

NEOHUMANIST Review

Issue 5 • September 2025



LIBERATING PSYCHOLOGY

Existential Self-esteem
Addiction and Yoga Psychology
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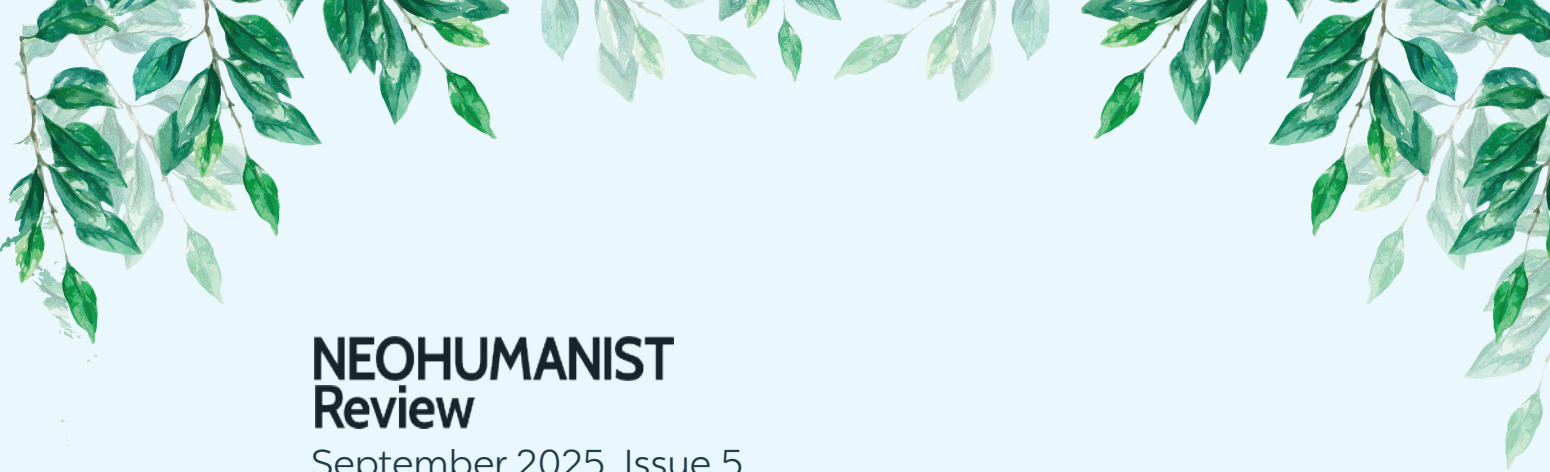
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NEOHUMANIST Review

Liberating human intellect from the shackles of dogmas that limit our evolution

MISSION STATEMENT

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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FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

MODERN PSYCHOLOGY AND psychiatry have greatly enhanced our understanding of bio-psychology. With advances in neuroscience and neuroendocrinology, we are getting closer to distinguishing myths and age-old belief systems from what might be considered relative truths of existence. However, one area continues to frustrate a significant number of mental health patients: our reliance on chemical drugs as the singular solution in psychiatric medicine. This frustration likely originates from the limited perspective of allopathic medical science, which seeks causes and solutions to every issue in chemicals and the pill-centric culture. New syndromes are conceptualized every year, and the field of mental disorders is rapidly expanding. Heavy chemical medications, supported by numerous pharmaceutical regimens, are overtaking healing modalities, and we still appear far from a world where herbal remedies, natural healing, liberation from complexes, inner tranquility, and mental balance are the standard.

Nobody wants to be captive to fear, depression, internal division, or any other form of illness. We all crave good physical and mental health to foster further development, meaningful interactions, and the fulfillment of life's potential. Therefore, medicine, like any scientific discipline, could significantly benefit from a holistic view of life, the universe, physical health, and mental well-being.

In this edition, we are excited to present fresh insights from neohumanist scholars worldwide. Dr. Sucharit Katyal proposes a novel approach to enhancing self-esteem, suggesting that existential self-esteem can be nurtured through meditation and spiritual practices, which can assist society as a whole while alleviating widespread mental health issues.

Clinical neuropsychologist Richard Maxwell explores the biopsychological foundations of awe and devotion, along with their respective roles, providing a thorough explanation of the scientific principles behind the subtler and sublime aspects of human capacity. His research suggests that we could benefit more by internalizing external realities if we cultivate a deeper subjectivization of our internal world into universal consciousness. In this regard, Dr. Maxwell's findings resonate with Dr. Katyal's.

Obsessive clinging that leads to addiction is the focus of Dr. Shaman Hatley's exploration of ancient

and modern yogic science and its relevance to today's human condition. Hatley's findings align with those of the previous authors, emphasizing the importance of "a single lofty remedy": to overcome mental illness, one's entitative flow must converge with the flow of the Universal Great.

Clinical psychologist Guldeniz Yucelen, in her follow-up article on *Change: One Heart at a Time*, provides insights and solutions to the issues of inferiority and superiority complexes that underlie many challenges facing modern humans.

Concluding the section on liberating psychology are excerpts from Shrii Shrii Anandamurti's essential discourse on the significance of struggle and progress in the evolution of living beings; being alive means embracing struggle and emerging victorious!

Also in this edition, we are fortunate to include extracts from the discourses of Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, who eloquently describes the evolutionary journey of humanity. Based on some of his discourses, Avadhutika Anandarama Acarya shares an enlightening piece on "Alpine and the Aryan Civilization."

Dr. Sid Jordan and Aaron Frank provide in-depth book reviews on consciousness, life, and the future of physical sciences. A third review examines a new collection by neohumanist writer Marcus Bussey, *Journey Through Neohumanism, Grace and Transformation*. If there is one resounding message in Bussey's book, Shermon Cruz writes, "it is that we stand at a pivotal moment of transformation—a threshold where old worlds are crumbling, and new rhythms of life are calling us forward." Enjoy your reading!

As we prepare for a special edition of *Neohumanist Review* on "Enlightened Leadership" (March 2026), we are honored to welcome Dr. Ralph Mercer and Dr. Sohail Inayatullah as the joint guest co-editors for this issue. The call for papers is available on our website. In addition to the chosen theme, we expect to feature our regular essays in this issue.

We are extremely grateful to all our esteemed subscribers and well-wishers who have provided us with inspiring and encouraging feedback on previous issues. The journal articles, complete with references, are freely accessible to everyone on our website.



I Exist, Therefore I Am Worthy

An Existential Basis for Self-esteem

Sucharit Katyal

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ABSTRACT

Considering oneself worthy is consequential to nearly every aspect of life – including mental and physical wellbeing, healthy social functioning, and more generally to pursuing life goals. What a person evaluates as their overall worth as an individual is called self-esteem. Self-esteem is one of the most influential constructs across social and psychological sciences.

Typically, people form their self-esteem based on what they or others think of them in various domains of life that are considered valuable by the society or by themselves. Such a psychological origin of self-esteem is based on a utilitarian view of self-worth – i.e., one is worthy if they have some (perceived) utility in the world. Here, I introduce a novel psychological concept, existential self-esteem, where an individual can base their self-worth beyond perceived utility and on the fact of their very existence. I situate existential self-esteem within Shri Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar's philosophy of Neohumanism according to which the existential worth of an individual should be considered as being derived directly from the Cosmic Consciousness, the Universal source of all worth. I discuss how existential self-esteem can be cultivated through meditation and spiritual practices. Finally, I propose that cultivating an existential sense of self-esteem could play an important role in alleviating mental health issues widespread in society today.



Sucharit Katyal is a scientific researcher working on various topics like self-beliefs, meditation, perception, and decision-making.

Self-esteem

SELF-ESTEEM CAN BE defined as how worthy a person considers themselves overall as an individual. Dating back to over a hundred years, self-esteem has been one of the most influential concepts in psychology and social sciences. Based on a large volume of research we now know that people who hold themselves in high self-esteem go on to have better mental wellbeing, physical health, social functioning, academic and work outcomes and lower criminality in the future, compared to people with low self-esteem¹. At the same time low self-esteem is a core symptom of anxiety and depression, which are both now widespread in the population as part of a global mental health epidemic².

*Practicing meditation
can lead to higher self-
esteem and a more secure
sense of self-worth.
This more secure yet
high self-esteem may be
rooted in an existential
sense of self-worth.*

”

What underlies self-esteem

Psychologists have long tried to understand factors based on which a person constructs their sense of self-esteem. An influential idea is that each person forms their self-esteem by relying on certain domains or combination of domains that they find relevant or consistent with their values. These domains on which one bases their self-esteem are called contingencies of self-worth³. One common contingency of self-worth is social approval, or what other people think of the person, which that person uses as a measure of their self-worth. Such a contingency may be common, for example, among the youth of today who rely heavily on peer feedback to their social media profiles to gauge their own worth. Others may base their self-esteem on specific competencies – for examples, on how good they are at their work, academics, sports, or even at fulfilling their ethical and moral obligations. Yet others, may base their self-esteem on spiritual or religious beliefs or ideas – such as, unconditional love of God/Supreme Being.

It is known that people whose self-esteem relies on factors like social feedback or performance-related outcomes tend to have relatively unstable self-esteem. In other words, their self-esteem fluctuates depending on things like their expectations from others, what feedback they get, and how well they think they have performed. Alternatively, people whose self-esteem relies on more secure ideas of self-worth would have a more stable self-esteem. Such secure self-worth, for example, could be based in strong convictions of an unconditionally loving God or humanistic philosophical views where one's existence itself is considered a worthy phenomenon.



Neohumanism and existential worth

Several philosophers and philosophical schools have promoted the idea that there is inherent worth in existing irrespective of what a person does, including Emmanuel Kant, Søren Kierkegaard, as well as a number of schools of Indian philosophy. This idea finds its clearest expression in the works of Shrii Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar (also known as Shrii Shrii Anandamurti) who propounded the philosophy of Neohumanism. According to Neohumanism, every living being—including all humans, animals and plants—has existential value irrespective of their utility value.

“... each and every living entity, whether plant or animal, has two types of value: one, its utility value, and the other, its existential value.”

– from the discourse Pseudo-Humanism in *The Liberation of Intellect: Neohumanism*⁴

In other words, all living beings are existentially worthy irrespective of what they do and how their actions impact others. This idea is situated within Shrii Sarkar's larger panentheistic philosophy and cosmology where the entire Universe is an expression of the Supreme Being/Cosmic

Consciousness. He calls the process of the Cosmic Consciousness expressing itself as the Universe, 'Macropsychic Conation,' where each living being or microcosm exists because the Cosmic Consciousness (or Macrocosm) is "thinking" of them within its Cosmic Mind.

"... the Macrocosm also cannot remain without thinking. It is bound to think of something; it thinks of its created objects. A microcosm, a unit being, may think, "I am an insignificant person, I am not educated, I have neither intellect nor erudition nor wealth. Does Parama Puruṣa [Cosmic Consciousness] think of me also? – Me, a very small insignificant microcosm?" They should remember that Parama Puruṣa not only does think of them, He is bound to think of them by force of circumstances. Parama Puruṣa cannot think, "These are just very ordinary human beings merely managing to make both ends meet – I can't think of them!" He cannot think like this, because by providential decree the Macrocosm is bound to think of His created objects – He cannot forget them... So you understand that you are not at all insignificant: your existential value is very great."

– from the discourse Macropsychic Conation and Micropsychic Longings from *Subhāṣita Saṁgraha Part 18*⁵

In this way, each expression derives its value and worth directly from the Cosmic Consciousness or Parama Puruṣa. And they have the potential to realise their greatness by considering themselves existentially worthy:

"In this universe all entities are divine; only people have to realize it. Nobody is helpless or alone in this universe. We have mundane, supramundane and spiritual relationships with the universe. So it is the bounden duty of human beings to expand their mental arena because basically all finite entities have the inherent wont of universal pervasion. Their goal is the Supreme Entity who is free from limitations. Human beings will have to expand themselves so much that they will go beyond the fetters of limitations. There cannot be and should not be an inferiority or superiority complex in anybody."

– from the discourse Universality in Race, Language, Religion and Culture in *A Few Problems Solved Part 6*⁶

Notably, each individual's existential worth is not one that is collectively zero sum. In other words, one person or living being does not become worthy at

the cost of another, as may be the case for utility value. Instead, recognition of existential worth naturally involves a balanced mental attitude that does not consider oneself either superior or inferior to another individual:

"Most people suffer from either a superiority complex or an inferiority complex. A balanced state of mind is one of the most essential qualities that one should possess. It is that state in which a person does not suffer from any complex, that is, neither from superiority complex nor from inferiority complex, neither from fear complex nor from hate complex. People should be free from each and every kind of complex"

– from the discourse The Social Order and Superiority and Inferiority Complexes in *Ananda Vacanāmrtam Part 5*⁷

Existential self-worth and its cultivation

From the psychological perspective of self-esteem, it is not sufficient to only philosophically embrace the idea of existential worth. It is also important to transform this philosophical idea into a psychological attitude or belief about oneself (and others), and where one evaluates one's self-worth (and others' self-worth) from an existentialist perspective.* As mentioned above, such an attitude may be present in people who establish their self-esteem in ideas such as unconditional God's love³. However, it is also possible to train one's mind to cultivate an existential sense of self-worth.

It is known that practicing meditation can lead to higher self-esteem^{8, 9} and a more secure sense of self-worth¹⁰. This more secure yet high self-esteem may be rooted in an existential sense of self-worth. Particularly noteworthy here is the meditation approach taught by Shrii Sarkar, known as Ananda Marga Tantra Yoga. These practices place a strong emphasis on existential self-worth, as consistent with Shrii Sarkar's philosophical ideas mentioned above. In this system of meditation, a practitioner meditates on the idea that she/he is an integral part of Cosmic Consciousness while trying to merge their sense of individuality (or unit consciousness) into a sense of Cosmic Consciousness¹¹. As practice progresses, this meditative process involves developing a personal inner relationship with Cosmic Consciousness – for example, akin to a parent (Cosmic Consciousness) and child (unit

*While the idea of existential worth can be applied in praxis both in relation to oneself and others, here I focus my treatment of it to oneself because of its relation to self-esteem and mental health.

An existential perspective of self-esteem is something that a person may be able to cultivate through spiritual outlooks.

”

consciousness). Through such practices, a meditator gets established in the idea that their worth is derived directly from a transcendental, universal and existential source of worth, i.e., Cosmic Consciousness.

I conducted a research study investigating how long-term Ananda Marga meditation may alter how people think about themselves compared to demographically matched healthy individuals who do not meditate⁸. Here, participants were shown a number of both positive and negative affective adjectives (e.g., capable, confident, anxious, fearful, etc.) to which they had to respond whether the adjectives described them or not. Self-esteem is measured as a global affective evaluation of oneself. People with high self-esteem evaluate themselves overall higher on positive traits and lower on negative traits compared to those with low self-esteem. In the study, we found that Ananda Marga meditators self-endorsed overall more positive and fewer negative adjectives than non-meditators indicating higher self-esteem. Besides asking people to respond to the words, we also measured participants' brain activity while they were making these responses and observed something very interesting. While non-meditators' brain response was stronger for negative compared to positive words, Ananda Marga meditators' brain response did not differ between positive and negative words. In other words, despite exhibiting a higher self-esteem (i.e., higher positive and lower negative self-evaluation), the meditators' brain reacted similarly to positive and negative words. This appears to reflect the existential mental approach that Ananda Marga meditators try to cultivate through their practices where they treat both positive and negative aspects of themselves as expressions of the Cosmic

Consciousness. Such an approach allows them to potentially experience positive and negative self-attributes from a somewhat distanced stance where they are situated within a larger (Cosmic) context rather than in relation to their individual egos.

Thus, an existential perspective of self-esteem is something that a person may be able to cultivate through meditation practices and spiritual outlooks.*

Existential self-esteem - a potential solution to the mental health crisis

Mental health disorders, particularly anxiety and depression, are now widespread around the world with around 4% of the global population suffering from such disorders². It is well known that low self-esteem is a core feature of such mental health disorders. Indeed, people with anxiety and depression exhibit fundamental cognitive distortions in forming beliefs about themselves that would contribute to a persistently low self-esteem, as I have found in my recent work¹³.

Further, a majority of people these days, particularly youth, spend a significant amount of time on social media. A common aspect of social media presence is to share content with others in an attempt to attract feedback and attention from others. People who rely too much on what others think of them are likely to exhibit unstable self-esteem, making them vulnerable to mental ill health.

In such scenarios, constructing a sense of self-worth on existential principles – i.e., “I am worthy because I exist” – may play a key role in promoting positive mental health.

Conclusion

In this article, I introduce a novel psychological concept called existential self-esteem, where an individual's self-worth is based in the non-contingent factor of their very existence. I discuss how existential self-esteem is situated within Shri Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar's philosophy of Neohumanism. I discuss how existential self-esteem may be cultivated through meditation and spiritual practices. Finally, I propose that cultivating an existential self-esteem could help alleviate mental health issues widespread in society.

The article with its complete references is available at the journal web pages theneohumanist.com.

* Another promising avenue for cultivating existential self-worth maybe through novel forms of therapy, like the one based in existential positive psychology¹².



Obsessive Clinging (*abhinivesha*): A Perspective on Addiction from Yoga Psychology

Shaman Hatley

Introduction

CONCEPTUAL CATEGORIES OVERLAPPING with the modern idea of “addiction” are prominent in the psychological analyses of Buddhist philosophy and the Yoga Darshana, the school of philosophy having Patanjali’s *Yogasūtras* as its authoritative basis.¹ Relevant categories are also present in classical Indian medicine (Ayurveda). These traditions have rich philosophical and theoretical bases and are also

¹ Following the journal’s conventions, Sanskrit is here transliterated according to Shri Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar’s own system, which differs from IAST conventions. In brief, long vowels and retroflexion are both marked by a stroke similar to the acute accent (´). Although Sarkar’s published writings do not discuss the system’s basis, this diacritic has precedent in the ancient Latin apex sign used to mark long vowels, especially in epigraphy (see e.g. Oliver 1966). The diphthongs written as *ai* and *au* in IAST are instead *ae* and *ao*. Vocalic and consonantal *r* and *l* use the same character, distinguished only by phonetic context; likewise, *visarga* and the consonant *h* are both written *h*. The guttural and palatal nasals are written as *ṁ* and *ṇ*, respectively (IAST *ṁ* and *ṇ*), while the palatal and guttural sibilants (IAST *ś* and *ṣ*) are written as *sh* and *s*, respectively.

Many of Sarkar’s publications are based on oral lectures to his disciples, and in quoting from these I silently correct errors in Sanskrit spelling, etc., unlikely to be authorial. I cite English-language sources by paragraph number (§) from the *Electronic Edition of the Works of P. R. Sarkar*, version 9 (abbreviation: EE9). Bangla and Hindi sources are quoted by page number.



Shaman Hatley is an associate professor of Asian Studies and Religious Studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston. He completed an interdisciplinary liberal arts degree at Goddard College in 1998, and then studied Indology and Religious Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. His research is primarily in the areas of India’s tantric traditions in the early medieval period, goddess cults, and the history of yoga.

associated with systems of self-cultivation and/or therapeutics. Today, clinical studies on addiction treatment drawing from Buddhism (mainly forms of mindfulness meditation), yoga (usually modern postural yoga) and traditional Indian medicine proliferate.² Given these clinical applications and

² For a survey of mindfulness-based approaches to addiction treatment and a review of research, see Bowen et al. (2016). Recent meta-analyses of clinical studies of yoga and substance use disorder include Walia et al. (2021) and Brooks et al. (2021) (focused on women). I am

their well-acknowledged therapeutic potential,³ serious endeavor to understand the theoretical and philosophical perspectives of these traditions on addiction is warranted. Perspectives from yoga traditions are especially underrepresented in the literature.⁴ This brief essay examines a single conceptual category—*abhinivesha*—relevant to addiction in classical Yoga and in the thought of a twentieth-century Indian guru and philosopher, Shri Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar (1922–1990), known to his disciples as Shrii Shrii Anandamúrti. While better known for the philosophy of Neohumanism, Sarkar’s thought touches a variety of fields. Relatively little scholarship has been devoted to Sarkar as a philosopher of yoga,⁵ but I hope to show that this is a productive lens for approaching his oeuvre.

Etymologically, *abhinivesha* means something along the lines of “entering,” “immersion,” or “abiding” (*nivesha*, from the verb *vish* [“to enter”] with prefix *ni-*) in an intensive manner (additional prefix *abhi-*). It may refer to clinging to something tenaciously, whether to an object of desire, an idea, etc. The word has a complex history and multiple shades of meaning. My exploration here is indebted to Frederick Smith’s (2023) recent article on *abhinivesha*, which examines the term in yoga and across Sanskrit literary genres.

In book II of the *Yogasútra* (hereafter “YS”), the *sádhana-páda*, Patanjali introduces the concept of *kleshas*: mental “afflictions” or “defilements” that impair the healthy functioning of thought. In brief,

not aware of high-quality review articles concerned with Ayurveda-based addiction therapy.

³ As Bowen et al. (2016: p. 187) conclude regarding mindfulness-based approaches to addiction, “We are at the beginning: there are many questions remaining to be explored, but preliminary evidence from increasingly large randomized controlled trials suggests that these questions are worth pursuing.”

⁴ Many examples of efforts to articulate a Buddhist perspective on addiction could be adduced; see for example Marlatt (2002), which is typical for its lack of philosophical and historical depth. More admirable in this regard is Kang (2010). Clinical perspectives dominate the literature on addiction and yoga. In this context yoga generally refers to modern postural yoga, and if discussions of yoga philosophy are present, these are often superficial (see e.g. Khanna and Greeson 2013).

⁵ See Kang (2003) for a study of Sarkar’s philosophy in its Indian philosophical context, including comparison to classical Yoga.

*How are deeply rooted
dispositions to be addressed?
Sarkar prescribes a rich array
of spiritual, ethical, and
physical practices. His book on
yogic therapy and natural
medicine also offers treatment
plans for a variety of diseases,
combining herbal medicines,
yoga postures, diet, naturopathic
treatment and so forth.*

”

these are ignorance (*avidyá*), egotism (*asmitá*), passion or attachment (*rága*), hatred (*dveśa*), and *abhinivesha* (YS 2.3). A similar account of *kleshas* features in Yogácára Buddhism (Gokhale 2020: 70–71). Ignorance (*avidyá*) is the foundation of the other four (YS 2.4). The practice of yoga (*kriyáyoga*)—in this context defined as austerities (*tapah*), mantra-incantation (*svádhyaýa*) and contemplation of God (*īśhvaraprañidhāna*) (YS 2.1)—leads to samádhi and causes attenuation of the *kleshas* (YS 2.2).

YS 2.9 elaborates upon the concept of *abhinivesha* without appearing to define it: *svarasaváhii vidúso ’pi tathá rúdhó ’bhiniveshah*. Provisionally, we might translate this thus: “Tenacious clinging (*abhinivesha*) flows from one’s own nature (*svarasaváhii*, lit. “flows from/with its/one’s own sap/essence”) and is developed/established (*rúdhah*) even in the wise (*vidúso ’pi*), just as [in others] (*tathá*).” Cf. the translations of Smith (2023: 343), “Abhinivesha is ascendant even in a learned man, just as in others; it flows from one’s own nature”; and Acri (2012: 506), “Persisting spontaneously, obsession springs up in this manner even in the wise.” However, the Yoga Darshana’s exegetical tradition, beginning with the *Bhásya* commentary on the *Yogasútras*, generally attributes to *abhinivesha* a much narrower meaning: “clinging to life,” the will to live innate in all beings, even worms (*krmer api*)—hence also “fear of death.” As Smith (pp. 343–45) notes, virtually all modern translations of the *Yogasútras* follow suit.

Years ago, I was intrigued to note that Shri Sarkar’s explanations of *abhinivesha* differ starkly,

⁶ Alternatively, *tathá* could mean “in the same manner [as the preceding *kleshas*].”

although these explanations occur in the context of citing the *Yogasūtras*. I am aware of five discourses where Sarkar engages with the topic of *abhinivesha*: three lengthy discourses published in the *Subhāsita Saṁgraha* series, parts 7, 8, and 24 (of 1958, 1959, and 1979), respectively; and two shorter discourses published in the *Ananda Vacanāmrtam* series (parts 2 and 27). In brief, Sarkar defines *abhinivesha* as compulsive or obsessive behavior driven by mental conditioning (*saṁskāra*; “reactive momenta,” in Sarkar’s technical terminology). He cites as the main example what we might call alcoholism, i.e. addiction to alcohol. I wondered at the time whether *abhinivesha* might not be a category in Sanskrit broadly applicable to “addiction,” and observed that the term has a rich history in Indian philosophy that would merit further study.

My interest in the subject was renewed with the publication of Smith’s illuminating 2023 article. As he shows, the term has a range of uses in different genres of literature and schools of philosophy, from “intense engagement” (in the *Kāshikāvṛtti*, a grammar) and “fixed intent” (in the *Mahābhārata*) to “strong attachment” or “grasping” [onto something negative] in Buddhist philosophy. To elaborate on some of its Buddhist usages, the Madhyamaka Buddhist philosopher Candrakīrti, for example, lists *abhinivesha* as one of the synonyms of *rāga*, “attachment” or “passion.”⁷ In Yogācāra (i.e. Vijñānavāda) *abhinivesha* is used as a synonym of *prapañca*, “spiritually negative clinging” (Schmithausen 1987: 360–61). The word’s negative connotations are evident in Dharmashāstra as well, where we find the expression *vitatha-abhinivesha* in the sense of “habituated or inclined to untruth.”⁸ The term also appears in Ayurveda: Smith (350–51) notes that the Cārakasaṁhitā describes a mental illness (*mānasa-roga*) called *atattva-abhinivesha*, “clinging to the unreal.” While Smith likens this to obsessive-compulsive disorder, it might in fact represent

something closer to psychosis, though it “cannot be interpreted with any single modern mental disorder” (Rymbai et al. 2023: 509). More neutral and even positive meanings of *abhinivesha* are also attested: the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* of Jīva Gosvāmī, for instance, refers to “single-minded attachment to Dharma” (*dharma-eka-abhinivesha*, 4, 3.57), and in his commentary on the *Bhagavad-gītā* Shankara glosses *abhinivesha* with *nīsthā*, “intent upon, devoted to” (5.17).

In what sense, then, did Patanjali intend *abhinivesha*? Given the degree to which Yogācāra Buddhism informs Patanjali’s technical terminology,⁹ it is certainly possible that Patanjali had in mind a meaning such as “intense clinging.” Indeed several scholars besides Smith have interpreted *abhinivesha* this way.¹⁰ Gokhale (2020: 70–75) goes a step further and argues that Patanjali’s *abhinivesha* should be interpreted as “dogmatic view,” i.e. clinging to false views, on the basis of the Yogācāra background to the *kleshas*, in which context *dr̥ṣṭi* (“view”) and *abhinivesha* appear to be interchangeable (at least in some examples). Still, there is a significant possibility that the *Bhāṣya*’s explanation—clinging to life/the will to live—reflects Patanjali’s intention precisely; contemporary specialists are increasingly inclined to view the *Bhāṣya* as an autocommentary, that is, as Patanjali’s own explanation of the *Yogasūtras*. According to this view, advanced most cogently by Maas (2013), the *Yogasūtras* and *Bhāṣya* form a single composition, known by tradition as the *Pātañjalayogashāstra* (Patanjali’s Treatise on Yoga). Even in this scenario, the *Bhāṣya*’s interpretation of *abhinivesha* appears idiosyncratic, suggested neither by the *sūtra* itself (YS 2.9) nor by closely-related philosophical literature. Later commentators nonetheless upheld this interpretation, including Shankara (to whom the -*Vivaraṇa* commentary is attributed), Bhojadeva, Vācaspatimishra, etc. As way to reconcile this problem, Gelblum (1992) suggests that the *Bhāṣya*’s comments on YS 2.9 were intended as an illustration rather than definition of *abhinivesha*. While there may

⁷ The opening of the sixth book (*prakaraṇa*) of the Prasannapadā, commenting on the word *rāga*, lists as synonyms *rāga*, *sakti*, *adhyavasāna*, *saṅga* and *abhinivesha*. See Smith (2023: 354–55) on Nāgārjuna’s use of *abhinivesha* in the sense of attachment or clinging.

⁸ *Manusmṛti* 12.5 describes three kinds of mental sin: ruminating about other people’s wealth, contemplating wrong-doing, and *abhinivesha*, attachment, i.e. habitual inclination, to untruth.

⁹ See especially Gokhale (2020) and O-Brien-Kop (2022).

¹⁰ Robinson (1972: 304), Filliozat (1977: 536 [n. 47]), Gelblum (1992: 82 [n. 26]), and Acri (2012: 506–7) have come to my attention.

be some evidence for this interpretation,¹¹ I do not find it fully persuasive.

Abhinivesha in Shri Sarkar's writings

Let us now examine Sarkar's discussions of *abhinivesha* and their contexts. As mentioned above, I am aware of five published discourses that engage with *abhinivesha*, listed by date¹²:

1. "Brahmabháva o Mánava Jivana," in *Subhásita Samgraha, Saptama Khandā* [Part 7]. Bengali. Date: Phálgunī Púrñimá, 1958. Translated into English as "The Macrocosmic Stance and Human Life."
2. "Citishakti O Mánasa Sádhaná," in *Subhásita Samgraha, Aštama Khandā* [Part 8]. Bengali. Date: 5 July 1959, in Jamalpur. Translated into English as "Cognitive Force and Psychic Practice."
3. "Manúśya ká kartavya," in *Ananda Vacanámṛta Saptaviṁśa Khandā* [Part 27]. Hindi. Date and place unknown, presumed to be 1969. Not yet published in English.¹³
4. "Cardinal Attributions of God," in *Ananda Vacanámṛtam Part 2*. Date: 14 September 1978, Patna. This discourse was mostly or entirely in English.¹⁴
5. "Incantation and Human Progress," in *Subhásita Samgraha Part 24*. Date: 30 November 1979, Tatanagar. Published first in English based

¹¹ I have in mind Vácaspatimishra's interpretation of *Sámukhyakárikā* 47–48, discussed briefly below.

¹² Lectures delivered to disciples on various occasions, transcribed (often from audio recordings) and then lightly edited for publication by staff of Ananda Mārga's publications department (usually, it seems, with relatively little involvement by the author). In the case of *Subhásita Samgraha*, vols. 1–8, the published discourses were re-dictated in Bengali after the lectures (usually in Hindi). The short discourses published in the *Ananda Vacanámṛtam* series were provided with titles by the editors, while the titles of *Subhásita Samgraha* discourses are the author's.

¹³ I am grateful to Tāraka Ghista (personal communication) for bringing this discourse to my attention and making available to me a draft translation under the title "Duty of Humanity." I am also grateful to Madhuresh Sumit for clarifying several Hindi passages with me.

¹⁴ The discourse was in all likelihood given in English, as were the lectures on previous and subsequent days; it was transcribed from a tape that may no longer be available. Audiotapes survive from 12 Sept and 15 Sept 1979.

Abhinivesha represents behaviors one clings to habitually despite knowing better ... certain kinds of obsessive, compulsive or addictive behavior ... extending beyond weakness for a certain object or the longing for pleasure.

”

on a trilingual discourse (Bangla, English, and Hindi).¹⁵

Each of these has a somewhat different focus.

It should be mentioned from the outset that Sarkar never proposes a direct translation of *abhinivesha*, whether into English or Bangla. One might presume that he does so in "The Macrocosmic Stance and Human Life," where *abhinivesha* is glossed as "psychic obsession" (§33). However, nothing corresponds to this in the Bangla; "psychic obsession" was supplied by the translator (not unhelpfully). The discourse "Cognitive Force and Psychic Practice" contains a different and more opaque gloss, "self-obsession," likewise absent from the Bangla.

A comparatively detailed explanation of *abhinivesha* appears in the earliest of these discourses (1958), translated into English as "The Macrocosmic Stance and Human Life." Sarkar quotes YS 2.9 (§31), and then provides the following explanation (§32–34), here retranslated:

*Svarasaváhii vidúśo 'pi tathá rúḍho 'bhiniveshah.*¹⁶

In the world there is no shortage of wise and talented people who understand the

¹⁵ According to the Publisher's Note, this discourse, published first in English, is based upon a trilingual discourse (Bangla, English, and Hindi) delivered in Tatanagar in 1979, a recording of which survives.

¹⁶ While the published editions print *svarasaváhii*, which the audiotape supports, this is simply a Bengali-inflected pronunciation of *svarasaváhii*. The Hindi-language discourse in *Ananda Vacanámṛtam Part 27* prints the correct *svarasaváhii* (p. 95).

difference between spiritual knowledge (*vidyā*) and ignorance (*avidyā*).¹⁷ They also know what is right and wrong (*sad-asat*), what is *dharma* and *adharma*. They may even deliver eloquent speeches on *dharma* and morality in assemblies and meetings, yet knowingly engage in sinful deeds in their personal lives, despite understanding the dreadful consequences of sinful actions. [Like the other *kleshas*,] this too is a particular manifestation of *avidyā*, one that keeps *vidyā* suppressed and does not allow it to flourish in individual life.

On this subject a story comes to mind. Once there was a person addicted to drink who by scriptural study and by cultivating intellectual knowledge realized in heart and mind that the habit of drinking alcohol is extremely bad. His *vidyā*-nature told him to give up drinking wine and so he resolved to give up his drinking habit. He decided that when an auspicious day comes into view he will begin to lead a disciplined life. As he waited, that auspicious day arrived. At the time that he used go daily to the liquor store, he walked down the road to the store with extraordinary firmness. Passing by, after taking ten steps he began to say, “O mind, you are heroic. You gave up the habit of alcohol—you went ten steps beyond the wine shop. Today I will reward your bravery—I will fill you to the brim with wine.” After this the drunkard entered the wine shop and drank even more than he would on other days. This story illustrates *abhinivesha* beautifully.¹⁸

From where does this propensity (*vrthā*) of *abhinivesha* derive its impetus? It is the acquired *saṁskāras* of human beings that provide its impetus; one’s own *saṁskāras* provide vitality to the propensity of *abhinivesha*. Emerging from within the mind,

¹⁷ In Shri Sarkar’s thought, *vidyā* [*śakti*] and *avidyā* [*śakti*] more specifically represent the opposing forces causing attraction to the divine—introversion and spiritual growth—and extroversion, i.e. attraction to the material world, respectively.

¹⁸ Sarkar recounted a similar humorous story to early disciples; see Pranavatmakananda (2019: 302–3).

this [karmic] flow (*rasa-pravāha*) helps *avidyā* remain established (*adhiṣṭhita*). As long as a human being remains guided by its individual [karmic] flow, that is, by *svārasa*, it remains an individual being (*jīva*), and when it is guided by the flow of Brahma (*brahma-rasa*), it becomes Shiva—it is liberated.

From this we may understand more or less how Sarkar interprets YS 2.9: *svārasavāhii vidūso ’pi tathā rūdho ’bhinivesha* means, “*abhinivesha* has one’s own reactive momenta (*saṁskāra*) as its impetus and is established even in a learned person, just as [in others].” For Sarkar, *vidūśah* (genitive of *vidvas*, whose nominative form is *vidvān*) refers to an educated person who may have deep intellectual understanding of right and wrong and the spiritual path. He appears to gloss *rūdha* (“established, grown, developed” etc.) with the adjective *adhiṣṭhita*, which could mean “established,” i.e. entrenched, or perhaps have the weaker sense of “present;” alternatively, it could connote something exerting control, i.e. “dominant.” Sarkar’s interpretation of *svārasavāhii* resembles that of the early-modern commentator Vijiñānabhikṣu, who writes, “*svārasavāhii* means that [*abhinivesha*] flows due to karmic conditioning (*saṁskāra*) alone.”¹⁹ As for *abhinivesha* itself, Sarkar understands this to refer to deeply ingrained habitual behavior that resists change even when one reaches a clear understanding of its devastating impact. The example of the alcoholic falls squarely within the scope of “addiction,” and Sarkar also uses Bengali expressions such as *pānāsakta* (attached to drink), *madyapa* (drinker/drunard), and *madya-pāner abhyāsa* (habit of drinking wine) that reinforce this.

The discourse “Incantation and Human Progress” (1979) also contains an account of *abhinivesha*. Its context is much different: the lecture concerns the role of mantra-incantation (*japa*) in spiritual life. Sarkar turns to *abhinivesha* in §21–22 after introducing the idea that only words specially infused with vitality (*caetanya*) by a great tantric guru (*mahākaola*) can be regarded as perfected or empowered (*siddha*) mantras (§19–20). He then says,

Even when the human mind understands everything, it still runs towards crude

¹⁹ Vijiñānabhikṣu’s *Yōgavārttika* ad YS 2.9: *svārasena saṁskāramātrēṇa vāhatiiti svārasavāhii*.

physicality. People realize what is detrimental and what is beneficial, yet despite that they move towards things that are detrimental to them. It can happen that way, and it does happen quite often.

Svarasavāhii vidūṣo ʔi tathā rūḍho bhiniveshaḥ: Even a great scholar, a highly learned person, who knows what is proper and what is improper, is still driven by his or her inherent reactive momenta, and knowingly moves towards improper and undesirable things.²⁰ This mental disease, which is in fact a crude movement driven by *avidyā* [ignorance], is called *abhinivesha*. When even the mind of a learned person runs towards crude physicality, then what can forcibly draw the mind towards subtlety, towards benevolence, and break the shackles of crude bondage? The living mantra can. Only [these] are the real mantras; the rest are not mantras, but mere collections of words.²¹

Here Sarkar adds the idea that *abhinivesha* is a “mental disease,” a category of modern psychology as well as Indian medicine (as *mānasa-roga*), and proposes incantation of a duly empowered mantra to be the ultimate medicine. The idea of *siddha mantras* belongs more to the world of tantric Mantrashāstra than Patanjali’s philosophy of yoga. Still, in the Yoga Darshana *svādhyāya* is usually interpreted to mean mantra-repetition, and is one of three elements of *kriyāyoga*—together with ascetic practice (*tapah*) and dedication to God (*iishvara-praṇidhāna*)—that YS 2.2 links to attenuation of the kleshas.

The account of *abhinivesha* in “Cardinal Attributions of God” (1978) is briefer. Published in volume 2 of the *Ananda Vacanāmrtam* series, the discourse is essentially a commentary on *Yogasūtra* 1.24, which defines Iishvara (God). In the course of the lecture Sarkar quotes six additional *sūtras* of Patanjali—the most of any discourse, it seems.²² After introducing YS 1.24 (§1–2), defining *klesha* (§3), and explaining *avidyā*, *asmitā*, *rāga* and *dveṣa* (§4–11),

²⁰ In the printed book, this sentence is placed in quotation marks, as though it is a translation of the *sūtra*.

²¹ I have rephrased the final sentence, which is printed thus: “Only [siddha mantras], the rest are not mantras, but mere collections of words.”

²² *Yogasūtras* 1.7–9, 1.24, 2.5–6, and 2.9.

At the stage of abhinivesha, desire progresses to the point of fixation or obsession, where the impetus becomes internal. Far from simply lacking rational support, desire becomes so deeply rooted that even clear understanding of the unethical and injurious nature of the behavior involved fails to check one’s action.

”

Sarkar quotes YS 2.9 and offers the following explanation, in comparatively informal language (§13):

The last one and the most dangerous one is *abhinivesha*. Even the learned persons and the *jñānīs*, the scholars [who] know that this is this and that is that, or what is what and which is which – even knowing everything they are entrapped by certain propensities.²³ This particular nature of weakness is called *abhinivesha*. Several times you would see a teacher moving his fingers as if he is using a cane. In classroom he uses cane. Now there is no cane in hand but he is moving his finger in that style. A drunkard knows that drinking is a very bad practice. Even then he cannot give it up. These are all examples of *abhinivesha*.

Sarkar again adduces the example of the alcoholic. However, the other example differs notably: a school teacher so habituated to punishing pupils with a stick that his body repeats this motion unconsciously. In this case *abhinivesha* denotes a compulsive reflex based on an ingrained habitual activity. It is surely meaningful that the activity in question is violent and pernicious, even if tolerated socially (in Bihar in 1978) and performed without overt malice. The example does not align well with framework of addiction, though it could fit obsessive-compulsive

Continued on page 57

²³ Sentence re-punctuated.



Devotion and Awe

The Biopsychological Basis of Peak Propensities

Richard Maxwell

THE HUMAN BODY is a “biological machine” which is “goaded by propensive propulsion,” that is, by mental propensities which motivate all overt or covert activities (Sarkar, 1994c, p. 153). The concept of mental propensities is somewhat analogous to the concept of emotion in a broad sense. The term “emotion” came into general use in the English language in the 1800’s, being preceded by various categorizations including “appetites,” and “sentiments” and the distinction between “passions” and “affections,” respectively referring to “evil propensities” and “virtuous propensities” (Dixon, 2012, p. 339). Consistent with the notion that propensities may be a meaningful way to conceptualize emotions, a more modern perspective considered all emotional states to involve a change of some sort in action readiness (Frijda, 1988). From this perspective, an emotion is a feeling state that modifies the motivational inclination to engage in some form of action, which is well represented by the term mental propensity. In yogic literature, mental propensities are referred to as *virttis*.

One conception of *virttis* has been attributed to the ancient yoga scholar, Patanjali, who compiled information from several traditions into a set of aphorisms (*sutras*). In that version of *virttis*, five forms of mental vacillation were described: correct perception, misconception, imagination, sleep and memory (Stiles, 2002). These five propensities have also been described as: forms of proving conceptions (based on perception, inference or authority), defective cognition, conceptions that vary from normal forms of meaning, sleep/mental vacuity, and



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memory/mental regeneration of past experience (Ānandamūrti, 1988b).

A second *virtti* conception that available records suggest developed more recently (Hatley, 2024) is related to cakras. Most people have some familiarity with the yogic concept of *cakras* that are energy centers at various locations in the body which are said to influence mental functioning (Goswami, 1999; Maxwell, 2009). In this second framework, *virttis* are components of the cakras. Cakra *virttis* are present only in a few yoga systems (including Avalon, 1913, 1974/1919; Goswami, 1999), and are most developed by Shrii Sarkar (Sarkar, 1994b). Beyond specifying *virtti* qualities, *virttis* were considered to arise from the magnitude of glandular secretions occurring in regions of the body related to each cakra. However, no specific hormones were ever designated for the *virttis* (e.g., Sarkar, 1994a, 1994b).

There are 50 vrttis in Shrii Sarkar's system. The focus of this analysis will be on the peak vrttis, the 49th and 50th, which are associated with the *ājñā cakra*, the sixth cakra. Those peak vrttis were proposed to arise from fluctuations in pituitary hormone levels. The yogic terms for those vrttis are *parā* and *aparā*, respectively representing spiritual knowledge and mundane knowledge (Sarkar, 1994b) and visualized as the two petals of *ājñā cakra*. (See Figure 1.) Other than Shrii Sarkar, those that have described cakra vrttis have neglected to name vrttis for *ājñā cakra*, despite noting the presence of two petals for that cakra (Avalon, 1913, 1974/1919; Goswami, 1999).

The following analysis will provide a summary of yogic conceptions of pituitary activity, how those may relate to emotional feeling states that one may experience in relation to the two *ājñā cakra* vrttis, and what pituitary hormonal activity may promote those states. A designation of specific hormonal secretions for any of the cakra related vrttis has never previously been published, to the best of the author's knowledge.

Psycho-Spiritual Analysis of the Pituitary

A somewhat complex description of lateralized functions has been provided for the pituitary. The pituitary's "left wing" (*parā vrtti*) was considered to control "rightistic propensities" which "pave the way to supra-consciousness." The "right wing" (*aparā vrtti*) was considered to control "leftistic propensities" which have a "degenerating and depraving effect" (Sarkar, 1994a, p. 98). In a different work, this was explained further in relation to subtle energy currents (*idā* and *piṅgala*) which were lateralized, *idā* being associated with rightistic propensities and *piṅgala* with leftistic (Ānandamūrti, 1968). The energy currents are too complex a topic to explore here, but right and left are

not distinctions used when describing the pituitary in physiological scientific literature. This quandary may be clarified by indications that processing of human emotions is lateralized in the brain.

In a review of 50 years of laterality research, one of the earliest researchers assessing asymmetries in hemispheric processing of emotion provided a useful perspective from which to interpret right and left pituitary distinctions (Gainotti, 2019). In Gainotti's perspective, research has demonstrated that the right hemisphere (which controls the left side of the body)

specialized earlier in evolution as an automatic emergency adaptive emotional system, facilitating essential rapid responses for survival. As such, it emphasized management of more severe, danger-related negative emotions using limited conscious awareness. In contrast, the left hemisphere (controlling the right side of the body) developed verbal expressive capacity that included verbal cognitive processing, greater conscious awareness and intentionality. As a result, the left hemisphere has a tendency to express more positive and socially oriented emotions that are not urgent survival needs. This formulation is consistent with Shrii



Figure 1. A representation of the basic 7 cakras, including their petals and forms. Each of the cakra petals represents a particular vrtti. Digital artwork created by Aaron Stangl (ayurvedaposters.com), and used with permission.

Sarkar's distinctions (although people without typical handedness may be different). The control of the left hemisphere is associated with control of the right side of the body and "rightistic propensities," ones that are elevating. The right hemisphere is associated with control of the left side of the body and "leftistic propensities" that are inclined to be degenerative. While this may make sense, it still needs to be determined how this relates to the pituitary. That will be examined in two later sections associated with the pituitary hormones. *Parā* and *aparā* will be examined individually in the next two sections.

Spiritual (Intuitional) Knowledge/Pará Vrtti

The basic concept of the spiritual knowledge propensity is that it “aims at the subjectivization of the internal objectivity.” Subjectivization in that sense means to take one’s individual subjective “I-ness,” focus it, and merge it into the “ultimate subjectivity” of Universal Consciousness (Ānandamúrti, 1999, p. 101). This process has been directly associated with devotion. At its fullest, devotion has been described as “being merged in the constant thought of God” (Ānandamúrti, 1996, p. 35), and being “identical with love. ...The moment devotion is aroused, love for God comes” (Ānandamúrti, 2024b, p. 11).

Spiritual love is in a separate category from more worldly forms of love. “Love and passion are mutually antagonistic tendencies. The attachment for a finite thing is an expression of extroverted energy, whereas the attraction for the Infinite is an expression of the introverted energy. That is why these two can never co-exist. Therefore, the aspirant has to skillfully transform passion into love (Ānandamúrti, 1971, p. 80).” In other words, 49 propensities are forms of crude, or more subtle, but still externalized longings/feeling states. For spiritual development, those propensities must be systematically internalized, and converted into the 50th propensity (pará) which represents devotional love. That is a process of channelizing and directing all vrttis to the devotional subject, the one Universal Consciousness (God) described by many different names (Ānandamúrti, 2024a).

Devotion, associated with the 50th vrtti, has a special role. “Without devotion, one’s mind cannot rise beyond the pituitary gland [ājñā cakra] – if one wants to take the mind beyond that, one needs devotion. So, the supreme spiritual progress of microcosms is never possible without devotion” (Ānandamúrti, 1992, pp. 44–45). “At such a stage all propensities, all entities, become calm and tranquil. ...the state of Yoga is a state of the tranquility of the organs (Ānandamúrti, 1968, p. 99).” These assertions imply that achieving tranquility or a balanced state of homeostasis within the organs is necessary in addition to promoting self-transcending devotional love. This may also demonstrate the importance and contribution of the broader set of yoga practices which facilitate not just mental tranquility, but also tranquility within the body’s physiology.

Mundane Knowledge/Apará Vrtti

While the relationship of devotion with pará vrtti has been described extensively, there has been no similar elucidation of a feeling state for apará. Similarly positioned at the pituitary, apará has been described as mundane knowledge, representing an impermanent and imperfect process which “seeks to subjectivize the external objectivity” (Ānandamúrti, 1999, p. 101). Being associated with ājñā cakra and the pituitary, apará should nevertheless represent a propensity that is relatively subtle. In contrast, progressively lower cakras and their associated glands would have increasingly cruder qualities for their vrttis.

Despite the greater importance of pará, the importance of both pituitary vrttis has been emphasized. “When both sides of the pituitary plexus are fully developed and fully utilized, one attains apexed intellect (Sarkar, 1994a, p. 98).” “Apexed intellect” refers to the fully focused point at which the last awareness of individual I-ness exists within the mind. Through this pointed intellect, spiritual aspirants can come in closest proximity to the Universal Consciousness while retaining self-awareness (Ānandamúrti, 2018). Thus, a relationship with external reality must be developed to unify knowledge of that external reality with a devotional internal reality. “...the correct course is to gain the maximum Pará knowledge and along with it to acquire such and so much of Apará knowledge as may be found helpful and necessary while dealing with the external objectivity (Ānandamúrti, 1999, pp. 101–102).” That state of pointed intellect with the proper mix of pará and apará facilitates the ultimate complete devotional surrender of the ego.

So, what feeling state, analogous to devotion’s relationship with pará, could be related to apará? One possibility could be that mundane knowledge refers to lesser forms of devotion, ones that are externally oriented. One description of devotion (*bhakti*) divides it into two types, superior and inferior (Ānandamúrti, 1971). With the inferior, fulfillment of various kinds of personal desires are sought from the One worshipped. In contrast, the superior category would represent pará in which there are no personal desires, except to express love to the one Universal Consciousness.

While the distinction of superior and inferior could represent the two vrttis, pará and apará, all vrttis have been considered to have varying degrees of expression as a result of the magnitude of their



“A healthy spiritual perspective has been considered to have a direct loving relationship with the Divine, but even relatively positive awe may lead many to an irreconcilable separation.”

particular hormonal secretions. If the hormonal state associated with pará is relatively imbalanced or weak, it would be expected for that devotion to be weaker, with other vrttis remaining active, coloring devotion with personal desires. When devotional longing is constrained by other desires, it would represent an “inferior” form of devotional longing, but that would still be a form of devotion, and not a separate vrtti.

A reasonable place to search for a relatively subtle feeling state that has qualities that could represent aparā is in the work of Abraham Maslow. Maslow conducted a psychological study of strong spiritual experiences, which he called “peak experiences.” Peak experiences were found to include “emotions” of wonder, awe, reverence, humility, surrender and worship, in addition to a temporary loss of fear, anxiety, confusion, conflict and a variety of other

characteristics (Maslow, 1964). Examining Maslow’s six peak emotions, together with Sarkar’s distinction of subjectivizing internal versus external objectivity, may provide a relevant framework to distinguish aspects of pituitary vrttis.

Maslow observed that a quieting of challenging negative emotions occurred first, before achieving peak experiences, which is consistent with the earlier spiritual process of balancing lower vrttis. With peak experiences, some of Maslow’s suggested peak emotions are more devotional and appear related to pará vrtti, spiritual knowledge, while others appear more externally oriented and related to aparā vrtti, mundane knowledge. For example, worship has been described as part of a devotional process. “The word Bhakti (devotion) means worshiping....Bhakti signifies longing for the Supreme (Ānandamūrti, 1971, p. 68).” Surrender may also be related. It

involves a release of ego control. The most complete surrender is unconditional (Ānandamūrti, 1988a), and a natural component of superior devotion.

The remainder of Maslow's peak experience feeling states, awe, wonder, humility, and reverence, are more externally oriented. Awe has gotten the greatest attention, being described as arising from the perception of vastness, or power, that went beyond normal frames of reference, requiring a major restructuring of referential frameworks (Keltner & Haidt, 2003). Many different dimensions of experience can have the potential to trigger awe, including environmental, physical, cognitive, social and spiritual. Awe-inducing experiences were considered capable of producing rapid and dramatic personal change and growth. Subsequent experimental induction of awe found awe to include the sense of being in the presence of something greater than oneself, feeling personally connected with the surroundings (Shiota et al., 2007), and also promoting prosocial behavior (Piff et al., 2015).

In the yogic literature of Shrii Sarkar, what has been translated as awe has been mentioned infrequently and in a negative context. For example, it was considered natural for individuals to "fear and hold in awe what is beyond their own limitations" (Ānandamūrti, 1970, p. 113). That kind of enhanced stature may come from superior strength, education, intelligence, wealth, social status, etc. The combination of fear and awe has also been described as a means to exploit others, particularly women, to make them submissive in the name of religious dictates made by (male) authorities (Sarkar, 1995). This has included the double standard of holding women to a high moral standard, while ignoring male immorality. Another problem is the implication for how one relates to the Divine. A healthy spiritual perspective has been considered to have a direct loving (devotional) relationship with the Divine (Ānandamūrti, 1971), but even relatively positive awe may lead many to an irreconcilable separation. "They cherish a certain degree of awe in their minds for *Parama Puruṣa* [Universal Consciousness/God]: 'My Lord is the Supreme! How Great He is! How then can I go near Him?'" (Ānandamūrti, 2021, p. 118).

While awe is typically classified as a positive emotion (e.g., Fredrickson, 2013), psychological research agrees there can be negative aspects of awe. In a study of threat-based awe (awe induced by overwhelmingly powerful and threatening circumstances), there were increased feelings of

Meditation research has emphasized effects on physiological measures including autonomic parameters, and largely neglected consideration of underlying hormone states.

”

powerlessness and fear, in contrast to positive awe which was associated with increased well-being (Gordon et al., 2017).

The other emotions in Maslow's set of peak experience emotions have all shown relationships with awe. This includes wonder (Fingerhut & Prinz, 2018), reverence (Ai et al., 2017), and humility (Stellar et al., 2018). The correspondence of humility, reverence, and wonder with awe, and their typically extroverted focus, supports the conclusion that awe can be considered the superordinate representative of a group of emotions that represents the subtle feeling state associated with *aparā vṛtti*. As Shrii Sarkar emphasized, as expansive as awe may be, awe is in relation to something else. Awe includes a fundamental separation between self and other. As a result, awe represents well the potentially strong spiritual qualities present in the nature of *aparā vṛtti* that would be expected for its *ājñā cakra* location.

It might be asked why a feeling state such as compassion is not also represented in *aparā*. Compassion's feeling state may be more directly relevant in relation to a *vishuddha* (fifth *cakra*) *vṛtti*, such as the "desire for universal welfare" of the *svāhā vṛtti* (Ānandamūrti, 1993, p. 101). The increased prosocial behavior associated with awe, does not mean that prosocial behavior is part of awe's characteristics. Much prosocial behavior can also arise from devotion. Similar to compassion, forms of prosocial service may be associated with other subtle *vishuddha vṛttis*.

Pituitary hormones will now be explored for how they may be related to *parā* and *aparā*.

Posterior Pituitary Hormones

The pituitary has two lobes, one considered posterior and the other anterior. The posterior pituitary does not synthesize the hormones it releases. Those hormones are synthesized primarily in the neurons of the supraoptic and paraventricular nuclei of the hypothalamus. The axons of those neurons form a tract (hypothalamohypophyseal tract), transporting the hormones and releases them in the posterior pituitary. (See Figure 2.) Two primary hormones are released from those axons: **oxytocin (OT)** and **vasopressin (VP)**. VP is also known as arginine-vasopressin in humans, and **antidiuretic hormone** (Rosol et al., 2013). The physiological functions of OT include promoting uterine contractions during childbirth and milk release from the breast tissue. VP promotes vasoconstriction and reabsorption of water from the kidney's collecting duct system, and ensures the equilibrium of intracellular and extracellular water

contents. To accomplish those functions, the two hormones enter the blood supply from the posterior pituitary.

OT and VP also have complex involvement in mood, stress-response regulation and related behaviors (Kupcova et al., 2022). OT plays an important role in social recognition and bonding. Research has also associated OT with trust, empathy, and cooperation, in addition to broader effects on sensory, autonomic, visceral, and motor systems (Carter, 2014). Clinical research with humans has had varied findings, but targeting the OT system may provide a meaningful therapeutic approach for some forms of social dysfunction (Kendrick et al., 2018). Animal research has also demonstrated that OT plays a role in male and female sexual behaviors, although this is not clear in humans (Melis & Argiolas, 2021).

VP has been associated with attachment to and defense of self, family, and other members of social networks (Carter, 1998) which includes maternal aggression and paternal defense of the young. VP has been identified as a key regulator of social cognition, communicative behaviors, the balance of aggression and cooperation, and influencing the interpretation of social circumstances that activate empathy and other prosocial behaviors (Crespi et al., 2022; Du et al., 2024).

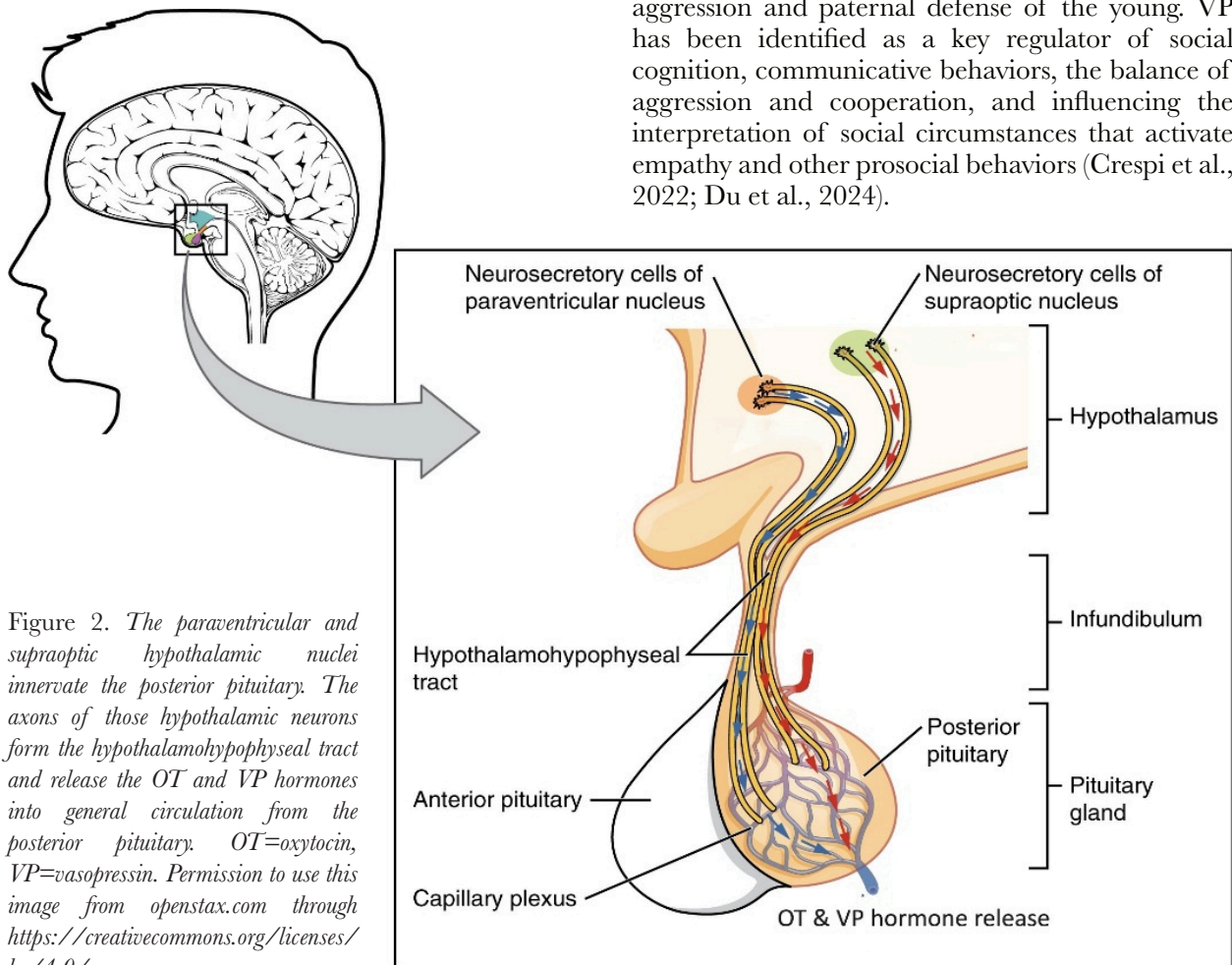


Figure 2. The paraventricular and supraoptic hypothalamic nuclei innervate the posterior pituitary. The axons of those hypothalamic neurons form the hypothalamohypophyseal tract and release the OT and VP hormones into general circulation from the posterior pituitary. OT=oxytocin, VP=vasopressin. Permission to use this image from openstax.com through <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

Perhaps of interest to yogis, an unusual effect was shown in an animal experiment as a result of extended water deprivation. That water deprived condition caused increased blood levels of VP and also a significant increase of blood melatonin concentrations. The source of VP's elevation may have been due either to circulating VP released from the posterior pituitary, or from branching hypothalamic VP fibers directly activating the pineal (Barassin et al., 2000). That uncertainty demonstrates the complexity often present when attempting to interpret activity in hormonal systems. At least under extreme conditions, this research indicates that VP may stimulate melatonin release from the pineal gland, considered associated with sahasrāra cakra, the seventh cakra. If this is valid, individuals who fully observe the yogic practice of periodic 24 hour fasting, taking no food or water during that period (Ānandamūrti, 2011), could experience an elevated pineal melatonin release. Melatonin has been considered to have a possible relationship with spiritual experience, but discussing melatonin is beyond the scope of the current work.

VP hypothalamic neurons do send branches to multiple sites outside of the hypothalamus, especially limbic regions, influencing emotional responses during stress coping and motivational behaviors. VP has been implicated in the regulation of circadian rhythm, body temperature, social behavior, and social cognition and emotion, including psychiatric disorders such as anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (Rotondo et al., 2016).

OT fibers from the hypothalamus going to the posterior pituitary, also branch to many other areas of the brain. In humans, a high density of OT receptors is present in the amygdala, hippocampus, cingulate cortex, and nucleus accumbens, which play key roles in human socio-emotional behavior. In some cases, these overlap those involving VP (Christ-Crain & Ball, 2000). Both OT and VP neuron branches from the hypothalamic paraventricular nucleus can regulate autonomic functions via brain stem and spinal projections (Lozić et al., 2018; Tsai & Kuo, 2024). These effects of branching fibers are technically not from the posterior pituitary, another example of the complex interaction between glandular systems, and the central and the autonomic nervous systems.

This description of OT and VP is limited and does not represent the full complexity of these not fully understood hormones. Further, it is difficult to distinguish OT and VP effects from each other,

If people want to control the excitement of this or that propensity, they must rectify the defects of related glands. Asanas help practitioners to a large extent in this task, so they are an important part of spiritual practice. Additionally, dietary and behavioral restraint can assist in maintaining proper glandular balance.

because each can activate the other's receptors (Song & Albers, 2018). Therefore, OT and VP have recently become viewed as a joint OT/VP system (Korenberg, 2024). Korenberg further speculates that this OT/VP system, which has been shown to have a major role in self/other distinctions, may also have the capacity to produce an abstract distinction that distinguishes the ultimate "Other," commonly referred to as "God." Korenberg did not consider spiritual systems that recognize non-dual states, transcending all self/other distinctions and therefore may be underestimating the potential of this system if adequate devotional intensity is present. There is at least some truth to Korenberg's speculation. Administration of intranasal OT into both nostrils shortly before a period of guided meditation increased self-reported spirituality (represented most strongly by feelings of interconnectedness, and belief in a larger meaning and purpose in life) and this effect remained significant a week later (Van Cappellen et al., 2016). Thus, the OT/VP system does appear strongly connected to spirituality of some form, and a reflection of the elevating rightistic qualities of parā.

Anterior Pituitary Hormones

The anterior pituitary synthesizes its own more extensive set of hormones that are triggered by releasing factors produced in the hypothalamus. Those releasing factors are secreted into a circulatory portal system which links with the anterior pituitary (Hiller-Sturmhöfel & Bartke, 1998). (See Figure 3.) The major hormones released by the anterior pituitary generally target specific functions of lower glands (Spencer & Deak, 2017).

They include **thyroid-stimulating hormone**, triggering the secretion of thyroid hormones thyroxine, or T₄, and triiodothyronine, or T₃; **adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH)**, activating adrenal cortisol and androgen production in the adrenal cortex; the gonadotropins: **follicle-stimulating hormone**, stimulating the production and maturation of sex cells, sperm in males, and ova plus estrogen in females; and **luteinizing hormone**, triggering ovulation and release of estrogen and progesterone in women, and the release of testosterone in men; human **growth hormone (GH)**, also known as somatotropin, inducing growth in almost all tissues and organs of the body, especially during adolescence; and **prolactin**, stimulating milk production and development of breast tissues; (Rosol et al., 2013). The anterior pituitary also produces a group of **melanocortins**, also known as melanocyte stimulating hormones, which contribute to skin color and are important in energy metabolism (Kim et al., 2014) and management of inflammation (Luger et al., 1997).

Greater complexity is present in these hormone systems than that basic description. The endogenous opiod **enkephalin** accompanies the production of growth hormone (Weber et al., 1978). Enkephalin has been shown to be extensively involved in

subcortical reward circuitry and is disturbed by drugs of abuse (Rysztak & Jutkiewicz, 2022). Similarly, most cells which release ACTH also contain and release **β-endorphin**, another endogenous opiod (Osamura et al., 1980), notably during strenuous exercise, excitement, pain and orgasm, producing analgesia, a sense of well-being and the “runner’s high” (Koneru et al., 2009).

Relevant to a spiritual focus, one study that compared runners with a form of concentrative yoga meditation, found that both runners and meditators had increased hypothalamic corticotropin-releasing hormone (CRH) which directly activates ACTH and the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, and this correlated with increased positive affect (Harte et al., 1995). The increased positive affect was considered potentially related to β-endorphin release, secondary to the

Continued on page 64

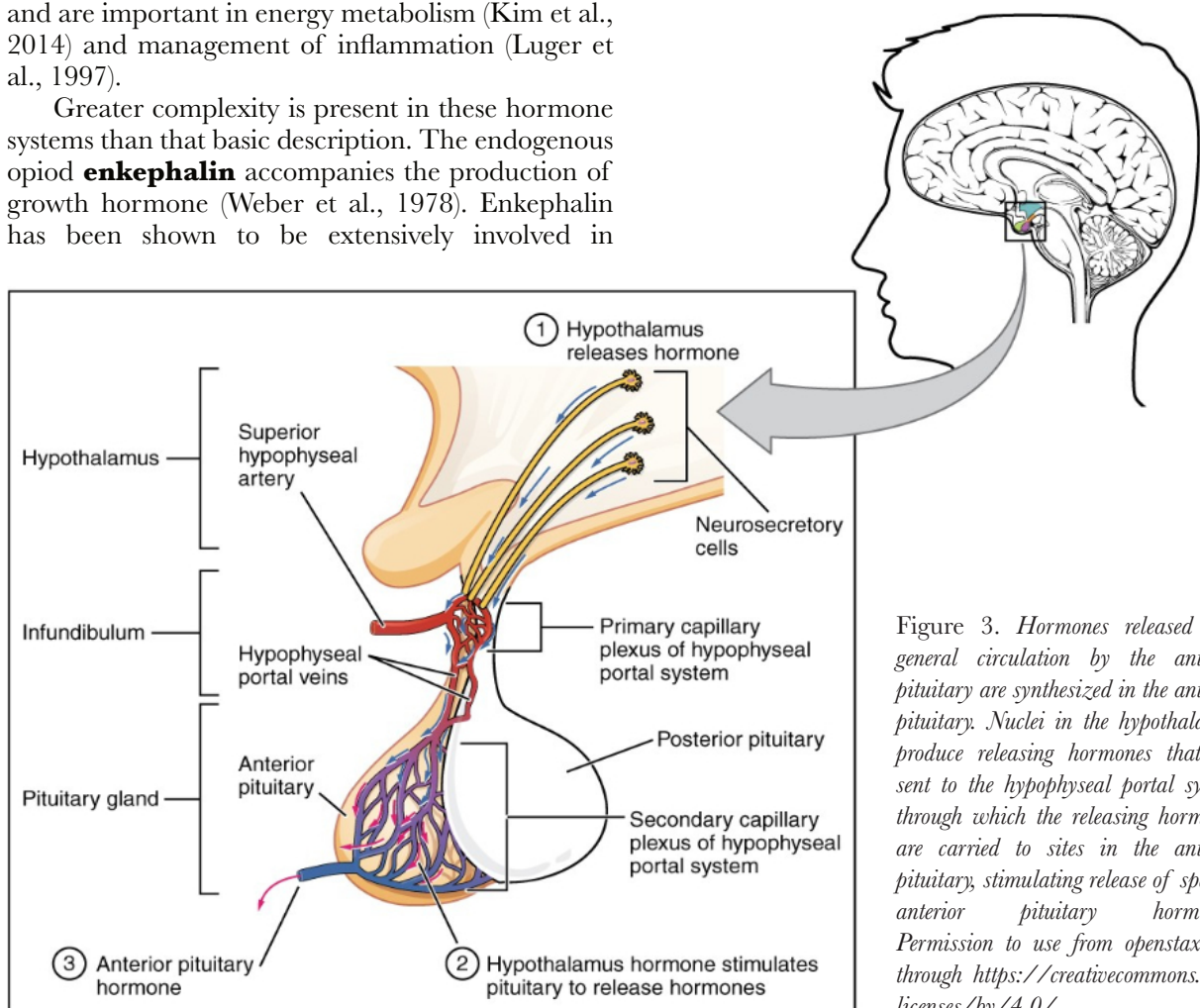


Figure 3. Hormones released into general circulation by the anterior pituitary are synthesized in the anterior pituitary. Nuclei in the hypothalamus produce releasing hormones that are sent to the hypophyseal portal system through which the releasing hormones are carried to sites in the anterior pituitary, stimulating release of specific anterior pituitary hormones. Permission to use from openstax.com through <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.



Change: One Heart At a Time

Part 2

Guldeniz Yucelen

*All human beings are my own.
In a single thread all hearts are stringed,
for, all have the same objective.
I cry in sorrow, I smile in joy and,
with a loving face, love my beloved ones.
I enjoy food when I am hungry
and drink when I am thirsty
and so do all human beings.
This earth, the stars, the moon in the sky and the
forests
are loved by all.
I dance and sing in one rhythm only
and call the Supreme single-mindedly.
Prabhat Samgiita #1090, translated from the
original Bengali.¹*

THE LYRICS OF this beautiful song describe how our inner experience, feelings, and sentiments are so similar to one another; what moves us, what we long for, the joy of being in harmony with one another. As infants, our experience of the world is intersubjective and does not include an awareness of self as distinct from other. Max Scheler² describes an infant's felt sense as 'an immediate flow of experiences undifferentiated as between mine and thine, which actually contains both our own and others' experiences intermingled and without distinction from one another,' which has been validated by

¹The first part of this two-part series, published in *Neohumanist Review* 4, March 2025, looked at current societal dynamics that perpetuate mental complexes.



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decades of research since the early 20th century. We can feel this contagious bliss in the presence of an infant through the instant joy and affection aroused in our hearts. As the infant grows up, the feeling of "I know that I exist" develops in the mind, and the blissful sense of unity slowly dissipates. The goal of human life is to overcome the illusion of separateness and to return to that blissful state of the eternal flow of Cosmic Consciousness.

A newborn doesn't carry any sense of inferiority or superiority.³ These complexes are acquired

through experiences that imply an individual's place in the hierarchy of wealth, status, education, cast, skin color, beauty, etc.⁴ In time, internalized and unrecognizable to our thinking mind, they may feel like part of who we are, dominate our lives, and hold us back from utilizing our full potential in all spheres, even in the spiritual sphere, as depicted in this humorous story by Shrii Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar titled *Inferiority Complex*.⁵

Rama's coronation ceremony was drawing to an end. The kings and dignitaries, the friends and relatives, had bid farewell to Rama and were returning to their distant lands. The monkeys also sought Rama's permission to begin their long journey to Kiskindhyā. Rama whispered in Vashīsthā's ear, "These monkeys have done a lot for us. How can we repay them?"

"Perhaps you could grant them a special boon," Vashīsthā suggested.

"I could grant them a boon to be reborn as humans in their next life," said Rama.

"That's a generous offer," mused Vashīsthā, "but they have such a deep inferiority complex that I doubt if they'll accept."

"Let's see," said Rama, turning to address the monkeys. "Brother monkeys, you have served me well. Today I wish to grant you the boon that you be reborn as humans in Kali Yuga."

The monkeys were hesitant. After a short deliberation they replied, "Your Majesty, we thank you for your generous offer. However, the world of humans is too formal and artificial for us. We would suffer terribly in such an artificial world. Thank you, Your Majesty, but we don't desire a human form."

"But as humans you can also lead honest unsophisticated lives. You can easily avoid unnecessary complications," Rama said.

"We've heard humans pretend to be hungry even when their stomachs are full. They say, 'Oh, we haven't eaten yet because we weren't hungry.' Sometimes they don't touch water for many days, and say, 'We just had a bath even though we are suffering from the flu'."

"But you don't have to tell lies," said Rama. "You'll clearly tell people whether you are hungry or not, or whether you have bathed or not."

The monkeys continued, "Humans keep filing lawsuits against each other. We don't understand the complexities of a court case. What shall we do, Your Majesty? Even after swearing an oath in court humans continue to tell lies. We couldn't possibly do that."

Bringing mindful awareness to the building blocks of our present moment experience can help us explore which level of processing – cognitive, emotional or somatic – can best support our wellbeing at any given moment.

"But you'll only file a case for a just cause," persisted Rama. "You won't implicate innocent people, nor will you tell lies after swearing an oath."

The monkeys fell into deep thought. Rama glanced at Vashīsthā, who said, "Didn't I tell you this would happen, Your Majesty?"

After a while the monkeys asked, "Your Majesty, if we become humans, what will happen to our beloved tail?"

"That's nothing to be worried about," said Rama. "In place of your monkey tail we'll give you a pigtail at the back of your head. The whole world will be enchanted by its beauty as it swings across your necks."

The monkeys were still hesitant. "See, I told you so," said Vashīsthā.

Finally, the monkeys said, "Your Majesty, we like your offer of a pigtail, but there is still a major problem. We really don't want clean-shaven, handsome faces; we prefer to keep our own charcoal-coloured faces."

Rama was lost for words. "This is what I meant by inferiority complex, Your Majesty," whispered Vashīsthā.

"Well, what a terrible thing," said Rama. "Humans must protect themselves from this inferiority complex."

"I couldn't agree with you more," said Vashīsthā.

Inferiority and superiority complexes are often unbeknownst to the beholder. Our thinking mind often justifies our choices as logical and the best options under the circumstances, failing to recognize the influence of these complexes. For instance, someone who has had multigenerational wealth and family pride may always expect to be served by others, which may get in the way of forming caring and meaningful relationships based on reciprocity and empathy. On the other hand, someone who comes from multigenerational poverty may feel undeserving and may not be able to stand up for themselves when they are treated unfairly, even when it is safe to do so. Fear complex is different from the

other two complexes, although they often go hand in hand. For instance, the likelihood of trauma increases with poverty.

Do you have an inferiority or superiority complex?

If we can't recognize these complexes with our thinking mind, how can we know whether we are affected by them? To access these complexes, we need to go beyond the conscious or thinking mind by tuning into the information from bodily sensations, impulses, five-sense perception, posture, and emotions. I invite you to do the following practice in order to have an experiential understanding of how these complexes may show up in your everyday life. Here are three suggestions that would help you get the most out of this practice:

- Have someone read this practice to you with a calm, slow, and steady voice, with pauses long enough to allow time for the visualizations. In this way, you can close your eyes and fully engage.
- Don't skip or skim this exercise, as this assessment can only be done by an experiential approach. It cannot be done with an analytical approach, which would engage only the thinking mind. An experiential approach would give you new information; an analytic approach would be listening to your thoughts and believing in what you already believe in.
- Suspend all judgment, if you can. Do the practice with openness and curiosity.

Practice

Sit quietly and comfortably for a few moments, breathing normally. Notice your breath as it enters through your nostrils, down the back of your throat, your lungs. For a few breaths, simply follow the movement of air in your body.

Then bring your awareness to the bottom of your feet. Sense the ground beneath your feet, supporting you. Remain here for a few breaths. Shift your attention to the parts of your back against your seat, and sense the seat supporting you.

Now visualize yourself entering a mansion and sitting down to wait for the owner. The owner is expecting you, and you know it is safe to be there. Take a few moments to immerse yourself in this moment, in your mind's eye, look around you, notice the smells and sounds.

Visualize the owner walking slowly in your direction. Pay attention to what your body experiences. Does it relax, expand, or constrict? Does it want to move backward or forward? Does it want to reach out, or to protect itself, or move in any other way?

How does your back feel? Hunched over or upright? How does eye contact feel? Do you look into the owner's eyes, or is there an impulse to look down or away?

Stay with the experience for a few more moments. Notice what other sensations, images, thoughts, emotions, impulses, arise in you. Do you feel expansive, confident, neutral, or self-doubt? Simply take a note of them.

Now, clear your mind. Breathe in and out a few times.

Now visualize yourself entering a house in a shantytown and sitting down to wait for the owner. The owner is expecting you, and you know it is safe to be there. Take a few moments to immerse yourself in this moment, in your mind's eye, look around you, notice the smells and sounds.

Visualize the owner walking slowly in your direction. The same man in different clothes. Now again, check in with your body. Does it relax, expand, or constrict? Does it want to move backward or forward? Does it want to reach out, or to protect itself, or move in any other way?

How does your back feel? Hunched over or upright? How is it to maintain eye contact? Do you look into the owner's eyes, or is there an impulse to look down or away?

Stay with the experience for a few more moments. Notice what other sensations, images, thoughts, emotions, and impulses arise in you. Do you feel confident, or do you have self-doubt? Simply take a note of them.

Take a moment to explore what was different in your felt experience in these two scenarios. Did you notice any difference in how your body felt, what your body wanted to do or wanted to avoid, your posture, impulses, thoughts, or feelings?

If your answer is 'yes':

- Congratulations! You sincerely engaged in this practice, and the traces of your real-life experiences came alive.
- You have allowed yourself to be vulnerable and honest despite the unpleasant possibility of finding out that you are affected by these complexes.



“The way forward is to goad and guide physical urge towards psychic and spiritual urge, paving the way for all-round liberation.”

- You brought mindful awareness to the components of your felt experience in these two scenarios, with the help of the questions in this practice. This allowed you to access a wide range of information from your body that would have been at least partially unavailable if you were to use your thinking mind alone.

If your answer is ‘no’:

- Either you are a saint who has achieved a state of constant mental equilibrium,
- Or you did not engage in the exercise fully.

My 14-year-old daughter, Pramila, agreed to do

this practice with me. She closed her eyes as I read the practice. When we were done, I asked her about her experience. Here is what she said with an expression of new insight on her face:

“This is exactly how life works. When I was in the mansion, I didn’t want to be there; I wanted to leave, and my body felt tense. When he was walking towards me, I felt that I was being judged. It didn’t make sense for me to be there. There was no character; it was cold, like a painting. When I was in the other house, it smelled like good food, it was loud and crowded, and it was a warm feeling. I imagined an Ethiopian woman who was wearing bright

clothes, like bright orange, and a welcoming smile. It is a good representation of how life works. It shows a lot about yourself, too. For instance, if I were rich, if I owned my mansion, I would feel the exact opposite.”

Of course, Pramila’s experience cannot be explained with an inferiority or superiority complex alone. She is a confident teenager who is passionate about equality, and she doesn’t seem to be affected by these complexes too much. Nevertheless, I believe her experience is at least partially shaped by these complexes, similar to most of us, given that we are bombarded with overt and covert messages about our “worth” every day. I do hope that this practice gave you an idea about how inferiority and superiority complex may show up in practice and helped you bridge the gap between the concept and the experience of inferiority and superiority complexes. In this practice, we used mindful awareness, an important human capacity that is often underutilized in our externalized, fast-paced, consumption-oriented lives.

Mindful Awareness and The Three Brains

Mindful awareness is the practice of bringing attention to the present moment experience, including one’s thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations. Used in spiritual and religious practices, including in Buddhism, Tantra, and Sufism, for thousands of years, mindfulness practices has been increasingly incorporated into the medical treatment approaches since the introduction of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program by Jon Kabatt-Zinn⁶ based on the premise to “use the wisdom of the body and mind to face stress, pain and illness.” Mindfulness has also been incorporated into various psychotherapy approaches over the last few decades. Commonly described as a solitary activity, that is silent and internal, mindfulness has been utilized in body-centered psychotherapy approaches as a collaborative curiosity.^{7,8} For instance, in Sensorimotor Psychotherapy, bringing mindful awareness to the five building blocks of the present moment experience, including thoughts, emotions, perceptions (internally generated images, tastes, smells, touch, and sounds), body movements and posture, and body sensations (physical feelings), allows the client to describe their experience as it unfolds, rather than describing it after the immediacy of the moment passes.⁸ Just like in Pramila’s experience in the practice, talking or

thinking about, or visualizing an event brings up the felt experience of that event in the here-and-now, as if the experience is happening right now. This allows somatic information, such as sensations and impulses, from the reptilian or survival brain to be recognized and explored, in addition to the thoughts from the frontal cortex, and the emotions from the mammalian brain or limbic brain. The obtained information from these three brains unveils various pathways to healing that evolve organically in the session, with the inner wisdom of the client as the driver, and the power of the body to heal itself physically and emotionally as the driving force.

For instance, in Pramila’s experience, she noticed an urge/impulse to leave the mansion (reptilian brain’s safety warning), a thought “I don’t want to be here” (frontal cortex of neocortex) and sensation of tension (reptilian brain) which perhaps goes along with an emotion, such as anxiety or fear (mammalian brain or limbic brain). “There was no character, it was cold, like a painting” may involve sight/visual perception of depth and temperature (5-sense perception, reptilian brain), maybe numbing of emotions or another unexpressed emotion in “it was cold.” In the first scenario, Pramila noticed that she wanted to move away from the interaction with the owner of the mansion. In the second scenario, her relational tendency was to move towards the owner of the house. “Smelled like good food, it was loud and crowded (five-sense perception, reptilian brain), and it was a warm feeling (emotion, limbic brain).” Perhaps she would have described a sense of comfort/relaxation in her body and a thought/conclusion, if prompted. She also expressed awareness related to how her past experiences and current circumstances shaped her felt experience in these two scenarios, and that they would have been different for someone else.

Bringing mindful awareness to the building blocks of our present moment experience can help us explore which level of processing – cognitive, emotional or somatic – can best support our wellbeing at any given moment.⁸ Becoming aware of our inner experience is the first step to changing how we feel in a particular moment.

Many people have had to live like slaves in society, suffering from a strong inferiority complex – their heads remain forever bowed – while others inherit vast wealth and family pride from their ancestors, keeping their heads held so high that at times it seems as if they might fall backward. Using Sensorimotor Psychotherapy, by bringing awareness

to “bowing down,” perhaps an adaptive coping strategy that was developed to keep oneself safe in unsafe circumstances—we can use a bottom-up approach and use somatic resources, such as lengthening the spine, taking a few deep breaths and opening up the chest, or keeping the head up and looking ahead, and explore how it feels. We can also use a top-down process of identifying thoughts or beliefs that go along with bowing down, such as “I am less than,” or “I am worthless,” and we can use cognitive resources, such as a thought “Everyone is created equal.” On the other hand, by noticing “heads held so high that at times it appears as if it will fall backwards,” we can access somatic resources, such as relaxing the back muscles or bringing the chin closer to the chest or taking less space at a dining table or on a couch. Somatic or sensorimotor interventions can be especially helpful when the three brains are not working in synch or when your brains are responding as if what happened in the past is still occurring in the present.⁸ Ron Kurtz explains, “If we can help enough of the right type of information to come forward, the system can reorganize itself towards more health and a better quality of life.”⁷ Kurtz brings in a much needed spiritual outlook, a belief in the inner wisdom and the inherent healing power of each person, that is often missing in therapy approaches built on the brain-disease model.

Bessel Van der Kolk recognizes that the brain-disease model overlooks four fundamental truths:⁹

- Our capacity to destroy one another is matched by our capacity to heal one another. Restoring relationships and community is central to restoring well-being.
- Language gives us the power to change ourselves and others by communicating our experiences, helping us to define what we know, and finding a common sense of meaning;
- We can regulate our own physiology, including some of the so-called involuntary functions of the body and brain, through such basic activities as breathing, moving, and touching;
- We can change social conditions to create environments in which children and adults can feel safe and where they can thrive. Safe connections are fundamental to meaningful and satisfying lives.

Inferiority and superiority complexes are products of a defective social order. We have to ensure a safe, equitable and meaningful society.

”

Maintaining a Balanced Mind

“Most people suffer from either a superiority complex or an inferiority complex. A balanced state of mind is one of the most essential qualities that one should possess. It is that state in which a person does not suffer from any complex, that is, neither from superiority complex nor from inferiority complex, neither from fear complex nor from hate complex. People should be free from each and every kind of complex, they should not suffer from any of these.”⁴

What is important is that the tendency of seeing people as unequal is eliminated from one’s mind. Eliminating a psychic tendency—as opposed to coping with, managing or challenging it—requires a bottom-up approach that starts with the body—as opposed to a top-down approach that begins with the thinking mind. This is only possible with the practice of spiritual sādhanā by which one can bring about certain changes in their nervous system, nerve cells and nerve fibres, control the secretions of the hormones from different glands and sub-glands.

Yogic literature describes the human body as a biological machine goaded by propensities or “propensive propulsion of the psyche.” Acclaimed author and yoga teacher Dr. Eyal Shifroni writes: “Asana practice is intended primarily to experience ... the mind-body complex and explore ... the deep connections that exist between body postures, breathing, blood and lymph circulation, nervous system, and so on, and the mental state that accompanies them.”¹⁰

Cakra, or *plexus* in Latin, are locations in the body where there are main nerve centres, as well as endocrine glands and sub-glands that influence and control the propensities attached to each *cakra*.¹¹ Besides the exceptions due to certain biological anomalies, human beings are goaded by a common psychology based on the same or similar biological structures, with the same wonts, the same psychic merits and demerits. Shrii Sarkar further explains:

Suppose an old man and a young man are arguing, and the young one says tauntingly to the old one, "You are a number one fool. You have no wits. You are a worthless, useless chap!" The old man replies, "What! What did you say? Is it so? Is it so? Have you no manners? Are you now about to teach me manners?" The young one responds, "Yes, yes, sure!" This is an example of common human psychology, of natural human reaction

*Now, suppose certain sub-glands in the elder man's chest around the anáhata cakra are activated. Then, instead of arguing, his response will become calmer, and less serious and grave. He will become quieter and not so irritated. In this case, in the attached nerve cells and nerve fibres, certain changes will have been brought about in the glands and sub-glands of the chest portion of the body. By properly activating the controlling point of a human sentiment, the response has changed... Thus, due to biological change, the psychological reaction or reflection will change. For this biological transformation, one should practise a spiritual cult [meditation] which changes the human nerve cells and nerve fibres attached to those portions, and brings about changes in the hormonal secretions, causing psychological changes. So, through the practice of a spiritual cult, changes come about in the nerve cells and nerve fibres.*¹²

Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to grow new neural networks in response to novel experience, which also impacts the glands and sub-glands in the endocrine system.¹¹ Through spiritual practice (*sadhana*), neural changes will take place in the glands and sub-glands, balancing the propensities and achieving a balanced mind (see the illustration on page 17 and Dr. Richard Maxwell's relevant article on the biopsychological basis of propensities).

As for the benefits of yoga postures, Shifroni notes: "In forward bends, the torso (or trunk) moves forward and rests on the legs (or leg). ... This seems to have physiological effects that include a decrease in blood pressure and heart rate, calming of the nervous system and the brain, stimulation of the digestive system and the adrenal glands, and increased supply of blood to the pelvis, legs and gonad glands ... Forward bends bring about an experience of tranquility, relaxation, surrender, devotion, renunciation, humility, and internalization."¹⁰

The regular performance of *ásanas* also profoundly impacts the glands and sub-glands and thereby our entire bio-psychological system. How?

*We all come from the same
source and will return to
the same source, and there
is no place for complexes
in the spiritual sphere.*

”

All *ásanas* have either a pressurizing or depressurizing effect on the glands and sub-glands. For example, *mayúrášana*, peacock posture, has a pressurizing effect on the *mañipura cakra*. The secretions of the glands and sub-glands of the *mañipura cakra* and the propensities associated with them will become more balanced if this *ásana* is practiced regularly. If someone has a great fear of public speaking, it means their *mañipura cakra* is weak. Through the regular practice of *mayúrášana*, this propensity will be controlled, and fear will be eliminated. Other *ásanas* may have a depressurizing effect on the *mañipura cakra*, and if these *ásanas* are performed regularly the glands and sub-glands associated with the *cakra* will become less active. Increased glandular secretions generally make the propensities more active and vice versa. By practising *ásanas* regularly, one can control the propensities and either increase or decrease their activity.¹³

According to yogic science, by proper biopsychological approach the eight fetters—hatred/revulsion, doubt, fear, shyness/shame, dissemblance, vanity of lineage, cultural superiority complex and egotism—and the six enemies of the mind—physical desire, anger, avarice, vanity, blind attachment and jealousy—may be constructively controlled. Among other main vices are excessive sleep, absentmindedness, lethargy, and procrastination.⁴

Summary and Future Directions

Each of us has an inherent capacity to achieve mental equilibrium and to be free from complexes.

Psychotherapy is the process of getting rid of what gets in the way of living fully. Elimination of all complexes and unhelpful tendencies requires a spiritual outlook and spiritual practices. In my professional experience, as psychological issues start to ease or resolve, it becomes easier to reach out or to explore spirituality.

We all have the moral responsibility to take good care of our bodies or our “biological machines,” so that we can utilize this human body for sadhana, service and sacrifice.

We also have a collective responsibility towards each other to create safe and supportive connections and communities. Support groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Weight Watchers, community programs where children can be mentored and supported by older youth, and systems such as mental health consultation with community agencies and schools can counteract the development of complexes and lessen the impact of social inequality for individuals and groups. Other initiatives where members can learn from and share (i.e., knitting or book clubs, makerspaces, etc.) or work together for a common cause (i.e., nature conservancy or climate change) provide opportunities for meaningful and uplifting connections. Building strong communities where people can get to know and value each other is a remedy against exploitation, which feeds on dividing people and pitting them against each other with divisive ideas.

We should cherish local cultures and languages as a celebration of colorful variations in the expression of humanity, dispelling the suppression imposed by the dominant groups to exploit people psychologically by attempting to paralyze them with an inferiority complex about their native language and culture.

Inferiority and superiority complexes are products of a defective social order. We have to ensure a safe, equitable, and meaningful society.

We have to identify the psychic propensities and sentiments of individuals and groups that disturb the peace of the human society, which is particularly important since humanity appears to be at a critical junction between progress and degradation.

The way forward is to goad and guide physical urge towards psychic and spiritual urge, thereby paving the way for all-round liberation, starting with universal socio-economic liberation. All over the world, people suffer physically, psychologically, and spiritually due to socio-economic want and disparities. The root cause of problems lies in unbalanced psychic urges. Both exploiters and the exploited suffer from imbalances, each in their ways. Unless the socio-economic system takes the physico-psycho-spiritual makeup of human beings properly into account, this suffering will continue to disturb and destroy not only human beings but the entire living world and its environment.

Last, but not least, we all come from the same source and will return to the same source, and there is no place for complexes in the spiritual sphere:

*“In the existential sphere, too, there should not be any complex because every one is the child of the Cosmic Father. If there is any superiority complex, it should be the common one that one is the child of the Cosmic Father who is so great, so potent. One may only have this superiority complex. Whatever people possess is given by the Cosmic Father and therefore no individual has the right to have a superiority complex. So in the existential sphere there is no reason for any complex to remain. In other words it can be said that there will be a common complex that all are the children of the Cosmic Father, no one being inferior and no one being superior.”*⁴

May we all be free from complexes and help others break free, also!

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Struggle and Progress

Shrīi Shrīi Ānandamūrti

PHYSICAL CLASH LEADS to psychic progress. But is absolute psychic progress possible through physical clash alone? No. Apart from physical clash, psychic clash and attraction of the Great are necessary. The mind that evolves from the solid factor as a result of physical clash gradually takes the form of *manomaya kośa*.¹ If there is only physical clash, the *kośas* higher than *manomaya kośa* cannot be developed. Extreme physical clash can only mature or perfect the lower *kośas*.

Human beings who live in hostile or uncongenial environments are far more dynamic than those who live in areas where the struggle for existence is minimal. Those who maintain their existence through greater physical clash are said to be engaged in *śākta sādhanā*.² But physical clash alone can only lead to a certain level of psychic progress. To progress beyond that psychic clash is required.

Through study, analysis, verification, listening to scriptural discourses, constant contemplation, and meditation unit minds acquire psychic power from the Cosmic Mind. To produce friction or commotion in others' minds by proper application of these psychic powers is called psychic clash. Those who are mentally inert, who are blindly attached to old worn-out ideas, will no doubt refuse to accept new ideas, but questions will nevertheless arise in their minds. Constant psychic clash will cause their blind attachment for the old to gradually weaken.

When the ancient people were faced with immense obstacles, they would perform sacrificial ceremonies for the propitiation of the gods, for they were not acquainted with the scientific methods to

Excerpted from "Struggle and Progress," published in *Subhāṣita Saṁgraha* Part 7, and in *Ananda Marga Ideology and Way of Life in a Nutshell* Part 8.

surmount those obstacles. They thought that there was no difference between the smoke produced by burning ghee in fire and the clouds in the sky. They were unaware that the former is composed of unburnt carbon particles of ghee and the latter are basically a combination of hydrogen and oxygen which appears to be blackish under certain circumstances. Even today if people misuse ghee by burning it in a sacrificial fire, they certainly do it out of total ignorance.

If people's blind attachment to sacrificial rituals and love for outmoded customs are intense, they will not disappear when confronted with logical arguments or shaken by the first jolt caused by psychic clash. But if one can create a suitable environment of constant psychic clash their blind attachments are bound to disappear. Some people believe that the fragrance of the sacrificial smoke purifies the air and kills germs. This is not true. On the contrary, the increase in the amount of carbon particles makes the air more impure. A highly pungent smell is much more effective in destroying germs. Thus, due to the impact of constant psychic clash, people eventually understand the defects of old systems and ideas. Through physical clash the *kāma-maya* and *manomaya kośas* can be developed, and through psychic clash the higher *kośas* can be developed.

Those who want to avoid the cultivation of knowledge hardly get any opportunity for psychic clash, and hence the higher *kośas* of his mind do not get any scope for development. It is through psychic

¹ *Manomaya*, the mind of recollection and contemplation; *kośa*, "layer" (of the mind).

² Spiritual effort through gaining knowledge and actional power.



Shri Caetanya Mahaprabhu (1486-1534) performing Nagar kiirtan, devotional chanting and dancing, in the streets of Nabadwip, Bengal. 19th Century painting, Kolkata

clash that the psychic field gets properly tilled, thereby increasing its fertility. All living beings evolving in the phase of *Pratisaiṅcara*³ benefit from this psychic clash.

Both physical clash and psychic clash accelerate psychic progress. The rat which escapes from the trap never makes the mistake of getting caught again; the fish which frees itself from the fisherman's hook never bites the bait again. Physical clash develops the *kāmaṁaya kośa* and, as a consequence, the instinct to survive. A city ox walks confidently along a busy street in Calcutta, but if a village ox were made to walk along the same road, it would become crazy.

Psychic clash enables one to make rapid psychic progress along the path of *Pratisaiṅcara* and deepen one's thinking capacity. The psychic clash caused when undeveloped minds come in contact with developed minds further accelerates the rate of psychic progress in the flow of *Pratisaiṅcara*. A monkey is more developed than a dog, having advanced further along the path of *Pratisaiṅcara*. Yet a pet dog, benefiting from the psychic clash resulting from its contact with human beings, becomes more advanced in knowledge than other dogs, and even other monkeys. A monkey trained by human beings is far more advanced intellectually than a wild

monkey. If a monkey becomes intellectually developed its brain's cells will have to be kept engaged in more complicated activities to give proper expression to its evolved thinking. This will result in a change in the size of its brain. If its brain outgrows the size of the cranium, it will require the more developed body and brain of a human being. Similarly the dog which makes tremendous psychic progress after being trained by a human being will require a more developed structure to express its increased psychic potentialities. In such circumstances there will be a rapid progress in the phase of *Pratisaiṅcara*. Such rapid change can also take place in the phase of *Saiṅcara*⁴ through scientific efforts. So you understand that psychic clash is not at all negligible. Rather, with the cultivation of knowledge, microcosms can make galloping progress along the path of *Pratisaiṅcara*.

One may conclude theoretically that a highly evolved monkey and the most backward human are almost similar. An underdeveloped human being will make rapid progress after coming in contact with more advanced human beings. The same applies to cows, horses, dogs and monkeys. After coming in contact with evolved human beings they get the scope to be reborn as human beings.

³The animate part of the Cosmic cycle of creation.

⁴The inanimate part of manifested Cosmos.

Animals lack a brain developed enough to contain a greater intelligence, and thus do not have the capacity to perform spiritual practice. This is not to say that animals are not entitled to spiritual practice. On the contrary, had their bodies and brains been more developed, they would have certainly had the opportunity to perform spiritual practice. The characteristics of a physical structure are determined by the nature of the brain. So by looking at the physical structure of a living being one can have a rough idea about the degree of its intellect or intelligence.

As some psychic propensities have a tendency to flow towards matter, even evolved human beings can be transformed into inert matter if they fall prey to those psychic propensities. Hence all human beings should carefully avoid bad company. Due to mean psychic ideation the human mind may imbibe animal tendencies or may even degenerate to a stage cruder than that. Once the mind degenerates to the inertness of stone, the physical body will also be converted into stone. In Indian mythology there is a beautiful story illustrating this point. Due to her mean thoughts Ahalya was turned into inert stone. However, by the grace of *Parama Puruṣa*, Supreme Consciousness, she was later reconverted into a human being.

When the mind evolves in a physical structure, it becomes responsible for the maintenance of that structure. That initial state of mind, the *kāma-maya kośa*, is only concerned about the needs of the physical body. Thereafter, in the flow of *Pratīsaṁcāra*, one's unit mind comes in contact with other unit minds which leads to psychic clash. In this way the hopes and aspirations, the pains and pleasures of one's own mind becomes interrelated to and interdependent on other minds. This mutual relationship is a kind of psychic clash. And even greater psychic clash occurs when people try to derive mutual benefit through rational intellectual pursuit. Therefore in our society the cultivation of knowledge is an indispensable necessity. Those who avoid good company (*satsaṅga*), study of good books (*svādhyāya*), uplifting discourses and healthy analyses cannot develop any *kośa* (layer of mind) higher than *kāma-maya kośa*. Animals dominated by the *kāma-maya kośa* find pleasure in snatching away morsels of food from others' mouths, and in depriving others of their right to live, because they look upon this world with a narrow body-centered outlook.

With the development of higher *kośas* through the process of psychic clash the existential feelings of

human beings do not remain confined to their physical bodies alone but spread to those around them. Initially they think about the welfare of the members of their own families, but with the gradual evolution of their minds, they see themselves as members of a global society and become actively engaged in promoting the well-being of all. This gradual process of evolution leads the unit mind towards the Macrocosmic mind.

The ensconement in the Macrocosmic stance is not possible through morality alone. "I will speak the truth, I will not harm anyone" – This simple morality alone cannot take human beings very far along the path of progress. So-called moralists can all too easily degrade themselves under the nefarious influence of evil company. The only way to advance is to follow the path of vigorous spiritual practice. To repeat high-sounding words of morality like a parrot, while cherishing narrow sentiments within one's mind, will not take one far.

The vanity expressed by the so-called civilized human beings of today is extremely dangerous. These people hide the cruder propensities of the mind under the cloak of sweet words and decent behaviour. They are more harmful to the well-being of the human race than the so-called uncivilized humans, because they are hypocrites. The defects of the uncivilized humans pale into insignificance before their abominable hypocrisy. The uncivilized humans of the past may have killed twelve people at most in the battles they fought with bows, arrows, sticks and spears, but the so-called civilized human beings of today kill millions of unarmed, innocent people indiscriminately with their dreadful and lethal weapons. Human society of today is being exploited by the so-called civilized people. Such people should not make themselves look ridiculous by claiming otherwise.

All entities must advance along the path of progress. This evolution will lead to the expansion of the psychic arena and, ultimately, liberation. This struggle for liberation is the struggle against those forces which attempt to thwart one's psychic expansion. These are one's enemies. Through meditation and contemplation one must surrender oneself at the altar of the Almighty, merging one's finite identity into the Infinite. Only by surrendering one's mind to the vast Macrocosm and becoming one with the Supreme Consciousness can one attain final salvation. The struggle for salvation is the struggle against those forces which strive to prevent one's total self surrender to the Supreme.



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Bio-psychology and Education

Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

BIO-PSYCHOLOGY MAY BE divided into several classes – human psychology; the psychology of creatures which stand upon two legs, for example, orangutans; the psychology of other beings, including monkeys, quadrupeds and other developed animals; the psychology of reptiles which move through the pressure of the chest but cannot fly; the psychology of flying creatures, that is, birds; and then the psychology of multicellular protozoa, unicellular protozoa, multicellular metazoa and uni-cellular metazoa. These are the main groups or classes.

Human beings are guided and goaded by a common psychology. There may be some exceptions due to certain biological anomalies; that is, biological exceptions must be there; but otherwise all humans are guided by a common human psychology. Ram, Shyam, Mohan, Yadu, Madhu – all are of the same or similar biological structure. So they have to be guided by the same psychic rules, they have to follow the same psychic characteristics, the same wonts, and the same psychic merits and demerits.

What is goading? There are three terms – “direct guidance”, “guiding” and “goadings”. Direct guidance is without any application of force. You want someone to go with you and they go. “Guiding” means making some effort to bring someone along the path of your choice. “Goadings” means compelling someone to move and act according to your desire. That is, it means to push or to move by the application of force.

From *The Human Body Is a Biological Machine, Yoga Psychology*, Ananda Marga Publications, 1991.

EDUCATION IS JUST remoulding the old structure of the mind and goading it unto the highest state of realization, the exalted status of Supreme Veracity, the highest status of factualities.

We have to keep in view three fundamentals before imparting education. The first is that education must always be based on factuality. There must not be the injection of any dogma or fanaticism or any type of geographical or racial chauvinism in the education system.

The second fundamental is that education must awaken the thirst for knowledge in the students’ minds. The students themselves will create environmental pressure by persistent demands for answers to queries like: What is the answer? Is it correct? The longing, “I wish to know; I wish to understand and assimilate the entire universe” should be created. Such a thirst for knowledge should be created in the minds of students. A learner, in Arabic, is called *tālib-ul-ilm*, meaning “a genuine seeker of knowledge.” So a tremendous thirst for knowledge must be awakened in the students’ minds. They will constantly ply their teachers, their parents and their neighbours with questions like: Why is this so? What is that? Why does that happen? Why does this not happen? etc. They are ready to assimilate the entire universe.

The third fundamental of education is that teachers and students should have a balanced mind, unaffected, unassailed by unimportant entities.

From *Some Hints on Education, Discourses on Neohumanist Education*, Ananda Marga Publications, 1998.





The Evolutionary History of Humans

Shrîi Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

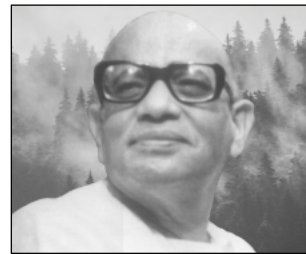
ACCORDING TO MANY scholars, the first expression of creation took place not on land but in water. Living protoplasm, thoroughly drenched in carbon materials, appeared as a unicellular entity, as *kaoshikî sattâ*, for the first time in water.

It is in water that the unicellular entity or elementary cell evolved into multiple-celled entities or compound cells. Then, in the ascending phase of evolution, due to environmental needs, some of those creatures had to move onto land, while others found opportunity for development in water. Even in water they were born from eggs. On leaving the water, they turned into reptiles. Those reptiles, still oviparous, developed into higher forms of creatures. They evolved into mammals.

Higher forms of these reptiles became winged creatures – *vihaunga*, or birds. The quadruped mammals living on land learned to climb on trees and developed into *shâkhâmrâ* [tree animals, that is, ape-men or proto-apes]. The ape-men, climbing further up the ladder of evolution, developed into Australopithecine, proto-human apes. [Some] *mrga* [quadruped land mammals], after further development, became known as *shâkhâmrâ*.

[Some] *shâkhâmrâ* were the half-human or anthropoid apes (like gorillas, chimpanzees and orangutans). These anthropoid apes gradually developed into men with pigtailed and sacred threads, into men with coats and pants or suits, and, in a further course of forward journey, into enlightened *mahâpurûṣas* [great personalities] wearing clothes.

Animals are chiefly of two types: graminivorous (feeding on grasses and cereals) and carnivorous. Graminivorous animals usually have hooves and are without paws, while carnivorous animals have paws for feet. Graminivorous animals have sparkling white



Shrîi Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar (1922-1990)

teeth which are carefully arranged. Carnivorous animals have uneven teeth, slightly yellowish, or reddish yellow in colour. They have canine teeth on both sides of the mouth for tearing flesh. Among graminivorous animals, particularly those creatures belonging to the zebu species (or bison genus) had an ability to store food in their appendix.

This developed during ancient times, when they lived in a volatile situation, unsure of obtaining food at all times. Apes, humans and goats all developed this capacity. Cows and buffaloes also did, and they still do today. As life becomes more and more secure, the necessity for this appendix also diminishes. This has happened to humans, apes and certain other animals. During leisure time, by regurgitating food from the appendix, these animals make it fit for digestion with the help of saliva. In English this is called rumination or chewing the cud; in Bengali it is called *românthanorjâbar kâtâ*. Carnivorous animals do not have this capacity, because the meat they have eaten quickly decomposes and develops a foul odour. It cannot be used for rumination or for chewing cud.

In ancient times, those land-dwelling, graminivorous animals without horns or claws for self-preservation began to climb trees in search of safe refuge. For those animals, just as the necessity for



using hooves came to an end, they now felt the need for using their forelimbs to catch hold of tree branches. They used their hind legs partly for clutching and partly for running. They used their forelimbs for clutching branches of trees as well as for other tasks.

In ancient times, the forelimbs were earlier called *kara*, and later *hasta*. Australopithecines, creatures of the ape family, and human beings are all equipped with *kara*. In fact, they have four limbs; but human beings are not quadrupeds because their forelimbs are used for clutching objects. In order to climb trees and to leap up, the creatures of the ape family required a tail.

However, for the more intelligent members of this family who no longer needed to leap as much, the importance of the lymphatic gland diminished and their tails dropped off. This superfamily of creatures – the apes – gradually split into two family lines. Both families had well-arranged teeth and no canine teeth. Both had an intestinal appendix, but one family had a tail and the other was tailless.

Those with tails, belonging to the ape family, are called monkeys – in Bengali *bánarorbádar*, and the females *bánariiorbádari*, in Urdu *bandar*, and the females *bandariá*. The tailless monkeys had greater intellectual development than those with tails. They also evolved into two different classes: one ordinary and the other more developed.

Of the ordinary tailless apes there were again three distinct genuses; 1) gorillas, 2) orangutans (in Malay language it means “men of the trees”) and 3) chimpanzees. Today the developed, tailless apes are known as humans. The word “man” stands for “mentally developed ape”. This is how we differentiate the types of graminivorous animals.

The human being is naturally a vegetarian creature without a developed intestinal appendix. So regular intake of meat might cause the ailment of appendicitis in humans – this does occur often. Regular intake of meat for humans is an unnatural habit which does not provide any benefit.

On the slightest occasion, either due to fear or excitement, a monkey grimaces with clenched fists. This habit of the monkey is prehistoric. Although the ancestors of human beings and monkeys are the same, they were separated at least one million years ago. So a human being also, when frightened or excited, clenches the fist and grimaces. A small child keeps its fist clenched most of the time, and the habit of grimacing also remains predominant in childhood.

Some animals live in herds or groups and others live by themselves. The sheep, the lion and the elephant live collectively, but the goat, the tiger and the cat live separately, on their own. Yes, the creatures of the ape group also live collectively. All creatures with herd instinct have a leader. They do not have any form of *milita netrta* [collective leadership] amongst themselves. This is because collective leadership ultimately creates fissures in the *saṅgha* [an association or organisation or society], and this goes against the very nature of existence.

The human being is also a creature that leads a collective life. However much one might use vocal pyrotechnics or speak eloquently against hero-worship, in their heart of hearts humans have always longed for strong and firm leadership. They are collective-minded creatures; if one finds an ideal leader, one comes and offers all one's love and devotion to them on the one hand, and on the other

Continued on page 56



From the Ancient Alpine to the Vedic Civilization

Avtk. Anandarama Ac.

THE ALPS ARE formed by the African and Eurasian plates which have been moving towards each other since 700 million years. The continental plates pushed to mountain heights and enclosed the Tethys Sea. The position of the Alpine mountains by 50 million years ago looked quite similar to that of today. Over time the mountains eroded and the valleys filled up so that now the highest peaks are half as high as the much recent Himalayas of 30 million years.

This ancient mountain range with snow and glaciers are the source of water for several main rivers and over fifty lakes. Major European rivers flow from the Alps, such as the Rhine, the Rhône, the Inn that flows into the Danube, and the Ticino that flows into the Po. They flow in all four cardinal directions from Switzerland into neighbouring countries, finally emptying into the North Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, the Adriatic Sea and the Black Sea. The Danube is not far from the Alps and passes at the foot of the Swabian Alb of Germany and flows through ten countries to the Black Sea touching the Caucasus. The Alpine range is



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1,200km long and 200km wide with several peaks reaching 4,000 meters. The Alpine highlands and valleys are in several of today's countries - Switzerland, Italy, Germany, France, Austria and Slovenia.



The Aletsch Glacier viewed from Eggishorn at Fiesch, Valais, Switzerland. Wikimedia Commons

In 1979, Shrii Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar started his world tour in Switzerland. He was taken high up the mountains to the idyllic resort of Fiesch near the Aletsch Glacier, not far from the sources of Europe's four great rivers.

Sitting on the snow, overlooking the Aletsch Glacier, Shrii P. R. Sarkar told, that the Alps were very old and were originally higher than the Himalayas. He highlighted the importance of the Alps as an ideal place for meditation (Master Units) and that its inhabitants are simple, honest and peaceful. This is echoed in their national anthem addressing God directly as they sense Him in the crimson dawn over the snowcapped mountains.

On an audio recording Shrii P. R. Sarkar said, "...there is many a thing to say regarding this ancient Alpine civilization..." From notes of his disciples in the book *Baba in Fiesch*, he said, 'We are now treading over the valleys of the Alpine Heights, where the first human beings were born in prehistoric days. It is one of the first places on earth where civilization started. This Alpine land was the original abode of the Aryans who lived in these valleys surrounded by the icy summits of the Alps. At first human civilization was located in the Alps in these hills and then due to climatic changes some human beings could not adjust to the cold and moved out in different directions. Their original language was Vedic.'

This was a surprising statement and here is a glimpse into more explanations from his writings to this startling claim. In his book *History along the Way*, he writes,

The Aryans who are known today as Caucasians originated from Switzerland. To escape from the snow in Switzerland, they turned eastwards to the Caucasus region to seek refuge in the first lap of their journey.

In his volumes *Shabda Chayanika*, Shrii Sarkar gives an example of the root sound that eventually becomes a verb and transformed into nouns:

The meaning of the root r is "to move forward", from which the word árya, Aryan is derived.

He further explains,

One meaning of the word ra, derived from the root verb r, is "one who moves forward". In ancient times when people started using horses to pull carts, they used to cry out "ra!" to urge the horse to move forward. They used to say "ra-ra-ra!" and the horse moved forward. And when they said tha, they were telling it to stop (tha-tha-tha, i.e., sthá + da = stha → tha). That cart or carriage or vehicle was called ratha.

In *Geology and Human Civilization*, he writes,

The word Arya has come from the root verb r plus suffix yat meaning "double march" or "moving speedily."

In another book *Psycho-Acoustic and Inferential Acoustic Notes, Discourse 9, Varña Vijñána*, he explains the word 'Aryan', while referring to the Aryans already not only from the Alps and Europe but also distinctly from the Caucasus as their home land. And furthermore, he is mentioning how the Aryans evolved into three distinct groups by the time they entered Northern India. He is also implying that German has retained Vedic vocabulary:

The Nordic people have high noses, blond hair, ruddy complexion and are tall in stature. The Alpine people are relatively short in stature. They are not so ruddy in complexion, have bluish hair and blue eyes. The Mediterranean people are fair-complexioned with black hair, black eyes and are somewhat shorter than the

Old Atlantis was a very vast continent, stretching from Iberia to Iceland. It is now underwater except for parts of Spain, Portugal, Ireland and Iceland.

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Alpine people. The collective name for these three branches is Aryan. The English word Aryan comes from German and originally from the Vedic word árya. As far as it can be determined, the word árya comes from the Vedic verbal root r which means “to cultivate” or “to plough”, so the meaning of the word árya becomes “that person or community whose culture thrives through cultivation”. The original homeland of the Aryans was Europe and the areas lying near the Caucasian mountains in central Russia. In northwest India and in Kashmir there is a good number of people of Aryan lineage, however their numbers in the rest of India is quite insignificant. The few who are there are mostly of mixed blood. Trying to search and pick them out would be quite difficult.

In *Ananda Vacanamrtam Part 15*, he explains how the Aryans upon entering Iran on their spreading over continents, named the land as their country. While in Iran, they discovered an abundance of food materials, and the climate was also congenial. Hence, they liked that place very much. When these people were moving and moving joyfully, they named their country *Aryanavraja* – that is, the Aryans lived in that country happily. *Aryanavraja* got changed in the ancient Iranian language into *Iranveja*. At present it is Iran.

Those who assert that the Iran is the land of the Aryans, are correct in this sense. Some clans of Aryans settled and mingled with the locals. It is noteworthy that the root verb *r* was later used also for the verb ‘to cultivate’ and ‘to plough.’ This must have been at the time of the development of agriculture which they started to some extent in the Caucasus region and more extensively in Anatolia and Iran during the Neolithic period. The Aryans trickled into India over several thousand years in smaller groups long before Shiva’s time of 7000 years and in time in increasingly larger groups, mostly from the Mediterranean, after Shiva’s era.

In *Discourses on the Mahabharata*, Shrii P. R. Sarkar further elaborates how the word Aryan changed,

In the Vedic age the expression of address was Bho árya – árya means respectable. In the Mahábhárata age (1500 BCE), that is, in Prákṛta, árya became ájja. In the Shaorasenii language, the natural language of Kṛ́ṣṇa, the grandmother of Hindi (which is a matter of glory for Hindi) árya became ájja. After that, when Shaorasenii died, ájja became ájjü in Ardha Shaorasenii, the mother of Hindi. Ájjü became jü in present Hindi.

But let us revert back to the ancient prehistoric origins of the ‘ancient Alpine civilization’ as Shrii Sarkar respectfully addresses our early European ancestors. The Alps were an area that was accessible and ideal for supporting life, as it is today, a sheltering abode in warm periods and in cold intervals people could move into the lowlands along the river.

Early civilizations started in the mountains where small clans were protected in caves or overhanging rocks, near boulders, in small valleys and favorable open hills where they could see far and could fight off wild animals and hostile groups. With time they moved along the rivers down to the plains to the big river deltas and beyond.

Considering Shrii Sarkar’s outstanding claim about the Aryans and their Vedic language originating in the Alps, we must reach far back into prehistory and imagine that it is well possibility that the early homo species found a congenial living space in the Alps and from there spread throughout Europe. All the archaeological findings of our human evolution in Europe of the Neanderthals, the Cro Magnon and other Homo sapiens are termed by him as the ‘Ancient Alpine Civilization’ in honor of their achievements after hundreds of thousands of years.

There are wonderfully researched fossils and tools in various places, from Iberia to Russia and the Caucasus. Eventually one Homo sapiens species survived, adapted to changes, developed intelligence and gained skills to advance step by step. They were forced by natural conditions to live in groups to fend



Wildkirchli caves, Appenzell Innerrhoden, Switzerland



Caucasus, between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea

better for themselves, to form early society and move to new horizons. In the last glacial period (LGP) of 125,000 years ago until 14,000 years ago, this Alpine source population could have survived in sparsely wooded areas and on the grass steppe in the valleys and low lands while avoiding dense forest cover.

Between the northern edge of the ice cover and the Alpine ice layer there were the lowlands of the Alps, the open wide steppe with grass stretching from Western Europe to the Caucasus and the Ural Mountains. This tundra like landscape was full of grazing animals and nearly empty of people. There were the wild animals, mammoth, reindeer, aurochs, rhinoceros, bison, wild horses, marmot, snow-hen, snow-hare and red deer. The ibex and chamois were higher up in the Alps. Most of the animals were grass eaters, even the cave lions. The early clan societies lived in this vast stretch of land from west to east Europe. Their lives were fully occupied with hunting and gathering edibles. They were dominated by constant fear of survival.

Women folk lived together and the women who gave birth to new clan members were revered. They struggled to improve their ability to produce fire and to cook their food and heal their sick members. Their food became more palatable by roasting it over fire or boiling it in animal hide. This contributed to their body energy and better health and improved intellect. They invented the bone needle to make clothes to cover their bodies and even produced intricate jewelry some 40,000 years ago.

Due to necessity the men invented useful skills, tools and weapons and eventually became the celebrated clan leaders. Leaders controlled and made rules. The more organized they were the more their clans benefitted. Strong and skillful members could protect the clan mothers and children.

The oldest hunting weapons in the world found until today were discovered in Schoeningen, Germany (near Timmern where Shrii Sarkar visited). The spears were well preserved for 300,000 years and astonishingly skillfully made for the purpose of hunting from a distance. They are testimony of the earliest humans living in this wide area.

Many more traces of their presence were found in wider Europe from 50,000 years ago, such as tools made of stone, bones and deer antlers and jewelry. These cultural activities have been classified as archaeological industries named after the sites of findings. Some cultures stretched over vast areas and over thousands of years. The Wildkirchli caves in the Appenzell Alps show traces of Neanderthal habitation about 40,000 years ago. The Venus of Willendorf in Austria is dated to 30,000 years ago and a similar small figurine out of mammoth ivory called the Venus of Hohle Fels is from a cave near Schelklingen of the Swabian Alb, near Ulm. This figurine was a pendant venerating the clan mother as the giver of life. Other figurines of the matriarchal antiquity have been found in various places in Europe such as the Venus of Lespugue, Venus of Laussel, Venus of Dolní Věstonice and the Venus of Brassempouy. In the Vogelherd cave near Stetten, Germany a small wild horse figurine made out of mammoth ivory was found and dated to be 35,000 years ago. Also in the in Hohle Fels cave and the Geissenklösterle cave near Blaubeuren they found flutes made of swan, vulture and mammoth bones, 35,000 to 43,000 years old.

There is no doubt that a subtle form of artistic creative intellect of these forebears was at work. The Lionman from Hohlenstein in Germany is another testimony to cultural expression dating back 40,000 years. This figurine may have been a symbol of their

The ancient Vedic language, which was originally spoken in central Russia by the Aryans, gradually developed as the Aryans moved from country to country, undergoing innumerable experiences and realizations as they went.

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thoughts on incorporating transpersonal shamanism.

There are about 350 caves in Europe many with beautiful cave art that depicts animals and scenes of their lives. In those caves over thirty abstract symbols are recurring. In the Grotta del Cavallo in Chieti, Abruzzo Italy fossils identified as human teeth, dated to 45,000–43,000 years ago, are thought to be the oldest known remains of modern humans in Europe.

Some of the magnificent cave paintings in France, Northern Spain and the Iberian Mediterranean Basin tell of refined artistic ability. There are many caves in Calabria, such as of El Castillo caves at Puente Viesgo, which date back to 40,000 years ago and tell of ancient people. The beautiful art at Altamira from 37,000 years ago is a sign of advancement of our early human family. The Chauvet caves in France date back to 36,000 years and have beautiful art work. The under-water cave of Cosquer near Marseille, France is stunning, showing unusual sea animals besides the land animals, 27,000 years old. The world's oldest known portrait was found in the Vilhonneur grotto near Angoulême and is thought to be 27,000 years old.

Solutre was a place near the Alps where relatively advanced flint tool-making was found in a cave with 20,000 years of occupation. The ancient industry was at its peak from around 22,000 to 17,000 years ago. It includes tools, ornamental beads and bone pins as well as prehistoric art. The most impressive Lascaux cave paintings of 17,000 years ago in southwestern France may have been painted by those Alpine Aryans who didn't migrate to the Caucasus during the height of the Ice Age but remained in the shelter of the caves and milder areas of coastal Iberia and south-west France.

In Fiesch, on casual walks, Shrii Sarkar talked on different occasions about the fabulous culture of Atlantis. He said that old Atlantis was a very vast continent, stretching from Iberia to Iceland. It is now underwater except for parts of Spain, Portugal,

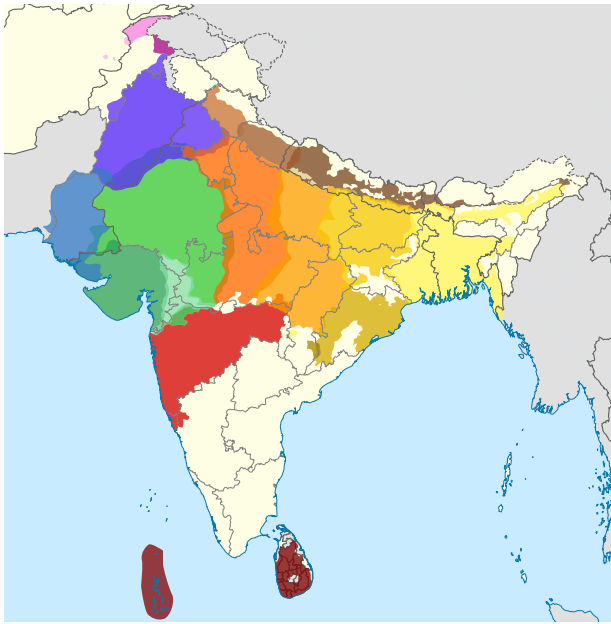
Ireland and Iceland. The Bay of Basque was originally a part of Atlantis that's why it is so shallow. Shrii P. R. Sarkar then added that Atlantis was a developed culture and that the Basque people and their culture have a link with Atlantis. It would be possible to find proof of Atlantis by studying the flora and geology of the Basque country, especially around the Bay of Biscay. There should be cultural, geological, zoological and other surveys along the Iberian coast, so that some new clues may be found about Atlantis. He casually told that the society of Atlantis may have been physically advanced to survive but mentally they were still primitive and could not get along and caused their own destruction.

Atlantis must have existed before a cataclysmic earthquake and tsunami swept it under water most probably around 11,600 years ago, a date for the great flood myths told by many cultures.

The Alpine Aryans moved on in the flow of natural nomadic evolution and steadily advanced in their psychic development through constant struggle and fight against all adversities.

During the last maximum glaciation (LMG) in the Alps around 22,000 years ago, when the temperature dropped, the majority of the ancient Alpine civilization clans could have moved towards the east hoping for a warmer climate to follow the thought of Shrii Sarkar saying that due to the cold, they moved on to the Caucasus. A few clans may have taken shelter in caves of Europe. Others moved closer to coastal lands of France, Basque, Iberia and the Mediterranean region. From 37,000 to 14,000 years ago, the population of Europe consisted of a small number of isolated clans descended from the ancient Alpine founding population.

Thus, the wider Caucasus area became their second home and today the original ancient Alpine civilization are mostly known as the Aryans originating in the Caucasus. They settled in the Caucasus region up to the Ural Mountains. Shrii



Map showing geographical distribution of the major Indo-Aryan languages. Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-Aryan_peoples



Myth and mystique of the Aryan race have stimulated both scientific research and popular culture

Sarkar more often refers to the Aryans as originating in Europe and the Caucasus.

The original homeland of the Aryans was Europe and the areas lying near the Caucasian mountains in central Russia. (Psycho-Acoustic and Inferential Acoustic Notes, Discourse 9, Varna Vijnana)

The original home of the Aryans was southern Russia, west of the Ural Mountains, now known as the Caucasus. (Developmental Planning, Prout Economics)

The original homeland of the Aryans was Central Asia, in the central and southern portion of modern USSR. (A Few Problems Solved, 5)

The Aryans were people of cold countries, the people of the Caucasus region of Russia. (Ananda Vacanamrtam, 15)

The wider Caucasus includes the geography of the Ponto-Caspian region with its flora and fauna of temperate steppe lands. It stretches from the northern shores of the Black Sea to as far east as the Caspian Sea, from Bulgaria in the southeast to Romania in the northeast through Moldova, Ukraine and Southern Russia. It includes the Caucasus Mountain region, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and the lower Volga Basin, southern Ural area and western Kazakhstan. It is bordered by the East European and Russian forest steppe to the north which is a transitional zone of mixed

grasslands and temperate broadleaf forests when not under ice.

Pockets of clans of the ancient Alpine civilization stock had disbursed throughout Europe many thousands of years ago and had remained in these areas. Artifacts have been found in south-central and eastern Europe at the site of Brno-Bohunice, Stranska skala, Bacho Kiro, at the Temnate Kave in Bulgaria, Dzierzyslaw, in Poland and others dating back to 43,000 to 26,000 years ago.

The Szeleta culture in Austria, in Moravia, northern Hungary and southern Poland are dated between 41,000 to 37,000 years ago. Similar findings were made at the Russian Kostyonki and Borshchyovo sites on the western middle bank of the Don River near the city of Voronezh.

Three people buried 32,000 years ago at Sungir, two hundred kilometers east of Moscow, were adorned in a grave with spears, clothing and more than 13,000 items of ivory-beaded jewelry which would have taken 10,000 hours to produce. Red ochre, an important ritual material associated with burials at this time, covered the burials. They are closely connected to the remains found at Kosteni and Vestonice in the Czech Republic from 26,000 years ago. The largest Paleolithic sculpture of a bison and two Venus figurines made from mammoth ivory were found in Zaraysk near Moscow from 20,000 years ago.

There are many sites in this area with traces of developed people. At Kamyana Mohyla, north of the Black Sea in the Ukraine, there is a large stone kurgan, similar to many kurgans in the south Ural-Caucasus area. According to Dr. Shilov in his book Ancient History of Aratta-Ukraine this is a sanctuary-observatory that has over sixty underground caves with over a thousand of ancient petro-glyphs with symbolic, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic images. The oldest dating back 14,000 years depicts a mammoth. The petroglyphs call this place Shu-nan in their land of Aratta according to A.G. Kafishin, a Ukrainian scholar who was specialized in Sumerian culture. He could see a connection between the petroglyph at this place dating between 9,000 to 24,000 years ago and the Sumerian encoded texts of 5,000 years ago. According to him the culture of Sumer has its origins here predating the Sumerian and Egyptian cultures by several thousands of years. The petroglyphs tell an elaborate story of our ancient ancestors, about their life, rituals, social codes and social structures. They depict scenes of their beliefs about the underworld, living world and heaven. An ancient inscription on a mammoth skull from the site of Mezhyrich dates back to 20,000–14,000 years ago.

The oldest swastika in the world was found at Mezine, Ukraine. It was carved on a bird figurine made of mammoth bone dated to 15,000 years ago.

The Vedic language of the ancient Alpine civilization advanced with their struggle; their vocabulary expanded as they lived and moved. By the time they arrived and had been settled in the Caucasus area for a few thousand years their language had achieved maturity of expression.

When the Aryans began to spread out in all directions from their original homeland, their vocabulary also began to develop and their language began to flourish. (The Faculty of Knowledge)

Humanity's journey on the path of civilization started only 15,000 years ago. This can be inferred from the fact that human beings began evolving language around this time. (Geology and Human Civilization.)

The ancient Vedic language, which was originally spoken in central Russia by the Aryans, gradually developed as the Aryans moved from country to country, undergoing innumerable experiences and realizations as they went. The natural outcome was the enormous development of their vocabulary. (Faculty of Knowledge 1)

This enormous Vedic vocabulary was the gift of the Aryans to the local Sanskrit of ancient India which had evolved in Rarh, the cradle of civilization of ancient India also around the same time of 15,000 years ago. The Vedic language survived for 10,000 years only because it was carrying the spiritual message of the Vedas. By the time of its arrival in India the Vedic language was dying but its vocabulary was absorbed by Sanskrit which was systematized from 7000 years ago by Sadashiva to 2600 years ago by Panini. Vedic was an oral language until 5600 years ago when it was written down in the Indus Valley civilization.

The journey of the Vedic language began approximately 15,000 years ago and it attained its full development about 10,000 years ago. In other words, it walked its road for about 5000 years. In very ancient times the pace of language was very slow, so Vedic needed 5000 years of dedicated effort to attain maturity.

With regard to civilization, there has been little progress during the long span of 985,000 thousand years. All the progress has taken place within the last 15,000 years, from the time of the Rgveda, the oldest unwritten book of the world.

We can roughly say that civilization first started sprouting after the prehistoric age of the human race, that is, from the days of the first composition of the Rgveda, about 15,000 years ago. A major change took place during the days of Shiva (7000 years ago) towards the end of the Rgvedic period.

The composition of the Rgveda began about 15,000 years ago. Scripts were totally unknown in those days. It would not be incorrect to say that although the human race came onto the earth about a million years ago, its civilization started only about 15,000 years ago. This shows that human civilization and human culture are not very old in relation to the antiquity of the human race. We should not belittle civilization for being so recent, but neither can we venerate it as being very old. (Namah Shivaya Shantaya, Discourse 1)

The sages meditated and composed hymns invoking the divine powers in fire, wind and nature. The hymns were recited in strict meter and memorized by selected students. These hymns were called “Veda” or spiritual knowledge and new verses were added in the course of time. The oldest portion of the Veda is the Rgveda.

7000 years ago there was a grand confluence of people at the foothill lands of the Himalayas, the food basket of the world, named Bharata Varsa (“land that feeds its people”) by the Aryans, holding the greatest number of people since ancient times and still does today.

The composition of the Rgveda started 15,000 years ago and ended 5,000 years ago, thus the entire composition was done over 10,000 years. The Yajurveda between 10,000 and 7,000 years ago and the Atharvaveda between 7000 and 5,000 years ago.

From the study of history, it is known that the Rgveda was composed outside of India, mainly in Central Asia and Russia. The Yajurveda was written mostly outside of India (in Iran); only a portion was written in India. And the Atharvaveda was composed in Afghanistan and India. (Namah Shivayah Shantaya)

The Sámaveda is not a separate Veda by itself but is the compilation of the lyrical and musical portions of the different Vedas. By the time the Veda was written down only sixty percent of the Vedas remained, and forty percent was lost and will never be recovered.

Although the Rgveda is mainly concerned with hymns, it also contains various tales and anecdotes. While not all of these stories and tales carry equal spiritual value, they are representative of the cultural heritage of those ancient humans. They paint a portrait of the gradual advancement of human thinking and the structure of society. When considered from this point of view, the language, literature and expression of the Rgveda is of special value to the world. (Shabda Chayanika, 2)

After the Younger Dryas, around 11,600 years ago there was congenial climate for disbursal and exploring new horizons. From the Caucasus, clans of Aryans moved in all directions, back to Europe, to the North, South and East.

The Aryans first moved from West Asia and migrated to different areas from the Black Sea to the Danube Valley and then to Central and West Europe. They advanced and settled in Iran, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, North Africa and Spain, and along the Mediterranean coast. They spread out from western France to the British Isles, and later spread to Afghanistan, the Indus Valley, the Red River Valley, and Korea and Japan in the Far East. (Human Society is One and Indivisible)

In Iran, sages composed the Yajurveda about 10,000 years ago which was more subtle and invoked one Supreme Being above all natural phenomena. It was the first conception of Monotheism. The Aryans came in contact with the indigenous Tantric civilization of ancient India as they moved further East.

The original Rgvedic civilization belonged, in spirit and language, to the non-Indian Aryans. However, the Yajurveda was composed by a particular branch of the Vedic Aryans who, when the Aryans later began to spread out in search of food (especially wheat), migrated to India via Iran (Aryaṇya Vraja) and Afghanistan. When we say “Indo-Aryan civilization”, we basically mean the civilization of these people. (Inception and evolution of the Vedas, Tantra and Indo-Aryan Civilization)

By the time of 7000 years ago there was a grand confluence of people at the foothill lands of the Himalayas, the food basket of the world, named Bharata Varsa (land that feeds its people) by the Aryans, holding the greatest number of people since ancient times and still does today.

There were huge clashes between the war-faring Aryans and the local Tantric civilization of the Tibetan-Chinese and the Austric-Dravidians of India. Lord Shiva emerged as a liberator and grand guide uniting all people under his epoch-making new cultural and social direction.

The ancient Alpine civilization evolved into the Vedic civilization of the Caucasus which evolved further on its way towards the East and finally experienced its climax in contact with Tantra and became transformed into the grand Indo-Aryan civilization at the heart of the ancient world. The modern Vedic age lingered on into the present age with various forms and colours. Shrii Sarkar needed to tell his story knowing that it is hard to research and find evidence into the hoary past. This tale of an extraordinary seer may be useful as a foundation and as a hypothesis to guide efforts of modern research in new directions. [END]

BOOK REVIEW

Consciousness, Life, Computers and Human Nature

Aaron Frank

In his book *Irreducible: Consciousness, Life, Computers, and Human Nature*, physicist and inventor Federico Faggin exposes the limits of the reductionist materialism which has guided western thinking for centuries

When future historians look back to analyze our current moment, it's likely the invention of modern computers will stand out as among the most significant turning points in the story of our species. Thanks to these machines, our ability to process information, an undertaking which dates to at least the Sumerian Abacus, is now possible at the speed of electricity and measured in 'trillions of calculations per second'.

And in the history of computers, the invention of the microprocessor may stand out as among the most groundbreaking as it shrunk what was previously a roomful of machinery onto a single microchip like those which power everything from our laptops, cars, cameras, and much more. In the context of today's digital revolution, perhaps the microprocessor's debut is the reasonable moment to mark the beginning of our information age.

Processing information has had a starring role in the western world's conception of reality since at least ancient Greece. Since that time, the west has been locked into an ideological worldview which proposes that reality itself is a vast algorithmic processor of information whose secrets began to reveal themselves with the discovery of the mathematical and physical laws of nature. It was the Greeks who established the view that a singular universal truth exists as a set of rational laws and to know the mind of God, in the view of Plato, was to uncover the eternal mathematical rules governing the universe.

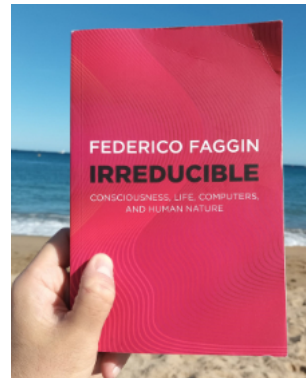
These cognitive frames shaped western thought well into the 17th century's scientific revolution when, with the discovery of Newton's laws of motion, these views reorganized into a triumphalist confidence that the rule-based activities of the

cosmos were finally revealing the fabric of a computable existence. Some leading physicists began to argue we could soon expect the end of physical discovery having uncovered all there is to know about the functioning of the universe.

In his 19th century writing, Pierre-Simon Laplace famously imagined that a vast intelligence equipped with knowledge of the starting positions of all physical elements and the laws which govern their behavior could calculate, in a single instant, all the events unfolding across space and time. This understanding of reality, conceived as a grand information processor, is still expressed in the modern pursuit of a "theory of everything," an idea popularized by Stephen Hawking's views that a single unified equation might explain all observable phenomena in the universe.

Today's computational paradigm has further influenced our views of everything including neuroscience, biology, and even the social sciences. Reality, and everything in it including our DNA, our brains, and our bodies, are machine readable systems of computation. If everything in the universe is 'information processing', then building faster and more powerful computers would seem to promise godlike powers, not only to perfectly predict and control the behavior of the cosmos, but perhaps even upload our consciousness into machines; a notion that is fashionable in some high-tech circles today.

Perhaps, then, the inventor of the microprocessor is an unlikely candidate to so thoroughly demolish this view of a computational universe.



Irreducible

Federico Faggin

Essentia Books, 2024

Paperback, 336 pages

\$18.55

While it may ironically be his invention most responsible for reinforcing these entrenched western ideologies today, Federico Faggin is a compelling scientific thinker who not only deconstructs the reductionist materialism core to the western knowledge system, but also offers a convincing alternative rooted in a panpsychist monism; or what could more simply be described as the spiritual worldview.

According to Faggin, the classical view of physics that underpins today's scientific worldview is inadequate to account for the true nature of reality. As a result, many of our dominant assumptions are unraveling under the weight of developments in formal logic, quantum physics, and other scientific breakthroughs over the past century.

Irreducible, structured in two parts, begins by articulating how a majority of scientists today operate from a working set of assumptions, often unquestioned, which propose a separation between us as subjective observers and an external objective reality (realism), that physical reality is a product of interactions between indivisible and separate particles of matter (atomism), and that the behavior of a complex system comprised of that matter can be understood by breaking apart and analyzing its individual parts (reductionism).

In summarizing a range of paradigm shattering discoveries over the last century, Faggin raises serious doubts regarding each one of these assumptions. A good example is the discovery of chaos theory in the 1960s, which revealed that even in deterministic systems, tiny differences in initial conditions can lead to vastly different outcomes making perfect prediction impossible. Aside from the fact that no instrument is capable of infinitely precise measurement, Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, the 1927 finding which shows that we can't know both the position and speed of a particle at the same time, put a definitive end to Laplace's vision of a predictable universe.

Faggin is particularly compelling in describing the implications of Kurt Gödel's 1931 incompleteness theorems; what he calls the coup de grâce of logical positivism. Before Gödel, it was assumed that all of mathematics could be formalized into a complete and consistent set of axioms. What Gödel showed is that rather than an objective ground truth from which to build an understanding of reality, all of mathematics is dependent on the starting assumptions, which themselves cannot be proved from within that model.

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infinite potential within its
own inner and outer realities.*

As Faggin points out, "The starting axioms are in fact considered self-evident truths, accepted as such by convention because their truth cannot be proven. The presumed objectivity of mathematics is therefore based on the subjective acceptance of what is considered self-evident."

Many scientists today misunderstand that the core assumptions underpinning today's views of a material, reducible, and external physical reality are themselves predicated on 'self-evident' yet unprovable starting point ideas. And for a culture well practiced in appealing to an external objective-seeming set of scientific truths, it will likely require a radical paradigm shift in thinking to internalize that a first-person subjectivity, and not an external separate ground truth, is the bedrock from which all knowledge of the universe can be conceived.

This leads to the core of Faggin's writing which argues for a reimagined view of science that integrates new starting assumptions positing consciousness and free will as fundamental and irreducible aspects of a unified reality. Reality, as a singular entity, intrinsically possesses the qualities of being conscious and alive and has free will from the outset, and so these attributes cannot be derived from classical physics, mathematics, or matter.

In his conception, the totality of all existence in its potential and actual form makes up what he refers to as One. According to Faggin, this singular entity is irreducibly holistic, dynamic, and creative, and seeks to know itself by emanating finite expressions of its own consciousness as unique perspectives which explore its infinite potential within its own inner and outer realities.

Starting from this idea, Faggin introduces what he calls the QIP theory (Quantum Information-based Panpsychism), alongside a framework that distinguishes between two inseparable dimensions of

reality. One is our outer symbolic world of measurable forms, and the other is an inner non-material realm of semantic meaning. While this may appear dualistic, Faggin emphasizes that both aspects are expressions of a single and undivided whole. While the material outer world we experience may consume our attention, it is merely an approximation of a deeper inner realm beyond spacetime from which our consciousness is derived.

It is within this context that he debunks a growing belief that modern technologies like AI and computers could ever possess a capacity for self-directed conscious activity. While perfectly capable as useful tools to manipulate the discrete symbols of our outer symbolic realm, today's machines are rule-based classical systems which process information without an intrinsic capacity for comprehension, which he argues is a core property of consciousness. Therefore, according to Faggin, today's computers and AI systems belong to an entirely different category than biological lifeforms.

While Faggin's work is likely to provoke a significant antibody-like response from the world of conventional materialism pervasive in academic science today, his ideas, and their implications, will appear entirely aligned with the knowledge systems of spiritual philosophy. While much of the second part of his book introduces a new taxonomy with terms like "seities" and "consciousness units" (what spiritual teachers like PR Sarkar would refer to more simply as 'unit minds') the ideas presented reconfigure the spiritual philosophy of tantric yoga in a scientific packaging which could be a more palatable introduction for western audiences.

Faggin is an excellent candidate to contribute to the work of dismantling the scientific materialism which has permeated western thought for centuries. Until he experienced a direct spiritual event himself, which he describes briefly in the opening pages of his book, he was immersed in the mainstream materialist perspectives suggesting that physical matter is the starting point to understand consciousness and existence.

As his own journey suggests, a core implication Faggin explores in exposing the limits of mathematics in describing reality is that true knowing cannot be fully reduced using the symbolic systems we've constructed from math or language. Truth, he argues, unlike information processed in the classical world of physics, must be touched directly as 'knowing' and 'being' collapse into an act of direct conscious experience.

BOOK REVIEW

A Scientific Inquiry Into the Physics of Reality

Sid Jordan

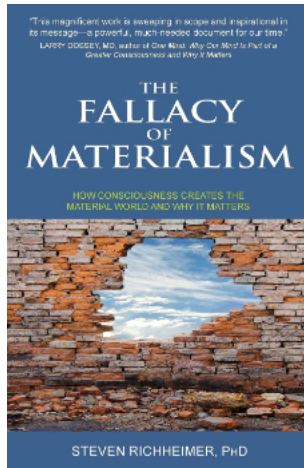
In *The Fallacy of Materialism*, chemist and spiritual researcher Steve Richheimer contrasts the worldviews of "materialism" and "spirituality" that challenges readers to eschew religious and scientific dogma, "always this and never that". He not only accomplishes a searing critique of a materialist science but offers an alternative spiritual upliftment of a new science that inspires individual and social liberation.

The Physics of Reality

Richheimer divides his book into four parts. The first is "The Physics of Reality" where, in an accessible language, he discusses how modern quantum physics, and Einstein's relativity theory challenge long held beliefs among physicists and biological sciences' mechanistic views that don't fit a newly explored non-local and interconnected reality.

A science that separates physical and mental realities begins with Descartes' Cartesian mind and body dualism and Newton's laws of motion and gravity. These theories laid the foundation for materialism's view of the body and the universe as a clock-like machine. This materialist worldview was even more consolidated with Darwin's theory of evolution that explained the origin of complex organisms.

This materialist Cartesian-Newtonian worldview of the late 19th century viewed matter as the ground for objective and subjective reality, including consciousness. The author sites several postulates of materialism that are keys to understanding the "fallacies of materialism". The first of these is "causal determinism" that postulates that if one knows the current conditions of a system one can predict the conditions of the future of the system with exactness. The second, "locality of matter-energy interactions", states that regardless of the size or mass of an object that it is governed by local force fields that diminish with distance regardless of its



The Fallacy of Materialism
 Steve Richheimer
 Innerworld Publications
 Paperback, 308 pages
 \$15.95

speed or the effect of time, assumed to be a constant throughout the universe. The third assumption of materialism is a “strong objectivity” that contends that “physical objects exist independent of one another and there is no scope for mind, which is created by the brain to have an effect on any physical entity except the body.” (p 10 Richheimer).

These postulates of materialism are directly challenged by the theories of Planck and Einstein that viewed packets of energy such as photons, electrons, protons, neutrons, quarks, atoms and molecules as “quantum particles” having both wave particle and wave characteristics. The “causal determinism” of a reductionistic science is challenged by the unpredictability of a “quantum wave function” that requires a consideration of all possible states being the outcome when observed or measured by anyone or an instrument. The materialist tenet of “locality” is largely upended by the phenomenon of “entanglement” in which two quantum particles that are created together remain connected and communicate any changes to one another no matter how far apart. The rule of materialism that brain creates mind is questioned by the author through the “observation problem”. The collapse of the wave function is preceded by an observation whether it is by a human or instrumental observation. In the end, it requires a subjective observation of a human mind for the wave function to collapse. It is contended that the mind or consciousness can directly affect the collapse of the wave and appearance of the particle through its “top down” impact on the neurons of the brain rather than the reverse “bottom up” process of brain creating mind.

The author finds support for the subjective approach to an objective adjustment of mind over matter in physicists like Bohm’s notion of “Deep down the consciousness of mankind is one” (p 46 Richheimer) and Wheeler’s “participant-observer” that could represent human consciousness or cosmic consciousness creating the universe. These qualities or oneness of the collective mind/consciousness and matter represent qualities of the wave function’s temporal and spatial nonlocality.

The author relates that Einstein’s four-dimensional (length, width, height and time) space-time concept of relativity deals a final blow to the Newtonian constant space and time “clockwork universe”. Both time and space are relative and interconnected. “Only events in four-dimensional continuum of space-time have meaning.” (p 60 Richheimer) An example is given that mass distorts space-time creating gravity. The greater the mass of an object the more it bends space. As Einstein predicts starlight from a star is seen to curve when it passes close to the sun.

The author ends this part of the book with, “Thus It is reasonable to think that someday physicists might develop a concise theory that shows how spacetime emerges from a wave function.” (p 65 Richheimer) He concludes that while a deterministic and local relativity theory serves as a container for physical reality, that theoretically everything in the domain of objective reality, including space-time, can be seen as an emergent property of the subtle domain of the wave function.

The Mind Beyond the Brain

The second part of the book takes on “Why Mind Cannot be Reduced to Brain”. The assumption that there is a reality that corresponds to what the senses and brain records is questioned as the author states that the only thing we can know with certainty is our “self-awareness” of the mind. He states that the “self-identity” is permanent whereas the body and brain undergo continuous change. This awareness is linked with our unit consciousness or “I feeling” that creates a sense of unity of self-awareness in contrast to the brain that lacks a mechanism of “anatomical convergence”.

There are number of well researched physical phenomena that the author sites that are caused by mental states that can not be explained by changes in the brain. These includes psychosomatic illnesses, placebo effect and hypnotic induced surgical analgesia. The author concludes that “These

phenomena are consistent with the hypothesis that mind lies at a higher hierarchical level than matter and brain.” (p 95 Richheimer)

Among mystical-like experiences the author cites, near death experiences (NDE) are the most convincing evidence for the mind functioning at a level beyond a brain that has shut down because of the absence of blood flow and a flat EEG. The lucidity of consciousness and vivid memory of those who recall their NDE includes being fully conscious, experiencing a divine presence, “life review”, witnessing attempts of resuscitation, visiting with loved ones and the lasting transformative effect upon their lives. These accounts of NDE are similar for thousands of people regardless of age, nationality, religion, race or culture.

The author counters that PSI phenomena are mistakenly referred to as “extra” sensory (ESP) experiences when in fact everybody experiences them. He contends that these rigorously researched phenomena of telepathy, precognition and remote viewing are explained by the existence of the cosmic or non-local collective mind. He concludes that this collective unconscious mind possesses the scientifically proven wave function’s qualities of timelessness, wholeness and entanglement that refutes the materialist atomistic worldview of reality.

Spiritual Logic

In the third part of the book, The Logic of the Spiritual Worldview, the author states that there must be some fundamental “ground substance” for creation. The materialist claim that this ground substance is matter that has always been there. The spiritual point of view is that cosmic consciousness is the ground substance of a creation that is cyclical in nature, beginning and ending with consciousness. This consciousness has a “creative principle” that molds consciousness into the material world. This creative principle transforms unqualified consciousness into the three principles of qualities of mind: I am, I do and objective mind. This cosmic objective mind then creates the objective world. This creation of the objective world is known as the Big Bang in which the creative principle acting on the cosmic objective mind transforms it into the five elements of spacetime (ether), plasma and gaseous elements (aerial), electromagnetic radiation (luminous), liquid and solid. This completes the outward or centrifugal, inanimate phase of creation of solids or planets. Next comes the return or centripetal phase of the creation cycle that, given

*Various levels of the mind
work together closely to apply
the conscious mind to create a
unified experience of reality.*



suitable conditions on a planet, life and mind evolve with an increasing expression of consciousness.

The author points out that in the 4 billion years evolution on planet earth, current humans have evolved in only the last 300,000 years. This expression of human consciousness is fraught with the double edge sword of moving towards cosmic consciousness to complete the cosmic cycle or devolving backwards towards the world of animal unconsciousness. This constitutes the struggle between the “I of the ego” attracted to the material world versus the intuition’s desire to become one with the “cosmic I”. This attaining oneness with cosmic consciousness completes the cycle of creation, the final journey of self-realization.

This theory of the cycle of creation begins with the oneness/wholeness of cosmic consciousness existing before cosmic mind is formed. According to the author, “Cosmic mind could also be described as the wave function of the universe” (p166 Richheimer) This cosmic mind (wave function) when observed by cosmic consciousness manifest the physical reality of spacetime. The author concludes that quantum physics and relativity’s concepts of oneness and a state of order, defined as entropy being zero at the beginning of time (Big Bang), logically support the primacy of an organizing principle of cosmic consciousness. This primacy of consciousness defies a materialist point of view that reality begins with matter alone.

Further support for this spiritual point of view is that various levels of the mind work together closely to apply the conscious mind to create a unified experience of reality. These levels of mind are defined by chakras arranged hierarchically from the crude level of the body to more subtle levels of conscious, subconscious and three unconscious levels that reflect the collective and cosmic mind. The neuroscience of the materialist model of “hierarchical brain networks” has a problem of explaining the conscious awareness of emotions, intentionality, collective mind and self-awareness that remains consistent over time. The logic of a

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more holistic and universal cosmic mind, contrasted with this materialist view, accounts for the innate, blissful and timeless experience of self-realization.

The author concludes that it takes many reincarnated lifetimes to achieve this self-realization. This invokes the idea of reincarnation to burn all the samskaras/momenta according to the law of karma: all actions have an equal and opposite reaction. According to the author's view "actions that draw us closer to self-realization (e.g. self-less service, spiritual practices and meditation) produce the greatest happiness while actions that move us farther away from self-realization produce negative reactive momenta and result in pain and suffering." (p 191 Richheimer) He further contends that to accomplish self-realization requires a human body. The author offers that the appearance of human consciousness was not rolled out in slow incremental steps but arrived amid "quantum leaps" based on the cosmic mind's actions on unexpressed gene variations that defy neo-Darwinian theories based on the slower process of mutations in "natural selection".

The Dogma and Its Remedy

In the final and fourth part of the book, The Problem and Solution, the author emphasizes the presence of the scientific dogma that only accepts a deterministic and local reality grounded in matter. He states this has assumed the proportion of a "Quantum Physics-Induced Trauma" manifest by a difficulty in assimilating mentally challenging advances in quantum mechanics. For materialist scientists there is total separation of the subjective and objective worlds that is reinforced by a

separation from spiritual/religious beliefs and a movement towards academic and corporate success. Skepticism of unmeasurable evidence for a subjective consciousness along with a threat to their reputation, funding and salaries drives many scientists towards a materialist stance.

The author feels that this materialistic point or view shared by scientists, intellectuals, capitalist and mainstream media has been sold to a receptive public. This widespread expression of materialism and its consumerism accounts for the de-stabilization of society around the world, reflected in income inequality, family disintegration, environmental degradation, health crises, excessive migration, nationalism fueling conflicts and political polarization. At the core of these crises, the author surmises that materialism is like a virus that "When we buy into the idea that this objective world exists separate from ourselves, it necessarily distorts our own self-image and denies our connection with one another and the universe". (p 225 Richheimer) Ian McGilchrist resonates with this conclusion regarding our separation from the world and the primacy of consciousness in his epic treatise *The Matter With Things: Our Brains, Our Delusions and the Unmaking of the World*. He posits, "It is a world in which relationships are ontologically primary, foundational; and 'things' are secondary, emergent property of relationships. It is one where matter is an aspect of consciousness, not consciousness an emanation from matter." (McGilchrist 2021 p 2052) In an essay comparing the two, Jordan (2024) states that "McGilchrist, like P. R. Sarkar, perceives a free will that chooses between embracing a short-sighted and impulsive egoistic left

hemisphere's materialism or the right brain's intuitive and benevolent universalism."

To remedy these societal ills the author recommends the adoption of the universalistic social philosophy of Neohumanism proposed by P. R. Sarkar. Neohumanism reflects the top-down view of reality of spirituality with its oneness of everything and rejection of geo-sentiments and socio-sentiments. Sarkar's answer to the socio-economic problems of capitalism and communism is a Progressive Utilization Theory (PROUT) that "Recognizes the material world is common to all people and seeks the rational and equitable distribution of physical resources to maximize the physical, mental, and spiritual development of humankind." (p 235 Richheimer)

Conclusion

Richheimer encourages us to adopt a rational perspective in considering the gaps in the materialist version of reality as opposed to the holistic nature of the spiritual perspective. He offers that the subjective approach of spirituality in understanding the objective reality, supported by modern quantum physics, places "observations/consciousness of our mind" as an antecedent to what is physically manifest. This is a "top-down view" of reality places consciousness as a precursor to matter in contrast to the bottom-up view of materialism that reality originates from evolving atomic structures, DNA, brain that produces subjective experience.

At a personal level the author encourages us to adopt a practice of selfless service that dissolves the ego and creates a more harmonious society. The highest form of service, he relates, is performing and sharing with others spiritual practices and philosophy of which this book is an example. He contends that the adoption of meditation and spiritual practices will reduce the desire for material things and ultimately lead to self-realization, ending the cycle of birth and death.

Towards the end of the book the author encourages that if we put a fraction of the money spent on military weapons and space exploration into scientific research of mind and consciousness, we could have a new science that established consciousness as the ground substance of creation. He optimistically states that "This change will eventually take place and ...human society will enter a glorious new phase of development marked by harmony, peace, economic prosperity, political unity and spiritual growth." (P 238 Richheimer)

BOOK REVIEW

Awakening to the Crimson Dawn: Journey Through Neohumanism, Grace, and Transformation

Shermon Cruz

IF THERE IS one resounding message in Marcus Bussey's *Neohumanism, Yearning and Becoming*, it is that we stand at a pivotal moment of transformation—a threshold where old worlds are crumbling, and new rhythms of life are calling us forward. Past, present, and future are converging in this moment, forming a crossroads of possibilities. As Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, his spiritual mentor, describes it, we are witnessing a crimson dawn—a time of profound awakening and renewal. This dawn is not merely symbolic; it is a call to radical transformation, a moment that demands courage, devotion, and a willingness to co-create a world rooted in justice, love, and planetary care.

In this spirit, Bussey's book serves as both a guide and an invocation, urging us to step into this moment with clarity and purpose, rekindle a sense of wonder in the world, and infuse our lives with deeper meaning, connection, and love. At its core, the book calls us to radically expand our understanding of what it means to be human—to embrace becoming, to think relationally, and to cultivate learning that does more than sustain; it transforms.

A Collection of Essays on Education and Spirituality

Neohumanism, Yearning and Becoming is not a conventional monograph but a collection of essays exploring the intersections of education, spirituality, and planetary consciousness. Drawing on years of scholarship, teaching, and personal practice, Bussey brings together writings previously published in journals such as the *Journal of Futures Studies*, *Futures*, *Práxis Educativa*, and *The Neohumanist Review*. The book spans decades of thought and experimentation, capturing the evolution of Neohumanist education, the role of critical spirituality, and the necessity of reimagining limits.



Some notable essays in the collection include:

- “Towards a Poetics of Possibility: Critical Spirituality as a Resource for Framing Sustainable Futures” – Exploring the anticipatory dimension of futures thinking and the role of spirituality in shaping sustainable futures.
- “Fatal Logic and the Neohumanist Response” – A critique of modernity’s self-destructive rationality and how Neohumanism provides an alternative path beyond extractivism and ecological collapse.
- “Tantra as Episteme: A Pedagogy of the Future” – Examining how Tantric wisdom can serve as an alternative foundation for educational futures.
- “Navigating the Ruins of the Future” – A meditation on how individuals and societies can reorient themselves amidst the collapse of dominant paradigms.

Each chapter unfolds like an extended meditation, seamlessly moving between personal anecdotes, philosophy, inquiry, reflections, and futures thinking.

Grace as an Active Force: A Disruptive Call to Transformation

One of the most profound themes in Bussey’s work is his redefinition of grace. Unlike conventional interpretations that frame grace as passive or bestowed from above, Bussey sees it as a dynamic, disruptive force that shatters conditioned realities and opens up new ways of knowing. He describes Neohumanism itself as a grace hack, explaining that it “starts out as an idea, but it quickly asserts a phenomenological dimension into our lives.” (Bussey, 2025, p.19).

Grace, he argues, is deeply embodied and relational, inseparable from both the chemistry of our emotions and the conditioning of our experiences:

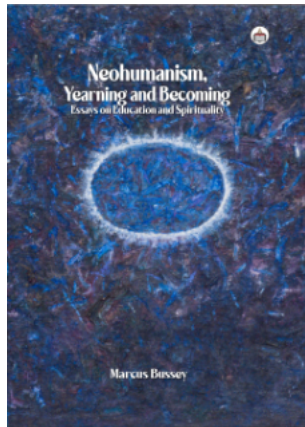
“Grace is deeply chemical—it is all mixed up with hormones and our responses to them. This means grace as a phenomenological category, as an uncanny epistemology, cannot be separated from the body and its sensorial habitus. Culture and all that goes with it is written, encoded into every cell in our body and engraved on the skin.” (Bussey, 2025, p. 21)

Grace, in this sense, is often suppressed by fear, habit, and social conditioning. To break free, we must actively engage in grace hacks—intentional disruptions that allow for new levels of consciousness. Bussey has experimented with these disruptions in his teaching, using dance, movement, storytelling, and the arts to rupture assumptions and create spaces of radical possibility.

Beyond its disruptive nature, grace is also tied to gratitude and relationality. He writes:

“The privilege of thinking is a form of grace in itself. Yet we often take it for granted. Similarly, the sharing of thinking, the co-walking we do as we read others’ words, share in conversations over coffee, or via email or Zoom is also an act of grace.” (Bussey, 2025, p. 20)

Through this lens, Bussey frames the crimson dawn—the pivotal transition moment he describes in the book—as a moment suffused with grace. It is disruptive yet filled with potential, messy yet profoundly reliable. It is in these ruptures, in the willingness to embrace the unfamiliar and step beyond conditioned realities, that we find the possibility of transformation.



*Neohumanism, Yearning and Becoming:
Essays on Education and Spirituality*
Marcus Bussey
AuthorsPress, 2025
Paperback, 212 pages
₹495

A Language of Intimacy: Bussey as Poet, Scholar, and Futurist

What makes this book deeply intimate is its language. Bussey writes not just as a scholar but as a poet and futurist. His prose does not merely inform; it unfolds like a dance, inviting readers to enter spaces of reflection and possibility. His chapters move seamlessly between the personal and the planetary, between analysis and wonder, between critique and devotion.

He does not simply present ideas; he invites us to play with them, to step into a space of not knowing, to surrender to the fluidity of imagination. Reading this book feels like being gently led into a state of expanded awareness, where new insights emerge not as conclusions but as open-ended invitations.

A Book to Be Experienced, Not Just Read

If you are looking for a book that will challenge, inspire, and shift the way you think about education, spirituality, and the future—this is it. *Neohumanism, Yearning and Becoming* is not just a book to be read; it is a book to be experienced.

Neohumanism is a living, breathing practice. The question is: are we ready to become?

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Continued from page 39 ... **Evolutionary History...**

hand does not hesitate to face death willingly, at their command. This is the inner characteristic of human thinking which keeps one's mind and heart always fulfilled. Even those who oppose hero-worship only do it verbally but not from the core of their heart.

In any case, the apes are a group of creatures associated with humans. Like humans, they have herd instinct and unlimited love and devotion for their leader. When the leader becomes old, he or she hands over the leadership to a younger monkey and retires. Whether they are red-faced, dark-faced or small-sized monkeys or baboons, they will have a leader. Since very ancient times, the word *gabayawas* used to describe a monkey leader. In spoken Bengali, we call this *gabaya, viir hanumán*.

There are several hundred species of monkeys. They are diverse in appearance and nature. Some are calm and quiet, gentle and disciplined, and others are very brave. Some have a brown face and colour, others are black, and still others are red in colour. Among the red-faced monkeys, those that are smaller in appearance are called *ulluk* in Sanskrit. They are very intelligent.

According to their degree of advancement on the evolutionary path, monkeys vary in their vocabularies. Some have only two to four hundred words in their language, and others have six to seven hundred words that they use. There is very little difference between the vocabulary size of extremely underdeveloped humans and of highly-developed monkeys. This means that if there is some addition to the vocabulary of developed monkeys, it would come close to the language of underdeveloped humans. Judging by their language, the developed monkeys with tails are more advanced than the tailless monkeys (gorillas, chimpanzees and orangutangs). Overall, of course, orangutangs have more advanced intelligence.

In physical strength none can compare with the gorillas. Among these apes, those with tails, which are more powerful – those dark-faced monkeys – are called *hanumán* in spoken Bengali, and in northern India languor. They have great physical strength. Male apes are called *viir hanuman* in colloquial language.

Source: Excerpts from Birds and Animals-Our Neighbours, Shrii P R Sarkar, pp. 20, 225.

Continued from page 15 ... **Obsessive Clinging (*abhinivesha*)...**

disorder. In the remainder of the discourse, Sarkar explains the five forms of mental functioning (*vr̥tti*)²⁴ (§14–22) and the remaining technical terms from YS 1.24 (*karman*, *vipāka*, and *āshaya*) (§23–29); after this he completes his explanation of the meaning of *liśhvara* (§30).

The third discourse listed above contributes additional points of interest.²⁵ First, its examples of *abhinivesha* differ from those of the alcoholic and the habitually abusive teacher, and suggest a more general principle: *abhinivesha* is the psychic tendency that prevents a person from adhering to moral principles that they both comprehend and accept. Sarkar illustrates this with the example of an erudite traditional scholar—the *vidvas* of *Yogasūtra* 2.9—who does not practice his own instructions, and “whose mind begins to race towards hell” as soon as he puts away the scriptures.²⁶ He then gives the example of a person who acknowledges the sinful nature of bribery but nonetheless accepts bribes. The third example is of a person who expresses interest in joining the Ānanda Mārga, but only after getting his daughter married (thus avoiding Sarkar’s prohibitions on caste-based marriage and dowry for his disciples). These examples suggest a concept much broader than “addiction:” *abhinivesha* represents behaviors one clings to habitually despite knowing better. A second point of interest in this

discourse is its more detailed exegesis of the concept of *svārāsa*. I translate this here, leaving untranslated the difficult term *rasa* (juice or essence, but also liquid, elixir, flavor, savor, delight, etc.; more freely, “flow”):

Human beings flow in the current of their own *rasa*. That ocean of human ideation, what is it? It consists of *rasa*; it is fluid, which means that one can make whatever kind of wave is desired flow in the mind. The mind is like a fluid substance. You can create whatever kind of wave you desire. So what is this? *Svārāsa* [means] one’s own *rasa*, while the *rasa* of supreme consciousness (Paramātmā) is expressed in the entire universe. What is the individual flow of *rasa* for a human being? It is the self-centered *rasa* in one’s own mind, that is, it is the flow of *rasa* of the little ‘I’, [expressing as] “I will do this and that.” The expansive flow of *rasa* of Supreme Consciousness (Paramātmā) is exactly like this too. What is this *rasa*? Universe-centered, which means [expressing as] “I will do this or that for the entire universe.” For this reason it is said concerning the Supreme Consciousness, “Truly, He is *rasa*” (*raso vai saḥ*) [*Taettiriya Upaniśad* 2.7.1]. Who is He? He is the ocean of *rasa*. One who tastes this ocean of *rasa*, the ocean of Brahma (cosmic consciousness) or *rasa* of Brahma, is called a *rasika* [“one who savours”]. This is the scriptural explanation of the word *rasika*: one who tastes the ocean of Brahma’s *rasa*. (p. 94)

The discourse continues by quoting *Yogasūtra* 2.9 on *abhinivesha*, providing as examples the erudite but degenerate scholar, bribery, and thievery. To overcome such obsessive clinging, a spiritual aspirant (*sādhaka*) “must merge their *svārāsa* with the ocean of the *rasa* of Brahma” (p. 96)

Sarkar also engages with the concept of *svārāsa* beyond his exegesis of *abhinivesha*. Note for example the following, from a Bangla-language discourse published in 1969:

²⁴ Students of Sarkar’s thought are likely more familiar with his use of the term *vr̥tti* to mean “psychic propensity,” referring to the fifty *vr̥ttis* associated with the cakras of yoga. He appears on one occasion to reconcile these two different usages by referring to the *vr̥ttis* of Patanjali’s philosophy as “the five main propensities; all other propensities are dependent on these” (“Yoga and Bhakti,” in *Subhāṣita Saṁgraha Part 18*, §13). In the same paragraph he refers to propensities other than the five as “subsidiary.” How these concepts might cohere remains unstated, and Sarkar elsewhere refers to the “main propensities” as fifty in number; see for instance “The Three Species of Human Being” (18 August 1979, Taipei, English).

²⁵ This Hindi-language discourse, perhaps of 1969, was published in *Ananda Vacanāmṛta Part 27* (1996), which consists of various discourses recovered from audio tapes and periodicals; see the Publishers Note.

²⁶ p. 96: “So when he is apart from the scriptures even momentarily, his mind begins to race towards hell” (my translation).

If we call this endless, playful rhythm of the macrocosmic vital force (*mahāprāṇa*) *parama-rasa* [the supreme or macrocosmic flow], then we will call the individual rhythm (*chanda*) of the unit being *svarasa*. The true significance of spiritual practice (*sādhana*) is to merge the *svarasa* into the *parama-rasa*.²⁷

This idea of *svarasa* as the “individual rhythm” of a person, formed by *saṁskāra*, allows us to make a crucial connection. In several discourses Sarkar uses an English-language expression that appears intended in the same sense as *svarasa*: “entitative rhythm” or “entitative flow,” where “entitative” apparently corresponds to the reflexive pronoun *sva* (“one’s own,” i.e. individual) and “rhythm” or “flow” to *rasa*.²⁸ This equivalence was in fact noted previously: the translator of another Hindi-language discourse of 1969, “*Svābhāvika Dharma* and *Bhāgavata Dharma*,”²⁹ glossed *svarasa* and *parama-rasa* as “entitative rhythm” and “Macrocosmic rhythm” in a passage³⁰ similar to the discussion of *svarasa* and the *rasa* of Brahma quoted above. We thus arrive at a translation of *Yogasūtra* 2.9 that reflects Sarkar’s interpretation and uses his distinctive technical jargon:

Svarasavāhū viduṣo ’pi tathā rūḍho ’bhiniveshaḥ (Yogasūtra 2.9). “Obsessive clinging (*abhinivesha*) has the entitative flow (*svarasa*) [of an individual’s reactive momenta (*saṁskāra*)] as its impetus and is established even in a learned person, just as [in others].”

²⁷ “*Jaevīsattā o Vishvaprāṇa*,” in *Tattva Kaomudī Part 2*.

²⁸ For “entitative flow,” see especially “The Spirit of Yoga” (Ernakulam, 1979) and “Man and His Ideological Flow” (Tapei, 1979), both published in *Subhāsita Saṁgraha Part 12*. For “entitative rhythm,” see for instance “One Will Have to Know Oneself” (Ernakulam, 1965).

²⁹ See the Publisher’s Note in *Ananda Vacanāmṛtam Part 33*.

³⁰ To quote in full: “*Rasa* means ‘flow’. Human existence is a flow, or *rasa*; of the two ends of human existence, at one end there is *Paramātman*, or *parama-rasa*, [the] Macrocosmic flow; at the other there is *viśaya-rasa*, or the flow of the crude world. Now, human existence is *svarasa*. In Tantra there is a type of *sādhana*, that is, *rasa-sādhana*. The object of *rasa-sādhana* is to merge the *svarasa* (entitative rhythm) into *parama-rasa* (Macrocosmic rhythm). The conception of *rāsaliḷā* has been derived from the idea of *Puruṣottama* encircled by innumerable devotees (*svarasas*); each and every *svarasa* tries to become one with *parama-rasa* (*Parama Puruṣa* [or *Puruṣottama*]). This is what is known as *rāsaliḷā*.”

The second discourse listed above, “Cognitive Force and Psychic Practice” (1959), adds little concerning *abhinivesha* but is illuminating for other reasons, discussed below.

Yoga psychology, *abhinivesha*, and the philosophy of addiction

As a starting point for examining the implications of Shri Sarkar’s *abhinivesha*, it seems necessary first to address the nature of his departure from the *Bhāṣya* and other premodern *Yogasūtra* commentaries. Did he privilege a particular commentarial or sectarian reading of Patanjali? To what extent was Sarkar even familiar with the *Bhāṣya*? What kind of intervention in the Yoga Darshana does his reinterpretation of *abhinivesha* represent?

It is generally unclear which sources Sarkar had in mind when discussing any given philosophical system. In this regard, the discourse “Cognitive Force and Psychic Practice” (Citishakti O Mānasa Sādhana, 1959) stands out for its focused exposition of Patanjali’s *sūtras*, as well as elaborations upon ideas derived from the *Bhāṣya*. The first section (§1–13) is devoted to defining *citishakti*, the “cognitive faculty” or “power of cognition,” a term for *puruṣa*, consciousness. This is essentially a commentary on the *Bhāṣya* to YS 1.2, whose enumeration of five qualities of *citishakti* Sarkar expands upon. Afterwards (§14–17) he segues to *vivekakhyaṭi*, the Sāṁkhya/Yoga concept of liberating insight. Next (§18–25) he explains that the mind experiences five states (from *kṣipta*, extremely perturbed, to *nirodha*, suspended), depending on its degree of concentration, a teaching that appears to be based on the *Bhāṣya* to YS 1.1, which refers to these as “stages” or “levels” of mind (*cittabhūmi*).³¹ Then is addressed *samprajñāta*- or *savikalpa-samādhi* (§26–31), followed by discussion of the five forms of mental function (*vṛtti*) in Patanjali’s Yoga (§32–45), and a return to the subject of *samādhi* and *citishakti* (§46–48). It is in the context of the third *vṛtti*, *viparyaya* (“defective cognition” or “false knowledge about an unreal object,” §37), that Sarkar briefly mentions the *kleshas*; he describes these as five forms of ignorance (*avidyā*) that *viparyaya* produces (§36–39). This seems to pick up on the *Bhāṣya* on YS 1.8, which refers to the *kleshas* as five divisions of *avidyā*, and the *Bhāṣya*

³¹ Sarkar treats this topic elsewhere as well, e.g. in “Yoga and Bhakti,” in *Subhāsita Saṁgraha Part 18* (1965).

to YS 2.3, which refers to the *kleshas* as five *viparyayas*. Sarkar (§38) also identifies the *kleshas* as synonyms of the Sāṃkhya categories of darkness, delusion, great delusion, dark of the night, and blinding darkness (*tamah, moha, mahāmoha, tāmisa, and andhatāmisa*),³² again an idea mentioned in the *Bhāṣya* on YS 1.8. The source ideas and technical terminology of this discourse are entirely those of Patanjali's Yoga, and Sarkar unambiguously picks up on themes from the *Bhāṣya*. Hence, where Sarkar differs from the *Bhāṣya* it is not for lack of familiarity: such departures appear purposeful.

Despite close engagement with the *Yogasūtra*, Sarkar never positions his philosophical writings as a contribution to the Yoga Darshana. Although I suggest that we may approach him as a philosopher of yoga, he does not claim Patanjali's *sūtras* as authoritative scripture, and in fact wrote his own Sanskrit *sūtra* text—the *Anandasūtram*—with a brief Bengali autocommentary that encapsulates his philosophical views. What, then, are we to make of his engagement with Patanjali's philosophy and his intervention on the subject of the *kleshas*, especially *abhinivesha*? One possibility is that Sarkar considered himself to be restoring the correct meaning to *abhinivesha*; that is, his remarks on the subject could be viewed as intervening to restore Patanjali's own intended meaning (with which he concurs). We cannot be certain, but there are reasons to believe that he considered the author of the *Bhāṣya* to be distinct from Patanjali. First, this has been the traditional view for many centuries and remains the dominant and default view in India. Second, it is reported that while dictating his autocommentary on the *Anandasūtram*, Sarkar justified its necessity by citing the example of Patanjali, whose *sūtras* came to be misinterpreted, he alleged, due to the lack of such an autocommentary.³³ Sarkar would hardly be the only modern author to disagree with the *Bhāṣya* and to propose a different interpretation: I have already mentioned several.³⁴ Moreover, this is not the only case where Sarkar's interpretation differs. To cite another, Sarkar's interpretation of the word *āshaya* in YS 1.24 overtly (but silently) contradicts the *Bhāṣya*.³⁵

³² See for instance *Sāṃkhyakārikā* 47–48 and the *Tuktidīpikā* thereon.

³³ This is reported by Acosta (2010 and personal communication), whose main sources were interviews with early disciples of Sarkar, such as Sushil Dhar.

³⁴ See n. 10 above.

³⁵ In brief, the *Bhāṣya* interprets *āshaya* as *vāsanā*, i.e.

To overcome obsessive clinging, the entitative flow (svarasa) of the microcosm must be made to converge with the flow of Brahma, the Macrocosmic ocean. An individual must cease to be impelled by his or her own flow.

”

Might Sarkar be correct, historically, in his re-interpretation of *abhinivesha*? This is not a question we can answer categorically. Scant evidence exists for early interpretations of the *Yogasūtra* that do not follow the *Bhāṣya*. One example is the medieval Javanese Dharma Pātañjala (Teachings of Patanjali), which seems to preserve a non-*Bhāṣya* tradition of interpretation, and understands *abhinivesha* along the lines of “obsession” (Acri 2012: 506–7). Al-Biruni, the famous Muslim scholar present in India in the eleventh century, translates *abhinivesha* into Arabic as *‘allāyaq*, “attachment, devotion” (Verdon 2024: 251); his sources for Pātañjala Yoga are unclear. In any case, as mentioned, the *Bhāṣya*'s understanding of *abhinivesha* as “clinging to life” is idiosyncratic, and a plain reading of YS 2.9 in its historical context would instead suggest understanding *abhinivesha* as some kind of deeply-rooted attachment—a powerful and pernicious negative tendency, like the other four *kleshas*, namely ignorance (*avidyā*), egotism (*asmitā*), passion or attachment (*rāga*), and hatred (*dveṣa*). Bridging this interpretation with that of the *Bhāṣya* is Vācaspatimishra, who in his tenth-century commentary on *Sāṃkhyakārikā* interprets *andhatāmisa* (blinding darkness) or *abhinivesha* as fear of eighteen kinds, which he explains as the fear of loss of various objects of the senses and their means of obtainment—thus a kind of obsessive clinging.

“karmic trace” (*tadanuguṇā vāsanā āśayāḥ*), but in Sarkar's interpretation of YS 1.24 it means *ādhāra*, “receptacle”: “*Ashaya* means ‘containing entity’. Each and every expression of this universe of ours, each and every entity of this universe requires some *ādhāra*[,] i.e. container[,] where to remain” (“Cardinal Attributions of God,” §125, in *Ananda Vacanāmrtam Part 2*).

While Sarkar's interpretation is hence plausible in general terms, it is difficult to corroborate.

In their context, Sarkar's discussions of *abhinivesha* do not suggest an agenda to restore a historically "correct" meaning of *abhinivesha*, nor do they suggest a strictly exegetical agenda. That is to say, Sarkar advances neither an historical nor philological argument explicitly, nor does he position himself as an exponent of the Yoga Darshana contributing to traditional exegesis. While he frequently cites the *Yogasūtra* approvingly, this should not be mistaken for its acceptance as infallible scripture; on occasion Sarkar objects strenuously to Patanjali's positions, particularly on the nature of God.³⁶ One could say that he engages with the *Yogasūtra* in a constructive manner as a philosopher and spiritual teacher, drawing on its rich resources in giving voice to his own views, possibly for pedagogical purposes. In other words, Sarkar's purpose in reinterpreting *abhinivesha* is philosophical: to offer a metaphysical explanation of certain kinds of obsessive, compulsive or addictive behavior based in the philosophy of yoga. Perhaps he observed this to be a lacuna in the Yoga Darshana: "addiction" is such a distinctive, widespread and pernicious phenomenon that failure to address it in a theory of the mind and spiritual liberation would be a profound oversight.

In Sarkar's interpretation, the *kleshas* represent five stages of *avidyā*, beginning with ignorance (defined as regarding the transitory as permanent) and culminating with *abhinivesha*, the most malign form of *avidyā*. The third *klesha* is *rāga*, "attachment" or "passion," which the *Bhāṣya* explains as "desire, craving or greed for pleasure, or for the means of its attainment, ... based on the recollection of pleasure."³⁷ Sarkar's explanation instead places

³⁶ See for example "Shiva in the Light of Philosophy (Discourse 17)," §18–22, in *Namah Shivāya Shāntāya*. For a more subtle example of Sarkar's critical engagement with the *Yogasūtra*, see his definition of sleep (*nidrā*) in the commentary on *Anandasūtram* 1.24, which may be read as a critique of *Yogasūtra* 1.10.

³⁷ *Yogasūtra* 2.7: *sukhānushayī rāgaḥ* ("Passion is a consequence of pleasure"). The *Bhāṣya* explains: *sukhābhijñāsyā sukhānasmrtipūrvah sukhe tatsādhane vā yo gardhas tśhā lobhah sa rāga iti* ("Passion means desire, craving or greed for pleasure, or for the means of its attainment, for a person who has had experience of pleasure, based on recollection of [this] pleasure").

emphasis on external influences, rather than recollection, in encouraging unhealthy sensory attachments:

What is *rāga*? Due to the influence of certain external influences such as books or bad company or any kind of bad association, when one feels weakness for a certain object or moves towards that object without being guided by any reason, without any reason or rational support, the *avidyā* that causes such stage of mind is called *rāga*. ("Cardinal Attributions of God," §10)

The fifth *klesha*, *abhinivesha*, thus represents an intensification of *rāga* extending beyond "weakness for a certain object" or the longing for pleasure. At this stage, desire progresses to the point of fixation or obsession. With *rāga*, external influences play a critical role, while with *abhinivesha* the impetus becomes internal. Far from simply lacking rational support, desire becomes so deeply rooted—*rūḍha*—that even clear understanding of the unethical and injurious nature of the behavior involved fails to check one's action. It has become integral to a person's *svārāsa*, their entitative rhythm or flow formed by conditioning (*saṁskāra*). According to yoga metaphysics, such conditioning may belong to this life or another: the traumas, choices and experiences of a person's current life may not adequately explain all cases of *abhinivesha*.

How, then, are such deeply rooted dispositions to be addressed? Sarkar prescribes a rich array of spiritual, ethical, and physical practices for his disciples. His book on yogic therapy and natural medicine also offers treatment plans for a variety of diseases, combining herbal medicines, yoga postures, diet, naturopathic treatment and so forth.³⁸ It is thus notable that Sarkar's discussions of *abhinivesha* and the concept of *svārāsa* converge upon a single lofty remedy: to overcome obsessive clinging, the entitative flow (*svārāsa*) of the microcosm must be made to converge with the flow (*rāsa*) of Brahma, the macrocosmic ocean (*brahma-samudra*). An individual must cease to be impelled by *svārāsa*. Here the theistic, Vaeśṇava-inflected devotional orientation of Sarkar's yoga come to the fore:³⁹

³⁸ *Yogika Cikitsā o Dravyaguṇa* (1958), published in English as *Yogic Treatments and Natural Remedies*.

³⁹ The passage is here re-translated from the Bangla original (pp. 23–26), but retains the paragraph numbering

To progress towards the stance (*bhāva*) of the supreme consciousness, one will have to plunge into the ocean of the macrocosmic flow (*brahma-rasa*) and move in its current. In the path of this movement the microcosm (*jīva*) will experience the sweetness of the supreme entity's divine play. Relinquishing one's sense of doership to him as the agent, undulating in his vibration, in the rhythmic sway of his flow, one must become immersed in that supreme *rāsaliilā* [play of *rasa*]⁴⁰... Just as the entitative flow of the individual leads one into the grip of *avidyā*, the supreme flow leads one towards the vast, the boundless. This supreme flow itself is Brahma, the embodiment of *rasa*. (§36–37) ...

The more a human being guides its entire existence towards the supreme entity as the agent of action and witnessing entity, the more it comprehends the expression of its flow. The more one rushes towards the macrocosmic stance, the divine effulgence, the more one's entire being becomes radiant and the more the darkness of *avidyā* is kept at bay (*sarate thāke*). Consequently, if one is to dispel the power of *avidyā* one certainly must take shelter in the supreme consciousness. (§40) ...

In the past, the entitative flow of the macrocosm (*brahma-rasa*) found expression through Caetanya Mahāprabhu. Ordinary people would madly chase after him, dancing, singing, crying and laughing. This macrocosmic flow was also expressed through the medium of Shrii Kṛṣṇa by the sound of his flute. Hearing its melody, people would rush forth madly, abandoning status, decorum and vanity. Forgetting the protective confines of their homes, the *gopīs* [of Vṛndāvana] danced, sang and laughed to that rhythmic sound. (§45) In Ananda Mārga this rhythmic flow (*rasa-taraṅga*) of Brahma is embedded in the very processes of spiritual

practice. Thus, whether in the present or future, in the course of time or beyond time, if one practices this *sādhana* continuously with sincerity, they too will sing and dance, will laugh and cry, and in this manner steadily advance towards the supreme stance of the blissful cosmic entity. (§46) ... Life's fulfillment lies in moving in the current of the supreme flow. The path by which this movement takes place is called the Ananda Mārga, the path of bliss. (§47) ("The Macrocosmic Stance and Human Life," 1958)

The power of *abhinivesha* is such that overcoming it requires a total loss of self-impetus, self-will—a complete surrender of self (*prapatti*) into the blissful flow of Brahma, the supreme consciousness (*parama-puruṣa*).

Once elsewhere, in "Incantation and Human Progress" (1979), reviewed above, Sarkar instead emphasizes the power of tantric mantra-meditation, silent repetition of an empowered (*siddha*), duly-imparted personal mantra (*īṣṭa mantra*), for attaining the "awakening of mantra" (*mantra-caetanya*) and breaking free from the shackles of *abhinivesha* (§20–31).

On this basis one might think that, for those unwilling or unable to take up intensive spiritual practice, Sarkar offers little of value for the treatment of addiction. However, Sarkar's discussions of addiction are not confined to his explanations of *abhinivesha*. A more complex picture emerges when considering his remarks on substance abuse, intoxication, sensory attachment, mental illness and many other topics that we cannot fully consider here. Those interested in developing or enhancing addiction treatment protocols based on Sarkar's yoga in fact have substantial resources to experiment with. It seems abundantly clear, however, that Sarkar regarded intensive spiritual practice (with the many lifestyle changes this may entail) and surrender of will to the divine as the most effective means of overcoming addiction.

Oral histories offer fascinating insight into how Sarkar addressed addiction. Many of the collected stories of early disciples feature tales of overcoming vice, especially smoking, drinking, meat-eating, and

of the English edition (EE9).

⁴⁰ In Vaeṣṇava tradition, *rāsaliilā* refers to the nocturnal dance of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana, a theme prominent since the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (book 10). Cf. footnote 30.

corruption, and in a few cases serious alcoholism.⁴¹ A common thread in these tales of recovery is the total reorientation of an individual's life under the guidance of the guru and the practice of *sādhana*. Sarkar's own spiritual charisma looms large in these stories: in addition to teaching yogic practices, he would alternately charm, admonish, and sometimes miraculously cure his ailing disciples. He placed much emphasis on diet, regularity in spiritual practice, maintaining good company, and strict avoidance of negative influences. Commenting about a certain Jitendra Tyagi, following his recovery from near-fatal alcoholism under Sarkar's guidance, he reportedly commented, "Such addictions are due to the effect of *tamoguṇa*, the crude force. In order to counter it, all that is needed is to increase the sentient influence upon the person. Unless one is strict in *sādhana* and remains in a sentient environment, it is difficult to overcome such kinds of addiction" (Pravanatmakanda 2019: 302).

I turn briefly now, in closing, to the question of what Shri Sarkar's concept of *abhinivesha* might contribute to the philosophy of addiction. While biomedical discourse provides addiction the semblance of universal, scientific truth, the concept is in fact modern and in many respects culturally specific. As James McHugh (2021: 9) observes, "the language and ideas we often use to talk about, demarcate, and understand this complex phenomenon very much belong to a certain time and place, and shape our thinking and ability to act in certain ways." To speak of addiction means to invoke "a constellation of modern, mostly Western ideas about free will, ethics, neuroscience, pathology, and political rhetoric" (ibid., p. 9). At the same time, phenomena such as substance-dependency obviously have universal dimensions and invite comparative, cross-cultural inquiry, grounded in the examination of particular philosophical traditions. Yet the study of addiction in non-Western systems of thought, and Indian philosophy in particular, seems not to have progressed very far yet. Notably, for example, the topic is not addressed in state-of-the-art reference books such as *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Philosophy*

(Ganeri 2017) and *Routledge Handbook of Yoga and Meditation Studies* (Newcombe & O'Brien-Kop 2021).

It is possible that this gap stems from the absence of a single category of premodern Indian thought that maps well to "addiction." Take for example the category of "human vices" (*puruṣavyasanas*) outlined in the *Arthashastra* (VIII, 3) and other early literature. Four of these are regarded as "arising from desire" (*kāma*) and map well to broad definitions of "addiction": the vices of hunting, gambling, [sex with] women, and alcohol. Other vices "arise from anger"; these comprise of abusing others verbally, causing injury to property, and physical assault, which do not correlate to "addiction" but could in some circumstances be considered compulsive behaviors (cf. Sarkar's example of the abusive teacher). At the same time, the problem of sensory and other forms of attachment is central to Indian philosophy, which offers uniquely rich resources for thinking about desire, dependence, compulsion, intoxication, substance abuse, self-destructive behavior and other aspects of the cluster of ideas cohering around "addiction." The idea that "craving" (*trṣṇā*) is the source of human suffering (*duḥkha*) is at the heart of Buddhist philosophy, for instance, and Buddhist psychology offers tremendous insight into addiction and its amelioration (Kang 2010). More detailed studies are required of the kind now being produced in other fields of philosophy, e.g. ancient Greek (Paszowski 2022).

As for Sarkar's reading of *abhinivesha*, this brings us close to an idea cognate to addiction while nonetheless grouping together a wider range of psychological and behavioral phenomena. Through *abhinivesha*, Sarkar postulates a shared basis for obsessive-compulsive behaviors and sense-based addictions rooted in the metaphysics and technical terminology of the Yoga Darshana, but without being bound by traditional interpretations. This perspective on addiction stands out for its formulation within sophisticated non-Western categories of thought and the possibilities it holds out for liberation from one of the most wrenching of human conditions. How this perspective might advance cross-cultural understanding of addiction as well as its treatment stands out as a promising area for further inquiry.

⁴¹ For accounts of various early disciples' experiences with Sarkar based on collected oral histories, see Acosta (2010) and Pranavatmakanda (2019, especially pp. 295–307 and 335–50).

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Continued from page 23 ... Devotion and Awe

CRH activation of ACTH. This was the first time that a CRH increase had been observed in an activity that was not overtly physically stressful, implying that the mental activity of yogic concentrative meditation promoted the CRH release and HPA axis activation.

The hypothalamic neurons which release CRH into the portal system to trigger ACTH release also contain VP. CRH typically has the primary releasing effect, but during acute psychosocial stress VP amplifies the release of ACTH (Mavani et al., 2015). During chronic stress, the HPA axis regulation switches from CRH to VP. This has been interpreted as VP having a primary role in the HPA axis adaptation to long-term stress (Rotondo et al., 2016). Thus, the hormones of the two lobes of the pituitary do not function entirely independently. This demonstrates another form of complexity in hormonal control systems, plus the importance of managing stress and physiological balance, or tranquility and homeostasis.

The HPA axis is generally activated when internal or external (environmental) conditions



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Meditation, Asana



Kirtan and Kaoshikii



deviate from the norm or what is expected, resulting in increased circulating glucocorticoid levels (primarily cortisol in humans). Research indicates that it is critical to maintain an appropriate balance of HPA axis activity, as both insufficient and excessive cortisol signaling (reflecting a potential *vr̥tti* of the *maṇipura cakra*, third *cakra*) may contribute to various disorders including anxiety and trauma-related behaviors, depression, overeating and obesity arising from daily life stressors, as well as promoting or disturbing some types of memory and learning depending on the degree of change (Packard et al., 2016). This variability in hormone activity is consistent with how *vr̥ttis* are generally thought to fluctuate (Avdk. Ananda Nivedita, 1999).

Analogous complex interactions occur between the hypothalamic-pituitary-thyroid (HPT) axis activity and other hormone systems, including growth hormone, estrogen, testosterone, and cortisol (Feldt-Rasmussen et al., 2021). Proper thyroid function is critical for normal brain development and normal sexual function (Carosa et al., 2018), cognitive function (Rovet, 2014) and avoidance of mood disorders (Ittermann et al., 2015).

Androgen receptors play a crucial role in modulating aggression by mediating the effects of androgen hormones, such as testosterone. Androgen receptors are expressed in various regions of the brain, including the amygdala, hypothalamus, prefrontal cortex, and striatum, which modulate offensive and defensive forms of aggression, plus the motivational and rewarding aspects of aggression and stress-induced aggression. Ultimately, the hypothalamus, specifically the ventromedial hypothalamus (VMH), acts as a central hub that integrates sensory information and hormonal signals to coordinate aggressive responses (Mbiydenyuy & Qulu, 2024).

Men generally maintain a high estrogen activity in their brain because testosterone is converted to estradiol (a type of estrogen) in the brain. It may surprise some that estradiol present in the brain near birth is the primary determinant of sex differences (Höfer et al., 2013; Konkle & McCarthy, 2011). The normal estrogen fluctuations experienced by women result in times of low estradiol that are most prominent during menopause. This can alter emotional reactivity and the cognitive processing of negative information, especially in women with emotional vulnerabilities. Women have been found to be more quickly responsive to emotional information and to have stronger memory of

emotional information than men, particularly during periods of low estradiol. This has been associated with more strongly activated limbic processing in contrast to frontal cortical processing (Albert & Newhouse, 2019).

As a whole, the anterior pituitary's hormonal systems are related to managing physical functions and interactions with the external environment. This makes them good candidates to represent the *leftistic* propensity of *aparā*.

Vr̥tti Hormones

The internally oriented elevating *rightistic* qualities of *parā* are considered best represented by the function of the entire posterior pituitary with its complex OT/VP system. OT has historically been associated with many forms of bonding, typically mundane forms of social bonding, and has been shown to increase spiritual sentiments when administered intranasally prior to meditation (Van Cappellen et al., 2016). VP has been identified as a key regulator of social cognition, social behavior, stress and emotion in addition to other more physical functions (Rotondo et al., 2016), complementing the “*rightistic*” elevating qualities historically associated with OT's loving bonding. In a spiritual context, fully expressed devotion, or *kevala bhakti* and *ragatmika bhakti*, arises from a relationship of overwhelming love of the Divine (Ānandamūrti, 1988a). Such devotional bonding could lead to a total surrender of one's self-awareness/existential independence, and to an immersion into a state of unlimited consciousness. VP's regulation of chronic stress in the anterior pituitary demonstrates a role on both sides of the pituitary which may facilitate a full activation of *ājñā cakra*.

Externally oriented “*leftistic*” degenerating and depraving qualities have been associated with *aparā*, which would best be represented by anterior pituitary activity. Achieving tranquility and homeostasis within just one anterior pituitary hormone system would be unlikely given the anterior pituitary's complexly interactive hormones. If the multiple primarily physically oriented hormonal systems of the anterior pituitary are collectively able to achieve tranquility and homeostasis, that could allow *awe's* deeper qualities to be achieved, fully expressing the best of *aparā*. If there is activation of endorphins associated with ACTH and/or enkephalins associated with growth hormone, that expanded engagement could yield an ecstatic state, fostering a deep empathic embrace of

the surrounding environment. However, affective systems other than those hormones could also be involved in producing that state.

Imbalances in any of these hormonal systems can have significant and complex effects on affective and cognitive functioning, as well as meditation practices. Several yogic practices offer a natural approach to maintain the balance of hormonal secretions. The most direct is through practicing yoga postures. “If there is any defect in the secretion of hormones or any defect in a gland, certain vrttis become excited. For this reason, we find that in spite of having a sincere desire to follow the moral code, many persons cannot do so; they understand that they should do meditation, but they cannot concentrate their minds because their minds become extroverted due to the external excitement of this or that propensity. If people want to control the excitement of these propensities, they must rectify the defects of their glands. Asanas [yoga postural exercises] help the sādhaṅka [meditator] to a large extent in this task, so they are an important part of sādhanā [meditation] (Ānandamūrti, 2010, p. 113).” Additionally, dietary and behavioral restraint can assist in maintaining proper glandular balance.

Conclusions

It has been shown that the term “mental propensity” (vrtti) describes well the broad motivational nature of emotion. The association of the parā vrtti with devotion was essentially predetermined by Shrii Sarkar’s extensive discussion of that relationship. Based on the work of Maslow, and Keltner and colleagues, the qualities of awe have been found to represent well the nature of aparā vrtti characteristics. The most salient interpretation of the hormonal basis of these ājīṇā cakra vrttis is that hormones collectively associated with each lobe of the pituitary are associated with one of the vrttis, parā with the posterior pituitary and aparā with the anterior pituitary. Given the potential for interactions among the various pituitary hormone systems, to conclude that only one hormone represented each vrtti would be overly simplistic.

Pituitary hormonal activity can not only modulate multiple other glands besides the target glands and physiological systems, it can also be associated with modulation of autonomic activity, a huge topic that can only briefly be addressed. Both OT and VP axons going to the posterior pituitary can influence autonomic systems via branches to brain stem and spinal locations (Lozić et al., 2018;

Tsai & Kuo, 2024). It is possible that related sympathetic activation could help develop the full devotional intensity of parā vrtti. This is suggested by research demonstrating sympathetic activation occurring within concentrative forms of meditation, including Ananda Marga meditation (i.e., Corby et al., 1978; Harte et al., 1995; Kozhevnikov, 2019). Similarly, at a minimum, the HPA axis activity associated with the anterior pituitary has extensive connection with autonomic activity and may help establish critical cortisol balance (Packard et al., 2016). When the whole of anterior pituitary activity is in a balanced state, an expansive tranquility and homeostasis could allow the awe of aparā vrtti to be expressed. Increased parasympathetic activity found often in meditation studies, including Ananda Marga meditation, could complement the hormonal process (i.e., Benson et al., 1974; Elson et al., 1977; Katyal & Goldin, 2021; Oman, 2019).

It has been noted that both sides of the pituitary need to be fully developed and fully utilized (Sarkar, 1994a). This supports the idea that a simultaneous combination of increased sympathetic activity for parā and increased parasympathetic activity for aparā might support optimal hormonal states. Such autonomic coactivation has been postulated as necessary for achieving peak “altered states of consciousness” (Newberg & Yaden, 2018). A study of Ananda Marga meditation experiences included a description of elevated experiences that were consistent with autonomic coactivation (Maxwell & Katyal, 2022).

Research can more easily measure and characterize autonomic and central nervous system activity compared to recording hormonal levels of a complex mix of hormonal systems. As a result, meditation research has emphasized effects on physiological measures including autonomic parameters, and largely neglected consideration of underlying hormone states.

The current analysis has highlighted the important role of hormonal systems for spiritual development, beginning a process of establishing greater recognition of the spiritual importance of hormonal system activity. These conclusions will remain speculative until a convenient means of simultaneously testing multiple hormonal systems is developed, but they begin a process of extending Shrii Sarkar’s biopsychological insights and foster increased understanding of the biological basis of the peak propensities.

The article with its complete references is available at the journal web pages theneohumanist.com. The author may be reached at rwmaxw@gmail.com



Tao and Tantra

Taraka Ghista, May 2025

Regarding your article on Tantra and I-Ching (Tao and Tantra; A New Translation and Interpretation of I-Jing, *Neohumanist Review* 4, March 2025), I would like to draw your attention to Acarya Bhaskarananda's chapter on Shavisim in Chinese Civilization from his book *Social Dynamics and Social Movements* (Psychospiritual Research Foundation, Anandanagar, WB, India, 2001), where he compares how Chinese character symbols (pictorial letters) relate to Shiva.

In his book, Acarya Bhaskarananda writes: "To truly comprehend the I Ching and other classics, there is a need for understanding the related terms in a new light. As Huang Ti's period was the golden age of Chinese spiritual civilization, every Chinese would proudly call themselves his descendants. But the totalitarian regime of today has destroyed even the urge to probe their past glory. The celebrated Chinese philosopher and historian Thome 'H Fang holds the view that, because of the past spiritual heritage, the four major traditions of Confucianism, Taoism, Chinese Mahayana Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism have many common views."

Concerning the I-Ching, Shrii Shrii Anandamurti and others have discussed the 64 expressed forms of Shakti as foundational to the 64 Tantras. Various scholars have connected the 64 I-Ching pictograms to kundalini; please see youtube.com/watch?v=3wi0ECB2W5M.

The Tao symbol is essentially the Indian vowel ending called Visarga (ah)—two dots stacked on top of each other. The Taoist symbol represents the two basic flows of human existence—introversive and extroversive. This symbol is associated with the six-pointed star, the Tantric Bhaeravii Cakra. Larry Dossey's book *Space, Time and Medicine* features a painting that combines the six-pointed star and the Taoist symbol (amazon.in/Space-Time-Medicine-Larry-Dossey/dp/0394710916).

A key observation is that traditional Chinese commentary on these symbols tends to be mundane, focusing on controlling the world and managing the kingdom—a royal mentality. The I-Ching appears to seek understanding of change to control, co-opt, and subdue worldly forces. In terms of spiritual philosophy, it would be categorized as avidyá sádhaná. Similarly, each of the 64 Tantras can be interpreted and practiced in subtle ways, leading to spiritual emancipation through vidyá sádhaná.

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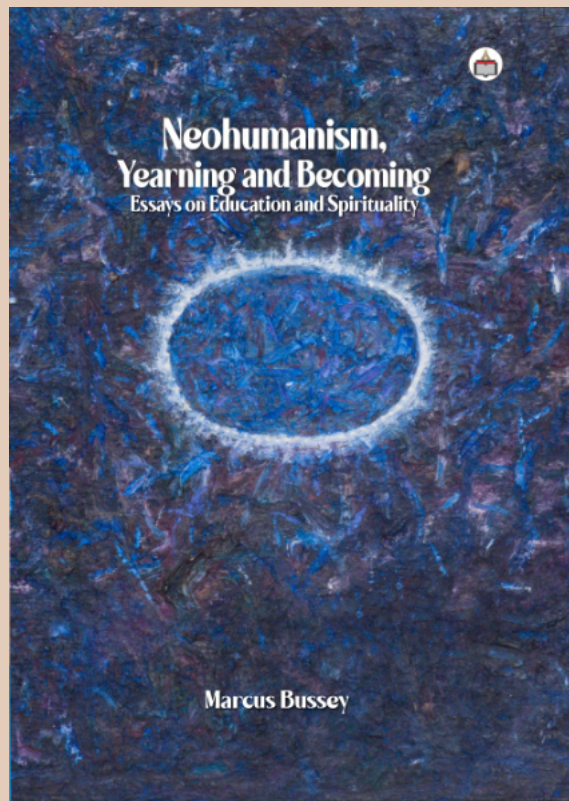
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