

The Wisdom of Yoga

An Introduction to Ananda Marga Philosophy

Ac. Vedaprajinananda Avadhuta

Foreword

This book was written and first published in 1982. It is an introduction to the philosophy of Shrii Shrii Anandamurti (P.R. Sarkar). Anandamurti (1921-1990) was one of the greatest philosophers and spiritual teachers of the 20th Century.

In 1955, Anandamurti founded a social and spiritual organization, Ananda Marga, the Path of Bliss. At this same time he began writing a series of books which eventually grew to include more than 300 volumes. His books covered the fields of spiritual philosophy, economics, political science, linguistics and the arts. Most importantly his books introduced a new school of philosophy: Ananda Marga.

Anandamurti was first and foremost a spiritual guru, and emphasized a practical, action based spirituality. He taught an updated form of meditation and yoga that was based on India's oldest spiritual tradition, Tantra Yoga. Although Anandamurti put a greater stress on spiritual practice, his books contain a startling reformulation of spiritual philosophy. Anandamurti's philosophical presentation tackles the major questions that face any human as an individual: Who am I? What is my purpose in life?, and What is my relation to the Supreme Being? His philosophy also addresses the fundamental questions that face humanity as a collective body: what is the purpose of society? How can an ideal social system be built?

The books of Anandamurti are a treasure for humanity, showing the way to individual fulfillment and to the resolution of today's most pressing social problems. However, due to the novelty of his approach, to his coining of new philosophical terms and to a need for prior knowledge of terms common to yoga and spirituality his original books do not make for light reading. This small volume was written to introduce the basic concepts addressed in the original books. My intention in writing it was not to make a substitute for the originals, but to indeed stimulate interest in them, and make it easier for people to understand the important concepts that these books contain.

If after reading this book, you would like to seek out the originals, go to www.anandamarga.org/books and you will find a complete list.

This present volume begins with an introduction to the ancient spiritual tradition, Tantra, on which all modern day forms of yoga are based and continues right through to the presentation of a spiritually based look at modern social and economic problems. I hope that you find it interesting reading, and I hope that it will stimulate you to take action to transform yourself and the greater society around you.

A.V.A.

Tantra: The Science of Liberation

Tantra is the original spiritual science first taught in India more than 7000 years ago. TAN is a Sanskrit root which signifies, “expansion”, and TRA signifies “liberation.” Thus, Tantra is the practice which elevates human beings in a process in which their minds are expanded. It leads human beings from the imperfect to the perfect, from the crude to the subtle, from bondage to liberation.

The development of Tantra is intertwined with the development of civilization in ancient India. During the time when Tantra emerged as an important spiritual practice, India was passing through a crucial historical period. In the Northwest nomadic tribes from central Asia, the Aryans, began to enter the country which they named *Bharata Varsha* (the land which nourishes and expands human beings). Although the Aryans were a nomadic warrior culture, amidst them there were certain sages known as *Rishis* who began to ask the basic questions about the origin and destiny of the universe.

These sages presented oral teachings, which were later compiled in books known as *The Vedas*. In these teachings they put forward the idea of a Supreme Consciousness, advancing beyond the previous concepts of a world in which many deities were thought to animate the forces of nature. They also developed a system of prayer and worship in order to enter into a relationship with this Supreme Consciousness, but their practices were mostly of an external, ritualistic nature.

In India the Aryans encountered and began to fight with the indigenous peoples - the Austrics, Mongolians, and Dravidians. They considered these races to be inferior to them, and in the epic tales of India such as *The Ramayana*, these races are depicted as monkeys and demons.

However inferior these races were considered to be, the Aryans were very much interested in the spiritual practices which the indigenous peoples of India were practicing. The spiritual approach of the non-Aryans was Tantra and it differed from the Vedic practices of the Aryans because it was fundamentally an introversive process rather than an external ritual. Many Aryans began to learn the Tantric system of spiritual development, and later Vedic books were influenced by Tantra.

During this epoch of warfare between the Aryans and non-Aryans, a great personality was born. His name was *Sadashiva* which means “he who is always absorbed in consciousness and one whose only vow of existence is to promote the all-around welfare of living beings”. *Sadashiva*, also known as *Shiva*, was a great spiritual preceptor or *Guru*. Although Tantra was practiced before his birth, it was he who for the first time gave humanity a systematic presentation of spirituality.

Not only was he a great spiritual teacher, but he was also the founder of the Indian system of music and dance, which is why he is sometimes known as *Nataraj* (the Lord of the Dance). *Shiva* was also the founder of Indian medicine, and presented a system known as *Vaedyak* Shastra. In the social sphere too *Shiva* had an important role to play. He introduced a system of marriage in which both partners accepted a mutual responsibility for the success of the marriage, irregardless of caste or community. *Shiva* himself was of mixed parentage, and by marrying an Aryan princess he helped to unite the warring factions of India and gave them a more universalistic social viewpoint. Because of these social innovations *Shiva* has been called the Father of human civilization.

Shiva's greatest contribution to the birth of civilization was to introduce the concept of *dharma*. *Dharma* is a Sanskrit word which signifies the “innate characteristic” of something. What is the innate characteristic and specialty of humans? *Shiva* explained that a human being wants more than the pleasure provided by sensory gratification. He said that the human being is different from plants and animals because

what he or she is striving for is absolute peace. This is the goal of human life, and Shiva's spiritual teachings were aimed at enabling any human being to attain this goal.

Like most ancient teachings, Shiva's ideas were first taught in an oral form, and only later were they transcribed into books. Shiva's wife, Parvati, used to ask him various questions regarding the spiritual science. Shiva replied to these questions, and the compilation of these questions and answers are known as the *Tantra Shastra* (Tantric scriptures). There are two types of Tantric scriptures. The principles of Tantra are found in books known as *Nigama* while the practices of Tantra are contained in books known as *Agama*.

Some of these ancient books have been lost and others are indecipherable due to their having been written in a code language designed to keep the secrets of Tantra away from the uninitiated; thus the ideas of Tantra have never been clearly explained.

In his commentaries on the *Tantra Shastra* and in his book about the life and teachings of Shiva, Shrii Shrii Anandamurti has presented some of the basic ideas found in the ancient teachings. One of the most important elements in Tantra is the relationship of Guru and disciple. Guru means "one who can dispel darkness" and Shiva explained that for spiritual success there must be a good teacher and a good disciple..

Shiva explained that there are three major categories of Guru. The first type is a teacher who gives a little bit of knowledge but does not follow up the lessons. That is, he or she may leave and the disciple is then left alone without guidance. The second or middle level is one who teaches and then guides the disciple for a little while but not for the complete period needed by the disciple to reach the final goal. The best type of teacher according to Tantra is one who gives a teaching and then makes continued efforts to see that the disciple follows the instructions and finally realizes the ultimate state of human perfection.

The qualities of this highest guru are further enumerated in the *Tantra Shastra*. The guru is one who is tranquil, can control his mind, is humble and modestly dressed. He earns his living in a proper way and is a family man. He is well versed in metaphysical philosophy and established in the art of meditation. He is one who knows the theory and practice of imparting the teaching of meditation. He loves and guides his disciples. Such a guru is called *Mahakaola*

But even if there is a great teacher, there must also be someone who can absorb his lessons. The *Tantra Shastras* describe three different categories of disciples. The first type is compared to a glass which is placed in the water with the mouth facing downward. While it is in the water it appears to be full but if it is lifted out of the water it becomes empty. This is like a student who practices well in the presence of the teacher, but after the teacher leaves, the student discontinues the practice and cannot apply the teachings to his or her every day life. The second type of disciple is like a glass placed in the water at an angle. It also appears to be full when it is immersed, but when it is raised out of the water it loses most of the water. This disciple is one who practices in the presence of the teacher but after a while he or she practices less and less and finally discontinues the spiritual way of life. The third kind of disciple is the best of all and is symbolized by a glass which is immersed in the water in an upright position. While in the water it is completely full and when it is taken out of the water it remains full. This kind of student practices in the presence of the master and continues the practice even if he or she is physically separated from the teacher.

The relationship of guru and disciple is very important and is a key feature of Tantra. The path of spirituality has been described as being as thin as a razor's edge. At any moment it is possible to deviate from the path and then it is very difficult to reach liberation. The guru is always there to love and guide the disciple at all stages of the practice.

Shiva was a Mahakaola, but after his death there was a lack of teachers of the same stature and Tantra fell into decline. Some of the teachings were lost and others were deformed. Today Tantra is shrouded in mystery and there are many misconceptions about it. To understand the source of these misconceptions it is important to examine the 5 M's. These are spiritual practices beginning with the letter M. When Shiva first taught he gave teaching according to the development of the student. He saw that certain people were at a level in which they were dominated by animal passions and others were at a higher stage of development. He gave different practices depending on the qualities of the disciple.

The first M is known as **Madya**. It has two meanings. One meaning of madya is "wine". For those people who were dominated by physical instincts Shiva instructed them to continue drinking wine, but he showed them how to control the habit and then finally leave it. For those at a higher level of development Madya has another meaning, it refers not to wine but to a divine nectar. Each month the pineal gland secretes a fluid known as *amrta*. A yogi who has purified his mind and practices fasting can taste the fluid and experience the profound effect of the fluid on his whole being, which has been described as a state of bliss. Thus, there is both a crude or material interpretation of Madya and a subtle or spiritual understanding of the term.

Another of the five M's is **Mamsa**. One meaning of Mamsa is meat. For those who ate much meat, Shiva told them to continue to take it with a spiritual idea and finally to control the urge and quit the habit. For the subtle practitioner of Tantra, mamsa refers to the tongue and the spiritual practice of controlling one's speech.

Matsya, the third of the M's, refers to fish. For the physically minded practitioner Shiva applied the same instruction regarding fish as he did with wine and meat. In spiritual or subtle Tantra the "fish" refers to two subtle nerves which run up the body, starting at the base of the spine and crisscrossing each other and ending in the two nostrils. These nerves are known as the ida and *pingala*. By the science of breath control, *Pranayama*, the currents of the nerves are controlled and the mind becomes calm for meditation. This is the Matsya of the spiritual practitioner.

Another of the M's is **Mudra**. Mudra has only a spiritual significance and there is no physical or crude practice associated with it. Mudra means to maintain contact with those who help us to make spiritual progress and to avoid the company of those who might harm our development.

The last of the M's, **Maethuna**, is the one which has caused the most confusion regarding Tantra. Maethuna means union. In its crude sense it means sexual union. For those who were dominated by the sexual instinct Shiva told that the sex act must be done with a spiritual idea and that gradually this instinct must be controlled. For the more advanced practitioners, those who were practicing subtle or spiritual Tantra, Shiva taught another practice of Maethuna. In this case "union" refers to the union of individual consciousness with Supreme Consciousness. In this case the spiritual energy of the human being, lying dormant at the base of the spine, is raised until it reaches the highest energy center (near the pineal gland), causing the spiritual aspirant to experience union with the Supreme.

The Ananda Marga yoga of today is based on the spiritual and subtle interpretation of the 5 M's.

One of the distinctive aspects of subtle Tantra is the introversive method of meditation. The concept of *mantra* is of key importance in the Tantra idea of meditation. "Man" means "mind" and "tra" means "that which liberates", thus mantra is a particular vibration which liberates the mind.

The ancient yogis experimented with sound vibration and began to utilize special sounds which they found useful in the process of expansion of mind. They found that there are seven principle psycho-spiritual energy centers in the human body. They further learned that there are 50 sounds which emanate from the centers. These sounds are found in the alphabet of Sanskrit, and certain combinations of the sounds were used in ancient processes of concentration and meditation. During Tantric meditation the

meditator is concentrating on the mantra and trying to keep only one sound vibration (and its associated idea) in his or her mind. Constant repetition of the mantra leads a practitioner to higher states of consciousness.

Not any sound can be chosen at random for use in meditation, rather there are certain qualities which the mantra must possess in order for it to be effective. First of all the mantra must be pulsative, that is, there will be two syllables which are repeated in synchronization with the inhalation and exhalation of breathing. In addition the mantra must have an idea associated with it. The general idea of the mantras used in meditation is that "I am one with the Supreme Consciousness". The mantra thus helps the individual to associate his or her own individual consciousness with the totality of consciousness in the universe.

The final characteristics of the mantra is that it must create a certain vibration which acts as a link between the individual vibration of the meditator and the vibration of the Supreme Consciousness. As people are not all alike, the mantras which are used in meditation are also not all alike. The meditation teacher chooses a mantra which matches the particular vibration of the individual and can link this individual vibration with the universal rhythm of the Supreme Consciousness.

Tantra is more than just a collection of meditation or yoga techniques. There is a particular world-view associated with it. According to Tantra, struggle is the essence of life. The effort to struggle against all obstacles and move from the imperfect to the perfect is the true spirit of Tantra.

In this movement from imperfection to perfection, there are three basic stages an individual passes through. In the first stage, the person is dominated by animal instincts, but in the next stage he or she gains control over these instincts and reaches the state of true human development. Finally, by constant struggle and effort, a state is reached where the human being becomes godlike. Tantra thus has an optimistic worldview. It shows how each individual is moving in a cosmic circle from a state of less developed consciousness to the most highly developed status

Ashtanga Yoga: Eight Steps to Perfection

The goal of Tantra is complete happiness and the method for attaining it lies in the full development of mind and body. Although this perfection of mind and body can be slowly achieved through natural means there is also a well-defined method for more rapid self-development. There are eight parts of this practice and since its goal is union (yoga) with the Cosmic Consciousness, it is also known as *Astaunga yoga*, or eight-limbed yoga.

The first two steps are *Yama* and *Niyama*, which are moral guidelines for human development. The idea of morality here is that by controlling our behavior we can achieve a higher state of being. The idea is not simply to follow a rule for the sake of following a rule. Rather the object is to attain perfection of the mind. When this state is attained then there will be no question of “rules” because the desire to do something which is detrimental to the welfare of our self or another person will no longer be present in the mind, which is in a state of perfect equilibrium.

Yama means “that which controls”, and the practice of Yama means to control actions related to the external world. In his book *A Guide to Human Conduct*, Shrii Shrii Anandamurti has clearly explained the different aspects of Yama and Niyama, giving an inter-pretation that is clear and also practical for people in the 20th Century. Here we will briefly review the five parts of Yama and the five parts of Niyama, but for a fuller explanation one should read *A Guide to Human Conduct*.

The first principle of Yama is *Ahimsa*. Ahimsa means not to do harm to others in thought, word and actions. To the best of our capacity we should never inflict injury on another living being. This principle is sometimes interpreted to mean complete non-violence, but if carried to an extreme it becomes very impractical. For example each time we breathe there are microbes which we inhale and kill! To solve this dilemma Anandamurti gives suggestions, saying that in selecting our diet we should choose the food where consciousness is less developed before killing highly developed creatures. Another problem is the question of self defense. Here Anandamurti says that to defend oneself against an aggressor or against an anti-social person is justifiable. Even if you use force, your intention is to save and protect life, not to cause pain or block the mental, physical or spiritual progress of that person.

The second principle of Yama is called *Satya*. The definition of Satya is “action of mind and the use of speech in the spirit of welfare”. It means to tell the truth and act in a straightforward and honest way which will promote the welfare of all. In cases where telling the exact truth will harm others, then Satya means to say what is best for the welfare of others rather than to tell the exact facts. Adherence to Satya brings about tremendous strength of mind and is extremely important for spiritual success.

The third principle is *Asteya*. Asteya means not to take possession of things which belong to others. This means not to commit actual theft. Also stealing should not be done mentally. Those who want to steal but who refrain from doing so out of fear of being caught are ‘mentally’ stealing. Asteya means to refrain from both mental and physical stealing.

The fourth principle is *Brahmacarya* and it means to remain attached to *Brahma* (the Cosmic Consciousness) by treating all beings and things as an expression of the Cosmic Consciousness. The mind takes the shape of the object of our thought. If we are thinking in a materialistic manner, seeing all things only as material objects, then the mind will gradually become dull. If we can perform all actions remembering that everything in this world is actually the Cosmic Consciousness in a transformed state, then the

mind will move towards a state of oneness with the Cosmic Consciousness. In some books Brahmacharya has been described as sexual abstinence. This definition was put forward in the middle ages by priests who wanted to attain supremacy over ordinary family people.

The fifth part of Yama is **Aparigraha** and it means not to hoard wealth which is superfluous to our actual needs. It means to live a simple life with only as much physical wealth as is actually necessary. This amount is variable according to time, place, and person. It is an important principle in both individual and collective life, because if one person or one nation hoards wealth, it may result in starvation and misery for other people. It is an important part of spiritual practice, because if one is always preoccupied with physical objects, then he or she can not think about the Cosmic Consciousness.

The second major part of Astanga Yoga is called **Niyama**. Niyama means self-regulation. Without self-regulation, it is impossible to attain higher states of consciousness.

The first principle of Niyama is **Shaoca**. Shaoca means Purity of mind and body. It includes cleanliness of one's external world such as the body, clothing and environment, as well as the internal world of the mind. External cleanliness can be achieved by regular cleaning of the body and the environment, while internal purity of mind can be attained by auto-suggestion. That is, one must substitute a good thought in place of a destructive thought. For example, if one feels greedy, one should think about and then perform a generous action.

The second part of Niyama is **Santosa**. It means to maintain a state of mental ease, to be contented. When the mind hungers for something it is in a state of uneasiness. Upon satisfying that desire, the moment of relief and ease which the mind gets is called *tosa* in Sanskrit. Those people who are easily satisfied and can maintain a state of contentment are following Santosa. The achievement of Santosa is linked with Aparigraha (mentioned previously).

The third principle of Niyama is **Tapah**. It means to undergo hardship on the path of personal and collective development. An act which is done in the spirit of service helping others without expecting anything in return is considered to be *Tapah*. The service should be rendered to people who really need help. If you undergo suffering to feed a rich person it is not a very useful service. In the past some spiritual aspirants practiced self-inflicted hardships and austerities (like walking on fire) but such austerities do not provide benefits to the aspirant, to the society or to Cosmic Consciousness, so they have no importance in spiritual advancement.

The fourth principle is **Svadhya**. It means having a clear understanding of a spiritual subject. One should read and assimilate the meaning of great books and scriptures written by spiritually advanced people. Mere reading without understanding is not Svadhya. The importance of Svadhya is that it gives one contact with great personalities and inspires one to continue on the path of self-realization.

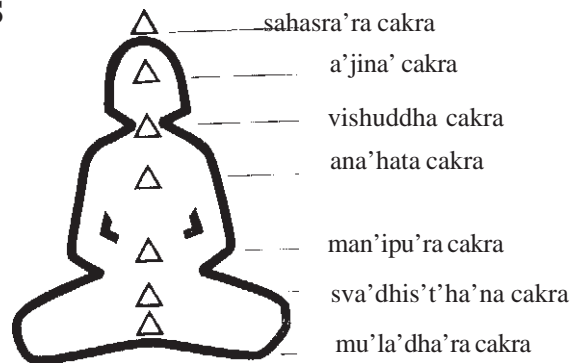
The fifth part of Niyama is **Ishvara Pranidhana**. It means to make the Cosmic Consciousness the goal of your life. This is done through a process of meditation in which the meditator thinks only of one thought, the Cosmic Consciousness. As previously explained, in Tantric meditation the meditator repeats a mantra which reminds him or her of his or her relationship with the Cosmic Consciousness. Part of this meditation process also includes steps where the mind is detached from other objects and is focused on the Cosmic Consciousness.

The third limb of Astanga Yoga is **Asana**. An asana is a posture which is comfortably held. It is the most well-known part of yoga, but it is often misunderstood as well. Asanas are not normal exercises such as calisthenics or gymnastics. Asanas are special exercises which have specific effects on the endocrine glands, joints, muscles, ligaments and nerves.

Thousands of years ago sages used to observe the animals of the forest. They noticed that each animal

had certain qualities and that the animals often assumed different poses. By imitating these poses they began to notice important effects on the human body. For example, the peacock is a bird with a powerful digestive system capable of digesting even a poisonous snake. The ancient sages developed a posture for humans, imitating that of the peacock, which strengthens the human digestive system. Other postures were also developed which exercise other organs and glands. The ancient sages developed thousands of postures. However, Shrii Shrii Anandamurti has selected around forty which are useful to help one's spiritual Progress as well as to cure and prevent different diseases. (*See Carya Carya III*

Diagram 1: THE CAKRAS



In addition to helping to bring about physical well-being the asanas have an important effect on the mind. when glandular functions are well balanced this contributes to mental balance. Also, by strengthening the psychic centers the asanas help control the mental propensities (*vrttis*) controlled by these centers. These fifty mental propensities are distributed in the six lower cakras.

The fourth component of Astaanga Yoga is **Pranayama** or control of vital energy. Pranayama is a well-known practice of yoga, but the principle upon which this practice is based is less well known and deserves explanation here.

Tantra defines life as the parallelism of physical and mental waves in proper coordination with vital energies. The vital energies are known as Vayus or "winds". There are ten vayus in the human body which are responsible for the moving activities including respiration, circulation of the blood excretion of wastes, movement of limbs; etc. The controlling point of all these vayus is an organ known as *Pranendriya*. (The Pranendriya, like the cakras, is not an anatomical organ.) This Pranendriya also has the function of linking the various sensory organs with a point in the brain. The Pranendriya is located in the center of the chest and it pulsates in synchronization with the process of respiration. when there is a rapid pulsation of the breath and also of the pranendriya it is more difficult for the mind to link up with sensory perceptions. For example if you run a race of 1000 meters you cannot immediately eat something and recognize the flavor of what you have eaten due to the rapid breathing and disturbed functioning of the pranendriya. During rapid breathing it also becomes more difficult to concentrate the mind.

In pranayama there is a special process of breathing in which the pulsation of the Pranendriya becomes still and the mind becomes very calm. This helps meditation greatly. Pranayama also readjusts the balance of vital energy in the body. Pranayama is a complicated practice and can be dangerous if not taught and guided by a competent teacher. The practitioner of pranayama must maintain a spiritual thought in the mind while doing the exercise - if not, his or her mind may focus on a negative propensity (such as anger for example) and the mind will become degraded rather than elevated. It is also important to know in which part of the body the vital energy should be concentrated. Because of these complexities Pranayama is usually taught following a preparatory period in which the student becomes familiar with the basic meditation process and other practices. In the system of Ananda Marga yoga evolved by Shrii Shrii Anandamurti, Pranayama is the fourth lesson in a series of six lessons of meditation techniques taught individually to students as they become ready for successive lessons.

The fifth limb of Astaanga Yoga is known as *Pratyahara* which means to withdraw the mind from its attachment to external objects. In Tantra the repetition of mantra is preceded by a process in which the meditator retracts his or her mind to one point. The stories of yogis who are so deep in meditation that they cannot even feel pins which are being stuck into their bodies are examples of the efficacy of this practice. However, it is not an easy matter to arrive at such a state of sensory withdrawal. Progressively, after constant and regular practice, a beginning meditator can gain more success in this process.

Another part of *Pratyahara* is called “the offering of colors.” Each vibration in the universe has a color associated with it, and for every object of the mind, there is an associated vibration and color. During meditation one’s mind may be occupied with different objects. At the end of meditation, the meditator visualizes and symbolically offers to the Supreme Consciousness the colors associated with the thoughts which have disturbed the mind during meditation. Through this process the mind becomes detached from these thoughts and objects. This lesson of offering the colors is taught as part of the second stage of individual instruction in the Ananda Marga system of Tantra Yoga.

The sixth part of Astaanga Yoga is *Dharana*. *Dharana* means the concentration of the mind at a specific point. In the basic lesson of Tantric meditation the aspirant brings his or her mind to a specific *cakra* which is his or her spiritual and psychic nucleus. This point (called the *Ista Cakra*) varies from person to person and is indicated by the teacher of meditation at the time of initiation. When the mind is well concentrated on the point, then the process of repeating the mantra begins. If the concentration is lost, the aspirant must again bring his or her mind back to the point of concentration. This practice of bringing one’s mind to the point of concentration is a form of *Dharana*.

In addition to this *Dharana* found in the first lesson of meditation, there is another form of *Dharana* known as *Tattva Dharana* in which the aspirant concentrates on the *cakras* and the specific factors controlled by the *cakras*. This lesson is important because it helps the meditator to gain control over the mental propensities governed by that *cakra* as well as to increase the concentration powers of the mind which is especially valuable in the other lessons of meditation. *Tattva Dharana* also has the effect of loosening the pressure of the *ida* and *pingala* nerves on the *susumna* nerve. When this pressure is loosened, then the spiritual energy *Kulakundalinii* can flow more easily upward. *Tattva Dharana* is taught as the third lesson of this series of Tantra Yoga.

When someone has gained skill in *Dharana*, he or she can then learn the seventh limb of Astaanga Yoga which is *Dhyana*. In this process, the mind is first brought to a particular *cakra* and then is directed in an unbroken flow towards the Supreme Consciousness. This flow continues until the mind becomes completely absorbed in the Supreme Consciousness. This process is difficult and is only given after the aspirant has practiced all the preceding steps, particularly *Dharana*.

There are different forms of *dhyana* and through the study of *Dhyana* we can understand the relationship of Tantra with other spiritual traditions. When Tantric teachers from India first brought this form of meditation to China it became known as Chan, and when Chan was brought to Japan via Korea, it finally became known as Zen. Although there are important differences between contemporary Zen meditation and the *Dhyana* as practiced by the Tantric masters in India, the root teaching was the same. *Dhyana* helps to perfect the most subtle layer of the mind and leads the person to the final step of Astaanga Yoga which is *samadhi*.

Samadhi is not like the other seven steps in that it is not a particular method or practice, rather it is the result of practicing the other parts of Astaanga Yoga. It is the absorption of mind in the Supreme Consciousness. There are two principal forms of *samadhi*, *nirvikalpa* and *savikalpa*. *Savikalpa* is a trance of absorption with distortion or qualification. In *savikalpa samadhi* the person has the feeling that “I am the Supreme Consciousness”, but in *nirvikalpa samadhi* there is no longer a feeling of “I”. The individual consciousness is totally merged in the Cosmic Consciousness.

Koshas: The Structure of the Mind

According to Ananda Marga philosophy, the mind is pure consciousness which has been modified by the operative principle (*Prakrti*) to form three functional parts: *mahat* (“I am”), *aham* (“I do”) and *citta* (“I have done”).¹ However, due to the continued activity of the operative principle on the *citta* portion there is the creation of five different layers or *kosas*. In order to explain the intellectual and intuitional capabilities of the human being it is important to understand the functioning of these five *kosas*. In addition, understanding of the five layers of the mind also helps one in the various spiritual practices which are designed to perfect these layers of the mind.

The division of the mind into five layers is similar to the structure of an onion - as one layer is peeled away the next layer is revealed until one reaches the innermost layer.

The outermost layer of the mind is actually the physical body which we can consider to be the sixth layer of the mind. This physical body is formed from the food we eat and is known in Sanskrit as *annamaya kosa*. By admitting that the body is the base of the mind, Ananda Marga philosophy avoids the duality of mind and body which has troubled some philosophical systems. Also by accepting the body as an integral part of the mind, the practitioner of Tantra Yoga includes the development of the body in the program of spiritual development.

The need to integrate a concern for the body in an over all program to develop the mind is demonstrated in the story of Gaotama, the Buddha, who in his final quest to attain enlightenment vowed to sit in meditation until he reached his goal. He sat for several days without eating or sleeping, but his body gradually weakened until he was no longer able to maintain the position of meditation. Fortunately, a young woman saw the plight of Gaotama and brought him a bowl of food. He ate the food, and with renewed strength continued in his arduous spiritual practice and after several more days realized his true self.

Beyond the *annamaya kosa* we find the first non-physical layer of the mind which is known as *kamamaya kosa*. *Kama* means desire and it is this layer which controls and guides our relationship with the exterior world. The work of the sensory and motor organs (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin, limbs, etc.) are governed by this *kosa*. It is this layer of the mind which is at work during our normal waking consciousness. It senses the exterior world and helps our motor organs to react to the world. It is known in Western psychology as the “conscious mind”. If someone sees a piece of cake and then desires to eat it and finally if his or her motor organs begin to carry out this desire, then we have a typical operation of the *kamamaya kosa*.

Going further into the mind we find another layer known as the *manomaya kosa* which is also known as the subtle mind. This is the layer which governs memory. All memory is stored here, and we can recall a previous experience due to the capacity of this layer. In addition the mind’s ability to process and use previously acquired data also depends on this layer.

An example of its operation is found in a university student who reads many books in preparation for an examination. At the time of the examination there may be one or two questions and it is the *manomaya kosa* which recollects the diverse facts from all the books and helps to synthesize them into a coherent response.

The *manomaya kosa* is known in psychology as the subconscious mind”. The subconscious mind is active during sleep while the conscious mind (*kamamaya kosa*) is inactive. Dreams take place in this layer. A further function of the *manomaya kosa* is that pleasure and pain are experienced here.

Unlike many schools of Western psychology, Ananda Marga philosophy states that the mind does not end with the subconscious layer. Beyond the manomaya kosa there are three layers which are collectively known as *Karana manas* or “causal mind.” Some psychologists, notably Carl Jung, have called this the “unconscious mind”. This causal mind is concerned with the intuitive capabilities of the human being, but due to the constant activity of the conscious and sub-conscious minds, it is rarely experienced by most human beings. This is perhaps why its study has been neglected in most schools of psychology.

This causal mind has also been called the collective unconscious by Carl Jung because all the knowledge of past, present and future is lying in it. The information in the causal mind is not limited to the memory and experience of the individual as is the data in the subconscious mind. It is because of the existence of this causal mind that we can explain the extraordinary experiences of prophets, psychics, clairvoyants and others who have predicted events of the future or who have known things beyond the limits of their sense organs.

An example is the case of the scientist Mendeleev who was the first person to formulate the periodic table of elements, an arrangement of the physical elements in order of their atomic weight. Mendeleev was asked how he had determined this arrangement and he responded by explaining that one night he was dreaming and in his dream he saw the periodic table of the elements. He woke up and then copied it down.

The American clairvoyant Edgar Cayce was able to diagnose the illnesses of people who were thousands of kilometers away from him. This is another example of the extraordinary capacity of the causal mind.

The Old Testament story of Joseph’s dreams in which he predicted several years of good harvests followed by several years of famine in ancient Egypt is another example of the limitless knowledge which lies in the more subtle layers of mind.

Similarly, there is an Indian tale of a man who worshipped the goddess Kali in order to find a remedy for his sick child; subsequently he was told the proper medicine in a dream by the goddess. In these cases, dreamers went into deep sleep in which they penetrated beyond the manomaya kosa into the causal mind.

In Ananda Marga philosophy, three layers of the causal mind are recognized. The first layer is called *atimanasa kosa*. It is here where the desire for spiritual realization originates. The faculties of clairvoyance, intuition and artistic creativity are characteristic functions of this layer.

The second layer of the causal mind is *vijnamaya kosa* or “special knowledge” kosa. Two of the most important intuitional qualities which humans can develop are expressed in this kosa. One is *viveka* or true discrimination; the ability to know what is permanent and what is transitory. The true sage knows that the passing show of this material world is only a relative truth and he or she is able to see the unchanging and absolute consciousness behind the panorama of the physical world. When *viveka* is developed then the second quality, *vaeragya*, gets expression. *Vaeragya* is the renunciation of and non-attachment to transitory physical objects. It does not mean running away from worldly objects like a hermit in a cave, but rather psychic non-attachment to objects. This state is best expressed in the story of India’s legendary sage-king, Janaka, who is said to have remarked “even if my kingdom goes up in smoke, I have lost nothing.”

The final layer of the causal mind is *hiranmaya kosa* or “golden layer”. In this kosa a practitioner of Tantra Yoga can experience a brilliant golden effulgence and experience the pure “I” feeling. When the aspirant reaches this layer, he or she has the awareness that only a thin veil separates him or her from the pure witnessing consciousness (Atman) which lies beyond the kosas.

Shrii Shrii Anandamurti compares the mind to a mirror which can reflect the Cosmic Consciousness. He says that if the mirror is not clean then the reflection of the consciousness is not clear. We can think of the kosas as the different layers of our mind's "mirror". If there are impefections in the different layers, then the reflection of consciousness is not fully perceived, and we may be unaware that there is pure consciousness beyond our mind. That is why Tantra Yoga utilizes the eight steps of Astaunga Yoga to puriify each of the kosas.

The development of the mind can be accomplished by natural processes but it can be greatly accelerated by the application of the various yoga practices. The body or annamaya kosa is developed naturally through physical labor and exercise while yoga prescribes asanas and the proper selection of food² to develop the kosa.

The development of the kamamaya kosa (conscious mind) through natural means comes about due to physical clash, that is the struggle to live in the world. In Astaunga yoga the practice of Yama and Niyama (moral code of conduct) helps one to develop the conscious mind by strengthening one's conscience. The subconscious mind (manomaya kosa) is also developed naturally through physical struggles and in yoga through the practice of Pranayama. The atimanasa kosa, or first layer of the causal mind is developed naturally through psychic clash, struggles in the realm of mind which everyone faces in the course of life. The yogic practice for the development of the atimanasa kosa is pratyahara, the withdrawal of the senses from attachment to external objects.

The second layer of the causal mind, vijinanamaya kosa, is likewise developed in all humans through psychic struggles and in yoga practice by the technique of Dharana (concentration). Finally the development of the last kosa, hiranyamaya kosa, comes about in all humans due to their longing for the Infinite. In yoga the practice of Dhyana develops this last and most subtle portion of the mind.

Table 1, Development of Kosa's

Kosa (layer of the mind)	Yogic Means of Development	Natural Means of Development
1. Kamamaya	Yama-Niyama	Physical clash
2. Manomaya	Pranayama	Physical clash and psychic clash
3. Atimanasa kosa	Pratyahara	Psychic clash
4. Vijinanamaya	Dharana	Psychic and spiritual clash
5. Hiranmaya kosa	Dhyana	Longing for the Great, (spiritual yearning).

1. A fuller description of Mahat, Aham, Citta appears in the chapter on "the Cycle of Creation."

2. See the book, *Food For Thought*, Ananda Marga Publications.

Brahma Cakra: The Cycle of Creation

In all civilizations people have attempted to explain the origin of the world in one way or another. In each cultural group one can find some mythology in which the story of creation is explained. Most of these stories do not however agree with what modern science says about creation. In Ananda Marga philosophy one can find a theory of creation which is not only in accord with the present views of modern science, but can also serve to guide scientists in their quest to find the answers to the many cosmological questions which are as yet unresolved.

This Tantric theory of creation, while scientific, is also profoundly spiritual. The wonder of how the stars move precisely in their orbits, the intricacy and beauty of the various living creatures from amoeba to human and other evidence of a profound intelligence and order in the universe are not neglected by the Tantric conception of creation and development of the cosmos. Rather, Ananda Marga cosmology begins by looking to the infinite consciousness which is the source of everything. This consciousness is considered to be the first cause and it is known as *Brahma*. Thus the cycle of creation in which Brahma transforms itself into this manifested universe is known as *Brahmacakra*.

Brahma means “the Entity which is great and has the capacity to make others great.” Brahma is composed of consciousness and energy. In Sanskrit, consciousness is known as *Purusa* and energy is called *Prakrti*. (Another name for consciousness is *Shiva*, and energy can also be called *Shakti*). Although we can say that Brahma is a composite of consciousness and energy, it must be emphasized that Brahma is a singular entity. Its two “parts” are like the two sides of a piece of paper. they can never be separated. Consciousness never exists independently from the cosmic energy.

Just what exactly is consciousness? Purusa or consciousness can be defined according to the various functions it performs. First of all consciousness performs the act of witnessing all events of the universe. It is like a chandelier hanging in a room from the ceiling; many different actions take place under the witnessing light bulb, but the light bulb itself does not undergo change or participate directly in the action it witnesses. It provides the light which makes all the activities possible and “observes” all the activities. It is the “cognitive faculty.”

Another function of consciousness (Purusa) is that it is the material cause of the universe... it is the basic “stuff” from which everything else is composed. Scientists have always been searching to find the fundamental matter of the universe. At one time they thought that the atom was the smallest particle, but in recent years they have been dividing and sub-dividing the atom, finding smaller particles with no end in sight. Yogic scientists have long said that the ultimate cause of all existence and the source of all material objects is nothing but pure consciousness.

Still another way to describe consciousness is by saying that it is the “efficient cause” of the universe. It is the fundamental entity controlling all actions in this universe. Consciousness is like the master architect who has made the plan of the universe and acts to carry it out.

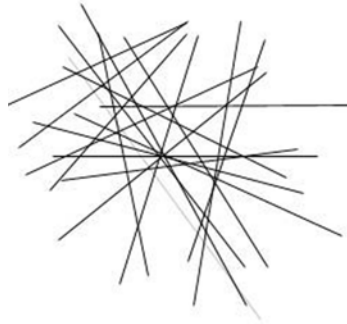
However, the architect takes the help of Prakrti, the operative principle, in order to carry out its task. Prakrti is the other aspect of Brahma, or the other side of the piece of paper so to speak. In the cycle of creation the dominant and controlling role belongs to the consciousness and the operative principle is considered to be a characteristic of consciousness. It is the consciousness which permits the operative principle to work. If the consciousness does not give the operative principle a chance to work, then the pure consciousness remains without any modification. In this condition the consciousness is beyond human conception because it does not have attributes such as form, smell, shape or colour. Ananda Marga philosophy calls this state of pure consciousness *Nirguna Brahma*.

If the operative principle is given a chance to act, it works according to three fundamental modes. That is Prakrti creates differences in this world by modifying the original pure consciousness in three distinctive ways. These three fundamental styles of action are known as *gunas* in Sanskrit, a term which literally means “binding quality”. This term derives from the idea that the Prakrti is like a rope which modifies the consciousness by binding it. When a particular *guna* is active there is a modification or bondage of the consciousness. The three *gunas* of prakrti are called *sattva* (sentient), *rajah* (mutative), and *tamah* (static).

Sattvaguna creates the most subtle bondage or modification of the consciousness. It is responsible for the feeling of existence... ‘I exist’. Rajah *guna* is responsible for the feeling “I do” and tamah *guna* creates the feeling of “I have done”. Tamah *guna* works to objectify thought and is responsible for the creation of the solid objects which we observe in the universe, as will be shown below.

What is the process by which Prakrti takes action and begins to modify the consciousness creating Saguna Brahma or Brahma with qualities? First, we must try to conceive of a state “prior” to the creation of the universe. Here the Supreme Consciousness is without any modification. The three *gunas* of prakrti exist but they are not acting. If the three forces are represented by countless lines, the intersections of these lines form countless polygons. This is a theoretical way to picture the state in which consciousness is unmodified.

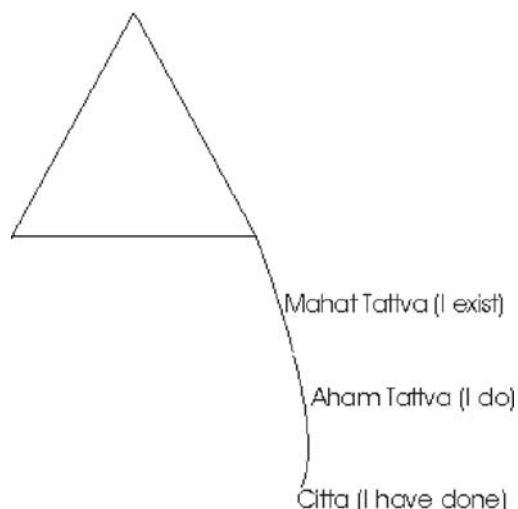
Diagram 1: Causal Matrix



Going further, the most stable figure formed by the three forces is a triangle. In this “triangle of forces”, the three *gunas* are whirling around, transforming themselves, one into the other. Purusa (consciousness) is “trapped” inside this triangle. The formation of this triangle signals the beginning of the creation of the universe. The Purusa inside the triangle is the nucleus of the universe, *Purusottama*, and when the balance of the forces in the triangle breaks down, one force, the sentient force breaks out of the triangle and modifies the consciousness.

This first modification of consciousness is very subtle. The feeling of “I exist” is created and the consciousness becomes aware of itself. This “I exist” is called *Mahattattva* and is the first portion of the cosmic mind. Following the first modification, the next force, rajah *guna*, becomes active and adds another quality to the consciousness. The thought “I do” arises in the pure consciousness and the second part of the cosmic mind *Ahamtattva* is created. Finally, the third *guna*, the static force or tamah *guna*, becomes active and modifies the consciousness in another way. It gives the feeling “I have done”. It objectifies the consciousness by creating the third part of the cosmic mind which is known as *Citta* or mind stuff.

Diagram 2: Formation of the Cosmic Mind



This description of the cosmic mind may seem abstract, but if we understand the functioning of our own mind, which is a small version of the cosmic mind, we can understand it better. If we see a tall tree, for example, what is actually happening? Our sense organs are receiving reflected light from the tree and this is transmitted to the brain and finally an image is formed in our mind. However, we can also close our eyes and still bring the image of the tree in our mind. The portion of the mind which gives the command to “create” the tree in the mind is the “I do” factor or *ahamtattva*, which is dominated by the mutative *raja* guna. The portion of the mind which forms the image of the tree is the *citta* or “I have done” factor. The *citta* is like a screen on which images are formed according to the commands of the “I do” factor. And in all the operations of the mind, the “I exist” or *mahattattva* must be present, because without a sense of “I” there cannot be any “I do”.

Thus, the cosmic mind functions in the same way as our individual minds, but there is an important difference which should be noted here. As we discussed above, the physical world (such as the tall tree) appears as an external reality to us, but for the cosmic mind the entire universe is an internal image on the vast cosmic *citta*. Also, in our individual minds if we use our imaginative power to create a green elephant, this image is not a reality for anyone except the one who imagined it. But if there is any image in the *citta* of the cosmic mind it is a reality and will be perceived as such by the micro-cosmic unit minds.

After the formation of the three parts of the cosmic mind, the static force (*tama* guna) continues to modify the *citta* portion of the cosmic mind and adds further attributes to the pure consciousness. It begins to transform a portion of the *citta* into the five fundamental factors.

In different ancient systems of thought there were said to be basic elements out of which all matter is composed. The ancient Greeks talked of earth, air, water and fire and in esoteric systems such as astrology these elements are also mentioned.

In the Ananda Marga philosophy there are five fundamental factors. The first is known as etherial factor or *akasha tattva*. Although modern science abandoned the concept of ether after the Michelson-Morley experiments of the 19th century failed to detect it, we can reconcile the yogic system’s *akasha tattva* with modern science by thinking of it as “space”. In Tantra this spatial factor is said to be able to carry the subtle primordial vibration known as *Om* or *Om*.¹

As the *tama* guna continues to modify the consciousness, a portion of consciousness is transformed into *vayu tattva* or gaseous factor. This factor can carry sound and touch vibrations. The next factor is *tejas tattva* or luminous factor. This factor can carry sound, touch and sight vibrations. Following the

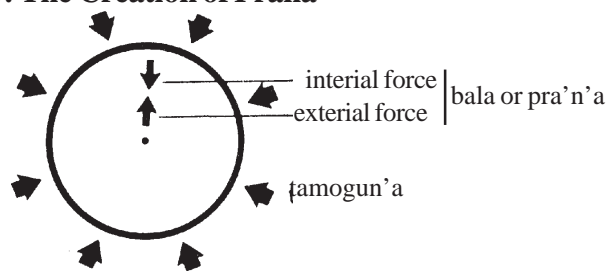
luminous factor there is the creation of the liquid factor, *apa tattva*, which carries taste vibration as well as sound, touch and sight. The last factor, solid or *ks'iti tattva* which carries the smell vibration as well as the vibrations carried in the other factors. Thus, all things of this physical world exist in the citta of the cosmic mind and this material world can be considered a thought projection of the cosmic consciousness. Modern science is also moving towards this position. Physicist Sir James Jean wrote, "the stream of knowledge is heading towards a non-mechanical reality; the universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a great machine."² Another physicist, Sir Arthur Eddington said:

"The final realization that physical science is concerned with a world of shadows is one of the most significant advances. In the world of physics we watch a shadowgraph performance of the drama of familiar life. The shadow of my elbow rests on the shadow table as the shadow ink flows over the shadow paper. It is all symbolic, and as a symbol the physicist leaves it. Then comes the alchemist Mind who transmutes the symbols.. to put the conclusion.. The stuff of the world is mind stuff."³

When the consciousness has been transformed into solid factor one half of the cosmic cycle has been completed. The first part of the cosmic cycle in which consciousness is transformed into cosmic mind, and then into the five fundamental factors, is known as *saincara*, or "movement away from the cosmic nucleus." In the second half of the cycle, matter is transformed back into pure consciousness. This movement towards the nucleus of the universe is known as *pratisaincara*. Previously we saw that through the process of the action of the three gunas or binding principles the consciousness is transformed into cosmic mind and that a portion of the cosmic mind is transformed into the basic elements which form the universe. The process of creation does not stop with the transformation of consciousness into inanimate objects. The binding principles of prakrti continue to transform the consciousness and the development of animate beings is accomplished in this process.

It is the static principle of tamah guna of Prakrti which continues the relentless transformation of consciousness. At the end of the *saincara* phase we find the creation of solid factor. Tamah guna puts pressure on the solid objects attempting to compress them or to lessen the space between the molecules. This compression of the static principle causes the creation of forces within the object. One force in the object is called an "external" force, as it is moving outward from the center of the object acting to break up the object. Another force may be termed "internal" - as it is acting to hold the object together and it moves towards the object's nucleus.

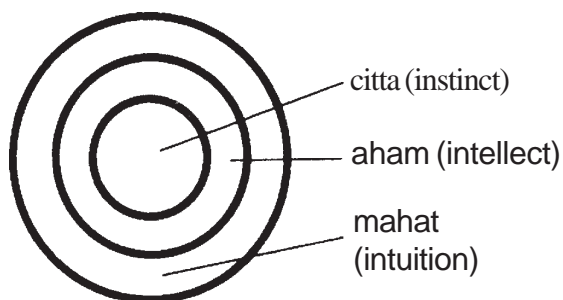
Diagram 3: The Creation of Prana



The collective name of these two forces is *Prana*. If the center-seeking internal force is stronger, a nucleus is formed in the solid factor and this nucleus controls the Prana or vital force in the object and there is now the possibility for the development of life. However, if the external-seeking force is stronger, then a resultant force bursts the object apart. In Sanskrit this bursting apart of the crude factor is known as *Jadasphota* - the explosions of dying stars known to astronomers as supernova are examples of *jadasphota*. In *jadasphota* the solid factor is broken down into liquid, aerial, luminous and ethereal factors. If however, a nucleus is created in the object and the vital forces are controlled by a nucleus and if there is a congenial atmosphere in which there is a balance of the fundamental factors, then we

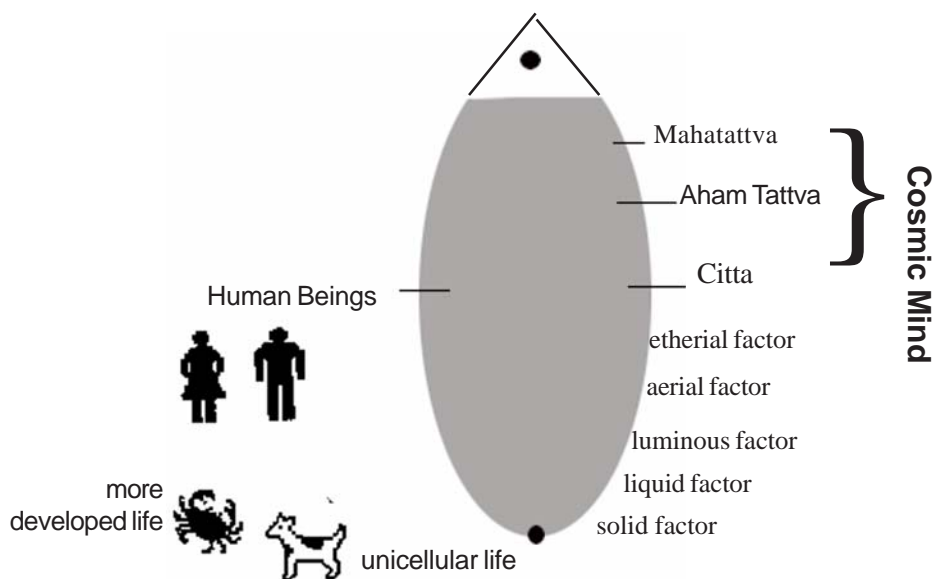
can witness the first expression of life.⁴ With the creation of life we find an important event in the cosmic cycle. In each living entity there is a mind. The simpler the entity is in physical structure, the simpler will be its mind. Conversely, the more complex an entity's physical structure, the more complex will be its mind. We may ask what is the origin of the mind in the individual living being? Ananda Marga philosophy says that within the solid objects which are under the pressure of the static force, two forces are created. As a result of friction caused by the conflict of these forces within the object, some portion of the solid is pulverised into something subtler, which is mind stuff or citta. As the solids originated from mind (the cosmic mind), it is quite consistent and logical to say that unit or individual minds have come out of matter, because matter has come from mind and thus mental potentiality is inherent in all matter. In one-celled living beings the mind which exists is very simple. For example, in a protozoa we can see that its behavior is reflexive or instinctive. If you put a hot needle next to it, it darts away automatically. This type of reflexive behavior is controlled by its simple mind which is completely composed of citta. The sense of "I do" and "I exist" does not find expression in unicellular beings. Life is in a state of evolution. Due to conflict and cohesion, the simple animals and plants become more complex. In Ananda Marga philosophy we also make the observation that the tamah guna, which has dominated the cycle of creation from the point of cosmic citta up to the point of creation of simple life, loses its dominance at this stage. Rajah guna, or mutative force, now becomes dominant. In this stage, living beings become more and more physically developed and also their minds become more complex. Animals and plants have not only a mind which governs instinctive and reflexive behaviour, but now there is also the existence of the second functional part of the mind - the "I do" factor (aham tattva). When there is a significant portion of "I do" factor (also known in psychology as "ego") and it is greater in quantity than the citta portion of the mind which governs instinct, the animal has the capacity for intelligent behavior. In many animals we can see the beginning of intellect. They can learn by trial and error, for example, to avoid those things which give pain and to seek those things which give pleasure. As aham tattva gets more developed, the behavior of the animals becomes more complex.

Diagram 4: The Composition of the Mind



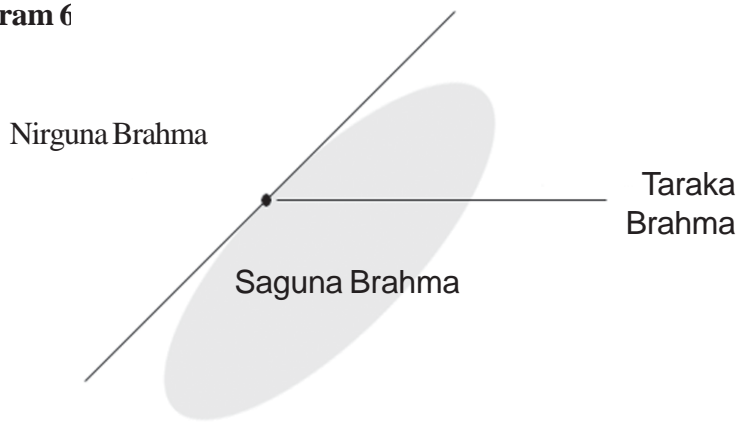
Evolution continues, and in some animals and plants there is also the expression of another part of the mind. This further evolution of the mind is caused by the increasing activity of the most subtle and strongest guna, sattva guna. The influence of sattva guna brings about the creation of the "I exist" factor (Mahattattva). If the amount of Mahattattva in a being's mind is greater than the amount of aham tattva, the surplus portion is responsible for the creation of the intuitive faculty in the living being. Whereas intellect is an analytical faculty, intuition is a synthetic faculty. With intellect we can know something by examining its parts whereas with intuition it is possible to know something in its entirety, in a holistic manner. Human beings who possess much intuition we recognise as sages. Two important characteristics found among people with developed intuition are *viveka* (discrimination) and *vaeragya* (renunciation or non-attachment).

Diagram 5: Brahmachakra : The Comic Cycle



In the returning phase (pratisaincara) of the cosmic cycle we have seen the evolution of life from simple to complex forms. Looking at diagram 5 of Brahmachakra we can see that the cycle is oval shaped and not circular. This means that the speed of evolution near the upper parts is greater. When the stage of human life is reached a crucial point is attained. Humans have the capacity to increase the speed of their evolution towards the nucleus of the cycle. This can be done through meditation. In meditation there is a process in which the citta (I have done) is merged into the aham tattva (I do) and the aham is absorbed into the mahatattva (I exist). Because of this process, the intuition of the persons becomes greatly developed and that is why meditation is also known as the intuitional science. When the mind, in the course of meditation, becomes transformed into this intuitional mahatattva and then merged with the cosmic mind there is a state known as *savikalpa samadhi*. The meditator at this time feels “I am one with the cosmic consciousness”. But this is not the ultimate state. When the whole mind is dissolved into the witnessing consciousness there is a state known as *nirvikalpa samadhi*. In this state there is no feeling of “I”, and hence no self-consciousness, only ecstatic union. What is the final destiny of life? Yoga is said to be the union of the individual consciousness with the nucleus of the cosmic cycle. In Ananda Marga philosophy, this union is described in another way. Rather than merging with the nucleus of the cosmic cycle, the goal is to merge with the undifferentiated pure consciousness (Nirguna Brahma) which exists beyond the manifested universe (Saguna Brahma). Permanent union with Nirguna Brahma is known as *moksa*. To attain moksa Shrii Shrii Anandamurti introduces a unique concept- *Taraka Brahma*. According to Ananda Marga philosophy, Brahma exists as the manifested universe (Saguna) and another infinite portion of Brahma remains beyond the influence of the operative principle and is undifferentiated (Nirguna). The link between the manifested and unmanifested Brahma is Taraka Brahma which means Brahma, the liberator. If a tangent is drawn touching the ellipse which we use to represent Saguna Brahma (see diagram 6) the tangential point is a point which is both inside and outside the ellipse.

Diagram 6



This point is Saguna and at the same time is also Nirguna. This point is Taraka Brahma. The great spiritual teachers who appear from time to time in human history are embodiments of this tangential entity whose role is to guide individuals to complete self-realization and ultimate union with Nirguna Brahma. The concept of Taraka Brahma is a devotional concept and explains the reverence which is given to great spiritual masters.

When individuals merge their unit consciousness with the Supreme unmanifested consciousness we have the completion of Brahmachakra. However, as one unit is liberated, new matter is constantly being created. Saguna Brahma goes on for infinite time. The thought projection of the cosmic mind can never stop. This means that the universe is indestructible and eternal....

Reviewing Brahmachakra we can see that points of scientific, religious and even political controversies are enlightened by this view of the universe. For example the Judaeo-Christian religion says that “man was made in the image of God”. What does this mean? Is God a man in the sky with a big beard? This is not acceptable to logic, but we can say that the mind of humans, having all of the three functional parts (citta, aham and mahat) is a replica or a reflection of the cosmic mind. Turning to scientific inquiry, Brahmachakra offers interesting perspectives on some questions which contemporary physics is trying to answer. Did the universe begin with a big bang? Is new matter being constantly created? Does the universe have a shape? Studying the universe through the perspective of Brahmachakra we see that matter is being constantly created. In some of his writings Anandamurti has said that the universe, although very vast, is not infinite and it does have a shape, which conforms to the physicists’ findings that space does have curvature. Finally more and more physicists have seen the difficulty in finding the base of all things and have reached the same conclusions as the ancient philosophers. The atom once thought to be the smallest and ultimate particle has been subdivided into smaller particles and more and more sub-atomic particles are still being discovered. That is why some thinkers have already come to the conclusion that the base of matter and energy is consciousness itself. Sir James Jeans said that “reality is better described as mental rather than material”. Brahmachakra even sheds light on competing social theories. Many materialists argue that mind is a creation of matter and that matter is the most important element in all considerations of society. Shrii Shrii Anandamurti’s theory agrees that the unit minds have come out of matter but contends that this was only possible because matter has come out of cosmic mind and mind is thus inherent in matter. Ultimately consciousness is the most important aspect of the universe. Brahmachakra also gives another perspective on an important philosophical question. Is the universe an illusion or a reality, and what should be our approach to the material world? Some philosophers said that this world is only an illusion and the lack of material advancement in India is in part due to the influence of this kind of philosophy. Anandamurti contends that this manifested universe is a “relative reality” because it is constantly changing. Nirguna Brahma on the other hand is an absolute unchanging reality. However, we are part of this relative reality and we cannot deny its existence without also denying our own existence. Shrii Shrii Anandamurti thus advises that we should make an “objective adjustment” with the material world, carrying out our social obligations, but at the same time we should

make the Supreme consciousness the goal of our life and move towards union with this blissful consciousness.

1. *OM is sound, but the word sound is used in a sense that is wider than the conventional definition in physics. For a more complete explanation see **Subhasitia Samgraha III**, pp.58-60*

2. James Jeans, **The Mysterious Universe**, (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1980)

3. Arthur Eddington, **The Nature of the Physical World** (New York; The Macmillan Company, 1928) 4. P. R. Sarkar's **Microvitum in a Nutshell** (Calcutta: Ananda Marga Publications) sheds new light on the subject by advancing the idea that the microvitum, sub-atomic particles with characteristics of living beings, are the first expressions of life.

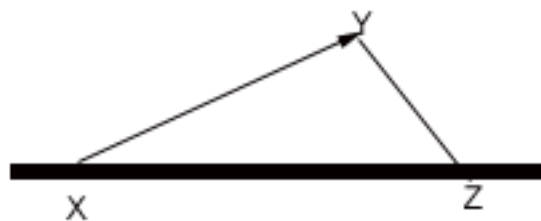
Life, Death and Reincarnation

What happens when a person dies? Is there anything after life? Is there a previous life prior to our existence in this body? These are questions which are inevitably asked when we begin to search for an understanding of our place in the universe. Ananda Marga philosophy answers these questions systematically. However, in order to understand the response to these questions, it is necessary to understand the law of action and reaction.

In the physical realm there is a well known law: for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. In the mental sphere there is a similar law at work. For example, if Mr. A hits Mr. B, perhaps Mr. B will respond immediately hitting Mr. A with a force equal to the first punch. In this case the action was followed by an immediate reaction causing Mr. A to suffer a pain equal to that which he inflicted on Mr. B.

If we were to draw a diagram representing Mr. A's mind during this process of hitting and retaliation by Mr. B it would be as follows:

Diagram 1:



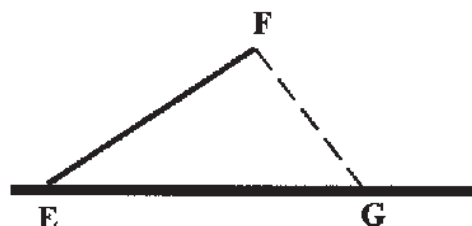
Point X is the original state of Mr. A's mind before the action of hitting Mr. B. Point Y represents the distortion of his mind's plastic portion (citta). Every time there is any kind of action, good or bad, there is some distortion of the citta. Point Z represents the moment when Mr. A's mind returns to the original state. In this case it occurs as soon as Mr. B. makes his counter punch.

Whenever we make an action, our mind is distorted and when we experience the reaction, our mind returns to the original state and we feel either pleasure or pain depending on the nature of the original action. Many times, the process of action and reaction works like this. There is an action and immediately following it the person experiences the reaction. If there has been no change of time, place and

person the reaction will be equal in strength to the original action.

However, there is another possibility. Suppose Mr. A hits Mr. B but the reaction is delayed. Mr. B doesn't respond with a punch. Five years later, however, Mr. A walks down a lonely street in a strange city and an unknown man appears and hits Mr. A many times. This is a reaction which was delayed and is experienced with an intensity exceeding that of the original action. This distortion of the mind which remains dormant for some time is known as *samskara* in Ananda Marga philosophy. A *samskara* represents a reaction in potential form. In diagram 2 it appears as follows:

Diagram 2 :



Line EF represents the original action and line FG represents the potential reaction (*samskara*) which can be experienced at any time. Thus, apparent accidents are simply reactions to previous actions. They sometimes appear to be without cause, but that is only because we have forgotten the original action. The reaction will be stronger than the original action if there is a passage of time between the two events and if there is a change in place or person just as a bank deposit will acquire interest if left in the bank for several years. This law of action and reaction is known popularly as the law of karma. The reactions in potential form are known as *samskaras* or impressions on the mind.

Returning to the original question about life, death and possible rebirth we are now in a better position to understand what happens at the time of death. According to the law of action and reaction we must experience the result of every action, and each day we are certainly experiencing pleasure and pain as the different impressions of the mind caused by previous actions become ripe and express themselves. If one were to die at a moment when all previous reactive momenta (*samskaras*) are exhausted and no new *samskaras* have been created, then the mind will be in a pure state and would merge in the cosmic consciousness. This state of permanent merger is known in Sanskrit as *Moksha*.

In reality however, it is very difficult to exhaust all the *samskaras* and not create new *samskaras* in the process. Whenever we perform an action with the thought, "I am doing this action" an impression is made on the mind. So in most cases when a person dies, he or she still has many reactions in potential form which have yet to be experienced. His or her mind is represented by the following diagram.



What will happen in such a case? The reactions must be experienced but there is no longer any physical body. So another body will be needed and the mind must take another birth.

In order to understand the process of rebirth it is necessary to understand what is life. According to Ananda Marga philosophy, life is a parallelism between mind and body. There is a particular wavelength associated with the body, and there is a particular wave-length associated with the mind. Just as in modern physics, the yogis have said that this entire universe is in vibration and that the vibrations are of varying wavelengths. There is a particular wavelength associated with our body and there is a particular wavelength associated with our mind. When these wavelengths are parallel we have life. However, if something happens to the physical body such as an accident or sickness, the physical wavelength may change and the parallelism may be lost. In this case we have what is known as the *physical cause of death*.

Diagram 4: Physical Cause of Death



Similarly the body may be functioning properly, but if there is a severe shock to the mind the mental wave may change and the parallelism is lost. This is known as the *psychic cause of death*. An example of this is a person dying due to having experienced something very fearful.

Diagram 5: Psychic Cause of Death



Another example occurs when animals live with humans. A dog living with a human family is constantly in contact with the more developed human minds. The dog who lives, eats and even travels with the human family begins to undergo an expansion of mind. His mind becomes gradually more and more human-like. If the expansion continues there may eventually be death due to a loss of parallelism between his mental and physical wavelengths. In this case the mental wavelength has changed due to the contact with human beings and will consequently require a more subtle body with which it can find parallelism. This will probably be a human body.

There is another possibility, which is known as the *spiritual cause of death*. In very evolved spiritual practitioners the mind will become absorbed in cosmic consciousness, which has a vibration of infinite wavelength represented as a straight line. If the mind attains prolonged parallelism with the cosmic entity, the person will lose parallelism with the physical body. In this case the person “leaves” his or her body and attains the state of Moksha. It is not a death in the sense of annihilation, but a merger into a state of infinite beatitude.

There is one more element that we must examine before we can fully understand the process of life, death and rebirth. In every living being there is not only a physical body and not only a mind, but also an “*Atman*” or unit of witnessing consciousness. This witnessing consciousness is the ultimate witness of the mind and is the source of the “I feeling” in the statement “I know that I exist”. In an earlier chapter the three functional parts of the mind have been discussed: *citta* (I have done), *Aham* (I do) and *Mahat*

(I exist). The “I” which verifies the existence of these three functional parts of the mind is known as the Atman. It is the imperishable unit of consciousness and is the key to unlocking the mystery of life, death and rebirth.

When a person dies, the vital energy of the body (prana) enters a state of disequilibrium and leaves the body. With the loss of the vital energies, the physical body ceases to function. The formerly living person loses all sense of pleasure, pain and self-consciousness. Although the mind enters a “long sleep” at the time of death, it has not perished as the physical body has. The samskaras — reactive momenta of the mind — exist and are recorded in the causal mind. The Atman remains as the witness of this inactive mind.

According to the type of samskaras, the inactive mind has a particular wavelength and where there is a proper physical body anywhere in the universe which has a wavelength parallel to that of this mind, the mind will be reborn in this new body. The living being will then have the possibility to experience the potential reactions acquired in previous life-times.

How long will the interim period last? It can be very short or it can be thousands of years. The important thing is that there must be a suitable body somewhere in the cosmos which matches the vibration of the inactive disembodied mind and soul. In Tibetan Buddhism, as soon as a spiritual leader (Lama) dies, his disciples search for his reincarnation in the form of a newly born baby. A suitable successor is groomed from among those young children who seem to have the same samskaras as the former Lama. A test is given in which different articles, some of which belonged to the Lama, are placed before the children. If the child can identify these articles, it is an indication that he may be the incarnation.

Another commonly asked question regarding reincarnation is whether one can remember his or her past lives. Up to the age of four years a person has *extra-cerebral memory* which includes memory of the past lives. However, if this memory persisted after the age of four, then a split personality would develop and the person would die. Thus, nature protects humans by not allowing this development of multiple personalities in a single body.

Although it may be fascinating to delve into our past lives, there is usually no particular psychological or spiritual value in doing so. Rather, it is generally advisable for spiritual aspirants to forget their past deeds (especially the bad ones) and to begin a life in a fresh manner, concentrating on the present and looking ahead to a more glorious future. Sometimes, however, in special cases a great spiritual master may “show” a disciple his or her past life in order to teach some lesson to him or her.

In the book *Ananda Sutram*, Shrii Shrii Anandamurti describes the state of death as “the long sleep of the causal mind” and emphasizes that there is no feeling of pleasure and pain in this condition due to the loss of the organs and nerves. He also explains that these “bodiless” minds are without motor organs and that they cannot harm human beings.

As to heaven and hell, heaven is when we experience in this life the results of good actions of the past and hell is when we experience the results of past bad actions. Superstitious concepts of eternal suffering have been promoted by various religions, but they have no place in Ananda Marga philosophy.

As is mentioned in the chapter on the Cycle of Creation, the ultimate goal of this cycle of life and rebirth is the moment when the unit consciousness goes beyond life and rebirth and unifies with the unqualified Cosmic Consciousness.

The Future of Civilization

In the present era the pressing problems of humanity stem not only from lack of spiritual insight, but they are also due to lack of proper understanding of social phenomena. Despite the long history of human existence dating back more than one million years, humanity has not yet been able to build a true society which can meet the multifarious needs of all its members.

In addition to his contribution in the field of spirituality, Shrii Shrii Anandamurti, writing under his civil name Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar, has also addressed the important socio-economic and cultural questions which trouble humanity today. He has deftly identified the weaknesses which are leading humanity to apparent destruction. However, he is not a pessimist or a prophet of doom, rather he shows how spirituality, far from being a utopian ideal divorced from reality, can be the inspiration and guiding factor behind a new renaissance in all strata of human life.

Society (*Samaja* in Sanskrit) is defined by Sarkar as the moving together of a group of people towards a cosmic goal. The spirit of society is like that of a group of pilgrims. If one of the pilgrims falls sick, the others will not leave him or her by the roadside but will make the proper arrangements to care for that pilgrim, even if the whole group of pilgrims has to slow down. The larger society should have such a spirit so that not a single individual is allowed to lag behind in the march towards the goal. By this definition humanity has not yet built what we can call a “society.”

Sarkar has observed that there are three needs for the construction of a true human society. The society must have a base for its existence (*asti*), a means for its development (*bhati*) and a goal towards which it is moving.

Lately, the very existence of civilization has been called into question. Some cosmologists say that perhaps there could be a thermal death of the universe in which the temperature would be the same in all parts of the universe. According to the Tantric concept of cosmology (as discussed in the chapter on Brahmachakra), this can never happen. This theory states that the manifest universe is a thought-wave emanating from the Cosmic Mind. Shrii Sarkar emphasizes that this macro-cosmic thought-wave will go on for infinite time and that this thought-wave cannot be retracted, i.e. the existence of the universe is assured. In addition, he points out that if a particular planet or dying star undergoes intense solidification, then this will result in *jadasphota* (like a supernova) and new galaxies and stars will be created. Thus he says “there is no cause to fear. The earth may one day become extinct, but humanity cannot cease to exist.” A particular solar system may die, but in that case it is likely that humanity will develop means to move to other, more hospitable, solar systems.

Another more immediate threat to human civilization appears in the form of atomic warfare. Here again Sarkar is also hopeful for humanity’s existence. He points out that atom bombs have been created by the human mind which is much stronger than the bomb itself. He predicts that the same human mind which has created the atomic menace will in the near future also create devices to counteract the destructive power of nuclear and thermonuclear weapons. However, he cautions that scientific research must be guided and controlled by moral people, not the war-mongers who presently direct such activities.

Existence also implies that there will be proper arrangements for the basic necessities of life: food, shelter, clothing, education and medical care. Recent advances in human knowledge make it possible to guarantee the basic requirements of all people, yet social consciousness has lagged behind technological progress. For a large part of the world’s population, even their existence is still in question. To deal with this problem Sarkar has opened a new branch of economic philosophy known as the Progressive Utilization Theory (PROUT) (see chapter 8).

For the development of society there are six factors or six “spokes” which make the “wheel” of society strong. When studying history we sometimes wonder why one civilization overcomes another, and why, for example, some invaders such as the many groups which tried to attack the Chinese civilization were sometimes absorbed by the civilization they were trying to conquer. The answer lies in the fact that some civilizations have been particularly strong in several of the six developmental factors and their collective psychology was able to overcome that of their rivals.

The first factor in developing society is **spiritual ideology**. Society needs a basic conception of the universe and of humanity’s place in it. Humans must know what is their origin and also the goal towards which they are moving. Primitive societies had different myths of creation and other societies evolved different religions and theologies to deal with these questions. To the extent that these philosophies can truly describe the meaning and purpose of human existence, that particular society will be able to develop successfully.

The second factor is **spiritual practice**. This is the complement of the first factor. It is not enough to tell humans that they can reach a certain state of being. One must also provide them with a practical means to realize their higher potentialities. Some societies have prayers and rituals which are practiced either by a few people or by the masses. The best situation would be to provide a rational, scientific practice which can be taught to many people. One great person does not make a great society. The elevation of as many people as possible through proper education and spiritual practice can be one of the fundamentals of a sublime society.

The third factor is **socio-economic theory**. All societies must decide how scarce resources are to be allocated. Various theories such as capitalism and Marxism have been evolved in the current era, but still the basic economic problems of humanity have not been properly dealt with. As mentioned earlier Shrii Sarkar offers PROUT, a spiritually based socio-economic system as a replacement for the present systems which have not lived up to the hopes of their founders.

The fourth factor is **social outlook**. Without a proper social outlook even the best socio-economic ideas can not be materialized. A healthy outlook is when one regards other living beings as his or her brothers and sisters. Such a fraternal feeling cannot be realized without spiritual practice which can liberate the mind from narrow feelings (see the following chapter on Neo-Humanism). Much of the chaos in present day society is due to an improper social outlook.

The fifth factor is **scripture**. In Sanskrit, scripture is “*Shashtra*” which literally means “that which liberates through discipline”. All societies have codes of conduct presented in the teachings of their most enlightened members. These codes provide guidance and inspiration to all. To the extent that the codes are in conformity with cardinal human values and with basic human nature (*Dharma*), then the society can develop in a healthy way. If in the name of scripture someone tries to impose codes of life which run against basic human values, then that society will head towards its destruction.

The last factor is **preceptor**, who is an embodiment of the values of the society. Preceptors are socio-spiritual leaders whose presence is vital to implementing the philosophy upon which society is based.

If any Society is strong in these developmental factors then it can move towards its goal of divine bliss or *Anandam*. In this case, the society will endure for a longtime. Furthermore those groups which have these six factors will be able to create spiritual leaders (Sadvipras) who will be able to help humanity overcome any obstacle which may stand in its way.

Regarding the cosmic goal of *Anandam* (Bliss), it is not possible that all of society will reach this goal at the same time. However, the cosmic goal should be in front of all and society must move in that direction. This cosmic ideal is the only ideal which can help unite humanity and keep it united for all time to come.

NEO-HUMANISM

One of the important factors in the development of any society is a proper social outlook. In the past, entire civilizations have weakened and crumbled simply because one class or group in the society considered another to be inferior and treated them as slaves. Today one of the greatest weaknesses of contemporary civilization is that there is no proper regard and mutual love amongst humans. Race is pitted against race, religion against religion, linguistic group against linguistic group. The divisions in human society are endless and are sapping the vital life out of our civilization.

Not only is there a lack of mutual respect among people, but humans have lost all esteem, appreciation and responsibility towards the animals and plants who share this planet with us. Our wanton destruction of the plant and animal life and our unthinking pollution of the air, earth, sea and space threaten to permanently damage the earth's eco-system making it inhospitable for all forms of life.

In his earliest writings on this subject, P.R. Sarkar said that humans must think of themselves as part of one great family comprising all of humanity, rather than identifying with a particular race, religion, nationality or linguistic group. This type of social outlook he termed "universalism". In 1982 he further elaborated on the method of attaining universalism in a series of discourses published in a book *Liberation of Intellect: Neo-Humanism*. In that book he noted that traditional humanism has not been capable of elevating humanity to the height of universalism and presented a reformulated humanism based on spirituality, and called it "Neo Humanism."

Neo-Humanism is derived from an understanding of the fundamental nature (*Dharma*) of human beings. Human life has three aspects: physical, mental and spiritual. Regarding the physical aspect, the science of biology has already said much about the workings of the human body. However, the psycho-spiritual needs of humans have not been, up to now fully understood despite the efforts of psychologists and spiritual seekers.

The higher possibilities of human nature demand that the mind be free to expand and to flow towards the Supreme Consciousness (God). When this happens, a human being develops love (devotion) for the Supreme Consciousness and love for all other beings. This love for the Supreme Consciousness should be considered to be the most valuable treasure of humanity. Without it life becomes dry and meaningless.

Today, however, humanity does not have a proper philosophy of life and so the society which we have constructed is not in harmony with the inner longings of the human heart. Materialism pervades all parts of present day life and materialism is crushing the devotional sentiment in humans. As a result of this imbalance between the inner needs and outer realities we find much misery, depression and mental illness in society today.

The solution to this rectifying this imbalance is a philosophy which harmonizes the inner needs of humanity with the outer demands of the material world. In order to implement such a way of life we must know the ways in which the spiritual treasure (devotion) of humanity is threatened. There are three human sentiments which impede the expansion of the mind towards universalism.

When one is obsessed with one's geographical land, this is called *geo-sentiment*. In the past, and even today, many people were concerned only with their own land or own country. Out of this love of their land they evolved other sub-sentiments such as geo-patriotism, geo-politics, geo-religion and geo-economics. Using geo-patriotism to stir the masses, politicians have goaded them into fighting many bloody wars. The colonialism of the past and the neo-colonialism of today is nothing but a form of geo-economics ("Let us develop our own country even if it creates misery and poverty in satellite states" is the slogan behind geo-economics).

Another sentiment which has harmed humanity is called *socio-sentiment*. Here people focus their attention on the particular social group to which they belong. It may be a national, linguistic, social or religious group. Although this sentiment is sometimes more expansive than geo-sentiment (if the particular social group happens to be very large), still it creates a group consciousness which comes into conflict with the sentiment of other groups. The religious wars of the past and even of the present were and are caused by this socio-sentiment.

Finally, the expansion of the human mind is blocked by another seemingly “good” sentiment that is, “humanism”. Love and respect for other human beings or “humanism” should be a noble sentiment uniting humanity and elevating the minds of everyone. However, ordinary humanism has some serious shortcomings. First of all, such humanism does not extend to plants and animals. People talk of “human rights” but continue to deny the rights of plants and animals to exist. Another defect of humanism is that, bereft of a strong spiritual background it often degenerates into pseudo-humanism. For example, many so-called developed nations give “foreign aid” to less developed countries in the name of humanism, but behind the scenes the multinational corporations of these same nations are extracting all the wealth out of the less developed nations, creating extensive misery for people and massive ecological destruction in their reckless pursuit of profits.

Sarkar has done more than describe the problems caused by these limited sentiments. He also presents the ways in which to overcome the sentiments which stand in the way of our developing universalistic consciousness. He says that geo-sentiments can only be countered when humans develop their faculty of rationality. Rational thinking is an extremely valuable tool which humans have at their disposal. Through proper study and use of the mind, humans can easily see through the geo-sentiments propagated by demagogues.

In this regard, Sarkar emphasizes that mental analysis must not be checked by dogmas which he defines as ideas or belief systems which attempt to limit the field of human thinking. In some countries, for example, one may discuss economics only within the framework of a certain philosophy. This is a dogma, not very different from the religious dogmas of some countries where spiritual or social ideas can only be discussed within the bounds laid out by a particular religious faith. All dogmas, whether they are presented as religious, or even are claimed to be “scientific”, are dangerous for human welfare.

Regarding social sentiments, the best way to overcome them is by adhering to the principle of social equality (*Sama Samaj Tattva*). Amongst humans, two principle psychologies can be observed. Some people live only for their own selfish pleasure and never think of the needs or rights of others. A more lofty outlook is where people have a determination to move towards the supreme consciousness, and along the way they make a resolve to eliminate the social inequalities which divide humanity. Sarkar explains that the “endeavour to advance towards the ultimate reality by forming a society free from all inequalities with everyone of the human race moving in unison is called *Sama Samaj Tattva*.” (*Liberation of Intellect*)

Thus, socio-sentiments can only be overcome with the spiritual outlook inherent in the *Sama Samaj Tattva*. The key to removing social inequalities is a “proto-spiritual mentality.” Proto-spiritual mentality is the attempt to focus the mind on a spiritual object (the Supreme Consciousness). When this kind of thought becomes the principle of human life then socio-sentiments can be easily surmounted.

In order to overcome the defects of humanistic sentiments, first humans will have to accept that all creatures have existential value. That is, all creatures have a right to live in the world and develop according to their inherent nature. Humans will have to take steps to see that the habitats of animals and plants are not destroyed even if these plants and animals have no apparent utility value to humans.

To fight against pseudo-humanism, we will have to be motivated by spirituality (movement of the mind towards the Supreme Consciousness). Humanism can not remain as an intellectual concept, rather it must be nourished by a flow of love. When one does spiritual practices, love for all beings arises within, and when this is expressed in individual and collective life, then spirituality becomes humanity’s mission and universalism is attained.

P.R. Sarkar maintains that Neo-Humanism is the solution to the world’s social problems and has described the ways in which present social, political and religious leaders have been trying to block the

progress of humanity through dogmas, pseudo-humanism, pseudo spirituality and half-hearted and incomplete measures of reform. Despite the dismal record of present and past leaders, we should remain optimistic because once humanity accepts the cosmic consciousness as the goal of life and collectively move towards that goal, then we will overcome all obstacles, small and large.

PROUT:

A Spiritually based socio-economic Theory

One of the necessary factors in the development of a healthy society is a proper socio-economic theory. In any age people have to come to grips with the question as to how the resources of the world are to be utilized and allocated. In addition, society needs to arrange a system of government which can meet the needs of all its members. The answers which the society gives to these concerns reflects the socioeconomic values which that society follows.

Today there are two theories which shape the world's approach to economics and politics. Only a few nations still follow economic and political systems and policies which are based on Marxism, while most others have fashioned systems based on capitalism. What is becoming increasingly clear is that neither Marxism nor capitalism are satisfying the all-around needs of society, and the time is right for the introduction of new socio-economic ideas which can fulfill the demands of humanity. In 1959 in a series of lectures later published as *Idea and Ideology*, P.R. Sarkar first described a socio-economic theory which he called Progressive Utilization Theory, known by the acronym PROUT).

Although it is possible to show that PROUT has similarities with the existing socio-economic philosophies, a deep understanding of Sarkar's ideas shows that PROUT stands alone in the world today, in that it is based on a spiritual rather than materialistic conception of the universe and of humanity. The idea that all animate and inanimate objects are part of one Supreme Consciousness and are to be treated as part of an integrated whole is the base of PROUT. Just as capitalism and Marxism emerged in an era when physicists and philosophers held a materialistic and mechanistic outlook, PROUT is emerging at a time when humanity is beginning to accept a holistic and spiritual view of the universe.

This holistic and spiritual base helps to define a new view of economics, history and political leadership and offers the hope that humanity can find a way out of the present socio-economic crisis.

One way to understand PROUT is to consider Sarkar's definitions of the words *progress*, *utilization* and *theory* by which he defines this new theory. According to Sarkar, progress, in its true sense, takes place on the spiritual plane because only there can one move towards a goal without provoking a counter movement. In the physical sphere, on the other hand, there is "development" such as the invention of the automobile, but it is always accompanied by counteracting trends, such as the pollution of the automobiles and the increased risk of injury and death in accidents.

In the mental or psychic sphere there is also development such as the increase of knowledge amongst the masses in the contemporary era, but once again there are negative results of the development such as the increase of stress, psychic complexes and mental illness which accompanies mental development. The idea of progress defined by Sarkar is for humans to adjust themselves to changing developments in the physical and psychic world while moving towards the spiritual goal.

Utilization means that the resources of the universe should be used to promote the good and happiness of all, not just of a few. And utilization of resources also applies to supra-mundane, spiritual and psychic potentials which are commonly neglected in many economic approaches.

Some theories are good in the theoretical realm but cannot be materialized in the practical world due to changing circumstances. A theory which has been developed after observing the economic situation of the 19th century may no longer apply in the 21st century. Some theories have been advanced by hypocrites who never had any intention to materialize their theory, while others were put forward by logicians who are content to live only in an abstract world and thus these theories have no practical utility for society.

Sarkar contends that the best kind of theory is one which is based on a careful assessment of events in the world and which also has built within it the capacity to adjust to changing environmental circumstances. The Progressive Utilization Theory is such a theory which is based on an observation of society and also has within it the means to maintain adjustment with changes in the world.

PROUT incorporates these concepts of progress and of utilization in a theory which is defined in five fundamental principles:

1. *“No individual should be allowed to accumulate any physical wealth without the clear permission or approval of the collective body.”*

This principle strikes at the fundamental weakness of capitalism which allows a few individuals to accumulate wealth even if it results in the starvation of millions. It clearly establishes the basis of a collective approach to economic questions. While the principle calls for limitations on the individual possession of physical wealth which is something finite, it does not call for limitations on wealth in the mental and spiritual sphere, because that is an infinite treasure of humanity which should not be restricted. Under the Marxism, this distinction between physical and psychic wealth was not understood, and the severe restrictions placed on freedom of thought and religion led to the downfall of most systems based on this theory.

2. *“There should be maximum utilization and rational distribution of all mundane, supramundane and spiritual potentialities of the universe.”*

This principle encourages society to utilize all resources of the universe to satisfy human needs. “Rational distribution”, means that the minimum necessities of all should be guaranteed but that individuals who have contributed special services to society should be given special rewards to encourage their work and to encourage others also to contribute more to society. Rational distribution does not mean equal distribution.

3. *“There should be maximum utilization of all physical, metaphysical and spiritual potentialities of the unit and collective body of human society.”*

This principle refers to the utilization of human resources, and states that a healthy society must develop the potentialities of all people. By denying large segments humanity chances for educational and economic development, the present day society is not correctly utilizing precious human resources. This principle also calls attention to the need to balance collective good with individual good.

4. *“There should be a proper adjustment amongst these physical, metaphysical, m undone, supra mundane, and spiritual utilizations.”*

Here Sarkar is saying that society should inspire people to work for the individual and collective good, and thus he urges that provisions will be made so that all can earn their minimum necessities through appropriate work. This principle also calls for society to make proper use of comparatively rare faculties such as spirituality.

5. *“The method of utilization should vary in accordance with changes in time, space and person, and the utilization should be of a progressive nature.”*

This principle provides society with a means of adapting to changing circumstances and also calls on humans to utilize scientific research guided by Neo-Humanism in order to bring about the welfare of all.

Economy of PROUT

How the principles of PROUT could be applied in society is for the moment a theoretical question as no country as yet has introduced PROUT. Also the means of implementing PROUT will vary from age to age. However, in Sarkar’s writings and in the writings of other PROUTist commentators we can see how the principles of PROUT could be used to bring about an economic system that can best be described as Progressive Socialism: a non-Marxist socialism based on Neo-Humanism.

In his writings on industrial and economic policies, Sarkar has stressed the need to prevent economic exploitation. Thus he says that the important economic enterprises which supply people with their basic necessities of life should not be placed in the hands of private enterprise. Sarkar was also aware of the

failings of central governments to directly control such enterprises.

To organise an economy on Proutist lines requires a three-tiered economy. Small enterprises employing few people and which do not deal with essential goods and services can be managed and owned as private businesses (e.g. a small restaurant).

The second tier, which consists of the majority of enterprises, would be set up as cooperatives, owned and managed by the people who work in the industries. The workers would be the stockholders of these businesses and would choose the management just as stockholders do today. The third category consists of the largest enterprises which employ large amounts of people and which have important effects on various parts of the economy - the key industries (such as steel production, energy, transport, etc). These should be managed by either autonomous public boards or by local governments, but not by central governments. This category would run on a no-profit, no-loss system.

Such a system would also follow the principle of economic decentralization and this could be accomplished by re-organizing the economy on the basis of self-sufficient economic zones in which there would be balanced agricultural, industrial, and service sectors of the economy.

The idea of the Proutist economy is to provide a good standard of living to all people and to see that economic power is not concentrated in the hands of a few.

Theory of History and Government

To bring such a system into being requires new governmental arrangements. Various socialistic experiments of the 19th and 20th Century ended up in failure, disappointment and much worse. How this can be avoided in the future is best understood by examining P.R Sarkar's new interpretation of history which he delineates in the book *Human Society*.

Sarkar says that history can be understood as the cyclical dominance of the different classes of society. His concept of class is however far different from previous, materialistic ideas of class. Sarkar defines class by mental characteristics rather than physical or materialistic concerns. He says that at the dawn of humanity the dominant mentality or class was that of the *Shudras* - people in whom matter is dominant over mind. These people were primarily concerned with the struggle to survive. Throughout history the toiling people concerned with physical survival belong to this class of Shudras or workers.

Sarkar notes that leadership of society then passed into the hands of people with another mentality. The class of *Ksatriyas* (warriors) developed the mentality that "with my physical force I will overcome the world (matter)". From the times of the Neolithic period and throughout the period known as "ancient history," this class ruled society. The chronicles of wars fought by the great civilizations of the Middle East are an example of this age of warriors.

With the further evolution of society another class rose to predominance. The *Vipras* or intellectuals had a different approach to the conquest of the world. They thought, "With my mental force I will overcome the world." Thus in the Middle Ages, ministers, advisors or priests (popes, Imams, etc.) held the real power of society even though warrior-kings were often the nominal rulers. This intellectual class brought about psychic and sometimes new spiritual ideas, but they also exploited society and are responsible for the religious wars of that time.

The cycle of society is always moving. The intellectuals ceded their authority to a class of *Vaeshyas* or capitalists who created the industrial and commercial revolutions that ushered in the modern age. The mentality of this class is to use mental strength to accumulate wealth. Just as the warrior age had a particular type of government, monarchy, and the intellectual age had its variation of monarchy which Sarkar calls *Ministocracy*, the age of capitalism saw the rise of democracy. Currently most countries of the world are in the capitalist era.

According to Sarkar this Vaeshyan era is near its end and it will finish with social revolution of economically, politically and psychologically oppressed masses. Following revolution, the age of warriors will come again.

But is the future of civilization so dim that we can only expect revolution and military dictatorship in the future? Sarkar's theory holds forth another possibility. He says that the best arrangement is for the evolution of a declassed human whom he calls the *Sadvipra*. The *Sadvipra* is a spiritually and morally based revolutionary who works against the exploitation of any particular class. The problem with most social changes in the past is that inevitably the class which initiated the change eventually ended up exploiting the other segments of society. The only way to avoid this is to create *Sadvipras* who will work for the rights of all.

The political concept of PROUT is based on establishing an electorate composed of spiritually developed people. Democracy of the present day will have to be reformed. Today democracy, although better than any other system yet introduced, has a number of weaknesses. First of all there is no provision for the economic rights of the people and democracy has even been the preferred government of powerful economic interests who can easily buy their way into influence and power. In addition there are three basic qualities often lacking in the electorate which insures that a very poor standard of leaders are elected year after year.

The three qualities are as follows: **Education**: where many illiterate or uneducated people vote then unscrupulous politicians take advantage and get votes easily through dishonest practices. This is particularly prevalent in the less developed countries. **Morality** is another quality that is missing. If more than 51 per cent of people are dishonest, then dishonest people can be elected. Another missing ingredient is *Socio-economic-political consciousness*. Mere education is not enough. Those voting must know what they are voting for or else they will easily be misled by opportunistic politicians. Thus, Sarkar says that the standard of education, morality and socio-economic consciousness must be raised and from amongst such a public, real leaders with the spirit of social service (the *Sadvipra*) can then emerge and serve society. With such universalistic leadership, humanity can reverse the weaknesses of the present period and will be able to set up a social and economic system which is rational, just and truly progressive

About the Author

I have been a teacher of yoga and meditation with the Ananda Marga society for the past 34 years. In addition to teaching yoga and meditation, I also write articles, compose music and am engaged in social work. This book is based on the teachings of my yoga master, Shrii Shrii Anandamurti (P.R. Sarkar).



Other Books by Dada Vedaprajnananda

Yoga Weight Loss Secrets

Lose weight with simple yoga postures and meditation. This ebook shows you how to do it. Visit <http://www.yogaweightlosssecrets.com> for more details

Start Meditation, Stop Smoking

Related Websites

Ananda Marga main website <http://www.anandamarga.org>

AMURT (Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team) <http://www.amurt.net>

Renaissance Universal <http://www.ru.org>

Ananda Marga Gurukul <http://www.gurukul.edu>

Neo Humanist Education <http://www.nhe.gurukul.edu>

PCAP (Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and Plants) <http://www.pcap.amps.org>

Prout World <http://www.proutworld.org>

Bibliography

Books by P.R. Sarkar / Shrii Shrii Ánandamúrti

(available at Ananda Marga centers and online at <http://www.shop.anandamarga.org>)

Ánanda Márga: Elementary Philosophy

This was the first-published of the more than 250 books of Shrii Shrii Ánandamúrti, and continues to hold its place as an introduction to his entire philosophy. Its speciality is the use of formal, though simple, logic to make an utterly convincing case for the existence of Supreme Consciousness and the need of spiritual practice

***Ananda Marga Ideology and Way of Life (series)**

An arrangement of the major spiritual discourses of Shrii Shrii A'nandamu'rti (known as Dharma Maha'cakra, or DMC, discourses). The 11 parts in English of this series include most DMC discourses through 1971, plus a few discourses that were not DMC's.

***Ananda Marga Philosophy (series)**

The author's most essential spiritual discourses, conveniently compiled in eight parts.

Ánanda Sútram

In the best traditions of sūtra literature, the eighty-five sūtras of this book serve, with breathtaking conciseness, as a framework for the entire Ananda Marga ideology. In this book the author has in a few vivid strokes presented humanity with original concepts of metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and macro-history.

Ánanda Vacanámrtam (series)

The Ánanda Vacanámrtam ("Blissful Discourses") series assembles all the known General Darshan talks, sometimes delivered in a very intimate way to relatively small groups of devotees.

Ánanda Ván'ii Samgraha

Shrii Shrii Ánandamúrti gave special messages on the occasions of the New Year and his birthday. This book is a collection of those inspirational messages.

***Awakening of Women, The**

Throughout his life, the author was deeply concerned about the conditions of women in society. He supported the emancipation of women from the bonds of dogma and ignorance. This book is a compilation of all the author's discourses and comments about the social and spiritual roles of women.

Baba's Grace

A collection of 38 devotional discourses about the spiritual seeker and the relationship with the Divine.

Caryácarya Parts 1-3

Caryácarya is the samája shástra (social treatise) of Ananda Marga. These three volumes set out both the organization and the cultural basis of the Ananda Marga movement. In Part 1 the author gives Ananda Marga its governing boards and committees, and provides guidelines for social functions. Part 2

gives many guidelines for conduct in a progressive society - i.e., a society of individuals moving towards the Supreme. Part 3 contains all the dos and don'ts related to physical health that must be followed for progress in mental and spiritual sádhaná.

***Discourses on Krs'n'a and the Giitá**

Krs'n'a, the Mahábhárata, the Bhagavad Giitá and many shlokas (couplets) from the Giitá figured prominently in the discourses of Shrii Shrii Ánandamúrti throughout a lifetime of spiritual teaching. Discourses on Krs'n'a and the Giitá is designed to complement Discourses on the Mahábhárata and Namámi Krs'n'asundaram - the author's two previous books on these topics.

***Discourses on Neohumanist Education**

Discourses on Neohumanist Education is a compilation of various discourses given by Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar over a period of thirty-five years.

Discourses on Prout

A summary of lectures delivered by P.R. Sarkar to the first conference of Proutists.

***Discourses on Tantra 1**

In this first volume, the author discusses Tantra's soaring philosophy, investigates the science of mantra and kuòialinii, and rediscovers pieces of Tantra's forgotten history.

***Discourses on Tantra 2**

The author explains what sets Tantra apart from any other spiritual path - and discloses much about the actual practice of Tantra.

Discourses on the Mahábhárata

Mahábhárata literally means "Great India". Hence Mahábhárata became the name both for a campaign led by Krsna to unify India, and for the epic composition about that campaign. Shrii Shrii Ánandamúrti gives a unique analysis of the historical context and of some of the key figures, including Krsna himself.

Faculty of Knowledge, The

Yogic insights into the functioning of everyone's most indispensable tool: the mind. Presently out of stock.

Few Problems Solved, A (series)

A collection of addresses given by the author as the founder and president of Renaissance Universal. The author discusses art and literature, civilization, history, etc., in nine parts.

Guide to Human Conduct, A

Herein the author explains Yama and Niyama, traditionally-accepted cardinal principles of morality, in a modern way, and at the same time places those principles on a clear scientific basis.

Guidebook for Táttvikas, A

The crucial need for a blending between spirituality and materialism, and the role of spiritual teachers in bringing this about. Presently out of stock.

Human Society 1

Here the author demonstrates at the outset that society must be built on a foundation of morality and must move progressively forward in order to establish itself in universal humanism. Then from the vantage point of that universal humanism, the author examines different issues of education, social justice, and the judicial system; and probes the impacts that practitioners of various professions may have, for better or for worse, on the social body as a whole, depending on the expansiveness of their minds

Human Society 2

Here the author introduces his theory of history and social change. Economist Ravi Batra has based his best-selling economic books on the Law of the Social Cycle as explained in this book. Historians and futurists are calling this a landmark work in understanding the process of social change.

Idea and Ideology

Like no other book, but rather like spiritual practice itself, Idea and Ideology methodically, in a careful sequence, expands the reader's horizons and mind. It concludes by using the spiritual vantage that has been gained, to focus on the social problems of the earth.

Ideal Farming

This book is taken from the notebooks of instructions dictated by the author to the Ananda Marga agriculture secretary. It is replete with information on all phases of cultivation, with suggestions on inter-planting and companion planting, ponds and lakes, the care of trees and shrubs, and conservation techniques.

In the Land of Hattamála

(in 2 parts). A hilarious fairy tale about three princes and how they learn about becoming human beings.

***Karma Sannyása**

There is an exalted joy when one is attached only to God. This collection of philosophical and devotional discourses captures that joy. Presently out of stock.

***Karma Yoga**

If we do all our works in life as an offering, unattached to the results, we will attain the highest spiritual realization. These discourses explain the science of karma yoga. Presently out of stock.

Liberation of Intellect, The: Neohumanism

This revolutionary book explains the root causes of forces that threaten society and the planet, and offers a unique solution. Neohumanism is a world-view that safeguards and enhances the development of one's inner spiritual assets. It is characterized by love for the Supreme, and finally overflows onto all objects, animate and inanimate, created by the Supreme.

***Light Comes**

A collection of pocket-book inspirational excerpts from discourses by P.R. Sarkar.

***Microvitum in a Nutshell**

Microvita are entities which come within the realms both of physicality of psychic expression. They are smaller and subtler than physical atoms and sub-atomic particles, and in the psychic realm they may be subtler than mind-stuff. The author predicts that they will soon be recognized by conventional science.

Namah Shiváya Shántáya

Shiva the historical personality has long been lost to view, hidden under layer upon layer of myth. Here the author removes the veils of seven thousand years of time to reveal Shiva the great spiritualist, Shiva the humanitarian, Shiva the pioneer of arts and science.

Namámi Krsnasundaram

Here the author has compares different philosophies to the life and personality of Lord Krsna. The author sets out the two distinct facets of Lord Krsna's personality: Vraja Krsna, the lord of devotion, and Párthasárathi Krsna, the lord of karma yoga, ceaselessly engaged in the battle against injustice.

***Neohumanism in a Nutshell 1**

The author describes the importance of freeing the human intellect from limitation and divisive dogma, and of curbing exploitative tendencies.

***Neohumanism in a Nutshell 2**

The author details how a universal spiritual outlook can unify all of humanity; and, in contrast, how our current limitations keep millions of human and other living beings from realizing their potential.

One Human Society

Issues of disunity and discord around the globe are usually all too clear. These discourses elaborate the many powerful elements of unity that can eventually reunite the human family.

Prabhát Samgiita 1

Samgiita means the combination of vocal music, instrumental music, and dance. Prabhat was the given name of the composer of these songs, so the school of music that these songs embody has been named Prabhát Sangiita. This volume presents the lyrics of the first 200 songs with their English translations. Presently out of stock.

***Pramá**

Universally-applicable principles of stable progress: applicable to intuitional science as well as to economic science, applicable to personal health as well as to politics. Presently out of stock.

Problems of the Day

An analysis of the main social problems of today, dedicated to Subhash Chandra Bose, revolutionary leader of the Indian independence.

***Prout in a Nutshell (series)**

In 1959 the author first propounded the socio-economic theory Prout, an acronym for Progressive Utilization Theory. Over the next thirty years the author elaborated Prout in great detail, giving numerous discourses on history, economics, sociology, politics, ethics, linguistics, culture and civilization. This

series assembles in 21 volumes all the author's discourses related to Prout.

***Proutist Economics: Discourses on Economic Liberation**

Proutist Economics has brought all of the author's published discourses on economics together in one volume for the first time. The author states that economics should free human beings from mundane problems so that all will have increasing opportunities for intellectual and spiritual expansion.

Sarkar's English Grammar and Composition

A yogi-scholar once said, "He who would track language to its lair would end as infinite." It seems that the author truly wants us to end as infinite, for he tracks language to its lair. Rarely satisfied with derived meanings and usages, he guides us to the sometimes-forgotten sources of language, that we might taste the purity of the source.

Sarkar's Short Stories

A collection of humorous and moral stories in the Indian tradition, full of fun and imagination.

Shabda Cayaniká (series)

Ostensibly, Shabda Cayaniká is a series devoted to the linguistics and philology of the Bengali language, but in reality it is much more than that. The author uses the platform of the word as a point of departure to take the reader on a journey through all the varied landscapes of human knowledge.

Subhásita Samgraha (series)

The Subhásita Samgraha ("Collected Discourses") series assembles all the Dharma Mahácakra (DMC) discourses given by Shrii Shrii Ánandamúrti. Dharma Mahácakras, large spiritual congregations addressed by Shrii Shrii Ánandamúrti, were held in cities and towns all over the world.

Tattva Kaomudii

A simple question-and-answer approach that makes spiritual philosophy accessible to all. Presently out of stock.

The Golden Lotus of the Blue Sea

A prince goes in search of the Golden Lotus and experiences so many humorous trials and tribulations.

***Thoughts of P.R. Sarkar**

A collection of short thought-provoking excerpts from discourses by P.R. Sarkar. A tiny pocket-book you can carry with you for on-the-spot inspiration. Subjects include evolution, consciousness, spiritual practices, intellect and intuition, service, morality, art and literature, women and democracy.

To The Patriots

This discourse examines the benefits and limitations of patriotism.

Under the Fathomless Depths of the Blue Sea

This is a delightful tale written by P.R. Sarkar in his youth. It is about a boy who journeys to the land of

ghosts under the sea, a place which bears a striking resemblance to our own sometimes strange society.

Varn'a Vijnána: The Science of Letters

Varn'a Vijnána can be translated into English as "The Science of Letters". However it can just as easily be rendered as "The Science of Language", for in it the author binds the myriad and often mystifying threads of language into a single tapestry and demonstrates with remarkable clarity how they obey the laws of pure science. In a lucid and entertaining style, laced with anecdotes and stories, he uncovers the fundamental principles which govern linguistic expression and blends this with an historical perspective that throws new light on the origins of human language. Many of the ideas that inform these discourses are new to the study of linguistics and are sure to provide ample material for future research.

***Yoga Psychology**

The science of psychology, as studied and practised within the traditions of yoga and Tantra, begins with our cakras (or plexi, psycho-spiritual centres) and the various glands associated with each chakra. The development of these structures is influenced by all our past actions and by a range of environmental factors that, like the mind itself, go far beyond what is conventionally contemplated by psychology.

Yogic Treatments and Natural Remedies

The object of the art of healing is to cure a patient, both physically and mentally. So the question is not the advocacy of any particular school of medical science, but rather the welfare of the patient. Diseases can be cured through natural methods of yogic exercise, water, diet, herbal medicines, sunlight and air.

* compilations containing material from other books on this list (in some cases containing original material as well)

Related Websites