher than socio-sentiment, is 'human-sentiment' whereby one identifies himself with people across the world, irrespective of the place they live in. Though it provides a unitary platform for human beings to live together, it ignores the interests of the non-humans. Human society is one and indivisible. This provides a shared vision by which people unite under a common banner with the conviction that they are offspring of the divine (*amrutasya putrah*) and possess the same essence at the core, irrespective of peripheral differences with regard to physiognomy, ethnicity, nationality, caste colour, creed, gender etc.

Existence and wellbeing of the human species is out and out parasitic on existential wellbeing of the non-humans. Neohumanism grows out of the inherent inadequacies of 'humanism' which makes room for inter-creature conflicts, i.e. man versus the non-humans as the

¹ Sarkar, P.R., *The Liberation of Intellect—NeoHumanism*. Kolkata: Ananda Marga Publications, 1991.

Neohumanism construes the universe to be the patrimony; therefore, it leaves no room for disparity, discrimination and exploitation. Rather it paves the way for the creed and credo of 'live and let live'.



former seeks to live at the cost of the latter. Neohumanism is a cosmo-centric or God-centered ideology vis-à-vis the self-centered, matter-centered and dogma-centered ideologies that have ruled the roost. The self-centered ideology, like Capitalism, is sustained by the propensity of acquisition (*pipilika vritti*) which eventually leads to exploitation of majority by the minority. The intelligent minority live at the cost of the majority leading to progressive polarization, with the opulent on the one hand and impoverished on the other. The matter-centered ideology like Communism construes 'matter' as the ultimate reality and 'economic conditions' to be the sole determinants of social change. Obsession with 'matter' tends to the degeneration human mind and prevents its expansion. There remains no room for cultivation of subtler ideation and expansion of human mind. This eventually results in 'Individualism' in the name of promotion of 'collective wellbeing'. Dogma-centered ideologies make room for the reign of fundamentalism and divide humanity. Humanism has been made a mute witness to illicit legacy of the self-centered, matter-centered and dogma-centered ideologies. Hence, there is the necessity of Cosmo-centered or God-centered ideology, which construes every creation to be the unmistakable expression of one primordial reality. Despite differences in respect of names (*nama*) and forms (*rupa*) everything at the core, is holy and divine. Everything is bound up with every other thing by the bond of cosmic fellowship. Neohumanism construes the universe to be the patrimony; therefore, it leaves no room for disparity, discrimination and exploitation. Rather it paves the way for the creed and credo of 'live and let live'.

Human beings, on account of possessing more developed psyche, bear the onus of leading

the rest of creation under their stewardship. This seminal awareness constitutes the focal vision of neohumanism. Neohumanism, spells out a viable alternative to Capitalism, Communism. Neohumanism is tempered by the vision of 'oneness'. Since every created thing and being is veritable expression of the supreme subjectivity (*Paramapurusa*), everyone deserves to be looked upon as form of the divine, and therefore to be treated with love and dignity. Sarkar doesn't stop at giving only an ideological blueprint but spells out the modalities of translating it into a living reality by giving a socio economic program, an appropriate educational module, and an exhaustive roadmap for social engineering, so that a cosmic society based on love and fellowship can be a living reality.

Neohumanism would remain a mere ideal or a utopia unless there is expansion of the human mind. Besides enunciating a sound and holistic paradigm, Sarkar goes ahead by emphasizing that the human psyche has to be expanded to imbibe the neohumanistic vision. So, there is a necessity of the practice of spirituality leading to the progressive expansion of 'mind' on account of which the frontier of empathy is broadened and there is increasing identification with the so called 'other'. Eventually, one finds oneself at peace with the rest of the creation. This is the state of perfect spirituality where one realizes the cosmic relatedness and interdependence, thus feeling the life-throb in every living entity as well as in those that are apparently inanimate or lifeless. When one is established in this state, 'Neohumanism' becomes the way of life and the order of the day. Where people live in loving fellowship with flora and fauna and even inanimate objects, then only one can claim that we have an ideal society with 'man' at humans as the protective mentor of one and all.





Shrii Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar on Ecology:

THE FOREST MUST BE SAVED

LED BY THE URGE of self-interest, human beings are neglecting ecology at every step. We have to remember that the sky, the air, birds, hills, wild animals, reptiles, insects and flies, fish, marine creatures and aquatic plants are all bound by an inalienable bond. Human beings are only a part of that vast common society. No one can survive to the exclusion of others. Not even humanity. By foolishly destroying the forest, wild animals, annihilating the fish and the birds, no possible human interest could be served. Whoever is born on this earth dies. One only survives on this earth for the period allotted to one by nature. As a result of human

folly, many creatures and geological phenomena will not survive for that period. Long before their natural end, they will be swallowed up by eternity. Humanity through its own madness has annihilated numerous creatures and objects and has thus prepared its own funeral pyre. This act of sheer short-sightedness is intolerable. People will have to be alert henceforth. They must shape their thoughts, works and plans in accordance with the science of ecology. There is no other way left open to them.

17 June, 1984. From *Neohumanism in a Nutshell Part 2*, and *Birds and Animals, Our Neighbours*, both by Ananda Marga Publications.



Shrii Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar (1922-1990)

Shabda Cayanika

On the 8th of September, 1985, Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, began an extraordinary series of Sunday lectures in his native Bengali that would eventually fill a total of twenty-six volumes over the next five years. The title he gave to this series was *Shabda Cayaniká*, which translates into English as “A Collection of Words”. The discourses begin with letter a and continue on alphabetically. What results, then, is neither an encyclopedia, nor a dictionary, but something unique to the fields of scholarship and literature.

The author uses the platform of the word as a point of departure to take the reader on a journey through all the varied landscapes of human knowledge – history, geography, medicine, science, art, religion, philosophy, etc. – and in the

process adds the indelible stamp of his own unique intellect, enriching our experience with new ideas and enabling us to see our human heritage in a way we have never been able to before.

Like most great authors, he is a consummate storyteller, using a seemingly inexhaustible supply of anecdotes, personal experiences and stories to capture the reader’s interest and lead him or her effortlessly through the garden of human knowledge. Along the way, the author enriches all modern descendants of Samskrta language such as Hindi, Bengali and others.

The following article is excerpted from *Shabda Cayanika Part 1*, Ananda Marga Publications.



From the Unmanifest to the Manifest

By Shrii Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar

AMONG ALL MUNDANE expressions, the sound a plays the chief role. In different layers, expressed or unexpressed, we find the a sound predominant. Just as one name of Prakṛti is Pradhána [Chief], so can we call the science of sound a *ádhárita* [based on a].

The sound a is the original seed of the creation. The mantra of creation, a, is gradually transformed into the mantra of preservation, u. And this mantra of preservation, u, gradually, with the passage of time, loses its momentum and sinks down into the final inertness [[of ma]]. But this is not the end of expression. Again, there is a new awakening, a new arising. That also happens through a; it is the play of that same a.

The seed of creation, a, is the first sound, the first letter of the alphabet. When we put together the first letter of the alphabet, a, and the last letter, kṣa, we get the akṣamálá [alphabet], also known as the varṇamálá [garland of letters].

Akṣa means “to delineate”. That is why, in Sanskrit, we use akṣámśha for the English word “latitude”. One sound gradually gets lost and within the melody of that loss is born another sound. A is the hidden source of all words and all sounds in this elliptical expressed universe.

The creation had arisen, sound had permeated the firmament, but in the unit body, the unit mind, the vibration of sound had not yet come – there was such an age. In that age ideas

were expressed with the help of gestures; this still continues today in the case of mute creatures and insects for the purpose of channelizing their internal feeling and realization towards others through their rhythmic flows of acquired experience.

Even after the advent of language, gestures remained. They are there today and will remain forever. As thought proceeds step by step towards greater subtlety, the intellect evolves a sharper language and subtler and subtler gestures – and it will go on doing so. Even today, when we want to show that it is hot we move our hand in a fan-like motion. When we want to show we are thirsty, we cup our palms and use a water-drinking gesture. At one time this was indispensable because the support of language was missing.

Movement is the dharma of the universe, both of the unit and of the collective. The creation is sustained in the rhythm of movement. Thus one name for the play of creation is jagat (*gam + kvip = jagat*), “that whose nature is to move”; another name is saṁsára (*saṁ – sr + ghaiṇ = saṁsára*) or “that which gradually moves away”. In this movement is hidden the measure of life, the grandeur of existence. The more one’s existence is vibrant with noble deeds, the more that existence is unique and splendid. But it is important to note that the old root verbs for



“move” began with a vowel – either a or one of its closely related sounds. In the very ancient language, *ejati* was often used in place of *gacchati*; besides this, we also see the roots *yati* (*i-á-ti*), *átati*, and so on. Similar roots were *aj* and *an* – in both of these, movement and the possibility of movement were understood. The primordial phase (pre-embryonic stage) of creation was indicated by the root *an*.

The modern root *cal* originated much later, in the middle of the Vedic era. The root *cal* signifies “motion” – “advancement”. Thus, in differing circumstances it was used as both *parasmaepadii* and *átmanepadii*¹ (in modern Sanskrit its *átmanepadii* form has almost completely disappeared). Anyhow, when we add the suffix *shatr* to the root *cal* in *paraesmaepadii* we get the word *calat* which means “that which goes on moving”. And if the root *cal* is used in *átmanepadii* we get *calamána* (*cal* + *shánac*) which also means “that which is in a state of motion”.

The root *an* is more frequently used than *cal*. Its primary meaning is “to move” or “to come

and go”. When we add the suffix *ańdac* to *an* we get the word *ańda* [egg] which means “that which moves about unseen and becomes active when it comes into the open”. The suffix *ańdac* is commonly used to imply something whose nature is hidden.

Thus, the etymological meaning of the word *ańda* is “that which is on the path of movement or emergence or expression”. The Cosmic *citta* or done “I” of the Supreme Entity is dominant as the causal factor and subordinate as the effect, thus it is the creation’s primordial manifestation. That conscious entity imbibes both possibilities, that of cause and that of effect, and thus the second stage is indicative of equality, that is, the causal factor and the effect factor maintain a state of equipoise or harmony, and the final or supreme state is subordinate in cause and dominant in effect, that is, where the causal factor dissolves into the effect, the effect is imbedded in the causal *a*, this is the third stage, the state of supreme negativity. That manifestation, or movement which emerges from the Great, that is, the all-expressive *kaosikii*

¹Terminologies of conjugation in Sanskrit grammar.

bindu [primordial point] – is the first qualified stage of vibration of that Supreme entity. Thus *a* is the original sound, the first seed, and it is the first manifestation of alphabetic expression. The first letter of the alphabet is *a*.

When the Great Entity, Brahma, is bound by *a*, then the word *brahmá* (*brahma + a = brahmá*) is used. *Brahmá* is not a separate state from the trinity of *Brahmá*, *Viśnú* and *Shiva* – it is the first stage of expression of the Supreme Consciousness where the causal factor is dominant in that cognitive bearing and the effect factor is only mildly expressed.

In the world of living creatures, those beings which are hatched from eggs we call *ańđaj* [oviparous]. This *ańđaj* is conceptually analogous to the *brahmáńđaj* [the created universe, literally “the cosmic egg”]; they are small editions of the *brahmáńđaj*. The Sanskrit-derived form of the word *ańđaj*, *ańđá*,¹ is prevalent throughout north India. *Brahmáńđaj* (cosmic egg)

It is not possible for creatures of the reptile group, that is, those who move by supporting themselves on their chest or ribcage, to carry a developed fetus in the womb. For this reason they carry eggs in their wombs. Though birds are technically not reptiles, when they fly they use their wings to cut through the air thereby putting a great deal of pressure on their chest. Due to this it is also not possible for them to carry a developed fetus in the womb and so they also carry and lay eggs.

Once an egg is laid, the embryo starts developing under the impetus provided by the egg’s contact with air, light and heat from the environment. When the developing fetus is fully mobile it pierces its shell and emerges into the outside world where it needs more heat than is normally present in the environment, so the mother bird or mother reptile helps the fetus develop by supplying warmth from her own body. Of course, not all creatures hatched from eggs require this extra heat. In such cases the mother abandons the egg once it is laid. In accordance with nature’s law, it does not feel any instinctive affection for the egg. For those eggs which require extra heat, however, it is the law of

nature that the mother feels an instinctive affection for the egg. If someone comes and takes the egg she will often chase after them.

Because egg-producing creatures need their chest and ribs for labour, it is not possible for them to breast-feed their offspring. Thus oviparous creatures do not produce breast milk; this is the natural law. Exceptions to this can be found in certain creatures from an earlier era when reptiles were making the transition to non-reptiles, becoming creatures who moved by means of their hands and feet. During that time some creatures were in an intermediate stage; for several hundred thousand years they continued to lay eggs, but at the same time they used to breast-feed their offspring in small amounts. Later, when they stopped laying eggs and started bearing their young, the amount of milk they fed their offspring increased.

Among the creatures we are familiar with, the cow family produces the greatest amount of milk for their offspring. They are also comparatively more intelligent than other creatures and they show more affection for their offspring. Interestingly, they cannot run very swiftly, while the deer group, which produces very little milk and shows less affection for their offspring, can run extremely fast. The antelope family (*bharal* (*niilgái*), alpaca, black antelope) falls somewhere in between the deer and cow families in all respects, including their size, their horns and their tails, even their excretory systems.

Bear in mind that while the word *niilgái* is similar to *gái* [cow], it is not a member of the cow family, nor is it a member of the deer family. It belongs to the antelope family. We often fall into the error of thinking that certain animals are either in the cow family or in the deer family when actually they are part of the antelope family. We can use the word *go-harin* [cow-deer] for the antelope family.

That rare member of the cat family known as the duckbill, which is found in Southeast Asia and certain parts of Australia, is a nearly extinct prehistoric creature. Though this fast-disappearing creature lays eggs, it also breast-feeds its offspring. Because it uses its chest area more for locomotion and other activities in comparison with other milk-producing creatures, it continues to lay eggs. But in comparison with reptiles and birds, it uses its chest less, and so can still breast-feed its children. Proper efforts should be made to save the duckbill from extinction.

¹ *Ańđaj* → *ańđá*; *đimba* → *đimba* → *đim*. The one exception among the north Indian languages is Gorkhali in which *đim* [egg] is called *phul* [flower]. In spoken Bengali, that which takes shelter in the mother’s womb in creatures who are not produced from eggs, is also called *phul*. When the child is born, the flower blossoms.

Among the aquatic creatures, fish are oviparous, the reason being that the way fish cut through water when they move is somewhat similar to the way reptiles slither along the ground or the way birds cut through the air. Thus, in the broader sense, they can also be considered reptiles. They also use their chest and ribs a great deal and so are unable to carry developed offspring¹ in their womb or breast-feed their young. Thus, according to the law of nature, they produce eggs.

There are other aquatic creatures, such as whales, seals and walruses, which use their chests and ribs less in their movements than fish do. Most probably, the whale was also once a land animal like the dolphin. Later, under the pressure of circumstance, they took to the water. Like the hilsa and the shark, they are not ancient aquatic creatures. Though they live in water they are not a species of fish. To call a whale a fish is a gross error. Therefore such creatures bear their young, breast-feed their offspring and, according to the natural law, have more affection for their progeny.

In other words, we see that those egg-producing creatures which do not incubate their eggs, also show no affection towards them. Those which incubate their eggs show comparatively more affection, and those creatures which bear their young and breast-feed them will even, in certain cases, not stop at sacrificing their lives for their offspring.

The crocodile is a land reptile – an ancient species from the Cretaceous age. Generally speaking, all members of this family are terrestrial by nature and all are egg-producing. The crocodile, fish-eating crocodile (mechokumiir), iguana (Gosáp. In Sanskrit godhá or godhiká, in indigenous Bengali gohárgil, goh, gosáp), girgíti [a type of lizard], tíktiki [a small house lizard], takśaka [a poisonous snake] (the word guisáp is used in East Bengal), ánjuni [also a type of lizard] – all these egg-producing creatures have a similar nature; they differ only in their level of cruelty. The man-eating crocodile is extremely ferocious. The rest of these creatures are also ferocious with the exception, to some extent, of the iguana which, despite being a meat-eater, has a somewhat timid nature. When they see people they will flee if they have

someplace to run. The Indian iguana is predominantly of two types: the black iguana and the golden iguana, both of which share this timid nature.

While it is true that the otter (in Sanskrit, udbirála [water-lion]) goes into water to catch fish, it is a land animal like the crocodile. Otters live near ponds or other water reservoirs, and they are milk-producing, not egg-producing. The Bengalee otter is somewhat smaller than the South American otter but it is more active and highly intelligent. Because it is a milk-producing creature, not egg-producing, it is, according to the law of nature, relatively keen-witted.

Normally, we observe that the young of any species are not fully developed at the time of birth. Whether human, dog, or cat, all are born in a helpless state, unable to hear or see. This helpless state is even more pronounced in egg-producing creatures. When tadpoles are hatched they cannot move properly. They need a tail in order to adjust with their environment. After adapting to their environment the tail falls off. From this we can deduce that the ancestors of the frog had tails.¹

However undeveloped milk-producing animals may be, egg-producing animals are even more so; by comparison they also show significantly less affection as well as other sentiments. Many do not even recognize their own children; those who do not hatch their eggs feel little or no affection and tend to be much more malicious by nature. Crocodiles become extremely vicious at a very young age.

Another characteristic of the egg-producing animals is that some of them, such as the shark and hilsa fish, are completely carnivorous, while you will not find a single completely carnivorous milk-producing animal. Tigers may not eat uncooked rice but they will eat cooked rice or bread; they may not eat raw vegetables but they will eat them if they are cooked, while the shark, hilsa fish, vulture and some hawks and owls (especially the white lakśmii owl) are extremely carnivorous.

Another characteristic of the carnivorous egg-producing animals is that their bodies have a high fat content and give off a strong odour. Those who are familiar with the hilsa fish know how strong a fish-smell it has. The reason for this is that the hilsa prefers rotten meat to fresh meat.

¹ Shávak [offspring] + lá + u = shavakal, shavakal → shaoyál → cháóal cháliá → chele [boy]. The word chele is not a native Bengali word at all; it is a Sanskrit derivative.

¹ Vi-aunga = vyaunga [frog], the one whose limbs are loose. In Sanskrit its synonyms are bhek, mañdúk, dardur.



The shark is the same way. It also has a very strong fish smell. People who eat shark often remark that it is similar to hilsa. It also has a high fat content. In fact, shark oil is used as a medicine (bear in mind that the shark is a fish, not a crustacean like crab or shrimp). The vulture's nature is quite similar. It prefers decomposed flesh to fresh meat.

It is worth mentioning again that such egg-producing creatures do not, for all intents and purposes, feel affection. Many do not even recognize their own children and some of them eat their own eggs.

Before the fetus is created, milk-producing animals produce an ovum in the mother's womb. Rather than producing an egg, however, a fetus develops. In the world of egg-producing creatures, especially birds, there are exceptions to this. Some of them can produce fetus-less or unfertilized eggs. Some varieties of ducks, especially, frequently lay unfertilized eggs. With such eggs there is no possibility of offspring, even if they are incubated. Commonly such eggs take longer to spoil. Many people who have a weakness for eggs, but do not want to harm a living embryo, are partial to taking unfertilized eggs; they contend that this way they are not killing a fetus. They should keep in mind that while it is true that they are not killing a fetus, they are still at fault for taking non-vegetarian food, because these unfertilized eggs still contain the defects of non-vegetarian food.

Snakes lay a great many eggs at one time but because they eat their own eggs very few of them have an opportunity to hatch. The result of this is that there is a check or a limit to the number of snakes – this is nature's arrangement.

Among fish, those whose offspring remain helpless at the time of birth show an instinctive affection for their young and keep them nearby, often sheltering them in some part of their body.

It is quite normal for snake-mothers to eat their own eggs. It is not full meal for them, perhaps, but rather more like a light tiffin. Speaking of tiffin, that reminds me of a small story. It happened during British rule, when I was in my early twenties. I was taking the train from Jamalpur to Calcutta with a childhood friend, Suvimal Cakravartii (Bhondá) and his youngest sister, Rainjaná Cakravartii, alias Khendi.¹ Seated next to me was a gentleman travelling from Muzaffarpur to Calcutta. Beside him was a basket filled with Muzaffarpur's famous sháhii lichus. Suvimal's sister, Rainjaná, was a very good girl but she lacked a little common sense and had even less consideration of time, place, and person. At the time she must have been about nine.

Suddenly Rainjaná, alias Khendi, spoke up – “I... I... w-want a... a... l-lichu.”

At first, Suvimal pretended not to hear and a few minutes passed. But when “I... I... w-want... a... a... l-lichu.” started again, this time with added hand and foot gestures, in other words, when she began flailing her arms and legs and saying, “I... I... w-want... a... a... l-lichu,”

¹ In the construction of khendi [snub-nosed], i is used because someone can only be khándá or khendi by birth. Khándá's wife is never called khendi in this sense. If she was it would be written khendi. Because they are related by birth, didi [elder sister], mási [maternal aunt], pisi [paternal aunt] and similar words use i, while in-laws such as kakii [paternal uncle's wife] and mámi [maternal uncle's wife] use ii because they are not only feminine gender but feminine as well.

Suvimal found himself in a predicament. He told her: “You just had a full breakfast and you’re hungry again? Stop it. Be quiet.”

“I’m stopping, I’ll be quiet,” Rainjaná replied. “How can I say anything if I’m afraid of you! But I still want a lichu.”

Again Suvimal answered: “You stuffed yourself with breakfast and now you want to eat again!”

Rainjaná answered back. “No one gets stuffed at breakfast! Even if someone can eat sixteen nimkis [a salty snack], he never takes more than two or three for breakfast. Even if he wants to, he’s too embarrassed.”

Suvimal retorted, “And you’re not embarrassed at all?”

Rainjaná replied, “Why be embarrassed in front of people on a train? We see them today, then we never see them again. Why should I be embarrassed?”

“After an hour or two we’ll reach Bhagalpur,” Suvimal replied. “I’ll get you some khájá [a type of milksweet] there. After that comes Sahebganj. There you can have some kálákánd [another type of milksweet], okay? Now keep quiet.”

Rainjaná (meaning Khendi) said. “I said I’d be quiet. How can I say anything if I’m afraid of you. But I’m going to eat and I want lichus. I’ll eat some khájá in Bhagalpur and some kálákánd in Sahebganj, but now I’m going to eat lichus.”

Suvimal lowered his voice: “Lichus aren’t available in the railway station. Tomorrow morning I’ll get you some lichus when we arrive in Calcutta.”

“So what if they’re not available in the station,” Rainjaná replied. “They’re available right here in the train. This fellow here has some.”

When he heard this, Suvimal’s nose and ears started turning red from embarrassment. He did not know what to say.

When the gentleman who was traveling with us in the train saw how stubborn Rainjaná was, he took some lichus from his basket and put them in her hand saying, “Now my child, eat. That’s what food is for. What a nice girl you are! Most people would’ve been too embarrassed to open their mouth, but you weren’t embarrassed at all. What a nice girl, as if M^á Laksmii [the goddess of fortune] herself had left heaven and come down to earth. I have a boy myself; there’s a little difference in age between the two of you, but nonetheless I would be glad to have M^á Laksmii

in my house as my daughter-in-law. That would really be nice.”

Suvimal tactfully started making a few inquiries. When Suvimal heard his replies he realized that the large-hearted gentleman had meant to console Rainjaná but had just gone a little too far. This time I noticed that his neck as well as his nose, eyes, and mouth had become red.

Meanwhile Rainjaná was totally engrossed in eating the lichus. Finally she finished her lichus and began licking her fingers. Suvimal became even more embarrassed. After a few moments he said testily, “Enough, come wash your hands.”

“By the time I’m done licking my fingers,” Rainjaná replied, “we’ll be in Bhagalpur. There I’m going to eat khájá. And by the time I’m done eating the khájá we’ll be in Sahebganj and I’m going to eat kálákánd there. When I’m done eating the kálákánd I can go for all three washings at once.”

Suvimal became even more heated: “Stop being so greedy. Only a foolish girl can talk like that!”

Rainjaná replied, “You’re calling me foolish? Didn’t you hear that I’m going to be married soon? That fellow there said I was Laksmii herself. If the age difference wasn’t so much, I’d be married right here in the train.”

Suvimal got even angrier. “Where did all this foolishness come from? Nobody gets married in a train! Have you ever heard of it or seen it?”

“Why not,” Rainjaná answered. “I’m sure if you looked you could find a priest or two in the train. What would you say if the bridegroom was here? Just because someone is not here, does it mean that you don’t show them any respect? I bet you’re thinking that because there’s nobody to do ulu¹ then there can’t be a wedding! I know how to do ulu myself.”

At that moment Suvimal’s entire face became red. Even his chin had started turning a little red.

¹In Sanskrit the sound is hulu [a sound that Hindu women make during auspicious occasions]. I have heard certain pandits from Kerala use the word mukhavádyam also. The ancestors of Kerala’s Náyárs came to Kerala from Rarh in the year 534 BCE. Thus, like Bengal, the custom of making the ulu sound is also prevalent there as well. In some Bengalee villages the practise of doing ulu is also called jokár deoyá. In ancient Bengal, people used to make this sound during auspicious functions in order to protect against anyone present who might have been thinking harmful thoughts; in other words, it was used for all auspicious undertakings.

He was staring at the floor in embarrassment and I thought I could hear him muttering – “I would throw her out the window if it didn’t have bars.” I also thought I heard him mutter – “I wish the earth would open up and swallow me... how embarrassing!... how embarrassing!”

Seeing Suvimal’s condition, I could not keep quiet any longer. “Look, Khendi,” I said, “it’s getting late. Now stop!”

This time Rainjaná screamed, “You used my nickname in front of so many people! What will people think!”

“If people think something or say something, so what?”

“I’ll be embarrassed, that’s what!”

“So you also get embarrassed!”

“I don’t get embarrassed about food, but when it comes to my name I get embarrassed. I’ll teach you a lesson.”

“How are you going to teach me a lesson?” I asked.

“When we get back to Jamalpur I’m going to tell your grandmother everything. I’ll tell her that Dádá used my nickname in front of everybody in the train. And I’ll tell her that I was going to be married but after telling everybody my nickname I won’t be able to now. Then she’ll really scold you.”

“Do as you please,” I answered. “Now stop being so greedy. Put a lock on your mouth.”

“Do you see a keyhole in my mouth? Is there a lock hanging there that I can lock? What are you saying! I don’t understand you at all.”

Helplessly, I beat a retreat... I kept mum.

Now a word from much later, after independence. Suvimal is now a retired ICS officer. Rainjaná is a professor at a well-known college. She did her doctoral research on the use of the Bengali language in the Káchár Royal Court [now a district in Assam]. Dr. Rainjaná is now a very erudite woman. Though I rarely see her anymore, I still call her Khendi from old habit and she does not get angry. But I’m not divulging her secret nickname to strangers on the train either. If she does get angry, I have no reason to worry. To whom can she complain? My grandmother passed on many years ago.

Rainjaná’s husband, captain Basu, is a very sympathetic gentleman. For justifiable reasons, I would venture a guess that he feeds Rainjaná khájá and kálákánd regularly. And even if she does not ask, he does not forget to feed her lichus.

Rainjaná’s secret nickname, Khendi, has been hidden away from the public eye. I am also trying to forget it. And Suvimal is now justifiably proud of his sister. All’s well that ends well.

Oh yes, I forgot to mention one thing. At Rainjaná’s wedding, I gave her a pair of gold lichu earrings for her to wear.

Just as an egg matures by coming in contact with the earth’s light, heat and air, then gives way to a child that develops little by little in that same earth’s affectionate shade, and finally one day sinks down into eternal silence when its life-energy is spent, the brahmánda [Cosmic egg] emerges from the kaośikii bindu [primordial point] in the introversial phase (saiṅcara) as brahmá and is nurtured and grows in the affection and care of the universe where it finds no obstacle to its development. The one who provides that sweet touch every second and fraction-of-a-second, that preserving force is known as vaeśhnavii shakti or viśnumáyá. The seed of preservation is u. Just as a developed being reaches the end of its days and loses itself in silence, so will every molecule and atom of the created universe one day return from effect to cause. This return to its own original cause is called “death”. It is not destruction but a return to its cause. The force which effects this return to its cause is called shaevii shakti. The seed syllable (biija mantra) of shiva or “destroyer” is m. From the a of creation, the u of existence or preservation, and the m of dissolution, we get om. But it is perceived only in the expressed universe. Om emerges out of the unmanifest – this expressed universe is a finite island in an ocean of infinity.

There is no signifier for the unmanifest. Thus, only a point is used to indicate it. When this point of the unmanifest or nirguṅa state comes within the purview of the expressed universe, it is transformed into om. A crest is then used as the associated sign for this action of transformation. Thus, the point is the symbol of the unmanifest, the crest is the symbol of the movement from unmanifest to manifest, and om is the symbol of the expressed universe. Together they become ॐ. Thus it is not sufficient to say om. We should say ॐ.

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The Cycle of Inflation and the Price Spiral of the 2020s

By Ravi Batra

THERE IS A well-known Chinese proverb: *May you live in interesting times*. With the onslaught of coronavirus in 2019, and its continuation in some form as late as 2023, our times are indeed interesting, nay nerve racking. Add to the mayhem of the virus, the unprecedented war between Russia and Ukraine, and the almost non-stop destructive weather-related events all over the world such as tornadoes, hurricanes, cyclones, snow storms, and you start wondering about the Chinese maxim: are these interesting times supposed to be good or bad.

Whether good or bad, history shows revolutions occur at such extraordinary moments. According to the law of social cycles, pioneered by my late teacher Shri Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, the era dominated by the wealthy, has always ended in a social revolution. Society is so polarized at such a juncture that the only way to resolve that polarization is a full-fledged revolt among the poverty-stricken masses.¹

This is how feudalism, the previous era of Western Society, ended. As a matter of fact, there are several similarities between the feudal age and the era of monopoly capitalism, the current system of production in the West.



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Feudalism lasted roughly from the 10th century to the 15th. This long period of history at first saw a major rise in living standards because of new technology and improving productivity, and Western economies grew in spite of almost a persistent state of warfare among feudal landlords. Laborers, known as the serfs, who were virtual slaves of these landlords also prospered and even won some freedoms from



oppressive work in a movement called commutation.

But then came Black Plague which, much like the modern-day coronavirus, decimated the population and reduced the supply of labor. The labor shortage sharply hurt farm output, increased farm prices, generated poverty, and created a highly polarized society. These were also what the Chinese call interesting times. Eventually things became horrendous and the only way out of this impasse was a series of peasant revolts that dethroned feudalism.

Current State of Society

The last days of feudalism are somewhat reminiscent of the current state of monopoly capitalism, especially the United States. American society has been increasingly polarized, mainly after the presidential election in 2020 and congressional elections in 2022. With former President Trump's indictment in April 2023, polarization grew by leaps and bounds. Furthermore, Poverty and wealth disparity have been scaling to new heights for a long time; in fact, since 1973 real wages have been sinking for a vast number of workers. Moreover, daily shooting incidents are increasingly common, which remind you of petty feudal warfare, while many people continue to insist on preserving their gun rights. A six-year-old boy shot a teacher in his school. On top of all, a new menace has emerged since early 2021—rising prices.

Nowadays, economists, especially the Federal Reserve, consider up to a 2 percent rise in the consumer price index (CPI) a normal state of affairs, something that is just natural to monopoly capitalism, which consists of large

firms controlling their prices and wages. Apple, Microsoft, Walmart, Pfizer, and Exxon among others are examples of such companies. These behemoths are not pure monopolies but they still exercise considerable influence over prices they charge consumers and wages they pay to their workers. So economists consider a 2 percent rate of inflation a natural phenomenon for modern-day capitalism.

After May 2021, however, the CPI began to rise at a faster rate, as shown by Figure 1, and crested at 9 percent in June 2022, which was the highest rate of inflation since 1981 and way above the tolerable rate. That woke up the economic profession. Ever since the 1970s, the US has adopted a culture of deficit financing, whereby a government budget shortfall is financed by money creation. It became clear in 2022 that the twin policy of giant federal budget deficits and high money growth that financed them had a major defect. Since then, inflation has eased somewhat but not completely. We will come back to this question later.

It is noteworthy that until May 2020, the CPI had been rising close to its natural rate of 2 percent. This is displayed in Figure 1.

The Cycle of Inflation

Prior to 1940 the CPI went up and down depending on the strength of the economy as well as the state of politics. During periods of war, prices would rise but then come down soon after the war. So essentially the CPI was the same between 1820 to 1940. Since 1940, however, prices have generally risen every year.² In spite of this, the US economy has been subject to a regular cycle of inflation. This cycle, believe it or not, began in the 1750s, ever since the data

appeared, even prior to American independence in 1776.

Historical statistics about prices started with the computation of WPI, which stands for the wholesale price index and is a measure of the average prices received by producers of commodities. So early inflation figures are provided not by CPI but WPI. This information is captured by Figure 2.

The data on WPI go as far back as the mid-18th century. When studying an economy over long time, it is customary to divide the time period into decades. The next step is to obtain the average WPI per decade, and then compute the decennial rate of inflation, or the inflation rate occurring over a 10-year period. When you plot these data, you obtain a graph such as that displayed in Figure 2. Clearly, in the long run inflation in America has moved through a cycle.

The character of inflation in the United States has changed drastically over time. As stated above, every burst of a price increase in the past met with an almost equal burst of a price decrease. But following 1940, prices have generally moved in only one direction — upward. Yet the long run nature of the inflation rate, which is a percentage change in a price index, has remained the same

The behavior of WPI and CPI in the 19th and early 20th century was very different from that in the late 20th century. However, with the cycle of inflation, starting as early as the 1750s, there is no such discrepancy. The cycle, which is

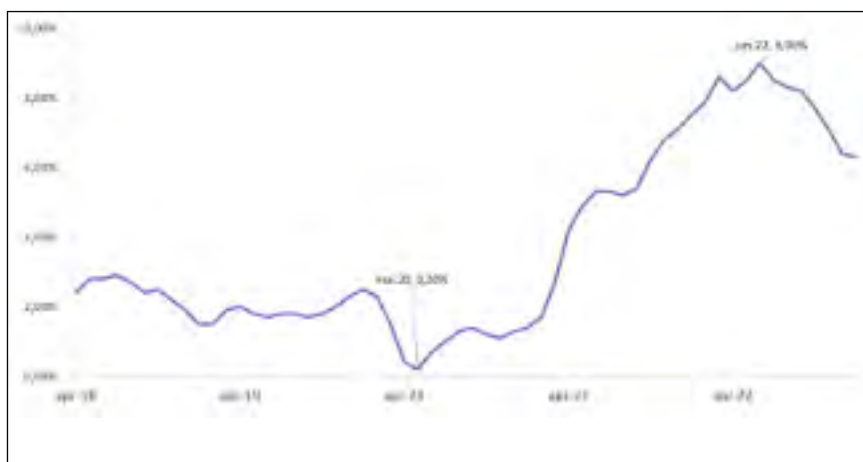
described by the price rise per decade, not just the average price like the CPI or the WPI, follows an oscillating path all through American history and reveals an amazing phenomenon. Except for the post-Civil War period, Figure 2 displays an incredible track, namely that at least over the past 200 years the rate of inflation reached a peak every third decade and then usually declined over the next two. As far as inflation is concerned there is no discontinuity between the 18th and 19th centuries on one side and the 20th century on the other.

Inflation first reaches a peak in the 1770s in Figure 2, then decreases over the next two decades and peaks again in the 1800s. It declines over the following two decades, cresting in the 1830s. This time the rate of inflation declines for only one decade, but still the subsequent peak appears 30 years later in the 1860s. Thus, the first four peaks of the cycle have followed an exact three-decade path.

Following the 1860s, the cycle hits an impasse, but begins anew with the 1880s, because within two decades another peak appears in the 1910s, which is the first inflationary peak of the 20th century. Three decades later the cycle crests in the 1940s, and then again in the 1970s. In the 1980s the rates of inflation plunge, just as the cycle prophecies.

From 1913 on, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) devised another measure of inflation, which is called the PPI or producer price index. This one is similar to WPI but it includes the

Figure 1: **The Inflation Rate from April 2018 to April 2023**



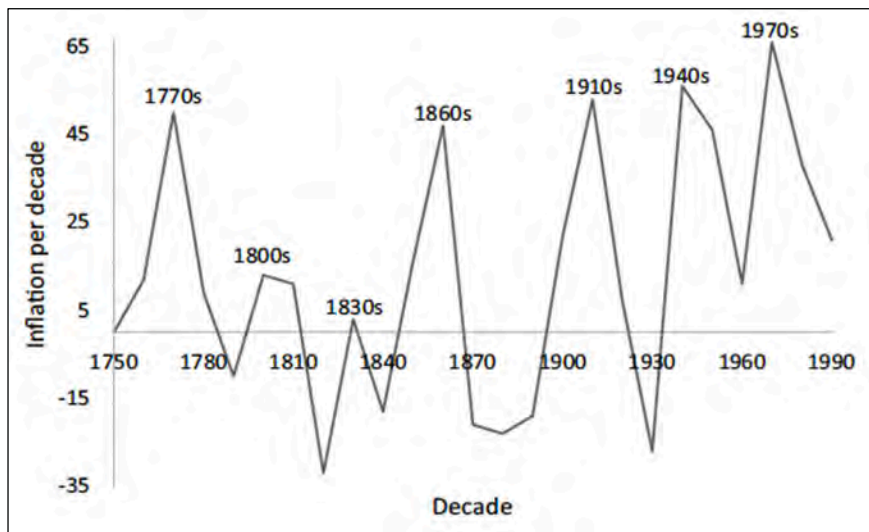
Source: Federal Reserve data, or *The Economic Report of the President, 2023*



prices received by producers of services and commodities. Hence it is a broader measure than the WPI. Figure 3 tracks the path of the PPI

from 1900 all the way to 2010s, and not surprisingly its message is the same as that of Figure 2, namely inflation reaches a peak every

Figure 2: **The Long-Run Cycle of WPI Inflation in the United States**



Source: Ravi Batra, *The New Golden Age*, Palgrave Macmillan, and *Historical Statistics of the United States*, 1975.

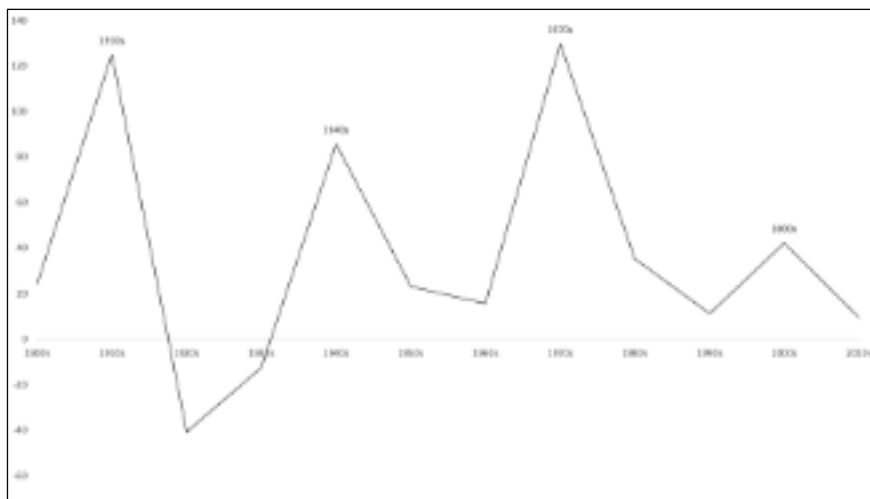
third decade. Note that since the PPI data starts from 1913, I have used the WPI data for the decade of 1900s.

supply. Since inflation is a sustained jump in prices over several years, then demand has to keep growing faster than supply for some time. The availability of money in the economy plays a crucial role in this connection. Thus, parallel to the cycle of inflation exists another neat arrangement of history, namely the long-run cycle of money growth. In other words, excessive

The Long Run Cycle of Money Growth

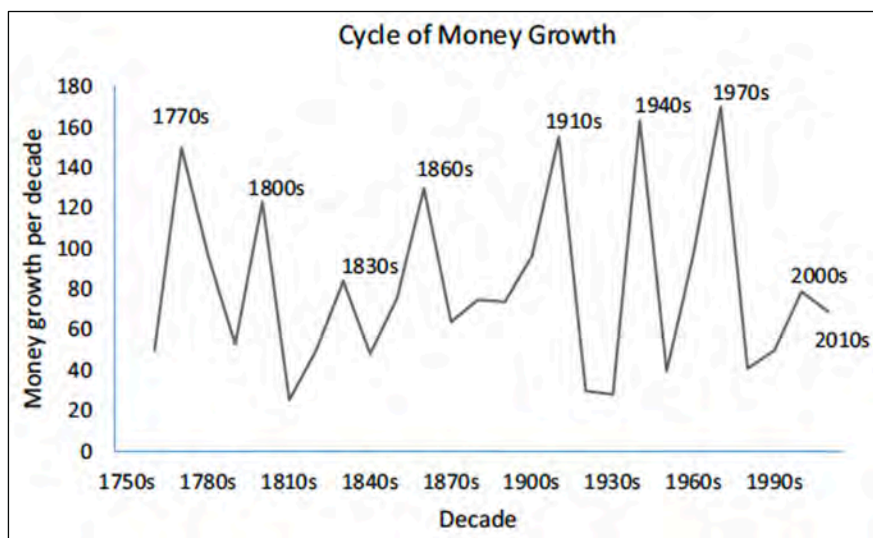
What causes inflation? Prices rise when demand for goods and services increases faster than their

Figure 3: **The Cycle of PPI Inflation in the United States Since the 20th Century**



Source: FRED, or the Bureau of Labor Statistics

Figure 4: **The Long-Run Cycle of Money Growth in the United States: 1750s–2010s**



Note: Except for the aftermath of the Civil War, money growth peaked every third decade in the United States. Source: *Historical Statistics of the United States, 1975*; *The Economic Report of the President, 2021*.



demand over supply fueled by money creation brings about a price spiral. So ever since the 1770s, as far back as the US data go, every third decade has also been a peak decade of money growth, with the singular exception after the 1860s, owing to the Civil War. There have to be too many dollars chasing too few goods for an enduring rise in the cost of living. It is just that simple. As you can see from Figure 4, this is precisely what has happened.

The cycle of money growth is easier to obtain than the cycle of inflation. Estimates of money supply come from Friedman and Schwarz,³ going as far back as the birth of the American nation in 1776. The data used are for every 10th year. A simple transformation of these observations into rates of change per decade then yields a vivid cycle.

The first peak of the cycle starts with the 1770s, which saw the birth of the American Revolution and an extraordinary use of the money pump to finance it. As you can see, all the peaks of the money cycle are also the peaks of the cycle of inflation in Figure 2. Similarly, the Civil War also disrupted both cycles.

The nation took about 20 years to recuperate, but once the economy's recovery was complete by the early 1880s, both cycles dutifully resumed

their rhythmical course. Within two decades money growth crested in the 1910s, then in the 1940s, followed again by the 1970s, and so on. To no one's surprise, in the 1980s and 1990s, money growth fell, and then surged again in the 2000s.

Money growth also peaked in the 2000s as is clear from Figure 3, and not surprisingly, it can be easily shown that both WPI inflation and PPI inflation also peaked in that decade. This has been a remarkable feature of the US economy, but not of other economies. But nowadays the US economy dominates all others in the globe. So American inflation also impacts the rest of the world.

Lessons of the Money Cycle

The money cycle has profound lessons for US history. First, money supply or wealth is the nucleus for most American people and institutions. Just as feudalism, capitalism is also in the age of acquirers, where wealth rules the roost. Second, both of the oldest cycles have similar peaks and valleys, and most of the peaks occur around major wars. The peak of 1770s is linked to the war for American independence that started in 1776 and lasted through that decade. War spending creates excess demand as

*Every good thing eventually becomes a dogma
in the hands of self-serving economists.* ””

well as the need for money creation, so money growth and prices jump at a fast pace. Is there a war around the peak of 1800s? Yes, there is: the Napoleonic Wars occurring in Europe but affecting the US economy all through the decade of 1800 to 1810, when US exports to Europe jumped sharply.

Both Britain and France met their domestic needs of food and cotton from imports from the United States, which in turn caused the American money growth and prices to soar. There was no significant conflict in the 1830s, and this may explain why both money growth and inflation register the lowest peak in the two cycles. Next comes the bloodiest conflict in America's annals: the Civil War of the 1860s. Here peaks of both cycles were the highest in the 19th century. However, the war all but destroyed the US economy, demolishing its normal pattern. This shock was so great that both cycles were disrupted. But the United States was resilient, as were the cycles. Within two decades, both cycles made a comeback. After 1880s, it took another two decades for both peaks to recur. Both the money growth cycle and the inflation cycle returned in the 1910s. This was another war decade, as was the decade of the 1940s.

The next peak in terms of both tracks arose in the 1970s, where Keynesian economics is primarily responsible for them, although the short, six-day war between the Arabs and Israel was the main trigger for the inflationary 1970s. While the OPEC's oil embargo in 1973 resulted from this conflict, Keynesian theories caused the giant increase in the growth of money, thus producing a sustained jump in inflation. OPEC stands for the organization of petroleum exporting countries and even now it exercises a major influence on the price of oil.

Keynesian Economics

In modern economics there are basically two schools of thought—classical and Keynesian. Until the Great Depression in 1929, the classical

school dominated the thinking of most economists. Since then, it is the Keynesian school, along with its offshoots, that has been predominant.

The classical doctrine in its purest form derives from Adam Smith, the celebrated author of *The Wealth of Nations*, which was published in the same year the 13 American colonies declared their independence from England. The classical school is also called a non-interventionist school while the Keynesian school is known as an interventionist school.

Keynes wrote his book, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, in 1936, when the depression was in full swing. Earlier he had spent some time as an IAS officer in India, where apparently, he came across an ancient text authored by Kautilya, *The Science of Wealth*, which reminds you of *The Wealth of Nations*.

Kautilya may be considered the first economist in ancient history. He was born at a time when India was in its own age of acquirers, much like feudalism and capitalism. He was not only a celebrated scholar but also a great humanitarian. He was contemporary to Alexander the Great, whose greatness lies in setting villages and cities of subjugated nations to fire.

Buddhist literature provides us a lengthy account of Kautilya's revolutionary activities. He along with a warrior named Chandragupta Maurya rebelled against his king Dhananada, who ruled over Magdhan empire, which was the largest in India at the time. Dhananda's name means someone who enjoys wealth. When the king, greedy and a tyrant, was dethroned through a revolution of poverty-stricken workers, people heaved a sigh of relief. Chandragupta appointed Kautilya as his prime minister, who deftly managed the economy and quickly restored imperial prosperity. The rebellious author went on to record his experiences in his book called, *Arthshastra*, which, as mentioned above, means the science of wealth. Here are some interesting excerpts:⁴



Chanakya Kautilya (375–283 BCE) and John Maynard Keynes (1883 - 1946)

“In the happiness of his subjects lies the king’s happiness, in their welfare his welfare ... Hence the king shall be ever active in the management of the economy ... A king can achieve the desired objectives and an abundance of riches by undertaking economic activity.”

It appears that Keynes was inspired by Kautilya’s thought. When he saw millions of people around the world starving and destitute during the decade long depression, he also wanted the government to do something for the suffering humanity. He recommended expansionary fiscal policy which required the government to expand the budget deficit. He even met President Roosevelt about his proposal, but the president paid no heed. Classical doctrine held that the state should not intervene in affairs of the economy, and the president held steadfast to that belief. While he didn’t go so far as to intervene directly through fiscal expansion, it must be said in fairness that he introduced some much-needed reforms related to the minimum wage, social security, etc.

By contrast, it was Adolf Hitler who adopted the Keynesian philosophy of direct job creation by the government, and unemployment quickly disappeared in Germany. But Hitler’s acceptance of Keynes’ ideas had the opposite effect. Hitler was a pariah in the eyes of Britain, France and the United States, the trio of allied states, and Keynesian economics went nowhere.

However, once Hitler started the second world war in 1939, war spending in allied states had to jump, and budget deficits ballooned even among allies. It was simply a matter of survival. Lo and behold, unemployment, as high as 17 percent of the labor force in America in 1940, fell to just 3 percent by 1943. Keynesian economics became popular at that time and has been popular ever since.

Every good thing eventually becomes a dogma in the hands of self-serving economists. Keynes had recommended budget deficits only to fight a depression or a recession, and a budget surplus once full employment has been achieved, which in practice means an unemployment rate of less than 4 percent; this is because there is always some joblessness no matter how good the economy is.

Now you will be able to see how neo-Keynesian economics, actually neo-Keynesian dogma, generated the inflationary peak of the 1970s. Inflation occurs when demand goes up faster than supply, or when supply falls faster than demand. When the Arab countries imposed an oil embargo as a result of their war with Israel in 1973, the oil price shot up and increased fourfold. The result was a huge jump in the cost of producing goods and services. America at the time was a gas guzzler and energy inefficient. This caused a big fall in supply and with supply trailing demand, prices had to rise.

Soon the embargo was lifted but the oil price did not decline. Unemployment was beginning to rise, and neo-Keynesian economists that formulated economic policy continued to raise the budget deficit, and the Federal Reserve financed it with money creation. So it was that both money growth and inflation peaked in the 1970s. In fact, these were the highest peaks in the 20th century.

Next, we examine the rates of inflation in the 2000s, where the main trigger was the international price of oil that rose to an all-time high of \$147 per barrel. Here both the WPI and PPI reached a peak as revealed by Figures 2 and 3, but the CPI inflation did not. The CPI inflation rate was more or less the same in the 1990s and 2000s. However, the Great Recession started in 2008 along with millions of layoffs, and the rate of unemployment shot up to 10 percent. Consumer demand plummeted, and even then, the CPI inflation did not decline.

During the 1970s, the neo-Keynesian dogma was renamed as the Philipps curve, which holds that inflation and unemployment are negatively related; in other words, if inflation rises joblessness declines, and conversely. The modern 2 percent inflation rule is the byproduct of this Philipps curve.

The Behavior of the Fed

The Federal Reserve System, also known as the Fed, was established in 1914 in order to regulate the supply of money. Pryor to Fed creation, money supply responded to conditions in the money market, which primarily deals with printed money as well as deposits held by commercial banks. One would think that the creation of the Fed at least tamed the money growth cycle, possibly eliminating it. Instead, the opposite

happened, because fluctuations in money growth actually amplified in the post-1914 period till the 1970s. This is what appears from Figure 4. However, thereafter the fluctuations did decline, but the cycle remained intact.

The Last Year of a Decade

The long-term cycles that we have analyzed are simply the outstanding features of American economy. No other nation displays them, which perhaps is not a surprise. As stated above, the US is the nerve center of monopoly capitalism with the largest economy in the world.

Now we explore another feature of world history that is also difficult to explain, namely the events of the last year of a decade.

Specifically, ever since the 1920s, a decade's final year displays an event that has global repercussions for the coming decade. These repercussions may be good or bad, although they have been mostly destructive.

The last year of the 1920s was 1929 and that marks the beginning of the Great Depression. Then came 1939 with the start of WWII. 1949 was the

year of communist revolution in China, as was 1959, the year of another communist revolution, this time in Cuba.

Next is the year 1969, which marks the birth of the great inflation that pulverized the world in the 1970s. But 1969 was also a wonderful year when two Americans, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, landed their spacecraft on the moon.

What else can happen in a decade's last year? How about the revolution in Iran that occurred in 1979 when the Shah of Iran was overthrown by a priest named Ayatollah Khomeini. What about 1989? The Berlin Wall fell on November 9, 1989 and unleashed a series of events that eventually unified East and West Germany.



What about 1999? This is the year when President Bill Clinton was tried and then cleared from all charges of impeachment by the US Senate. He was only the second American president who was impeached, the first being Andrew Johnson in 1868.

What about 2009? That year someone named Barack Obama, a black politician, became the US president, an unthinkable event until that time. Finally, we come to 2019. This is the year of coronavirus that initially took birth in China and then spread around the world.

From 1929 to 2019 is almost one century in which the last year of the decade witnessed an unusual episode that had major consequences for our planet. In fact, two such events were foreseen by me:⁵ The dethronement of the shah of Iran by the Iranian priesthood and the birth of a Black Plague in the form of coronavirus. What can we say about 2029? This is what we turn to next.

Conclusions

We can now put all our strands together and see what we should expect for the decade of the 2020s. The long run cycles reveal that both money growth and inflation have peaked together in US history but there was one exception that occurred in the post-Civil War period. The last inflationary period was the decade of 2000s, which means sustained inflation is not supposed to return until the 2030s. Then what about the jump in prices that we have witnessed from 2021 to 2023? It merely suggests that this price spiral is temporary, resulting from a pandemic that caused millions of deaths around the world and the consequent shortage of labor. In a global economy the labor shortage led to a rise in wages as well as transportation costs, disrupting international trade. With supplies falling relative to demand, prices had to rise. In this scenario, the rate of inflation will fall by the end of 2023 or soon thereafter, and then return to the natural rate of 2 percent per year.

Another scenario is suggested by Sarkar's law of social cycles that has never failed in 5000 years of recorded history. After all, monopoly capitalism, or the age of acquirers has to end in a social revolution of masses that have been impoverished by unprecedented disparity of wealth. This is what happened to feudalism in

the West in the 15th century and more recently in China where Mao Zedong brought an end to the Chinese variety of feudalism in a bloody war in 1949.

Since another war was started by Russia in February 2022 this outcome cannot be ruled out. Russia-Ukraine conflict along with American and NATO's strong military support to Ukraine suggests that the US age of acquirers will end in this decade, possibly by 2029, which is the last year of the 2020s.⁶ This event will usher in a new golden age as monopoly capitalism ends and mass capitalism or economic democracy begins.⁷ Such is the dictum of the law of social cycles.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has opened yet another possibility, which was unimaginable until now. With the United States and European Union providing generous military aid to the gutsy people of Ukraine, the ongoing European conflict could escalate into a full-fledged nuclear war, where victory will be meaningless for both sides. History, past and present, will then be no guide to our future. Only Dharma, the law of righteous conduct, will win, and those who genuinely love God will survive.

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Let There Be More and More Competition

Interview with Dr. Ravi Batra

What is the nature of inflation?

Inflation affects the poor badly and also hurts the middle-class. The global response to the pandemic was that governments increased their budget deficits sharply to ward off negative effects on production, employment and poverty, etc. The pandemic played out against a backdrop of years of low to zero interest rates along with huge increases in money supply. Some nations had even negative interest rates. In this atmosphere economic equilibrium occurs when:

$$\text{Supply} = \text{Demand} + \text{New Debt}$$

For several thousand years, equilibrium occurred when supply equaled demand. But now it requires supply to equal demand plus new debt. Such is the distortion needed to preserve monopoly capitalism, wherein a few producers dominate various industries. It is a distortion of the economy, because it needs the governments to run huge deficits to essentially buy goods and services from large suppliers. It is also symptomatic of corrupt politicians who constantly need money to get themselves elected.

Politicians feel that they need to allow the CEOs to raise their salaries every year regardless of their performance, so the CEO pay keeps rising. The CEOs in turn donate campaign

money to the politicians to win elections. So, each party is happy with the status quo, while the masses suffer. This is why we find the real wages of production workers in the United States have been stagnant and even declining since 1974. Let us look at the pre-pandemic data. According to the economic report of the president issued in 2017, real wages of production workers were \$326 in 1974 vs. \$311 in 2017, whereas the index of worker productivity rose from 50 to 108. Thus, even as workers became over twice more productive, their real wages fell. How many production workers are there? They are about 75% of the labor force. So, the living standard of as much as three fourth of the population actually fell over those 43 years from 1974 to 2017, while productivity jumped sharply.

Such is the fruit of monopoly capitalism. So, who benefited even as almost everyone else suffered. The answer is—the CEO as well as their patrons, the politician. We need more competition in many industries. Wave after wave of mergers even among large companies has stifled competition among private firms and created super-sized corporations.

As regards the post-pandemic economy, the CEO pay has not declined, but poverty is now the highest in over 50 years. The Federal Reserve

and its supporters tout a low rate of unemployment as a mark of singular achievement since 1969, when the unemployment rate was 3.5 percent as compared to 3.6 percent in 2023. But they forget that the minimum wage in terms of today's prices was about \$11 in 1969 vs. \$7.25 at present; similarly, federal debt stood at less than a trillion dollars then vs. over 32 trillion now. Still, they cling to the status quo. Now you need supply to equal demand plus new debt, which becomes:

$$\text{Supply} = \text{Demand} + \text{Total Borrowing}$$

In other words, past year's borrowing becomes new debt today. So for production or supply to be sold out, you need consumer demand plus federal and consumer borrowing every year. Otherwise, production will not be sold out and will result in layoffs.

Normally, when demand rises faster than supply, prices go up. But this time demand was generated by governments as they borrowed money to create artificial demand and essentially bought goods and services from suppliers. This was great for the suppliers, the monopoly capitalists. Since interest rates were also low

people bought big- ticket items like homes and new cars on credit as well. Thus, so much artificial demand was created from all this borrowing all over the world that prices began to rise and inflation surged to the 1981 level.

What is your solution to inflation?

In a just society, the government shouldn't have to worry about buying goods and services from suppliers. The purchasing power of people should be enough to buy goods offered by suppliers so that there are no layoffs. But this means no budget deficits, and no money creation for some time. The federal reserve has gradually raised interest rates and that will eventually cool inflation, but for inflation to be completely wiped out, governments will have to balance their budgets.

Perfect competition will be the main key to generate a more dynamic economy.

What is the significance of people's purchasing power?

When suppliers do well in the market, profits and ... cont'd on page 71

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Tantra Re-Envisioned: The Two River Theory on the Origin of Yoga

By Ramesh Bjonnes

TANTRA HAS RECEIVED increasing interest among scholars and the public in recent years. Its historical origins and practices, however, are not so well understood. Sometimes misinterpreted or misrepresented, traditional Tantra is often veiled in a mist of popular myths. In the Indian imagination, Tantra is generally considered a dark art of magic, while in the West it is popularized as an expression of sacred sex. However, these simplifications and misconceptions are beginning to change.

Christopher Wallis, a contemporary practitioner and scholar of Kashmir Tantra, asks: Why would Tantra be of interest to modern people, Westerners in particular? "Millions of Westerners are today practicing something called yoga," he writes, "a practice which, though much altered in form and context, can in fact be traced back to the Tantrik tradition."¹ Then he explains in more detail how the yoga we practice today originated in Kashmir Tantra as well as in the Hatha Yoga tradition of the Middle Ages. In this essay, we will look at another possibility, that the Tantric tradition is

considerably older than 1000 years, and that both yoga and Tantra have emerged from the same spiritual roots, formed a similar philosophical trunk, and sprouted many important branches of embodied spirituality.

In 2011, when Georg Feuerstein revised his monumental book *The Encyclopedia of Yoga*, he decided to give the new edition an expanded focus. "My extensive coverage of material on Tantra," he wrote in the new introduction, "which is nowadays wildly popular but also wildly misunderstood, warranted a new book title: *The Encyclopedia of Yoga and Tantra*." In this revised version, he included those contemporary teachers who, according to him, have significantly contributed to contemporary yoga and Tantra practice. These teachers include Shrii Shrii Anandamurti, Paul Brunton, T.K.V. Desikachar, B.K.S. Iyengar, Swami Satyananda, and other teachers that are well known in the West—except perhaps for Anandamurti.

Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar (aka Shrii Shrii Anandamurti) was a social reformer, philosopher, poet, composer, economist, and Tantric guru. In the 1950s and 60s, he became well known as a spiritual teacher and activist speaking out against many economic and social ills, including the

¹ Christopher Wallis, *Tantra Illuminated: The Philosophy, History, And Practice of a Timeless Tradition*, Mattamayura Press, 2013

caste system. Following Tantric tradition, where caste is not recognized, and arguing that all people are part of one human family, Anandamurti advocated marriage across caste divisions and an increase in women's independence. He supported a post-capitalist economy he termed PROUT (The Progressive Utilization Theory), which is based on ecology, cooperatives, bioregional development, and on neohumanism—the love for and inherent rights of all beings. His unusual blend of Tantric spirituality and progressive socio-economic ideas attracted the intellectuals and the middle class of his time.

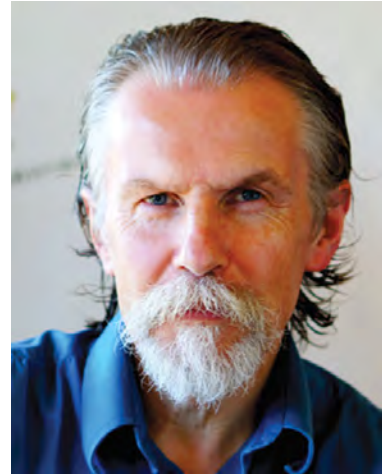
However, like many revolutionary and unorthodox thinkers, Anandamurti was persecuted and finally jailed during Indira Gandhi's near-absolute control of the Indian government in the 1970s. This period culminated with her authoritarian state of emergency from 1975-1977.¹ After eight years in confinement, during which he miraculously fasted for five years in protest, he was, in 1978, "found innocent on all counts and released. He wrote over 5000 songs and more than 250 books."² Anandamurti also authored *Ananda Sutram*, a philosophical masterpiece on Tantric cosmology, philosophy, and practice. Hailed by some as perhaps "the fullest synthesis" of any book on Tantra, the text follows in the footsteps of other Tantric gems, such as Kshemaraja's *Pratyabhijnahridayam* and Abinavagupta's *Tantraloka*.

Tantric History Re-Envisioned

One of the most compelling Western academic cases for Tantra starting at the dawn of human civilization, as Anandamurti and a few other Indian sources maintain, has been made by art historian Thomas McEvelley. His essay "An Archeology of Yoga" represent one of the most formidable writings on the connection between Tantra and shamanism, before and during the Indus Valley Civilization (4500-2000 B.C.E.). The archeological evidence is revealed in the various excavated seals depicting a yogi seated in an advanced yoga asana posture on an elevated

¹ Vimala Schneider, *The Politics of Prejudice*, Ananda Marga Publications, 1983

² Georg Feuerstein, *The Encyclopedia of Yoga and Tantra*, Shambala, 2018, page 28



Ramesh Bjonnes is the co-founder of the Prama Institute and has practiced the Ananda Marga system of Tantra Yoga for over 40 years. He has taught workshops in many countries and is the author of five books, including Sacred Body, Sacred Spirit (InnerWorld), Tantra: The Yoga of Love and Awakening (Hay House India), and A Brief History of Yoga (InnerWorld). He is on the faculty of The Neohumanist College of Asheville and a faculty member of Embodied Philosophy where he teaches about the history and philosophy of yoga and Tantra.

platform—the famous and much-debated Pashupatinath seal.¹

McEvelley writes that the purpose of his essay is to answer the question: Was yoga practiced in the Indus Valley 5000 plus years ago? His well-documented and affirmative answer: Yes, it was. However, the current academic view is that yoga evolved in the Magadha region among ascetic yogis in the sramana movement on the fringes of Vedic society at the time of the Buddha about 500 years before Christ.² Other Indologists and historians supporting McEvelley's view are authors on Tantra, such as Alain Danielou, Prasad Lalan Singh, N. N. Bhattacharya, M.R. Sakhare, and R. P. Chanda, all pointing to ancient Tantric Shaivism as the source of yoga, independent of the Vedic tradition. As more archeological evidence, R. P. Chanda draws our attention to another figure found in the Indus Valley indicating an ancient non-Vedic origin of Tantric yoga. The statuette is a bust of someone

¹ Thomas McEvelley, "An Archeology of Yoga", essay in *Anthropology and Aesthetics*, University of Chicago Press, 1981

² James Mallinson and Mark Singleton, *Roots of Yoga*, Penguin Classics, 2017, page xiv

"in the posture of a Yogin or one engaged in practicing concentration."¹

From within the tradition itself, from various untranslated Tantric scriptures, from the Puranas, as well as from Anandamurti, who presents Shivology, a revisionary history, we are introduced to the "historical Sadashiva." In these writings, he claims that Shiva introduced yogic metaphysics and meditative practices in the Himalayan and North Indian regions about 5000 BCE. According to Anandamurti, Shiva also introduced Ayurvedic medicine, asanas, meditation practices, and his wife Parvati helped formulate Tantric philosophy and the mudras used in dance and hand gestures. Together, this illustrious and much-celebrated couple introduced the Tantric teachings in Agama and Nigama Tantra's oral tradition. Thousands of years later, this culture would influence India's many sacred texts, such as the four Vedas, the Upanishads, the Samkhya, and Patanjali's Yoga sutras. Their Agama and Nigama Tantra then reemerge in various Tantric texts during the early common era, including the now popular Vijana Bhairava Tantra text.²

According to Puranic sources and the writings of Anandamurti, the first Vedic Aryans migrated into India at the time of Shiva. From the commingling of these cultures evolved the many references to ascetics, mantra rituals, and Rudra as Shiva in the early Vedic scriptures. The claim of a historical Shiva is still open for scrutiny. But the assertion of an Aryan migration has been proven by recent genetic research supporting the Out of Africa Theory. This research places the Aryan arrival in India between 5000-2000 B.C.E. Modern genetic science has, despite contrary claims by Hindu nationalists in the Hindutva movement, compellingly evidenced a long Aryan migration route into India rather than a sudden violent invasion as previously held by Indologists.^{3 4}

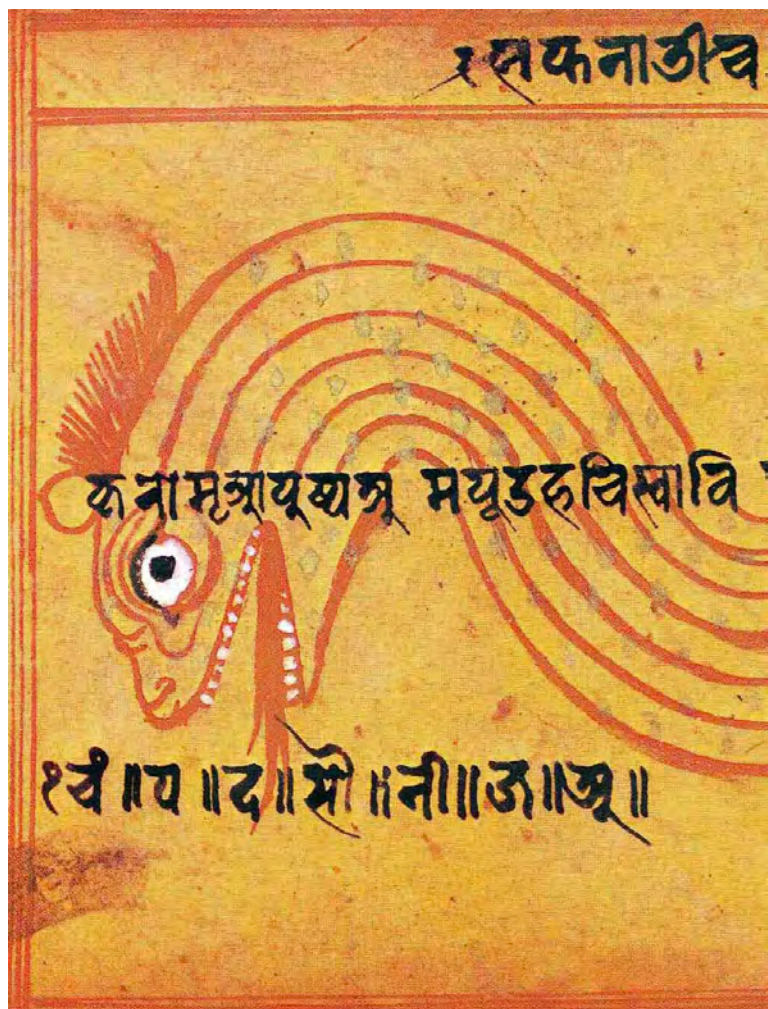
In the words of Indologist Justin M. Hewitson:

¹ Quote from N. N. Bhattacharya, *The History of the Tantric Religion*, Manohar Publishers, 1999

² Shrii Shrii Anandamurti, *Namah Shivaya Shantaya*, Ananda Marga Publications, Calcutta, 1985

³ Spencer Wells, *The Journey of Man: A Genetic Odyssey*, Princeton University Press, 2003

⁴ Tony Joseph, *Early Indians: The Story of Our Ancestors and Where We Came From*, Juggernaut Publications, 2018

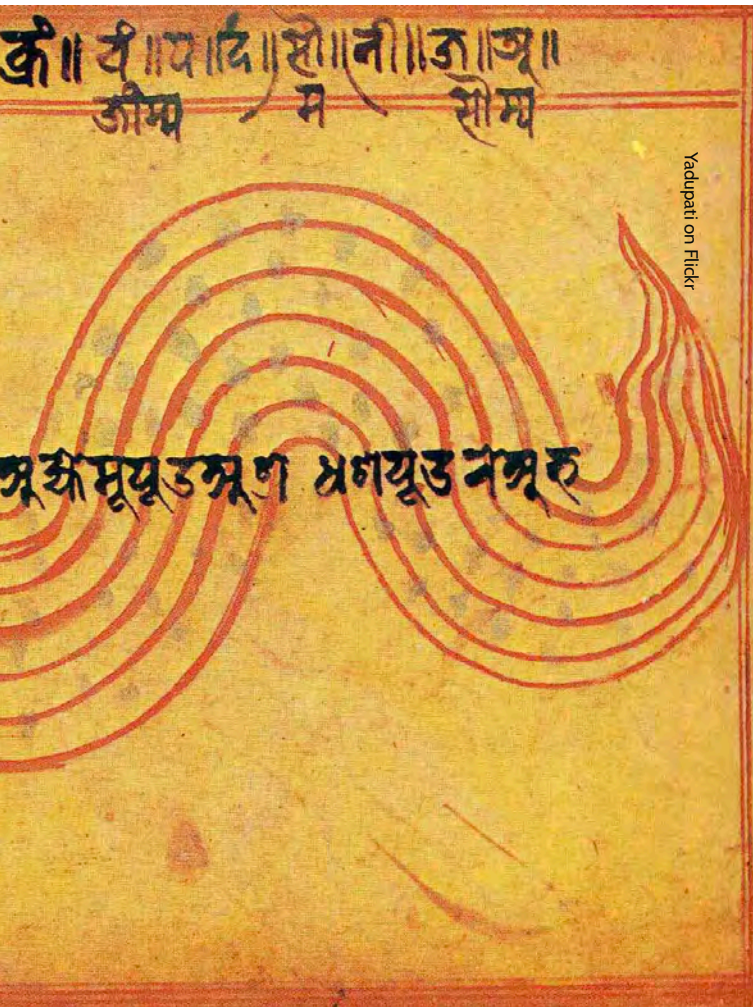


Tantra diagram showing seed-sounds for control of the flow of forces in the subtle veins.

"Shiva's tantric philosophy of universal monism united some of India's warring Aryan and indigenous clans under a common spiritual ideology. Tantra's left-hand, avidya, and right-hand vidya approaches to liberation and power rerouted their primitive desires toward universal consciousness. Sarkar [aka Anandamurti] explains Tantra's overtly transgressive and subtle sadhana as are encapsulated in the Sanskrit advaitadvaitadvaita, translated as "nondualistic cum dualistic monism."¹

Hewitson further writes that "Western Indologists like Hugh B. Urban and Christopher Wallis have questioned whether non-initiates can or should analyze the emphatically esoteric

¹ Justin M. Hewitson, "Siva Tantra Rediscovered: Transforming the Etic Routes and Emic Roots of Indian Spirituality", essay in *Roots, Routes and a New Awakening*, Springer Nature, 2021



Yadupati on Flickr

that are not easily grasped by contemporary paradigms."¹

India's spiritual paths are largely soteriological, and, for Anandamurti, Tantra represents a universal mysticism that originated as humanity's first systematic impulse for spiritual liberation. Similarly, and agreeing with Thomas McEvilley, the French Indologist and Tantric initiate Alain Danielou, and Tantric guru Swami Satyananda, all see Tantra as universal and indigenous to humanity's mystic search. Tantra, then, likely emerged within shamanism as proto-Tantra, an interior pursuit beyond the fear of the Gods in heaven (as expressed in the early Vedic texts) to seek spiritual liberation through the inner and outer alchemy of meditation and physical yoga practices. The early Vedic tradition may thus be viewed as largely exoteric, and the shamanic/Tantric tradition as largely esoteric. The goal of Tantra, which is based on the *sadhana* (spiritual effort) of controlling nature's powers and in purifying the body and mind, is to experience inner trance states and ultimate freedom in nondual consciousness (*mukti* and *moksa*). The practices in the ancient Vedic tradition are mainly concerned with rituals and sacrifices through fire offerings and recitation of hymns to the Gods and Goddesses in heaven. The Tantric and yogic traditions are focused on "internal sacrifices and rituals" performed through mantra, pranayama, and *cakra* meditations. As yoga scholar Georg Feuerstein writes, we have two distinct Indian sacred traditions: "Except for the most orthodox pundits, who view Tantra as an abomination, educated traditional Hindus... distinguish between Vedic and Tantric—*vaidika* and *tantrika*—currents of Hindu spirituality."² Hence my Two River Theory—that the philosophy, practice, and history of yoga came about not only through the evolution of the Vedas, but from the influence of both the Vedic and Shaiva Tantric streams.

Many Vedic scholars and Indologists maintain that yoga's historical roots can be traced back to the early Vedas, most notably the oldest of these texts, the *Rigveda*. I term this The One River Theory. One of the most active

discipline" of Tantra. Given these concerns, this essay's approach is to consider the views of both the history and practice of Tantra through the lens of contemporary guru and renaissance man, Shrii Shrii Anandamurti. Sohail Inayatullah, the UNESCO Chair of Future Studies, considers Anandamurti to be a "macro-historian" in the tradition of Arnold Toynbee and Ibn Khaldun. Inayatullah, who has written extensively on Anandamurti's work, sees Shiva as an "extra-historical" teacher who "existed empirically" yet went on to play "a grand and mythological role in righting the balance of the world."¹ Hewitson writes that Inayatullah further argues that Anandamurti "changes our epistemic maps by inaugurating new emic categories of knowledge

¹ Quote by James Hewitson in the essay *Siva Tantra Rediscovered*.

² Georg Feuerstein, *Tantra: The Path of Ecstasy*, Shambhala, 1998

¹ Sohail Inayatullah, *Understanding Sarkar: Macrohistory and the Indian Episteme*, Brill, 2002



The “half man, half woman”, the union of he and she, a popular way of portraying the Tantric merger of the created being with infinite consciousness

proponents of this theory today is American Hindu writer and scholar David Frawley. A follower of Hindutva, a fundamentalist Hindu ideology, he maintains that yoga is primarily a Vedic practice. Other Western scholars, such as Edwin Bryant, adhere to what I term The Two River Theory of yoga’s origins. Bryant writes that yoga evolved outside the early Vedas among ascetics who consequently influenced the Vedas over time. “Yoga”, he writes, “evolves on the periphery of Vedic religiosity and beyond the parameters of Vedic orthopraxy. Yoga is clearly in tension with Vedic ritualism.... and its goals are in stark and explicit opposition to it.”¹ In this

group of scholars, there are two main opinions: some who believe yoga can be traced back to the Indus Valley civilization and earlier (4000-2000 BCE) and those, including SOAS university scholar James Mallinson, who maintain that yoga largely developed outside the Vedic tradition from about 700 BCE onward. These scholars hold skeptical views about the Pashupatinath seal from 2500 BCE representing a seated yogi figure, for example.

From the perspective of the Two River Theory, however, the Vedic and Shaiva Tantra cultures merged over time. An amalgam of philosophical and cultural expressions advanced in the form of various philosophies and yogic traditions, first as oral traditions, later as texts.

¹ Edwin Bryant, *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, North Point Press, 2001, page xx

Divinity is everywhere and all humans can realize sacredness anywhere. This holistic cosmology of Tantra holds that this world and all its living beings are created from the union of Shiva with Shakti.



These include the Agamas, the Puranas, the philosophy of Samkhya, the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, the Yoga Sutras, etc., as well as in the various Tantric and yogic practices in numerous sects, including the Kapalikas, Shaivas, Kalamukhas, Shaktas, and many others. Then, in the Middle Ages, from 500 CE to about 1500 CE, Tantra reemerged in a more literate form and produced the period and texts most scholars today associate with Tantra and the Tantric period. But from the perspective of the Two River Theory, Samkhya (also called Kapilasya Tantra) is a Tantric philosophy, and great teachers, such as Kapila, Krishna, Astavakra, Gosala, Patanjali, and others from the culturally and spiritually rich period before the common era were practitioners and teachers of various forms of Tantra.

Tantra as the Essence of Yoga

According to Anandamurti, Tantra is the essence of yogic transformation, irrespective of style. The word itself has had many but inter-related meanings in various texts, from the Vedas to the Tantras: loom, essence, system, practice, or science. The spiritual meaning of the word, according to Anandamurti, is:

"The scriptural definition of Tantra is tam jadyat tarayet yastu sah tantrah parakirtitah [Tantra is that which liberates a person from the bondage of staticity]. Tam is the acoustic root of staticity. Tantra has another meaning as well. The Sanskrit root verb tan means to expand. So, the practical process that leads to one's expansion and consequent emancipation is called Tantra. Thus sadhana [spiritual practice] and Tantra are inseparable."¹

The worldly goal of Tantra is to lead a dynamic and balanced life of service (seva) and

to struggle against oppression and injustice in society. Anandamurti's definition of a Tantric practitioner is both broad and specific: any "person who, irrespective of caste, creed or religion, aspires for spiritual expansion...". From this perspective, Tantra is "neither a religion nor an ism" but rather a "fundamental spiritual science." When diligently practiced Tantra ultimately reveals the goal of all yoga, of all mysticism: the universal realization of divine union.¹ At the same time, Tantra also refers to the distinct tradition initiated by Shiva, the tradition which later became known as Shaivism and which in the Middle Ages blossomed through various Tantric texts and teachers in Kashmir, Bengal, South India, China, Indonesia, and elsewhere.

Alain Danielou points out how the ancient oral teachings of Shiva in the Agamas influenced Indian culture, in general, and yoga in particular when they eventually were written down:

"The most important of these texts are called the Agamas (traditions) and Tantras (rules and rites). To these must be added the Puranas (ancient chronicles), which deal with mythology and history, and philosophical and technical works about cosmology (Samkhya), yoga, linguistics (Vyakarana), astronomy (Jyotisha), medicine (Ayurveda), mathematics (Ganita), and so on—a vast literature, which despite having been transcribed in a relatively recent era, nevertheless has sources in distant antiquity."²

The philosophies and spiritual practices of yoga and Tantra, Danielou writes, in addition to the texts and the commentaries of the Vedas, the Brahma Sutras, and the Upanishads, as well as those of Buddhism and Jainism, were "only

¹Ibid.

²Alain Danielou, *While the Gods Play: Shaiva Oracles and Predictions on the Cycles of History and the Destiny of Mankind*, Inner Traditions, 1987.

¹Shrii Shrii Anandamurti, *Discourses on Tantra, Volume 1*, Ananda Marga Publications, 1993



Meditation mat for tantric practice, Tibet

transcribed during the great age of liberalism and civilization which characterizes the Shaiva revival."¹ This idea that certain parts of the great spiritual texts of India are a renewal and elaboration upon teachings originating in ancient Shaivism, represents an alternative view from current scholarship in the West.

While Christopher Wallis and other Tantric scholars have noted few, if any, Tantric elements in the Yoga Sutras, or in earlier yoga texts, Alan Finger, of ISHTA Yoga, writes in the introduction to his book *Tantra of the Yoga Sutras*: "Between my own practice, the instructions from my teachers, and my learning about the Sutras, I developed the view that Patanjali was a Tantra Yoga practitioner writing about the way yoga actually works from a scientific point of view."² For Anandamurti, the word Tantra is used much the same way the word yoga is used today—to signify all the "scientific" practices combining meditation and postures originating in ancient India. Despite multiple modifications and additions over time, since these practices began with Shiva and the Shaiva Tantric tradition, they are, from this perspective, in essence, all Tantric. Swami Satyananda, the founder of the Bihar School of Yoga, echoes this view by writing that "yoga is part of the more

encompassing system of Tantra. Yoga as it is widely known and practiced, the yoga that has been practiced in India for thousands of years, comes directly from Tantra."¹

Tantric Meditation Practice

The historical and practical context of the teachings expressed above were not yet known to me when I began practicing yoga in Norway in 1972, a couple of decades before the proliferation of yoga studios and the slip-resistant yoga mat. As a young hippie studying agronomy and completing my practicum on a dairy farm in the mountains, I had just finished reading Ram Dass' legendary book *Be Here Now*. So, I started learning posture yoga from a book written by an Indian Swami who had been living in neighboring Denmark for several years. I practiced on a woolen blanket, and in my imagination, I transported myself to mystical India. A year later, a friend of mine and a disciple of Anandamurti taught me a simple mantra meditation technique. He called the practice Tantra. Little did I know then how important that singular word would become to me and the world of modern yoga. The timing was right for a deeper plunge into Tantric spirituality.

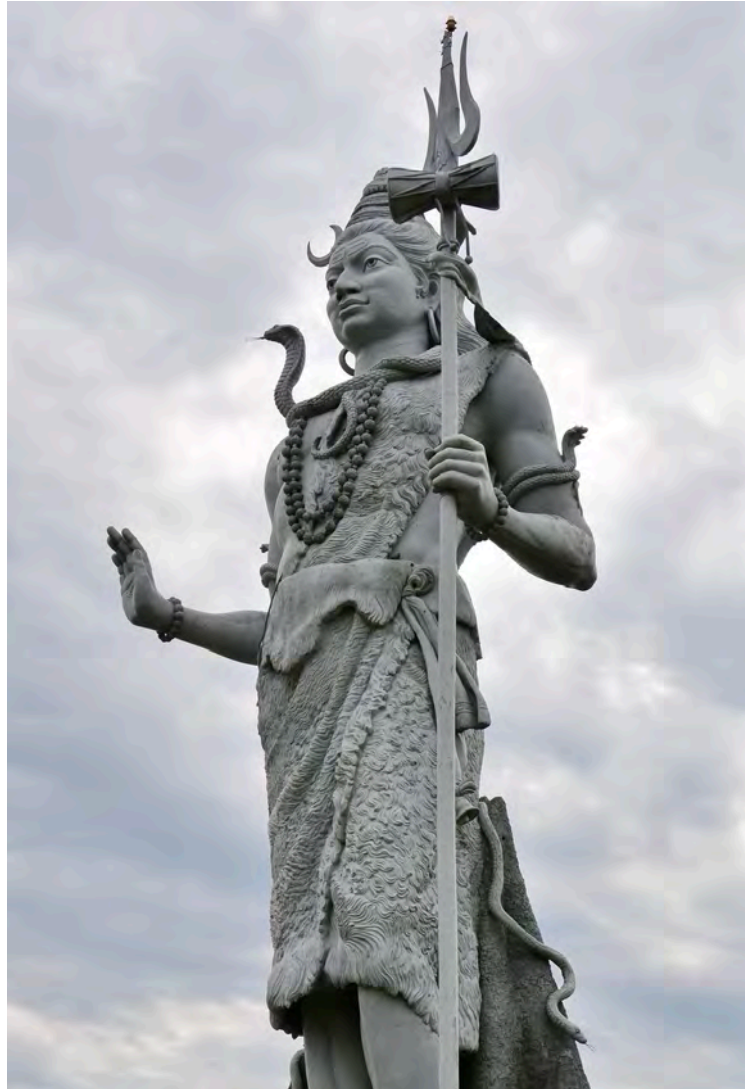
Unlike today, however, when most people learn yoga as a form of physical postures, at that time, the main entryway into the world of yoga was through meditation. That is also the traditional way. The goal of spiritual yoga, and thus Tantra, is not just a healthier, slimmer, more flexible body but inner freedom, liberation, peace, and ultimately divine union, *mukti* or *moksa*. These spiritual goals were confirmed in a recent anthropological study among modern Indian ascetics or sadhus conducted by scholar Daniela Bevilacqua. When asked why they were practicing postures, the majority invariably answered: to prepare the body for meditation. Not surprisingly, the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, an essential textbook on yoga from the 15th century, begins with this statement: "Salutations to the primeval Lord, who taught the Hathayoga-vidya, which is as a stairway for those who wish to attain the lofty Raja Yoga."²

¹ Swami Satyananda Saraswati, *A Systematic Course in the Ancient Tantric Techniques of Yoga and Kriya*, Yoga Publications Trust, 1981

² Daniela Bevilacqua, *Let the Sadhus Talk: Ascetic Understanding of Hatha Yoga and Yogasanas*, research paper, SOAS University, 2019

¹ Ibid.

² Alan Finger and Wendy Newton, *Tantra of the Yoga Sutras*, Shambhala, 2018



Manfred Sommer, Flickr

Benevolent Shiva, father of Tantra, adored throughout the ages as the greatest of gods in India and beyond

The primeval Lord refers to Shiva, while Raja Yoga refers to various Tantric meditation techniques as described in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. Records in the Puranas, which are texts based on the ancient oral tradition, state that Shiva was the King of Yoga, the originator of Tantric practices, even yogic medicine. From other sources, such as from Anandamurti, we learn that Shiva was the inventor of Raja Yoga, the yoga of meditation exercises, including pranayama (breath control), pratyahara (sense withdrawal), dharana (concentration), and dhyana (flow meditation),

thousands of years before Patanjali consolidated these teachings in the Yoga Sutras.

In the words of Indologist Justin M. Hewitson: "While Siva Tantra's origin is obscured by the complex religious transformations that preceded its founder's advent seven thousand years ago, Siva's pervasive imprint remains visible in India's surviving oral tradition and in Vedic and Buddhist sects."¹

Tantric mantra meditation—which is

¹Quote from Justin M. Hewitson's essay Siva Tantra Rediscovered, 2021

signified by a complex set of visualization-, sense-withdrawal-, breathing-, concentration-, and ideation-techniques—suited my introverted nature. As a young writer who loved to be alone in the Norwegian nature's peaceful, ferocious, and awe-inspiring splendor, meditation became a natural pastime. I had started practicing a year earlier when a mantra just popped into my head while meditating with a group of friends practicing Maharishi Mahesh's Transcendental Meditation, more popularly known as T.M.

A few months after my friend taught me, I was introduced to more of Tantra's inner mysteries when I received diksha, or initiation, one of the unique characteristics of Tantric yoga. Another characteristic is that the process of meditation is to be kept secret to preserve the authenticity of the teachings, which is another reason why textual study conveys an incomplete picture of Tantric practices. To my great surprise, the mantra I received during diksha from a charismatic, orange-clad kapalika, a wandering monk from the Ananda Marga order, was nearly identical to the mantra that had "popped into my head" a couple of years earlier. I learned that Anandamurti had spiritually energized the sacred mantra since he was a Mahakaula, someone who could impart the power of shakti in a mantra and thus help raise the kundalini of other yogis. When I asked the kapalika how all this was possible, he at first shrugged it off and replied: "Tantra is a mysterious path." When I challenged him further, he said that the "intuitional science" of Tantra is very complex and sophisticated, and that I would learn it through practice, not from books. I gradually became accustomed to the new mantra the kapalika taught me, and I practiced twice a day as instructed.

In the late 70s, I lived in an Ananda Marga ashram in Denmark where I learned an elaborate system of six Tantric meditation techniques incorporating practices described, but not elaborated upon or taught, by Patanjali in the Yoga Sutras. These techniques incorporate mindfulness, the most common form of meditation practiced today, while adding more complex elements involving cakra-visualizations, physical and mental concentration points, and alternate nostril breathing combined with cakra-concentration and mantra recitation. Anandamurti termed these specific practices Sahaj yoga, but he referred to the overall path as

Tantra. These lessons are also described as Shiva Yoga by Indologist Alain Danielou. They have been taught in initiation ceremonies since the time of Shiva and have been practiced in various forms by ascetic yogis from multiple sects. These meditation techniques are described by many names depending on teacher or lineage—including Kundalini Yoga, Laya Yoga, Ashtanga Yoga, Raja Yoga, etc.—and they are not for slacker yogis. They require time and dedication to practice. When we add the historical perspective of an entire yogic subculture dedicated to these embodied techniques for thousands of years, it is fair to say that yogis in the West are just starting to embark upon the sophisticated path of spiritual introspection the Tantric way.

Most Western yogis are familiar with mindfulness meditation, the practice of watching the breath, thoughts, and feelings without attachment. Robert Wright, bestselling author of *Why Buddhism is True*, a book about mindfulness meditation, explains that there is also another form of meditation, namely concentration meditation. "Sometimes, if sustained long enough," he writes, "it can bring powerful feelings of bliss and ecstasy. And I mean powerful feelings of bliss or ecstasy."¹ Mindfulness and concentration (dharana) are both central to Tantric meditation practice. Mindfulness is practiced at all levels of Tantric meditation, from the time you begin, and the mind is still somewhat restless, until you have a feeling of concentrated flow, and further until you have a deep and sustained bliss experience. Why? Because, without mindfulness, the detached, witnessing, inner observer part of the mind can quickly be overshadowed by the ego's sense of pride and judgment. And before you know it, the deep focus and bliss are gone. However, lingering feelings of clarity and bliss may remain after such meditations, sometimes for days. If there is near-perfect mindfulness coupled with a stillness of the mind, the observer recedes. Without mental interpretation (ego), a flow of ecstasy ensues, culminating with samadhi—union with Divine Consciousness (Shiva), in the Tantric language, or a deep stillness beyond the fluctuations of the mind, according to Patanjali. Tantra also claims it is possible to attain liberation (mukti) while

¹ Robert Wright, *Why Buddhism Is True: The Science and Philosophy of Meditation and Enlightenment*, Simon and Schuster, 2017

alive. The term *jivanmukta* is accredited to such a living saint or liberated being.

In this context, Alan Finger can rightly claim that Patanjali prescribed Tantra Yoga, Anandamurti can affirm that Tantra and yoga are "basically the same," and that both the so-called Hindu and Buddhist Tantra traditions originated from the same ancient roots in Shaivism. Similarly, Shyam Sundar Goswami may write that in both "Waidika yoga and Tantrika yoga the eight stages of [Patanjali's] practice have been accepted."¹ However, while Patanjali explains that yoga is to "still the fluctuations of the mind" so that the "seer (the Divine Self, or Purusha) is revealed", the Tantric way of yoga is through devotion and union with that Divine Source, often described as Shiva, or Cosmic Consciousness. Within the tradition, for thousands of years, the minute features of these teachings have been secretly taught during oral transmissions, during face-to-face initiation ceremonies, by an accomplished teacher or guru. That ancient tradition is still ongoing, but it has yet to manifest itself in the modern yoga studio culture for lack of qualified teachers.

Tantra as Philosophy and Worldview

From within the tradition itself, it is said that the practice of Shiva worship, Tantric meditation, and yoga is one of the world's oldest and most influential wisdom traditions. "This oral route," writes Tantric scholar Justin M. Hewitson, "was mostly ignored by etic colonial scholars who preserved their 'objectivity' by elevating textual studies over ethnographic data."² Despite the availability of Tantric texts and the proliferation of Zoom accounts, traditional Tantric meditation and asana

¹ Shyam Sundar Goswami, *Layayoga: The Definitive Guide to the Chakras and Kundalini*, Inner Traditions, 1991

² Quote from Justin M. Hewitson's essay *Siva Tantra Rediscovered*.



Yadu on Flickr

A pair of snakes portraying the subtle ida and piungala psychics nerves coiling along the human spine.

practices are still transmuted orally today—person to person, from teacher to student.

Despite the many forms of Tantra—from the pious, idol-worshiping Vaishnav Tantra to the transgressive practices of Aghora Tantra—there is underneath it all a universal Tantra, a theistic, nondualistic, and dharm-centered philosophy and practice that originated with Shiva. In Hindu culture and the historical narrative of the Puranas, Shiva is considered the *Adi Yogi*, the first yogi, even sometimes referred to as the inventor of Ayurvedic medicine. David Crow, a well-known Ayurvedic teacher, writes that his Nepalese mentor referred to Shiva as "The Father of Ayurvedic medicine."¹ From this perspective, what emerged in the

¹ David Crow, *In Search of the Medicine Buddha: A Himalayan Journey*, Tarcher, 2000

Middle Ages as the textual and thus now the accepted academic evidence of the origin of Tantra, is a continuation of a much older oral tradition that began in ancient times with Shiva, the archetype of yogic self-transformation. It is this prehistoric Tantric tradition Anandamurti has systematized, reignited, and reinvented for modernity.

From the Two River Theory's perspective, every contemporary yogi, whether meditating or not, practice a form of Tantra. It is also important to note, however, that many, if not most, postures of the Hatha Yoga practiced in yoga studios today are hardly more than 100 years old. Some are only a few years or decades old. They were first introduced by Tirumalai Krishnamacharya, the so-called father of modern posture yoga, to his legendary disciples B. K. S. Iyengar, Pattabhi Jois, and his son T. K. V. Desikachar.¹ They in turn developed their own styles and trained yet other teachers who again created new types of posture yoga, such as well-known American teachers Sean Corn, John Friend, Judith Lasater, Rodney Yee, and many others. Meditation, a fundamental practice of traditional Tantra, and emphasized and still practiced in conjunction with traditional Hatha Yoga by contemporary sadhus, is not central to modern posture yoga. But within the tradition that Anandamurti represents, the Tantric meditation and posture yoga techniques practiced 2000 plus years ago are essentially the same today. Traditional Tantra, which values spiritual quality and purpose over physical therapy and flair of style, has not undergone the same radical changes as the yoga practiced in the modern posture yoga movement.²

Philosophically, the nondualistic Tantra is different from the two other primary schools of Indian yoga, the Classical Yoga of Patanjali (also known as Ashtanga Yoga) and the Advaita Vedanta of Shankaracharya. As a so-called dualist, Patanjali believed that the spiritual realm was separate from our worldly existence. On the other hand, both nondualistic Tantra and Vedanta subscribe to the Oneness of existence. However, where the Tantrics see the world as Divine, the Vedantists see it as an illusion.³

¹ Mark Singleton, *Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Posture Yoga*, Oxford University Press, 2010

² Ramesh Bjonnes, *A Brief History of Yoga: From Its Tantric Roots to the Modern Yoga Studio*, Innerworld, 2018

³ Ramesh Bjonnes, *Sacred Body, Sacred Spirit: A Personal*

So, what is the essence of the nondualistic Tantric worldview from Shiva to Abinavagupta and Kshemaraja in the Middle Ages to the contemporary Anandamurti? That worldview states unequivocally that Divinity is everywhere and that all humans can realize sacredness anywhere. This holistic cosmology of Tantra holds that this world and all its living beings are created from the union of Shiva (Cosmic Consciousness) with Shakti (Cosmic Energy/Matter), and that this union dissolves in nondual Brahma. (Cit or Samvit in Kashmir Tantra). Anandamurti explains this fundamental cosmological insight in his Ananda Sutram text with the following sutra: Shivashaktyātmakam Brahma, which simply means that Shiva and Shakti are inherent fusions within the cosmic essence of nondual Brahma. It is this cosmic ontology and the practical teachings of Tantra which makes the tradition so appealing to contemporary spiritual seekers.¹ Indeed, several prominent yoga teachers quoted in *Yoga Journal* over a decade ago predicted that Tantra would be the "next step in [our] spiritual evolution."²

These teachers have indeed been prophetic. A sincere inquiry into the philosophy and practices of Tantra has been steadily increasing in the worldwide yoga community since Isaacs' article was published. With the growing interest in this ancient spiritual tradition, many of the misconceptions have steadily decreased. One of these misconceptions is that Tantra is only about 1000 years old and that it has very little to do with the much older yogic tradition. From the alternative perspective presented here, however, we have learned that Tantra may be the root source of all the yogic paths and philosophies that evolved from a rich oral tradition outside Vedic society at the dawn of Indian civilization. We have also learned that the practices Patanjali only alludes to in the *Yoga Sutras* are inherently Tantric and have been imparted outside the text in oral initiation (diksha) ceremonies. Thus, Tantra may not only be the source of all yoga, as Anandamurti maintains, Tantra is yoga and yoga is Tantra.

Guide to the Practice and Philosophy of Yoga and Tantra, Innerworld, 2012

¹ Anandamitra Avadhutika, *The Spiritual Philosophy of Shrii Shrii Anandamurti: A Commentary on Ananda Sutram*, Ananda Marga Publications, 2002

² Nora Isaacs, "Tantra Rising", *Yoga Journal*, August, 2007

Interview with Ravi Batra *cont'd from p. 59*
 the value of their stocks continue to increase. In this way, stock markets have continued to boom whereas people are suffering. The suppliers do not feel the need to raise wages of those who work for them, because increased government spending adds to total demand for their goods. That is why productivity has sky-rocketed while real wages have plummeted. Let us define the concept of the wage gap as:

$$\text{Wage Gap} = \frac{\text{Labour Productivity}}{\text{Real Wage}}$$

Whenever productivity raises faster than the real wage, the result is a rising wage gap. This rising wage gap creates all sorts of problems: widespread poverty, and a constant need to increase government spending. Rising productivity means that supply goes up as each and every employee increases his and her production. Productivity is the main source of supply, and the real wage, or people's purchasing power, is the main source of demand. What we have is a situation where productivity rises fast but the real wage does not. To cover for this rise in wage gap since 1974, government spending has to be increased, increasing corporate profits that fuel the stock market further, without benefitting the general public.

In your article you mention two great economists, Kautilya and Keynes. Would you say fairness and humanity are significant elements of economics?

Yes indeed. In 1960, the average salary of a CEO in America was about 60 times the average real wage. Today, it is more than 300 times. Almost the entire increase in productivity since 1974 has gone into the pockets of suppliers. This system is pure corruption. Suppliers pocket higher profits due to increased productivity without offering a proportional increase in wages--whereas some of those profits are allotted to politicians in the form of campaign funds to keep that corrupt dynamic going. This has been happening since the early 1970s in the US. A just system will require that the real wage growth equals productivity growth of the economy so that everybody benefits from new technology, which is the main source of rising productivity. Also, this is an ethical system, because if your productivity rises you expect to be rewarded for it.

Profits continue rising for suppliers as productivity increases, but the working class gets poorer. Poverty is actually the highest in the last 50 years despite huge subsidies given to the very poor. Governments have to create competition for giant corporations and outlaw mergers among large firms. This is what Adam Smith recommended in his 1776 masterpiece, *Wealth of Nations*, and so do I in my *Common Sense Macroeconomics*.

For instance, there is no competition among large banks, and they have been charging very high interest rates from the poor. Today the average American has less than \$1000 in savings, which means that people cannot meet any unexpected expenses from their savings and have to borrow with a credit card.

Whereas government lending rates have been hovering around 0, credit card companies have been charging 20% to 25% interest rates and more on their loans. Interest rates for the poor are even higher in countries like Mexico, and perhaps the highest in Brazil where the poor have to pay 100% interest on their credit card debt. In 2007, the profit margin of US credit card companies was just 5%; today it is up to 20%. The main reason for it is that governments have allowed competition in the banking industry to decline sharply.

So, an ethical economic system has two main properties. First, real wages should rise as fast as productivity, so that the wage gap stays constant. This can be done by allowing the minimum wage to increase proportionately with productivity. Second, the interest rate on credit cards should be such that no bank has a profit margin exceeding 5% on credit card loans. As I said earlier, in 2007 this profit margin was just 5%, and the banking industry in America had a profit of some \$440 billion, which even now is a huge amount of money.

An ethical system requires strong competition among firms. The present-day monopoly capitalism has to give way to mass capitalism or economic democracy. This is the only way to restore prosperity and bring inflation under control. The rule of money in politics must disappear. Governments need to be honest to further a societal transformation.

Interview conducted by Rodrigo Bazúa Lobato and Trond Överland

Book Review

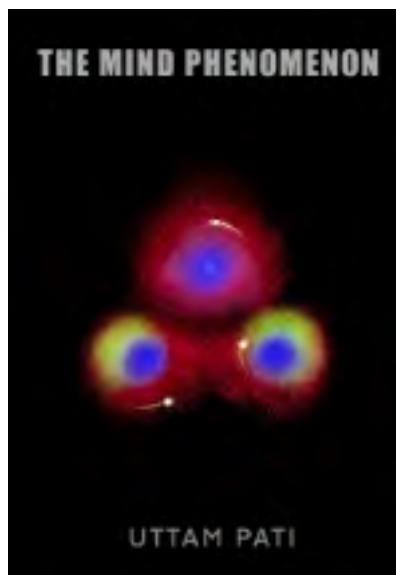
Basic Mind-stuff

The Mind Phenomenon by Uttam Pati
Reviewed by G Padmanabhan, Honorary Professor, Department of Biochemistry,
former Director Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru

I HAVE A deep interest in Advaidic Philosophy, although I cannot claim to be a practitioner. It enunciates the principle of Self as the ultimate. The Bhagavad Gita also projects intellect above the mind, and Self above the intellect. In the ultimate state of Self, there is no difference between the seer and the seen. There is only one ultimate reality. Duality is the reason for the miseries of the world and mind is the chief arbiter of duality. However, mind is the instrument of Life. Purity of mind is essential to move ahead to the next stage. All ethics, morality, and value-based conduct of mankind is to purify the mind into a state of positive orientation to realize the ultimate reality.

A jnani (spiritually-oriented intellectual) has realized the Self and lets his mind function with absolute detachment. But what is this mind? Intellectuals in different walks of life, have attempted to define the mind but it has remained an abstract entity. Uttam Pati, in a bold initiative, has attempted to explain this mind-body paradox in his small book Mind Phenomenon. The book is small only in the number of pages, but it required a tremendous effort, at least on my part, to understand its fundamentals before attempting to comprehend the book's message. It has only 6 chapters spreading out on 150 pages, and at times I found the linkage between topics a bit unclear. It needs to be acknowledged that we all stand on the shoulders of a large number of people from different walks of life, who knowingly or unknowingly have laid down a path that can be lit for posterity.

Let me try to summarize what I have understood. The brain has trillions of neurons and is the seat of consciousness. The mind links the brain (body) to consciousness. Waves and waves of thought processes define the mind, which depends on the functioning of the brain, described as the "garden for flowers to bloom and cactuses to grow". Trillions of cells



The Mind Phenomenon,
Uttam Pati.
Notion Press,
2022.
202 pages

communicate with each other within the brain and elsewhere in the body to create a conscious human being. A characteristic of the neurons is the presence of neurotransmitters converting chemical to electrical signals. Uttam proposes, or raises, the question whether there is cellular consciousness. The book's take-home is, in the words of Uttam, "a hypothetical Unit Particle (UP), a potential subtle-crude entity, may be responsible for the expression of the mind in a cell, which could establish a liaison between the cells crude molecular units and the subtle layers of mind". The mind and the cell are further conceived "as a miscible distillate, with an invisible interface, which makes the cell both to refract and pulsate". In a further expansion of the concept, the UP is defined as the energy unit of consciousness, solely responsible for expression of mind with a self-operational switch. The UP is not physically or structurally defined. However, functionally its composition is

The unit particle of the mind links the cellular processes to the mind phenomenon ... cells have a plan of action and there is consciousness at the cellular level.



suggested to enable control of cell behavior through diverse molecules, DNA, RNA, Protein, amino acids, stem cell and cellular mind as a whole. Consciousness can, in simple language, bring past and present together, which is perhaps the basis of superposition, entanglement and coherence in the quantum state. Virus, as an example of UP, is considered. It is an ancient, living-non-living, ‘intergalactic traveler’. Could some archaic virus be a precursor of human DNA? Extra-terrestrial life forms have been the subject of many debates and claims. Uttam brings in the proposition of Hoyle-Wickramasinghe, that extraterrestrial viruses and terrestrial forms could have co-evolved and even disperse locally modified genes back into the cosmos.

This book is dedicated to P R Sarkar (Shri Shri Anandamurti), who introduced the theory of Microvitum (MV), smaller than that of sub-atomic particle, essential for the sustenance of vital energy and contribute to “pure consciousness”. These can all lead to endless debates and so is the answer to the question what existed before Big Bang! The bottom line is the projection of UP as the fundamental unit of mind. UP can be positive or negative. Virus is, perhaps, an example of negative UP, although it eventually leads to the build-up of the immune system to fight the disease. A significant proposition is that the positive and negative states are reversible. Basically, one can make one’s life by positive thinking, which is “self-producing, self-maintaining, self-repairing and self-relational aspects of living systems”. Pranayama, control of breath, is fundamental to regulate oxygen supply at the cellular level. It is necessary to stabilize the unit mind that is governed by unit particle. Chaos in the mind can interfere and oxygen can quench the stress, basically suggesting pranayama, meditation would be the answer:

unit mind, quantum mind, polarity, propensity, free will are all manifestations of the UP.

Does this book say anything new? Reversible thought process, control of thought process through meditation/pranayama, to perform karma with detachment, mind control for the welfare of humanity, *Lokah samasthah Sukhni Bhavantu* (“may all beings everywhere be happy and free”) are all fundamental principles of Santana Dharma, the eternal law. While, the book reemphasizes the value-based, reversible thought process, it proposes something new: the unit particle. The UP of the mind links the cellular processes to the mind phenomenon, but it is not structurally defined. Cells have a plan of action and there is consciousness at the cellular level. I believe, this is a bold initiative to try and offer a scientific basis for consciousness. As with every other theory in this field, it is a proposition that can be debated and challenged. For example, David Bohms quantum field theory, applicable to matter and consciousness, or the “orchestrated objective reduction” (wave function collapse) of Penrose and Hameroff, suggesting microtubules as suitable hosts for quantum behavior, have been contested and debated. The bottom line is that there is a missing link between physics and neuroscience, provided consciousness is just not viewed as a metaphysical problem but an issue of mathematical neuroscience. UP as a fundamental unit of consciousness of the mind is another bold concept that can be challenged and debated. Future will deliberate on Uttam’s proposition, “This newly conceived particle may influence cellular and deep layers of mind via a quantum-cell-conscious pathway”.

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