

SURENDRANATH DASGUPTA

# INDIAN IDEALISM



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BY

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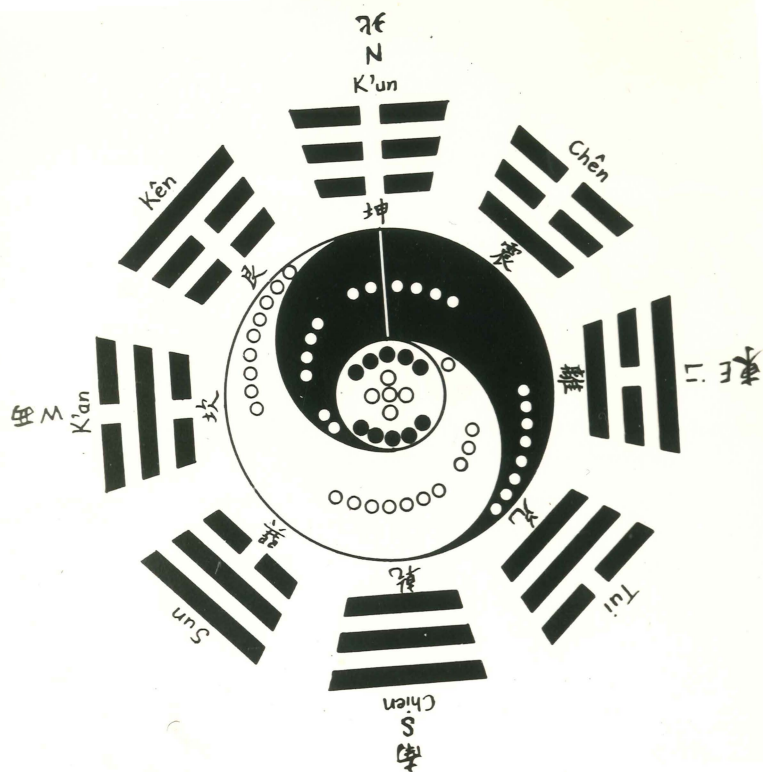
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## Preface

Years ago these Lectures were delivered as the Readership Lectures of the Patna University. Their publication has been delayed for various circumstances over which I had no control. This is probably the first attempt to put together some of the most important strands of Indian idealistic thought within a small compass. I fear however that my success has been but doubtful.



moon, the manhood in man, smell in earth, the heat of the sun, the intelligence in the intelligent, the heroism in the heroes, strength in the strong, and I am also the desires which do not transgress the path of virtue". Again, it is said: "In my manifested forms I am pervading the whole world; all beings exist completely in me but I do not exist in them. Yet so do I transcend them that none of the beings exist in me...I am the upholder of all beings. I do not exist in them and yet I am their procreator". In both these passages (Geetā, 9. 3-5) God's relation with man, by which He exists in us and yet does not exist in us and is not limited by us, is explained by the fact of the threefold nature of God; there is a part of Him which has been manifested as the inanimate nature and also as the animate world of living beings. It is with reference to this all-pervasive nature of God that it is said that as the air in the sky pervades the whole world so are all beings in Him. "At the end of each cycle (*kalpa*) all beings enter into my nature and again at the beginning of a cycle I create them. I create again and again through my nature." Three *prakritis* of God are referred to in the Geetā—the *prakriti* of God as cosmic matter, *prakriti* as the nature of God from which all life and spirit have emanated, and *prakriti* as *māyā* or the power of God from which the three *guṇas* have emanated. It is with reference to the operation of these *prakritis* that the cosmic world and the world of life and spirit may be said to be existing in God; but there is another form of God as the transcendent Brahman, and so far as this form of God is concerned, God transcends this sphere of the universe of matter and life. In another aspect of God, in His totality and super-personality, He remains non-existent as a creator and upholder of all, though it is out of a part of Him that the world has come into being. With reference to His transcendent part it is said: "The sun, the



thus he became many. In the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad it is said that thought-power or movement is spontaneous with God and, in the Taittiriya, Brahman is described as being the truth, the thought and the infinite. It seems clear that in the above system the power, will or perception of God is identified as spontaneous thought-movement; and it is in this way that the theistic view of a creation is reconciled with the pantheistic view of creation as spontaneous self-development of God. There is yet another element which has to be taken note of here. We remember that in the Atharvaveda (19. 54) time is regarded as a first god; it began the work of creation, and it is in time that both Brahman and tapas were upheld and time is regarded as the lord of all things. The whole universe was set in motion by time and produced by time, and it was time which became Brahman. This idea of the Atharvaveda was almost ignored in the Upanishads, and in the Śvetāśvatara the view that everything came out of time is regarded as a heretical doctrine. In the above system, however, time is identified with the thought-movement of God and is regarded as the first category of its inner movement, which is responsible not only for the creation of the cosmos but also of the colony of individual selves. We thus find here a system of dynamic absolutism in which the absolute out of the necessity of its own nature as thought spontaneously sets itself in movement, which is called its power, its will or time, and through it splits itself up into the subjective and the objective order. There is no particular point of time when this movement starts and there is no external cause which acts as its stimulant. The absolute is complete in itself and its movement is spontaneous; it is the spontaneity of this movement that is also regarded as its vision, and the necessity that is involved in its own nature otherwise called *niyati* is what determines the



nature of the direction in which it flows; and it is also responsible for the specific natures of the subjective and the objective order that have sprung into being. The absolute, however, does not exist in its self-evolving activity, but remains in full self-possession even though it may be splitting itself up as consciousness of the unconscious series. The conscious series involving an infinite number of souls is associated throughout the whole course of evolution with the different grades of the objective category, until the fullest development of the latter is attained in the creation of the cosmos as we have it. The individual members of the colony of souls being parts of God are all absolutely pure and unchangeable, but yet through the divine practical necessity of the self-realisation through moral struggle in the cosmos they are all associated from the moment of their separation with God with extraneous limitations which formed a nucleus which would determine the nature of the future history in the form of root tendencies (*vāsanās*) from which it will be their duty to free themselves through their moral struggle in the world. In this system of thought the spirituality of matter and of individual souls is well established. The full reason of the association of matter and spirit is to be found in the fact that they are both jointly evolved out of the spontaneity of the absolute; they have both remained associated together at each of the stages of the development of the thought-movement of God as the spontaneous movement of the absolute. Throughout the whole course of the evolution they simply break up into two poles of the dialectic as the creator and the created, and the thinker and the thought. In a way it seems to me to be the best reconciliation of the apparently irreconcilable strands of Upanishadic thought, and it has indirectly inspired some of the most important Vaishṇava systems of thought that have been elaborated in later

times. If I had to label it with any name I should call it "The idealism of dynamic pantheism".

8. But while the followers of the Upanishadic line of thought were thus trying to re-think the Upanishadic ideas and reconcile them in systematic forms in their own words, many other thinkers were trying to think out the problem of their time independently. Much of the history of these thinkers is now unknown to us, and it is to be seen how far our future researches can explore the nature of the intellectual activity of this period with any degree of exactness. Thus while the law of karma which started while the belief in the magical Vedic rites was being formulated in the Upanishadic period, and while the conviction was growing in the Upanishadic circles that the birth and experiences of a man were determined according to his deeds, we have evidences of schools of thought, known as the Ājīvakas, who continued to preach the nihilism of karma and who thought that there was no such thing as exertion or labour or power or energy or human strength and that all things were unalterably fixed. The Dighanikāya, while giving an account of the schools, says that according to them

There is no cause either proximate or remote for the deprival of beings; they become deprived without reason or cause. There is no cause either proximate or remote for the purity of beings: they become pure without reason or cause. Nothing depends either on one's own efforts or on the efforts of others; in short, nothing depends on any human effort, for there is no such thing as power or energy or human exertion or human strength. Everything that thinks, everything that has senses, everything that is procreated, everything that lives, is destitute of force, power or energy. Their varying conditions at any time are due to fate, to their environment and their own nature. (Hoernle's translation.)

This is a sort of ethical nihilism that attempted to upset



the entire moral order which formed the firm bed-rock not only of the Upanishadic belief but also of other thinkers of the age. The existence of such lines of thought remarkably demonstrates the view that the period which succeeded the Upanishadic times was a period when bold adventures in independent thinking were being undertaken, and this is very definitely proved by the rise of the two great schools of philosophy, namely, those of Buddhism and Jainism.

9. Gautama Buddha was born in or about the year 560 B.C. in the Lumbini grove near the ancient town of Kapilavastu in the now dense terraces of Nepal. According to the legends it was foretold of him that he would enter upon the ascetic life when he should see "a decrepit old man, a diseased man, a dead man and a maniac". His father tried his best to keep him away from these by marrying him and surrounding him with luxuries. But on successive occasions while issuing from the palace he was confronted by these four things, which filled him with distress; and realising the impermanence of all earthly things he determined to forsake his home and try if he could discover some means of immortality to remove the sufferings of human beings. He made his "Great renunciation" when he was twenty-nine years old. He travelled on foot to Rājgriha and thence to Vārāṇasī where in company with other ascetics he entered upon a course of extreme self-discipline, carrying his austerities to such a length that his body became utterly emaciated and he fell down senseless and was believed to be dead. After six years of this great struggle he was convinced that the truth was not to be won by the way of extreme asceticism, and resuming an ordinary course of life he at last attained absolute and supreme enlightenment.

10. It is difficult to assert what exactly was the nature of his enlightenment. But what passed as the philo-



sophy which the Buddha preached was the twelvefold chain of causation which is supposed to explain the mystery of the world. The early Buddhist philosophy did not accept any fixed entity or being as determining the nature of all realities. The only things that existed were the substantial phenomena, and these were called *dharmas*. But the question is, that if there is no substance or reality, how are we to account for the phenomena? But the phenomena are happening and passing away and the main point of interest with the Buddha was to find out; what being what else is, what happening what else happens, what not being what else is not. The phenomena are happening in a series, and we see that there being certain phenomena there become some others in relation to them or with reference to them. The question with which the Buddha started before attaining Buddhahood was this: In what miserable condition are the people; they are born, they decay, pass away and are born again, and they do not know the path of escape from this decay, death and misery. How to know the way of escape from this misery, decay and death? Then it occurred to him, what being there are decay and death, depending on what or with reference to what do they come? As he thought deeply it occurred to him that decay and death could only occur when there is birth, so they depend on birth. What being there is birth, on what does birth depend? Then it occurred to him that birth could only be if there were previous existence (*bhava*). But on what does then existence depend or what being there, there is *bhava*? Then it occurred to him that there could not be existence unless there is the "holding fast" (*upādāna*). But on what did *upādāna* depend? It occurred to him that it was desire (*taṇhā*). But what being there, can there be desire? To this question it occurred to him that there must be feeling (*vedanā*) in order that there may be

desire. But on what does *vedanā* depend or rather what being there, there may be feeling (*vedanā*)? To this it occurred to him that there must be a sense-contact (*sparsā*) in order that there can be feeling. If there should be no sense-contact there would be no feeling. But on what does this sense-contact depend? It occurred to him that as there were six sense-contacts there were the six feelings of contact (*āyatana*). But on what did these six *āyatanas* depend? It occurred to him that there must be the mind and body (*nāmarūpa*) in order that there might be the six feelings of contact. But on what did the *nāmarūpa* depend? It occurred to him that without consciousness (*viññāna*) there could be no *nāmarūpa*. But what being there, there would be *viññāna*? Here it occurred to him that in order that there might be *viññāna* there must be the affirmations (*saṅkhāra*) or synthesising activity of the complexes. But what being there, are there the *saṅkhāras*? Here it occurred to him that the *saṅkhāras* can only be if there is ignorance (*avijjā*). If *avijjā* can be stopped, then the *saṅkhāras* will be stopped, and if the *saṅkhāras* can be stopped, the *viññāna* can be stopped, and so on. For our present purpose the question whether all these twelve links of causation were discovered by the Buddha himself in their entirety, or whether originally there was a lesser number of links to which some more were added in later times, need not detain us here, for whatever that may be it is certain that the spirit of the twelve links was present in the primitive formulation even though it may not have contained all the twelve links. But the most important protest against the Upanishadic thought that is to be found in the view that was enunciated by the Buddha consists in his radical denial of the existence of self. There was no *ātman* as a permanent entity, individual or being. What appears as self is only the aggregate of different elements such as the body and



the senses, the feelings, conceptual knowledge, the synthetic functioning of combined sense-affections, combined feelings and combined concepts of the consciousness. Interpreting it according to later explanations, we find that the early Buddhistic thought was radically pluralistic; no permanence and no ultimate reality can be attributed to anything; but whether we take the subject or the object phenomena, we find that there is only a concourse of diverse elements which are momentarily coming together, disintegrating and forming new components, again disintegrating and forming other components, and so on. There is no distinction of substance and qualities, for what is called a substance is as much an element as that which is called a quality, and there is no reason why one entity should be dependent on another or should be considered as inherent in another; so the distinctions of substance and qualities and actions are ignored. The so-called substance, qualities and actions are placed on the same plane and taken as separate elements. Thus the elements cannot have any further description than the momentary form in which they appear, and there is no individual agent that persists through time, but each element, each component, lasts only for the moment in which it appears. The elements have this peculiarity that they act in co-operation with one another, and that such co-operation takes place in such a relative reference that there being some entities there are other entities. Since there is no permanent cause, no ground, no producer and no permanency anywhere, no conglomeration of entities can be called an individual or a cause. Cause is to be understood only in the sense of "This being there, that is". In the Upanishads we had the idea that an individual is composed of sixteen parts, of which the last part was a nucleus and the ground of all the rest. Here, however, there is no such ground part, and an individual is



reduced to sense-data, cognitional feeling and consciousness-elements and the element of functioning by virtue of which the diverse elements would come together and show up the appearance of the individual. Since no ground can be affirmed of any of the elements that appear, all elements are absolutely unsubstantial, and there is no way of penetrating into them any further than their momentary appearance. It is only through avidyā that the conglomerations of these unsubstantial and impermanent elements are regarded as permanent or semi-permanent individuals.

11. The true self with the Upanishads was a matter of transcendental experience, for they said that it could not be described in terms of anything, but could only be pointed out as "there" behind all the changing mental categories. The Buddha looked into the mind and saw that it did not exist and the Buddha is represented as saying: "When one says 'I', what he does is that he refers either to all the elements combined or any one of them and deludes himself that that was 'I', just as one could not say that the fragrance of the lotus belongs to the colour so one could not say that the sense-data was 'I' or that the feeling was 'I' or that any of the other elements was 'I'. There is nowhere to be found in the elements composing an individual 'I am'". What people perceived in themselves when they said that they perceived their selves was but the mental experiences either individually or together. The Upanishads reveal through them the dawn of an experience of an immutable reality as the self of man, as the only abiding truth behind all changes, but Buddhism holds that this immutable self of man is a delusion and false knowledge. The first postulate of the system is that impermanence is sorrow. Ignorance about sorrow, ignorance about the way in which it originates, ignorance about the nature of the extinction of sorrow and ignorance about the

means of bringing about its extinction are the four kinds of ignorance (*avidyā*). The word *avidyā* also occurs in the Upanishads, but there it means ignorance about the ātman doctrine, and it is sometimes contrasted with *vidyā* or true knowledge about the self. With the Upanishads the highest truth was the permanent self, the bliss; but with the Buddha there was nothing permanent and all was change; and all change of impermanence was sorrow.

12. This early phase of Buddhism was thus a system of pluralistic phenomenalism, which did not attribute any greater importance to mind than to matter; and where mind and matter vanished as individual entities, we found in their place a number of elements (seventy-five according to the later elaboration of the system).

13. It may thus be difficult to conceive how from this doctrine there can originate any system of idealism, monism or absolutism, but a little inspection will show that this elimination of all substantiality and reality from the elements which are supposed to compose the so-called individual took away from them the basis of realism or realistic pluralism. The elements are no doubt as they are perceived, but we cannot say that they are real as they are perceived, for there is no reality behind them. When, therefore, the enquiring mind pursues the question, which naturally arises in the mind and without an answer to which the mind cannot be set at rest, "What is there behind these elements, what is the ground of these appearances, what is their substance?" and if such a question meets with the answer that there is no ground and no reality behind the elements, the elements are naturally reduced to mere appearances, and to the question, "What is the ultimate reality, what is truth?" the only answer that can be expected is that everything is void and essenceless; there is nothing real anywhere. The goal or *Nirvāṇa*, as held before us by



early Buddhism according to the Theravāda interpretations, cannot show to us any positive element. The Buddha no doubt could not give any positive answer as to what becomes of us when the nirvāṇa is attained, for whether we exist in some form eternal, or do not exist, is not a proper Buddhistic question. For it is an heresy to think of a *Tathāgata* as existing eternally (*śāśvata*) or not existing, or whether he is existing as well as not existing, or whether he is neither existing nor non-existing. So anyone who seeks to discuss whether nirvāṇa is either a positive or eternal state, or a mere state of non-existence or annihilation, takes a view which has been discarded in Buddhism as heretical. We can only describe nirvāṇa according to the early Buddhism as extinction of sorrows, as the natural consequence of the destruction of desires. But in spite of all these the question may still remain irresistible—What is then the ultimate reality? We shall show in our next chapter with what acuteness the logical dialectic of Nāgārjuna tried to prove the unsubstantiality and essencelessness of all concepts and of all appearances, and in doing this he only supplemented the view that had been indefatigably emphasised and endlessly repeated in the *Prajñāpāramitā* works with a logical apparatus. We shall also see how this doctrine of the unsubstantiality of all elements and their reduction to mere phenomenal appearances made it easy for many thinkers, who probably had a Brahminic training or grounding in the Upanishads, to reduce these elements into mere mental ideas and to supplement them with a permanent nucleus as pure consciousness.



## Chapter IV

### BUDDHIST IDEALISM

1. I suggested in my last chapter that when the Theravāda school of Buddhism started the doctrine of the unsubstantiality and impermanence of all elements, one logical consequence of that would be that there was nothing real anywhere. So the highest truth would be a mere nothingness of all phenomena, but neither the Theravāda Buddhism nor its later product the Sarvāstivādins, which admitted the existence of all things, could give us a logical dialectic by which the essencelessness of all things could be proved. Both the Theravādins and the Sarvāstivādins, therefore, remained at a stage in which they only emphasised the existence of the impermanent elements, but did not push the doctrine of impermanence and unsubstantiality to its natural, logical consequence of nihilism. Thus none of the early thinkers tried to emphasise this part of the doctrine, and seceded from the Mahāyāna school as represented in the Prajñāpāramitā in which they preached the doctrine of nothingness of all phenomena as the greatest attainable truth. But it was only Nāgārjuna who first applied the Law of Contradiction to all phenomena and to all concepts and tried to establish the doctrine that no concepts could be explained either by themselves or by other entities; that all attempts to understand them would land us in confusion from which there is no escape, and that, therefore, all phenomena had only a relative appearance and at bottom were all essenceless, inconceivable and self-contradictory.

2. The Mādhyamika system of Nāgārjuna holds that there is nothing which has an essence or nature of its

own; even heat cannot be said to be the essence of fire, for both the heat and the fire are the results of the combination of many conditions; what depends on many conditions cannot be said to be the single nature or essence of the thing. That alone may be said to be the true essence or nature of anything which does not depend on anything else, and since no such essence or nature can be discovered which stands independently by itself we cannot say that it exists. If a thing has no essence or existence of its own we cannot affirm the essence of other things of it. If we cannot affirm anything positive of anything we cannot consequently assert anything negative of anything. If anyone first believes in things positive and afterwards discovers that they are not so, he may be said to have faith in negation, but in reality since we cannot speak of anything as positive we cannot speak of anything as negative either. It may be objected that we nevertheless perceive things and processes going on. To this the Mādhyamika reply is that a process of change could not be affirmed of things that are permanent. But we can hardly speak of a process with reference to momentary things; for those which are momentary are destroyed the next moment after they appear, and so there is nothing which can continue to justify a process. That which appears as being neither comes from anywhere nor goes anywhere and that which appears as destroyed also does not come from anywhere nor goes anywhere, and so no process of change can be affirmed of beings either in their origination or in their destruction. It cannot be that when the second moment arose the first moment had suffered a change in the process, for it was not the same as the second and there was no so-called cause-effect relation. In fact, there being no relation between the two the temporal determination as prior and posterior is wrong. The supposition that there is a self which suffers changes



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is invalid, for there is neither self nor the so-called psychological elements. If the soul is a unity it cannot undergo any process, for that would suppose that the soul abandons one character and takes up another at the same identical moment, which is inconceivable. But then the question may arise that if there is no process and no cycle of worldly existence, what is then the nirvāṇa? Nirvāṇa, according to the Mādhyamika theory, is the absence of the essence of all phenomena which cannot be conceived either as anything which has ceased or as anything which is produced. In nirvāṇa all phenomena are lost; we say that the phenomena cease to exist in nirvāṇa, but like the illusory snake in the rope they never existed. Nirvāṇa is merely the cessation of the seeming phenomenal flow. It cannot, therefore, be designated either as positive or as negative, for these conceptions only belong to phenomena. In this state there is nothing which is known, and even the knowledge of the phenomena having ceased to appear is not found. Even the Buddha himself is a phenomenon, a mirage or a dream, and so are all his teachings.

3. The Mādhyamika school wishes to keep the phenomenal and the real views wide apart. If from the phenomenal view things are admitted to be as they are perceived, all the relations are also to be conceived as they are perceived. Thus while Diñnāga urges that a thing is what it is in itself (*svalakṣhaṇa*), Candrakīrti, a follower of Nāgārjuna, holds that since relations are also perceived to be true, the real nature of things need not be *svalakṣhaṇa*; the relational aspects of things are as much true as the unrelational as well. Phenomenal substances exist as well as their qualities. "The thing-in-itself", says Nāgārjuna, "is as much a relative concept as all relational things that are popularly perceived to be true"; that being so, it is meaningless to define perception as being only the thing-in-itself. Candrakīrti thus

does not think that any good can be done by criticising the realistic logic of the Naiyāyikas. So far as the popular perceptions or conceptions go the Nyāya logic is quite competent to deal with them and to give an account of them. There is a phenomenal reality or order which is true for the man in the street and on which all our linguistic and other usages are based. It is, therefore, useless to define valid perception as being only the unique thing-in-itself and to discard all associations of quality or relations as being extraneous and invalid. Such a definition does not improve matters; for in reality such a definition is also relative and therefore false. Āryyadeva, another follower of Nāgārjuna, says that the Mādhyamika view has no thesis of its own which it seeks to establish, for it does not believe in the reality or unreality of anything or in the combination of reality or unreality. Thus there is no ultimate thesis in Nāgārjuna. It is, therefore, neither idealism nor realism nor absolutism, but blank phenomenalism which only accepts the phenomenal world as it is but which would not, for a moment, tolerate any kind of essence, ground or reality behind it.

4. As Buddhism was gradually developing, it began to make many converts from amongst the Brahmins who were trained in the Upanishadic learning. One of these was Aśvaghoṣa, the son of a Brahmin named Saimhaguhyā, who spent his early days in travelling over the different parts of India and in defeating the Buddhists in open debates. He was probably converted into Buddhism by Pārśva, who was an important person in that age. He in all probability was a man steeped in the knowledge of the philosophy of the Upanishads, and after his own conversion into Buddhism he interpreted it in a new line which, together with the philosophy of the Laṅkāvatārasūtra, marks the foundation of Buddhist idealism. He held that in the soul two aspects



may be distinguished; the aspect as the reality (*bhūta-tatātā*) and the aspect as the cycle of birth and death. The soul as *bhūtatātā* means the oneness of the totality of all things (*dharmadhātu*), i.e. that in which all the appearances ultimately merge and from which they have all come into the so-called being.<sup>1</sup> Its essential nature is uncreative and eternal. All things, simply on account of the beginningless traces of the incipient and unconscious memory of our past experiences of many previous lives, appear in their objective and individuated forms. If we could overcome this, our integrated history of past experiences, otherwise called *vāsanā* or *smṛiti*, the essence of all individuation and plurality, would disappear and there would be no trace of the world of objects. "Things in their fundamental nature are not nameable or explicable. They cannot be adequately expressed in any form of language. They possess absolute sameness (*samātā*). They are subject neither to transformation nor to destruction; they are nothing but one soul—thatness—reality (*bhūtatātā*)."  
 This "thatness" or reality has no attribute and it can only be somehow pointed out in silence as the mere "that". Since you understand that when the totality of existence is spoken of or thought of, there is neither that which speaks nor that which is spoken of, there is neither that which thinks nor that which is thought of, you have the stage of "thatness". This *bhūtatātā* is neither that which is existent nor that which is non-existent, nor that which is at once existent and non-existent, nor that which is not at once existent and non-existent. It is neither that which is plurality, nor that which is at once unity and plurality, nor that which is

<sup>1</sup> The treatment of Āsvaghosha's philosophy is based upon Suzuki's translation of Āsvaghosha's *Śraddhotpādasūtra*. Whether *Śraddhotpādasūtra* can be attributed to Āsvaghosha or not need not be discussed here.

not at once unity and plurality. It is negative in the sense that it is beyond all that is conditional, and it is positive in the sense that it holds all within it. It cannot be comprehended by any kind of particularisation or distinction. It is only by transcending the range of our intellectual category and the comprehension of the limited range of finite phenomena that we can get a glimpse of it. It cannot be comprehended by the particularising consciousness of all beings, and we thus may call it negation (*śūnyatā*) in this sense. The truth is that which subjectively does not exist by itself, that the negation (*śūnyatā*) is also void (*śūnya*) in its nature, that neither that which is negation nor that which negates is an independent entity. It is the pure soul that manifests itself as eternal, permanent, immortal, which completely holds all things within it. On that account it cannot be called affirmation; and there is no trace of affirmation in it because it is neither the product of the creative function of thought nor the sub-conscious memory as the integrated past history of experiences, and the only way of grasping this truth—the thatness—is by transcending all conceptual creation. “The soul in birth and death comes forth from the tathāgata-womb, the ultimate reality. But the immortal and the mortal coincide with each other though they are not identical.”

5. “Thus the absolute self remains a relative aspect by its self-affirmation. It is called the all-pervading mind (*ālayavijñāna*). It expresses two principles: (1) enlightenment, (2) non-enlightenment. Enlightenment is the perfection of the mind when it is free from the corruptions of the creative, instinctive, incipient memory. It penetrates all and is the unity.” When it is said that all consciousness starts from this fundamental truth it should not be thought that consciousness had any real origin, for it was merely a phenomenal existence, a mere imaginary creation of the perceivers under the influence



of the delusive *smṛti*. The multitude of people are said to be lacking in enlightenment because ignorance (*avidyā*) prevails, because there is a constant influx of *smṛti* or past memory conserved as sub-conscious thought which forces itself constantly into the conscious plane and from which they are never emancipated; but when they are divested of this *smṛti* they can then recognise that no stages of mentation, viz. their appearance and presence, change and disappearance, have any reality. They are neither in a temporal nor in a spatial relation with the soul for they are not self-existent. This high enlightenment shows itself imperfectly in our grouped phenomenal experiences as *prajñā* (wisdom) and karma. By pure wisdom we understand that when one by virtue of the perfuming power of the dharma disciplines himself truthfully and accomplishes meritorious deeds, the mind (*ālayavijñāna*) which associates itself with birth and death would be broken down, and the modes of the evolving consciousness will be annulled and the power of the genuine wisdom of the dharmas will manifest itself.

Though all modes of consciousness and mentation are the mere products of ignorance, the ignorance in its ultimate nature is regarded as being both identical and non-identical with enlightenment; and, therefore, ignorance is in one sense destructible and in another sense indestructible. This may be illustrated by the simile of the water and the waves which are stirred up in the ocean. Here the water can be said to be both identical and non-identical with the waves. The waves have been stirred up by the wind but the water remains the same. When the winds cease the motion of the waves subsides but the water remains the same. Likewise, when the mind of all creatures which in its own nature is pure and clean is stirred up by the wind of ignorance (*avidyā*) the waves of mentality (*bhāvanā*) make their appearance. These three (the mind, ignorance and mentality), however, have no existence and they are neither unity nor plurality. When ignor-

ance is annihilated the awakened mentality is tranquilised but the essence of wisdom remains unmolested.

The truth or the enlightenment is absolutely unobtainable by any modes of relativity or by any outward sense of enlightenment. All things in the phenomenal world are but reflections in the true light, so that they neither pass out of it nor enter into it and they neither disappear nor are destroyed. It is, however, disassociated from the mind (*ālayavijñāna*), which associates itself with birth and death, since it is in its true nature clean, pure, eternal, calm and immutable. This truth again is such that it transforms itself, wherever conditions are favourable, in the form of *tathāgata* or in some other forms, in order that all beings may be induced thereby to bring their virtue to maturity.

6. "Non-enlightenment has no existence of its own apart from its relation with enlightenment *a priori*." But enlightenment *a priori* is spoken of only in contrast with non-enlightenment, and as non-enlightenment is non-entity true enlightenment in turn loses its significance too. They are distinguished only in mutual relation as enlightenment or non-enlightenment. The manifestations of non-enlightenment are made in three ways: (1) as a disturbance of the mind (*ālayavijñāna*) by the action of ignorance producing misery, (2) by the appearance of an ego or a perceiver, and (3) by the creation of an external world which does not exist independently of the perceiver. Out of the unreal external world six kinds of phenomena arise in succession. The first phenomenon is intelligence; being affected by the external world the mind becomes conscious of the difference between the agreeable and the disagreeable. The second phenomenon is succession; following upon intelligence, memory retains the sensations agreeable as well as disagreeable in a continual succession of sub-



jective states. The third phenomenon is clinging; through the retention of a succession of sensations agreeable as well as disagreeable there arises the desire of clinging. The fourth phenomenon is an attachment to names or ideas, etc.; by clinging the mind hypostatizes all names through which it gives definition to all things. The fifth phenomenon is the performance of deeds; on account of attachment to names, etc. there arise all the variations of deeds productive of individuality. The sixth phenomenon is the suffering due to the fetter of deeds; through deeds arises suffering in which the mind finds itself entangled and curtailed of its freedom. All these phenomena have thus come forth through avidyā or ignorance.

7. The relation between this truth and avidyā is in one sense a mere identity and may be illustrated by the simile of all kinds of pottery, which though different are all made of the same clay (compare Chāndogya Upanishad 6. 1. 4). Ignorance and its various transient forms all come from one and the same entity. Therefore, the Buddha teaches that all beings are from eternity abiding in nirvāṇa. It is by the touch of ignorance that the truth comes in the phenomenal form of existence.

8. In the all-surveying mind (ālayavijñāna) ignorance manifests itself, and from non-enlightenment starts that which sees, that which represents, that which apprehends an objective world and that which constantly particularises it into various individual forms. This is called ego (*manas*). Five different names are given to the ego according to its different modes of operation. The first name is activity-consciousness (*karmavijñāna*), in the sense that through the agency of ignorance an unenlightened mind begins to be disturbed. The second name is evolving-consciousness (*pravṛtṭi vijñāna*); it means that when the mind is dis-

turbed there evolves that which sees an external world. The third name is representative-consciousness, which means that the ego (*manas*) represents or reflects an external world. As a clear mirror reflects the images of all descriptions, it is even so with the representative-consciousness; when it is confronted, for instance, with the objects of the five senses it represents them instantaneously and without effort. The fourth is particularising-consciousness, in the sense that it discriminates between different things, defiled as well as pure. The fifth name is succession-consciousness; it means that it is continuously attracted by the waking consciousness of attention. It (*manas*) represents all experiences and it never loses nor suffers through the destruction of any karma, good as well as evil, which had been done in the past and the retributions of which, painful or agreeable, are matured in the present or in the future; through this function the mind recollects things gone by and in imagination anticipates things to come. Since all things that are produced from *ālayavijñāna* are produced through the operation of the integrated history of experiences, all the modes of particularisation are the self-particularisations of the mind. The mind in itself, being however free from all attributes, is undifferentiated. Therefore, the conclusion is that all things and conditions in the phenomenal world get hypostatised and established only through ignorance of the integrated history of experiences and have no more reality than images in a mirror. They arise simply from the ideality of a particular mind. When the mind is disturbed, the multiplicity of things is produced, but when the mind is quiet, the multiplicity of things disappears. By ego-consciousness (*manovijñāna*) we mean the ignorant mind which by succession-consciousness clings to the conception of "I" and "not I" and misapprehends the nature of the objects of the six senses.



Thus, believing in the external world produced by the beginningless history of the integrated experiences, otherwise called *vāsanā* or *smṛti*, the mind becomes the principle of the sameness and undifferentiation that underlie all things which are one and perfectly calm and tranquil and show no sign of becoming.

9. Non-enlightenment is the *raison d'être* of *saṃsāra*, i.e. birth and rebirth. When this is annihilated the conditions of the external world are also annihilated, and with them the state of an unrelated mind is also annihilated. But this annihilation does not mean the annihilation of the mind but of its modes only. It becomes calm, like an unruffled sea when all winds which were disturbing it and producing the waves have been annihilated. In describing the relation of the interaction of *avidyā* (ignorance, *karmavijñāna*, activity-consciousness—the subjective mind), *vishaya* (external world represented by the senses) and the *tathatā* (thatness of the reality), *Aśvaghosha* says that there is an interpenetration or interperfuming of these elements. Thus *Aśvaghosha* says:

By perfuming we mean that while our worldly clothes have no odours of their own, neither agreeable nor disagreeable, they could yet acquire one or the other odour according to the nature of the substance with which they are perfumed. This thatness (*tathatā*) is likewise a pure *dharma* free from all defilements of the perfuming power of the ignorance. On the other hand, ignorance has nothing to do with purity. Nevertheless, we speak of being able to do the work of purity because it in its turn is perfumed by the "thatness". Determined by the "thatness" ignorance becomes the *raison d'être* of all forms of defilement, and then ignorance perfumes the "thatness" and produces the integrated history of experiences. This last again in its turn perfumes ignorance. On account of this reciprocal perfuming the truth is misunderstood; on account of its being misunderstood an external world of subjectivity appears. Further, on account of the per-

fuming power of memory various modes of individuation are produced, and by clinging to them various deeds are done, and as the result thereof we suffer miseries, mental as well as bodily. Again, the "thatness" perfumes ignorance and in consequence of this perfuming the individual in subjectivity is made to loathe the misery of birth and death and to seek after the blessing of nirvāṇa. This longing and loathing on the part of subjective mind in turn perfumes the "thatness". On account of this perfuming influence we are unable to believe that we are in possession within ourselves of the "thatness" whose essential nature is pure, and we also recognise that all phenomena in the world are nothing but the illusory manifestations of the mind (*ālayavijñāna*) and have no reality of their own. Since we thus rightly understand the truth, we can practise the means of liberations and can perform those actions which are in accordance with the dharma; we should neither particularise nor cling to objects of desire. By virtue of this discipline and habit we get ignorance annihilated after a lapse of innumerable years. As ignorance is thus annihilated the mind (*ālayavijñāna*) is no longer disturbed so as to be subject to individuation; as the mind is no longer disturbed the particularisation of the surrounding world is annihilated. When in this way the truth of the condition of defilements, their products and the mental disturbances are all annihilated, it is said that a person attains nirvāṇa.

10. The nirvāṇa philosophy is not nothingness, but *tathatā* or thatness in its purity, unassociated with any kind of disturbance which produces all the diversities of experience. The main idea of this *tathatā* philosophy seems to be that this transcendent thatness is at once a quintessence of all thought and activity; as *avidyā* veils it or perfumes it the world-appearance springs forth, but as the pure thatness also perfumes *avidyā* there is a striving for the good as well. As the stage of *avidyā* is passed this illuminating character shines forth, for it is the ultimate truth in which the illusion appears as the many of the world.



11. We see here that after the analogy of the Brahman in the Upanishads Aśvaghosha admitted one permanent reality from which he sought to derive everything else. We remember there are many passages in the Upanishad where the Brahman is described as being unthinkable, unspeakable and unnameable, as one that can only be indicated by negating all affirmations about it. The Māṇḍukya Upanishad, in trying to discover it, says that it is invisible, indefinable, unthinkable, which can have no practical bearing, wherein all appearances have ceased, one that is to be regarded as the soul. The dialectic of Nāgārjuna has made us familiar with the view that no affirmation of any kind, be it that of existence or of non-existence or of both, can be made of any entity, and that all appearances are impermanent and unsubstantial. Aśvaghosha seems to combine these two ideas into the doctrine that there is a reality which he calls the mere thatness, of which it is not possible to make any kind of affirmation or negation; and following the footsteps of the Upanishads he describes it as forming the essential nature of the soul. The question may arise, if any affirmation or negation of any kind be possible, how can this ultimate principle be regarded either as ultimate or as reality? Aśvaghosha seems to evade this charge by describing it as a mere thatness, and he thinks that by so doing he forbears from making any positive or negative affirmation regarding it. But he forgets that as a Buddhist he exposes himself to the charge of heresy by admitting a permanent entity as the ultimate truth. We have seen that in the Upanishads the word avidyā is used merely in the sense of ignorance of the superior philosophy. But the Buddha uses the term as the primary notion in the twelvefold link of causation. But here also avidyā is only a term in a revolving series, such that when there is the avidyā there are the saṃkhāras which represent the past deeds; and

there being *avidyā* and *saṃkhāras* in the past life, there are the *viññāna*, *nāmarūpa*, *sparśa*, *vedanā*, *trṣṇā*, *upādāna* and *bhava* in the present life, and then again the *jāti* and *jarāmaraṇa* in the next life.<sup>1</sup> The causality of *avidyā* towards the *saṃkhāra* does not imply any generative character or productive agency, for such notions are ruled out from the Buddhist notion of causality as defined by *pratītyasamutpāda*. When one says that there being *avidyā* there is the *saṃkhāra*, what is meant is that *saṃkhāra* arises associated with *avidyā* in the sense that when *avidyā* arises it is followed by the *saṃkhāra*. But this does not mean that *avidyā* is the material cause or a productive agent of *saṃkhāras*. It means only ignorance in the sense of passions or afflictions contrary to right knowledge. *Avidyā* is not a mere negation of knowledge or ignorance, but it is a positive entity in the sense of false knowledge. Yet it is not a substance which generates the *saṃkhāras* by itself or through itself, but it is its cause only in the sense that there being the *avidyā* there are the *saṃkhāras*. The concept of *avidyā* in *Aśvaghosha* is different from this notion of *avidyā* as we find in early Buddhism and its later interpretations by the *Sarvāstivādins*. *Avidyā* with *Aśvaghosha* appears as a dynamic agent, through the influence of which the ultimate reality, the "thatness", takes a creative attitude, at which stage it is called *ālayaviññāna*; yet this dynamic agent is not different in its ultimate character from the nature of "thatness", and the nature of "thatness" is itself indefinable by any affirmation or negation of any kind. The older concept, in which *avidyā* stood as only a term in a revolving series, is thus changed in *Aśvaghosha's* philosophy into a principle of activity. But it retains somehow its primitive character; because it is only through it that the past history of an individual in the form of root-potencies of

<sup>1</sup> See *A History of Indian Philosophy*, by S. N. Dasgupta, p. 84 et seq.



unconscious memory is retained; and it is through this that the "thatness" is made dynamic into the state of ālayavijñāna. It is through this ālayavijñāna that the appearance of the egos or perceivers and a false creation of an external world (the entire existence of which depends on the perception of these perceivers) are possible. It is in relation to this ālayavijñāna that the six kinds of phenomena, viz. of sensation, agreeable or disagreeable affections, desires, association of names and ideas, deeds and suffering, arise. Since without avidyā there would not have been the first stir into activity of the ultimate "thatness" into ālayavijñāna, and its successive developments as the egos and the ego-creations of the external world would have been impossible, the avidyā may still be regarded here as a first term of the revolving series, though here its dynamic character is more emphasised. It is through the influence of this avidyā that there starts that which sees, that which represents, that which apprehends an objective world and that which constantly particularises—the ego or manas. It is through the influence of this avidyā that the ego operates in its fivefold functions by which it rouses itself as ego, as the perceiver of an external world, as a thinker of ideas generated by the external world, as discriminating between good and bad and as retaining within itself all experiences that it gathers, whose good and bad effects it reaps. Avidyā thus produces this ego-appearance and through this ego-appearance generates the history of experiences of this ego-appearance, and through that there is the cycle of new ego-appearances, their new experiences and their newer and newer conserved history of experiences. The existence of the external world is but a perception of the ego, and the ego is the product of the history of the experience and its historically prior egos. Though the avidyā, the subjective minds and the external world which is but their perception, are all

the knower—the mind-associated consciousness. We all have notions of self-identity and we feel it as “I am the same”; and the only way in which this can be explained is on the basis of the fact that consciousness, though one and universal, can yet be supposed to perform diverse functions by virtue of the diverse nature of its associations, by which it seems to transform itself as the knower and the thousand varieties of relations, and objects which it knows. The main point which is to be noted in connection with this realisation of the identity of self is that the previous experience and its memory prove that the self existed in the past; but how to prove that what existed is also existing at the present moment? Knowledge of identity of the self is something different from the experience of the self in the past and in the present. But the process consists in this, that the two experiences manifest the self as one identical entity which persisted through both the experiences, and this new experience makes the self known in the aforesaid relation of identity. Again, when I remember a past experience, it is the self as associated with that experience that is remembered. So it is the self as associated with different time relations that is remembered; so, it is the self as associated with the different time relations that is apprehended in an experience of the identity of self.

25. From all these discussions, one thing that comes out clearly is that, according to the Śaṅkara Vedānta as explained by the Vivaraṇa school of Padmapāda and his followers, the sense-data in the objects have an existence independent of their being perceived; and there is also the mind called *antaḥkāraṇa*, which operates in its own ways for the apprehension of this or that object. Are objects already there and presented to the pure consciousness through the mind? But what then are objects? Śaṅkara's answer is that they themselves are



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