

conscious or unconscious level, a feeling of great inferiority. The self thus consists of illusions of one's mental self and body.

Throughout our lives we must deal not only with an outer world but also an inner one, and whereas the secondary processes of logical thinking and reasoning govern our mastery over the outside world, the primary processes of condensation, displacement and symbolisation contribute to the unfolding and enrichment of the inner world and the continuity of the self. This is the argument being advanced here, that these are not really good or bad but that they have different functions, and it seems that maintaining the continuity of the self or increasing it is relatively more pronounced in the Indian inner world.

One sees this if one gives a clinical illustration. The schizophrenic, for example, tries to deal with outside reality through his primary processes, and fails, while an obsessive-compulsive, on the other hand, tries to deal with his own reality through logical reasoning and thinking, and cannot succeed, because one cannot deal with reality using self-oriented processes and with the self using reality-oriented processes. We can now appreciate that certain elements of the Hindu world-image are faithfully consistent and reciprocal with the ego-configuration generated in the developmental experiences of Indian infancy and childhood. The widespread conviction that knowledge gained through ordering, categorising, logical reasoning, is 'avidyā' or not knowledge; that real knowledge is attainable only through direct, primary process thinking and perception; the imperative that inspires the yogi's meditation and the artist's *sādhana*, namely that to reach their avowed goals they must enlarge the inner world rather than act on the outer one; the injunction inherent in the karma doctrine to accept and use outer reality for inner development rather than to strive for worldly realities; the indifferent respect given to scientists compared with the intense reverence for the various gurus and *bābās*: these are a few indicators of the emphasis in Hindu culture on the primary processes of mental life. Unless the social organisation makes some special provision for it, however, no group can survive for long if its members are brought up to neglect the development of those secondary processes through which we mediate and connect outer and inner experiences. An ego underdeveloped

with respect to the secondary mental processes is a risky luxury except under the most bountiful and Utopian conditions.<sup>2</sup>

Indian social organisation traditionally took care of the individual's adaptation to the outer world. That is, traditionally, in the early years, the mother continues to serve as the child's ego, mediating his most elementary experiences well into the years of childhood proper. The responsibility for monitoring and integrating reality is then transferred from the mother to the family at large and other social institutions. Thus, when making the decisions based on reasoning the pros and cons of a situation, the individual functions as a member of a group rather than on his own.<sup>3</sup> With the help of traditional precedence and customary consensual as opposed to adversory modes of decision-making, based on the assumption that no two people have identical limits on their rationality, the individual can cope effectively enough with his environment. Similarly, as far as the environment of relationships is concerned, the myriad detailed rules and regulations governing social interaction and conduct define the individual Indian's interpersonal world in most conceivable situations and spells out appropriate behaviour. By making social interactions so very predictable, these norms make it unnecessary and usually imprudent for each individual to assess the exigencies of a particular encounter or circumstance on his own; rather, they encourage him to respond in a tried and true traditional pattern. The highly structured and elaborate social organisation that seems oppressive to modern sensibilities is just functional in the sense that it strengthens and supplements the individual's basic ego fabric in which the world of primary processes and animistic projections looms large. In Indian society this complementarity between the ego and the social organisation remains functional only so long as the process of environmental change is a slow one, affording enough time for a

2. Surely this whole characterisation of Hindu culture betrays unfortunate absentmindedness regarding the rationalism of Hindu metaphysics and the realism of its Sociology—Ed.
3. Why is small group-egoism so strong in India? Why doesn't an overall social coherence emerge if ego-abandonment for the sake of the group were for Indians as easy as the hypothesis under consideration suggests? If Indians were natural ego-overcomers, why would their scriptures go to such great lengths to recommend and teach ego-overcoming?—Ed.



gradual, barely perceptible evolution of cultural ideas, social institutions and generational relationships. Difficulties arise when the pace of change quickens. Today the outer world impinges on the inner world in India in an unprecedented way. Harsh economic circumstances that lead to a greater social and geographical mobility imply that the dealing with the outer world may have to be more on an individual rather than social footing. Under these conditions, an individual's ego structure and weaker secondary processes, unsupported by traditional or new social organisations, would come under considerable strain.

I have discussed the influence of the protracted intimacy between the mother and infant, and of Indian motherhood on the entrenchment of primary mental processes in the Indian inner world. These processes, as we have seen, are supported by the structure of social organisation and traditional cultural modes. The second theme in the Indian inner world, more for men than for women, that derives from the special psychosocial features of Indian motherhood, is the simultaneous, often unintegrated presence of fantasies and images of the good and the bad mother. Given the nature of Indian motherhood, the mother's immediacy, her utter responsiveness and striving to be the too-satisfying mother, it is no surprise that she is highly idealised. The proportion of Indian men who express or experience an active dislike, fear or contempt for their mothers at a conscious level is infinitesimally small. This is strikingly apparent in clinical work, in initial interviews and in the early stages of psychotherapy, where patient after patient invariably portrays his mother as highly supportive and extremely loving. In studies of family relations, sociologists and anthropologists confirm the existence of the good mother in different regions and social classes throughout India. Literary evidence, I would suggest would further corroborate this. Under the conscious idealisation, however, we very frequently find in clinical work that the unconscious image of the mother is that of a bad one. In contrast with the western experience, the visage of the bad mother in the Indian inner world is really that of a depriving, ungiving one. Most often the bad mother is one whose stifling omnipresence threatens to engulf the child's budding individuality and destroy his emerging masculinity. The too-satisfying mother thus has another visage in the child's unconscious, that of a devouring femininity which

keeps the child enthralled in helplessness. Let me give a couple of case veneers for the purpose of illustration.

B was a 26 year old man who had come for analysis because of a general loss of interest in work, inability to relate to people and suicidal thoughts. He was the eldest son of his parents, and had spent the first three years of his life with his mother at the home of his maternal grandfather in a village in U. P. In the fourth year of his life, B, with his mother, went to a distant village where his father was a policeman. B's first memories of his father were of a harsh and authoritarian man who had broken the blissful intimacy between mother and son, but who was luckily rarely at home. As the analysis progressed, B's memories and feelings about his earlier years began to change. He discovered that under the overt hostility against the father, there were considerable feelings of affection and admiration. Concomitantly, the mother's image began changing from a loving mother absorbed in her son's welfare to an overpowering mother who clung to her son and belittled his efforts at individualisation. B's resentment against the father, he discovered, had less to do with the so-called oedipal rage and more with the fact that the father was so often away and did not provide his son emotional access. Once, when after his marriage, B's feelings of helplessness in the face of overpowering femininity had again been triggered off, he had the following significant dream: 'I am in our village home when a gang of dacoits led by a girl attack our house. The female leader of the band chases me through the rooms of the house. I pass my father in the hall. He is lying on the bed with a gun but it is not effective, and he cannot help me even though he wants to. I am very afraid as the girl bandit runs after me, laughing and mocking me for not being able to defend myself.'

Another patient, suffering from a narcissistic personality disorder, at the time of the analysis was struggling with his very ambivalent feelings for his mother and dreamed:

'I am lying on my bed when I see my mother approaching. She is almost naked and has a laughing, gloating expression on her face. I am very scared. Then I see you, the analyst, sitting in a corner of the room with an enormous penis next to your chair that rises from the chair and goes up to the ceiling. I hold the penis and feel safe.'



Besides other dreams, this dream also echoes a Hindu mythological motif depicted in temple sculptures in which a boy holds fast to his father's penis to escape the God of death and the ultimate destroyer of the self.

I would not interpret these dreams. I chose them because they seemed so clear-cut. But these clinical veneers also point to another aspect of the Indian male's inner world, in which the need for the father in order to escape the clutch of the too-satisfying mother is paramount. Or, I would suggest, and we will take this up now, in India the need for the oedipal alliance often outweighs the hostility of the oedipal complex.

As is well-known, in psychoanalysis the oedipus complex of the child surfaces when he starts differentiating sexuality, and there is a hostility for the father because of a possessiveness for the mother. This is the normal oedipus complex. But there is another angle to this, which we find very often in the Indian male patients, and which is not hostility towards the father because of sexual feeling towards the mother but an alliance with the father to escape the overpowering mother through the oedipal alliance instead of the complex.

Elsewhere I have tried to interpret various Hindu myths and legends around the theme of the bad mother to show the psychological defences used by the male child. In most myths, renunciation of activity and masculine potency and prowess is one of the principle defences against the threat posed by the bad mother. I would like to stress here that in dreams the same kind of defences in almost the same kind of language as in the original myths we are so accustomed to read, come out. Other defences in the mythological repertoire, as in individual fantasy, are matricide and very often a withdrawal into a grandiose self-image of complete self-sufficiency where the bad mother cannot intrude and where the child can feel safe. However, an exploration of these defences in individual life histories and in the Indian cultural milieu (I have been suggesting an ongoing interaction between the cultural milieu and individual development) will take us too far away from our subject. Summarising the mother's place in the Indian inner world, we could say that taken into the child's ego, the good mother's tolerance, emotional vitality, protectiveness and nurturance become the core of an Indian's positive identity. Alongside this

positive identity, however, and normally repressed, is its counterpart, the negative identity, that originates in and experiences the sometimes stifling, all-too-present mother. Whatever the contours of the negative identity, they reflect certain defences against the bad mother who may have been most undesirable or threatening, yet who was also most real at a critical stage of development.

I would like to state here that in psychoanalysis we acknowledge two really critical stages in human development. The first is separation as an individual, because in psychoanalytic thought there is no self at the beginning of life, and there is no distinction between the self and not-self for the early months. This one can often see in the case of psychotic patients where these distinctions are removed and the boundaries between the self and the not-self vanish. For example, there was a woman patient who was psychotic and in her early years had the feeling that when her twin sister was picked up from the other end of the pram, the sensation was that she was being picked up. The boundaries between her and her twin sister had disappeared. The second critical stage is differentiation, when one discovers sexual difference.

Although the inner world of Indian men is decisively influenced by both versions of the maternal feminine, the adult identity consolidation of men is, of course, not to be cast exclusively in these terms. For identity is constituted not only from early feminine identification but also from a later masculine one, all modes rearranged in a new configuration at youth. Normally the biological rock-bottom of maleness limits the extent to which a boy can or will identify with his mother as he grows up. The view advanced here, namely that the length, intensity and nature of the mother-infant relationship in India contributes to the Hindu male's strong identification with his mother and the Hindu maternal, feminine stance towards the world only makes sense in the light of that relationship. Expression of the maternal feminine in a man's positive identity, in its adaptive aspect, is, of course, neither deviant nor pathological but that which makes a man more human. Its presence precludes that strenuous phallicism which condemns a man to live out his life as half a person, and it enhances the possibility of mutual identification and empathic understanding between the sexes. Of course, in its defensive aspect, the maternal feminine identification of men may serve to keep the sexes apart, and may



even contribute to discrimination against woman. A precarious sense of masculine identity can lead to a rigid all-or-nothing demarcation of sex roles. This kind of rigid differentiation is a means of building outer bulwarks against feared inner tendencies.

What about the father's role in the inner world? Here, I am afraid, my sociologist and anthropologist friends would be right in warning of the reckless generalisation I have been making so far. Keeping in mind the need for the oedipal alliance, the male child who enters family and society in late childhood has a different fate depending upon a host of sociological factors. Nevertheless, for a number of men, at least in North India, with which I am more familiar, there do seem to be some uniformities, and I offer them with tentativeness, as indeed the rest of my remarks.

I have already mentioned the boy's need for the oedipal alliance, and for the guiding voice of the father. The guiding voice of the father can become effective, and the oedipal alliance successful only if the father allows his son emotional access to him, i.e. if he allows himself to be idealised at the same time as he encourages and supports the boy's own efforts to grow up. Identification is a process, however. It requires that the father, over the years, be constantly available to the son, a criterion fundamentally at odds with the rationale and structure of the extended family. The strength and cohesion of the extended family depends on a certain emotional diffusion. It is essential that nucleus cells do not build up within the family, or at the very least, that these cells do not involve intense emotional loyalties and potentially exclude other family members and their interest. Thus, the principles of extended family life demand that the father be restrained in the presence of his own son, and divide his interest and support equally among his own and his brother's sons. In autobiographical accounts, fathers, whether strict or indulgent, cold or affectionate, are invariably distant. In the analysis of many male patients, the father often appears as a shadowy figure, his paternal presence a childhood blur. Behind the requisite facade of aloofness and impartiality, a Hindu father may be struggling to express his love for his son. Fatherly love is no less strong in India than in other societies. Yet the fact remains, that the son, suddenly bereft of the good mother, and needing a firm masculine model with whom to identify as a means of freedom from the bad mother, is exposed to bewildering, contra-

dictory messages of simultaneous love and restraint emanating from his father. He does not have the necessary conviction that his father is a dependable constant to learn from and emulate. The son often lacks the affirmation of that one guiding masculine voice as it becomes diffused among many. The unconscious anger of sons against good but intangible fathers, their individual paternity muffled in the impartiality required by the extended family is one of the major themes of the father-son relationship in the Indian inner world.

#### DISCUSSION

ABHA CHATURVEDI :

In your paper you have predominantly talked of Indian men. If you are trying to establish a causal correlation with culture, then it should be the same for men and women. So did you study women at all or did you confine your study to men and then generalise?

SUDHIR KAKAR :

As my presentation is from a larger work source, and it is called *some* aspects of the inner world, the aspects I have taken here are only the male ones, but in the larger work I did try to study female development too, with its relationship to male development and culture.

SUNDARA RAJAN :

I would first like to be sure whether I have understood the implicit theoretical model in the paper, and then if I am right about that, I would like to raise a question.

As I understood it, perhaps we could say that there is a certain theme in Indian culture — a theme about motherhood—and this cultural theme, when it is acted out by individual mothers, leads to a certain pattern of mothering, mainly emphasising the over-protective, too-good kind. This kind of mothering leads to a peculiar constellation of the child's psyche, characterised by the predominance of primary processes, and this kind of psychic



structure is supported by a certain type of social organisation and its functionality with the psychological structure. Let me pause and find out whether I have got the model right.

SUDHIR KAKAR :

Yes, except for one point in the beginning, which is that it is not only the theme of the culture which I have not gone into but also the way women's identity is conceived.

SUNDARA RAJAN :

If I am right about this, I would like to raise a question. What kind of psychoanalytic explanation can we offer for the presence of this entire cultural theme? Do we simply start with it as given, or do we go behind it and try to show that this schema itself is a reflection of, say, a certain peculiar division between the male and the female in society?

SUDHIR KAKAR :

I started with the same question, and I went beyond, in the sense that it is very much a theme of a strong patriarchal culture, and a woman's identity is almost exclusively in motherhood. The whole social cultural situation changes then. When motherhood becomes very strong and the importance of the male child too, then there are strong unconscious interactions going on between the male and the mother; not letting the male child know who is the protector and guarantor of her high status and inner identity. In addition to psychoanalytic explanations of this situation, there are certainly other ritual ones, economic ones, which would also be very much a part of a full picture.

RAMGHANDRA GANDHI :

To borrow a phrase of Mahajan's, it seems to me that a close look at childhood anywhere at all would reveal gross imperfection of environmental adaptation. I suggest that what contributes to ill-health in the wide sense of the word, and to misery and unhappiness, is not the dream creation of images indicative of un-

resolved crises and fears, but the absence in any society, at any given time, of the creative use of symbolism, of the terrible mother, for instance, or the good mother. What may be happening in Indian society is that this dreamwork, when it went along with the creative use of it, in terms of the language of the cosmic mother, was not only not indicative of actual or impending illness but, positively, of a very powerful freedom-oriented capacity. With the decline of the language of mythology, this dreamwork was greatly handicapped. Mothers and fathers and uncles and grandmothers don't any more talk of the divine mother, the cosmic mother, or about Śiva, Prajāpati, with the result that there remains only the discomfort. The dreamwork may in fact be very powerful symbolic work demanding the helpful environment of symbolic thought and language, and not merely the more material comforts of the family. So the mothering, in the more profound cosmic sense, connected with language and society, is ceasing to be. What I am trying to suggest is that we simply cannot look at dreamwork in the absence of what is available in the way of mythology, metaphysics and philosophy. You can find in the creative artist, for example, the use of material which in any other kind of person would merely support the theory of misery. I hazard the opinion that there must have been a time — and there can always be in a society like ours — where all this dreamwork was part of a wider scheme of things, and difficulties would be overcome not only in familiar ways of adaptation and adjustment but also resolved by raising them to a symbolic understanding of man and the universe and so on. I would like to have your reaction to this possibly very familiar suggestion which occurred to me.

SUDHIR KAKAR :

Yes, I would tend to agree with that. I wouldn't know whether there is a difference or deviation between the psychopathology of the past and the present. That would be very difficult to say. As I said, the bad and the good mother who do not get integrated in the psyche, who remain separate, are at different levels of consciousness. They never coalesce into a single, more realistic mother. One sees, of course, the effort to reintegrate them, and the cult of the cosmic mother affords, or at least offers this reintegration which could not be done in the past.



## RAMCHANDRA GANDHI :

I feel a point may be missed because of inefficient representation on my part. I want to suggest that if this is conceded, then our approach of understanding must change in relation to certain kinds of practices; for instance, linga worship. It would be wrong to say that what is happening here is a doomed-to-failure attempt to come to terms with problems whose origins are in infancy and so on, for this may not be the case at all. Linga worship might be something much more positive, symbolical not of what happened in early childhood but of the nature of things. Of course, I am not forgetful of all those instances where the practice camouflages misery, and we should be very grateful to methods of healing, modern or ancient, but it occurs to me that in the absence of powerful mythology, Indian mankind would have perished long ago, given the anxiety of these dreams. I simply cannot believe that there were centuries of these dreams but not the supportive mythology. If this was so, I feel nobody could have survived. So I take it as something that belongs to the normal order, that for these and far more anxiety generating dreams, there is also a supportive, clarifying mythology. If this is so, then interpretation of cultural phenomena will have to be of a different kind. One couldn't say that Kali worship is really nothing, or nothing more, than mother-worship or mother-love/hatred, because at all levels I think it is required that both go together. In your book on the Indian Inner World I feel this is not clear enough, so one gets the impression that you would not welcome alternative explanations to the psychoanalytic ones.

## ASHOK KELKAR :

He has brought out two functions of mythology : mythology as a kind of collective prophylaxis for the protection of the male in this case, and secondly, mythology as a good and creative use of a particular shared experience. About the first part, I don't think we need be overly worried because mythology has atrophied or is tending to atrophy despite evidences for its survival. Something else has taken its place, and it is the image world of the Indian film industry.<sup>4</sup> It would be interesting to find out the functions

4. Does our film industry show the metaphysical and moral concern and insightfulness demanded of pauranika thought and art?—Ed.

performed by the Indian film heroes and heroines for both Indian males and females. I have found, for example, that it is not only the young who dote on and worship them, but also quite a few older people. A further point Dr. Kakar confessed was that he was more acquainted with the North, and that therefore this portrayal of the Indian inner world may not be wholly valid for other parts of India. I think it will be interesting to find out how far this portrayal is valid (a) for the Dravidian South, (b) for the East (I'm mainly thinking of Bengal at this point). Maharashtra, for example, is in many ways a kind of transition area between the North and the South.

I will throw out a few suggestions here. If you take the South I don't think you will find the oedipal alliance to that extent, and this is borne out in various other ways. The relationship between a father and a son, in a South Indian family, is in many aspects quite different, and one could correlate this with certain features of South Indian films. In Bengal, of course, there is another kind of way out: Kali worship in that context becomes not so much a creative prophylaxis but sometimes reaches pathological proportions.

## DEVAHUTI :

I take it that our speaker means a good mother by a bad mother and a bad mother by a good mother. It seems Dr. Kakar has spoken rather disapprovingly about the good mother. To be a fair psychoanalyst, is it not necessary to bring out the counterpoints? In the same way, what are the positive aspects, or is there any positive aspect at all in the relationship between the son and the father in a joint family? Can a patient be understood successfully without looking at both sides of the case? At one point Dr. Kakar said that resentment against the mother builds up in the process of growing up, when the son feels deprived of his masculinity. I was wondering here about the female child : does she feel deprived of anything? Finally, does this apply equally to the rural environment and the urban environment?

## ASIS NANDY :

In the context of the presentation, I think we are concerned with three fundamental sets of questions when we are studying



a culture or person or civilisation psychologically. One is, how does that particular science, e.g. modern psychology, look at a civilisation or society or culture? But the moment you ask this question, there is an implied question which is not asked but which is becoming increasingly salient in the contemporary world, namely, how does that civilisation construe modern psychology or its own psychology? In other words, if we are putting culture on a psychoanalytic couch, does the culture in turn have the right, to that extent, to put that science on the couch too? Is it possible for the two constructions to come to a mutual understanding? There is one danger here, of course, which we must also bear in mind, and this particularly applies to psychoanalysis, that as we become more and more conscious of cross-cultural studies, the critical thrust of Freud's writings is lost. In the attempt to accept every kind of cultural deviation, in the attempt to integrate the theory somehow and accept all cultural differences as valid normatively as well as cognitively, what in the process we have done is to dilute the critical thrust of the early clinical — I use the word reluctantly — judgements of Freud.

The third issue which is recurrently coming up without anybody explicitly stating it is that of normality : what is normal and what pathological. This is related to the second issue also. In other words, when Sudhir (Kakar) for example describes the group experiences of the Indian male, how far are we justified in calling this another version of the eternal verities, and how far are we justified in saying that some aspects of it are pathological?

This also has some kind of history. In some sense, psychoanalysis, like what Professor Saran said about himself yesterday, is a child of the modern age. It somehow inherited some of the problems of the modern age also. I have in mind particularly two or three tendencies within the science. One is the way psychoanalysis drew upon two modern discoveries. This point I make very hesitantly, but I am reasonably sure that modern childhood, and what we mean by childhood, as well as modern femininity and what we mean by femininity, were also discoveries of the modern period. There is evidence of divergence between the traditional and modern concepts of childhood. In Europe, at least, people have located the shift from an older to the modern conception of childhood in the 16th and 17th centuries, and similarly with the traditional and

modern concepts of womanhood. With the growth of evolutionism, the concept of childhood was given a historical content, so that you grew from childhood to adulthood, and words like infantility and childishness became pejorative terms. Thus, to remain childlike, or for a man to be feminine became, in the context of the modern sciences, pathological and abnormal. What was typical was made historical in the context of the individual life cycle. One of Freud's main contributions was that he allowed us to recognize that what seemed historical, something chronologically defined, could also be present in each one of us as a quality or aspect of ourselves.

Finally, I would refer to the matter of myth which Professor Kelkar mentioned. I think this too is the product of the modern age, in the sense that with the introduction of the concept of history, myths became clearly demarcable from history, so that other people's history became your myth and your history became somebody else's myth.

NIRMAL VERMA :

I must confess at the very outset that I felt rather troubled by the presentation. Partly because of a childhood fascination for psychoanalysis, I always had a very ambivalent approach to this modern medical science. Then later, when I was reading *The Brothers Karamazov*, at the beginning of one of the most anguished chapters Dostoevsky ever wrote, I found the thought, "Psychology is a stick with two ends," something to that effect. Perhaps he meant that the way you employ this instrument evolved by Western man to fathom the nature of individual misery and find some way out, outside religion, outside clinical medicine, is extremely important. It is a common thing now that western man doesn't go to the priest for confession but to his friend. I was expecting that Sudhir would start from the other end of the stick, that is, instead of going to the inner world of India through psychoanalysis, would go to the insides of psychoanalysis from his insight into the nature of the misery of Indian reality or its inner world. When I use the word misery or suffering, it is in a very special cultural context. I recall a strange beautiful sentence of Levi-Strauss which says that there are communities who dream



while they are awake through their myths. In a strange way myth becomes a dream while a community or culture does normal business from morning to evening. Human beings are coming in contact with each other, they are trying to tackle the external reality apparently through the same ways as people of more advanced industrial societies, and yet which would be looked down upon by western psychologists as means which are childish, naive, which are guided, as Sudhir said, by the primary perceptions. Naipaul once made a sweeping generalisation on the basis of Sudhir's thesis that Indians never become adults. It was a disparaging remark, perhaps. He was trying to make a point that we do not use the instrument of consciousness and reason in order to come to terms with reality in the same way as western man does : we are guided by various other impulses and emotions.

But why should we not? Can you castigate a culture because it behaves like a child or I behave like a child? If the other person also behaves like a child, then we are sharing a common reality in which the terms that give a certain degree of understanding and mutual help to each other may be completely alien to a western man. But can it be a reality less meaningful than that guided by the instruments of scientific reason? And what have westerners done to that reality guided by the most sophisticated means of reason and cognition? My question is not in the negative sense, because I think Sudhir would realise that I have tremendous sympathy with this kind of approach. My question is, can we now meaningfully use means and instruments evolved in the late 19th century in Europe in a country like Austria? I recall reading something by Stefan Zweig where he said that his sister one night had come rushing to his mother to be reassured that she had not become pregnant because she had been kissed by somebody! What seem to be aberrations in western society need not be so for another society like India or China or Africa. There is perhaps a unique sort of existential bafflement which may exist in these societies and about which I won't say anything. Also the particular forms of misery or suffering of such societies are so qualitatively different from what we understand in the western idiom by the terms isolation, alienation, loneliness, Godlessness, lack of any support from institutional religion, angst, etc. These must have been and must be very deep psychological traumas for western man. My question is, is it

possible to use western man's instruments for handling this experience in cultural areas where religious sustenance, sustenance from the community, relationship to father and mother, and so many other types of protection and compensation are available? Where even the concept of the individual, as you very rightly said, is very different, and cannot be isolated from the family or religion to which a person belongs?

P. C. JOSHI :

My first point is strictly empirical. Perhaps if Professor Srinivas were here he would have liked to ask which India (regionally, culturally, castewise) you are referring to when you speak of Indian culture. I become aware of this kind of difficulty when I recall my own childhood in the hill areas of U. P., in Kumaon. Being a brahmin's son and being of a peasant caste were worlds apart. For me, of brahmin background, there were certain do's and don'ts : talking about sex was strictly a taboo, and there was a sense of disapproval about it, but for the peasant caste, among the boys who were my classmates, it was a very normal kind of thing. Could you make a generalisation on the basis of the culture of the dominant elite? You are trying to universalise the culture of the brahmins as the culture of all the groups and all the communities in India which do not share it. So there is this kind of a problem in a strictly empirical sense.

The second point I wish to raise is whether, in the context of change in this kind of society, the same tools and techniques of understanding would be used or whether they would require modification. I am not one of those who do not require the exploration of the inner world, but I wonder, what kind of modification, adaptation, innovation of new techniques, etc., would be required for this kind of purpose in the Indian context.

An observation. I have been a student of Professor Saran's, and have always respected him for the kind of way he looked at Indian society. With the kind of liberal and Marxist values that I have had, I never looked at the analysis sympathetically, but as I grow older I begin to think perhaps that there is something to be learnt from it. From the standpoint of the values of an individualistic civilisation, the whole culture that we have inherited, I felt, was a liability,



a burden. But the other day, while I was talking to a German lady and describing my background, she told me that she missed belonging to an old civilisation, missed living a life not just with immediate parents but with multiple generations, which had a kind of poise, quality, a sense of continuity about it. Looking at it from this point of view, one could get a different perspective on the problems, tensions and maladjustments of Indian society. My last point is about the legitimacy of understanding maladjustment in immediate adult life only by going into roots lying deep in childhood personality. I would like to understand the reason for this, because a lot of Marxist critique of psychoanalysis—the basic escapist nature of psychoanalysis—is based on the fact that it takes you into your deep remote past rather than an orientation into the present world and its difficulties which need to be faced. I would like to understand the theoretical philosophical sanction behind this kind of effort.

#### SUDHIR KAKAR :

There have been so many points raised that I won't answer any single one but try to clarify two or three themes which I feel have come up recurrently, and put them together.

Let me first react to the last point about culture, which, I think, is related to something that Asis Nandy said about childhood. I quite agree that we cannot ignore all the caste, class, regional differences in Indian culture, but what I am trying to say is that the elements of culture I have used fall outside these areas of difference. The nature of motherhood and the ideology of childhood may not be universal in India, but there is a kind of dominant mode in the statistical sense. There may be slight variations in behaviour but there is a common ground, even in different areas, of the idea of motherhood, what a mother should be like, of the identity of a woman when she is a mother as compared to her identity when she is only a wife or a daughter, etc.

This brings me to the differences in the ideology of childhood, a point which Asis raised. I think there is a difference in the ideology of childhood in the west and the east. I am not a linguist, but perhaps the difference starts with the words used: child training is how one deals with children and describes the task. In German

the word used is really also used for horses and has the root sense of pulling-pushing. In Hindi it is *palna, posna*, where there is no sense of pulling or training or pushing. Again, if we go into the legal aspect, and for a paper I did go into this, of how a child should be punished, what the child's offences are, etc., and compare the historical development of law, we do find a marked difference in the ideologies of childhood in the west and in India. In Ayurvedic medicine, for example, it is said that the disease of the child in the first year is caused by the mother, and she should be treated for it. This is a radical, psychoanalytic notion and a very modern one, that the psychological growth of the child takes place much later, at the age of two and a half or three years; that at the beginning the child's illnesses are the mother's tensions. The idea of socialisation too, I feel, is not enough. It should go further: socialisation to what? To adult norms? I don't think this is the right word, and as far as the Indian ideology of childhood goes, we have a different word altogether, because it is part of the historical development. So this ideology I think is present very much in different regions of India. It is not only brahminical ideology and if it is, then it has penetrated quite deep.

The second point could be expressed as the ambivalence towards psychoanalysis, of which we have a lot of examples. It is not that a psychoanalyst does not share the ambivalence, but it is not a pleasant feeling to keep on questioning it. As far as ideology goes, I think there is a very strong individualistic ideology in psychoanalysis, and I would like to state that there are psychoanalytic values. One is limitless respect for the individual, and as a therapist I think this is very important. The second is, I think, that there are secrets that the psyche harbours which are deeper than we care to confess. I think this creates tremendous ambivalence, so that consciousness is dethroned. Another value offered, which I accept, is that understanding is always better than illusion. The understanding may be very painful, but it is to be preferred to a pleasurable illusion.

Are these values very different in the Indian cultural context? I would say yes. There would always be the problem of the ambivalence of psychoanalysis at the edge of things. I would like to give an example of how this is so. For the last two years I have been studying the Indian traditions of mental and spiritual healing,



which include also local folk healing, and one of the places I studied is a temple in a village between Bharatpur and Jaipur. There one sees that healing proceeds very differently. I will give cases of village girls. The first is an obsessive-compulsive case. There was this girl from Bihar who was referred and she came with her mother. The girl said that her aunt used to come and dance on her head and that she got terrible headaches. Then in the conversations the mother talked of the aunt, who had died when the girl was three years old, as a terrible woman who was so promiscuous that she used to sleep with all the labourers, and that one day the husband found her out and she committed suicide. But the girl had no idea about it, and when she was 16, she saw the dead aunt coming towards her. To me it was very clear that the aunt, the *bhoot*, was her own forbidden negative impulses of sexual promiscuity. But not to the way of healing they sought.

Healing is very different. It stresses the strengthening of projections, not their explanation, mostly with integration into the group. What even happens often is that you become a part of the group, and when the patients have gone away, the *bhoot* comes. And most often, in Hindu society, the Muslim is the most alien, so the strongest *bhoot* is the Muslim *bhoot*, who will never go because he is a Muslim. But in the end there is integration into the society, the gods are recognised and the *bhoot* changes into a *doot*,—into a messenger. The values I would see here are that integration into the community is better than remaining an individual apart, that saying yes to traditions and gods is better than rebelling against them. This is also healing. I am not saying that it does not work : it does. In fact, I couldn't do it — no psychoanalyst could do it — because our idiom would be very different. If I want to talk of the father and he—the traditional healer— talks of the *bhoot*, we will think each other crazy.

ASIS NANDY :

Nirmal made a point that this issue of cultural embeddedness of psychoanalysis can have a special meaning, and I grant it very strongly because it clearly does. But we should also remember that certain insights are independent of who formulates them at a certain point of time. I remember being very surprised when I

was reading a small summary of Freud's work on what he considered the three fundamental fantasies of human life. I found them exactly similar to the three questions the *yaksha* asks Yudhishtira in the Mahābhārata.

RAMCHANDRA GANDHI :

If you could set them side by side, it would be useful to see how one is connected with the other. Take the one about death...

ASIS NANDY :

The *yaksha* asked Yudhishtira what the most surprising, wondrous, mysterious thing was, and Yudhishtira answered that the most surprising thing was that every day people die and yet nobody can believe that he is anything but permanent. Freud identifies this as one of the fundamental fantasies of human life : the inability of the individual ever to conceive of himself as dead. He suggests somewhere that even when you are thinking of yourself as dead, you see yourself outside the body and also see your body as lying there dead.

T. N. MADAN :

Sudhir always gives us fragments from larger works, and I thought perhaps he was doing the same thing today. What has been very interesting to listen to is the way in which you completely structured the argument and discussion. I don't think any of the questions have gone beyond the framework which you set. You began by setting up a number of oppositions yourself : you talked of the inner and the outer world, you talked of the differences between you and anthropologists, you talked of good mothers and bad mothers and so on. When you were asked the rural and urban question, you might not have expected it, but it was put forward because you did not explain to us the overall framework for the basic kinds of oppositions you were deriving. I thought Dr. Joshi's statement a fascinating one, in the sense that it was a validation for psychoanalysis.

Once you have set up the oppositions, what do we do with them? How do we resolve them? You talked of the bad mother,



which makes the father relevant. Is it that those people who are blessed with good mothers have fathers who are irrelevant? You also spoke of good mothers. You never spoke of bad sons. But these questions of mine can go on mounting and add up to nothing unless we address ourselves to the question behind these questions. You are really sharing with us here a certain methodology. That is one point I wanted to make.

The second point is in continuation. There are so many levels of discourse. There is the people's discourse, where they talk of fathers and mothers and sons, at times in terms of the normative patterns of the culture, at times in terms of the myths that have been mentioned, and at times they talk of real fathers and mothers. The judgements made in the last are quite different from those involved in talking of normative patterns. Then there are several other levels of discourse which come from the people themselves. This includes, of course, the discourse in which you as a specialist deal : the dream level. What you were giving us today was your discourse.

I think we need to reduce all the oppositions that have come up : male-female, rural-urban, brahmin-peasant, North-South, and I think we can do this only by turning to the question behind these questions. Similarly, there is the problem of the value we place on the different discourses, and how to integrate them into a common framework. Here feedback to the psychoanalyst is important. I think we have had a long day without a single story being told, and I hope the Chairman will allow me to tell one.

This comes from the 1930's from Yale, when Edward Sapir, the anthropologist, was very fascinated by psychoanalysis. He had a tribal African student who wasn't very bright but who had managed to get admission. He had to give a seminar paper, and this happened to be on inter-tribal warfare. It was a very dull paper and everyone was bored stiff with it. He described how his tribe went on fighting with their neighbours, and they had war shrines and deities, and how there were priests who tended the shrines. There was maximum activity at these shrines during wartime, and at such times the shrines were handed over to women. Sapir immediately intervened here and started a psychoanalytic explanation about why it should be women and not men at the

time of inter-tribal warfare. Everyone became excited and sat on the edge of their chairs. Then, having taken this some distance, he changed the analysis and took it along a different turn, which built the excitement even more. Then he turned to the dull African student and asked : which one of the two strikes you as the right one? to which the student replied "The men are fighting and there are only women left to look after the shrines."

DHARMENDRA GOEL :

My point has been partly made by Professor Madan, and it is about the psychology of culture. I was a little intrigued by the term "psychology of cultures", because it could mean two things : Either it could mean the science of culture as developed by the different cultures, and there seems to be a suggestion that there cannot be a culture-free science in which the phrase "psychology of culture" could be used; but there is another, more interesting sense which is directly relevant to the discussion we are having, i.e., how maturation makes people adult, acquire their various personality traits and so forth. There is good reason to believe that there cannot be a culture-free psychoanalysis. You have yourself, in the beginning of your paper, expressed doubt about psychoanalysis being a global or universal science. You felt there might be an element of localism and specificity about the kind of syndromes and traits which might usher in different types of personality. This is one point which seems to have recurred time and again in our discussions here, so I would like to have your reaction to it again.

K. J. SHAH :

I want to say, unlike the others who have preceded me, that I am not in sympathy with psychoanalysis. This does not mean that there is nothing to it, but by and large I am highly sceptical and uneasy about the whole thing. If you put the matter by means of a metaphor, I think in any culture or community people eat different kinds of food, and yet not all find all kinds of food acceptable. Some people digest it, some don't, and some, even though they don't digest it, want to take it again, thereby getting into trouble. Some turn it into blood, some into muscle and some



into fat. And yet all these are acceptable ways of dealing with food. One doesn't even worry much if someone takes the food which disagrees with him, as long as he can carry on his normal activities. What I am trying to suggest is that whatever happens to us in our relationship with others and ourselves, we digest in a variety of ways, and it gets into us. Even if certain things don't, it is possible always for us to live with the problem: we will suffer it and see later what to do with it. Similarly, when a problem arises, society also has various ways of dealing with it, depending upon the individual and the problem. Take for example, weaning. Why is it that we think weaning should take place at a certain time and age only, or in a certain way only, or by replacement by another thing only? If I am talking to someone and I yawn, it is suggested that I am bored. But there can be so many other reasons: it is possible that I have not slept. Look at the way Gandhi digested his surroundings, for instance. He digested it totally differently from the ways many other people digested it. He digested it in relation to himself and in relation to others. So there are different ways, and how one succeeds depends on what one thinks of oneself and what others think of oneself. It is true that myths, ideas, philosophies may encourage or discourage certain ways of digesting, and my fundamental antipathy towards psychoanalysis is towards its suggested ways and means of digesting. They seem to be lacking in something. It was suggested that one gives attention to values or pleasure. But what is pleasure? If I say that it is not a value, then is this only hypocrisy? There are situations here and procedures by means of which our relationship with others and ourselves can by and large be looked after. The extreme cases which need handling will always be there, but I think those cases and the manner we adopt in handling them will not destroy the normal character and process of digestion of our world.

ASIS NANDY :

I think it just won't do to talk of psychoanalysis simultaneously as a therapeutic technique and as a theory. As a theory — I probably use the word wrongly—it could also be seen as a different language, and I don't think the question of truth or falsehood applies to a language system. This point could be debated, but

the distinction of psychoanalysis as a therapeutic technique and as an interpretative model should be borne in mind.

Secondly, two issues you raised go beyond psychoanalysis — they apply, I think, to most systems of the modern world. One is the issue of self-consciousness as opposed to self-awareness. The modern world has made us more self-conscious than self-aware, and there is a built-in premium on this. This is very closely related to the whole issue of scientism. I don't mean scientism in the conventional sense, but the encroachment of science into all spheres of life. Even when you jump into bed with your wife you are within page 73-75 of some famous sexologist or psychiatrist. This is a kind of aberration of psycho-analytic theory, I would say, called transactional analysis. It is a totally instrumental concept of how you understand another person's mind and operate even day-to-day interpersonal relationships — e. g. if you are shaking hands with someone or wishing him, how you should be self-conscious and try to manipulate the other person.

The second issue is also part of the modern ideology, namely, that of non-suffering. This applies not only to psychoanalysis but also to modern medicine. In the U. S. today, for example, more than 60% of all cases referred to doctors are a result or byproduct of medication itself. In other words, a majority of illnesses are being produced today by the intervention of the modern medical system into the health of the public. This you see in area after area, that there is a tremendous premium on avoiding all suffering, of the built-in ideology that all suffering can be eliminated from human life. And this is the goal towards which you should strive.

RAMCHANDRA GANDHI :

I want to begin with the conversation between Yudhishtira and the Messenger of Death. Is Yudhishtira's answer to the latter's question fantasy? Fantasy is closely connected with the notion of self-deception. That this is a piece of self-deception, the view that I cannot conceive of my own annihilation, has got to be shown, and I don't think it has been shown. Annihilationism is not self-evidently true, if true at all.

...8



One way of formulating the problems of human beings in all ages and not just modern times, is this : If we are really finite and helpless, what do we do when finitude itself becomes a problem?—and I do not mean a particular kind of finitude, but the fact of being finite itself becoming a problem. I suggest that those who believe there are finite solutions to all problems of finitude may be deceiving themselves, and that at the back of the idealism or optimism of psycho-analysis and related disciplines there may be this fundamental self-deception. I want to make a distinction here. There may be finite solutions to finite problems, but whether there can be a finite solution to the problem of finitude—that is what I am not at all sure of. It is nice of people to believe that there can be such a solution, and perhaps up to a point it is nice of people to encourage others to believe this, but if there is self-deception here then Sudhir's point is apt, that painful knowledge of truth may be preferable to illusion about it. Perhaps I am wrong, but if there are finite solutions to the problem of finitude, then they must be of a staggering nature, but are unknown to me. Again I want to make a distinction between the theoretical question of whether there can be a finite solution to the problem of finitude, and our practical responses or non-responses to it. We can perhaps get along nicely anyway in this lifetime even if we do not answer this question, but I think intellectual honesty demands that we do try and answer it. If we cannot answer it, then the whole effort, therapeutic as well as theoretical, is a bit suspect.

FRANCINE KRISHNA :

I wanted to say that if your aim is to interpret Indian culture in terms of psychoanalysis, then I am satisfied with what you have done. But if your aim is to understand the Indian inner world, then I am afraid I do not feel satisfied. I must also underline the dissatisfaction that Professor Shah has felt with the psycho-analysis of self, and which, I think, Nirmal Verma has also mentioned. What exactly is meant, after all, by the inner world? You haven't defined that, and I think Professor Madan quite rightly said that you should certainly have given us some notion of what you mean by the inner and the outer world. I do not know a great deal about psychoanalysis, but from what I have been able to put together here, it seems to me we are to under-

stand by the inner world, in psychoanalysis, something to do with (a) the unconscious, which includes fantasy, dream, etc., and (b) perhaps external behaviour as it is manifested. But I am not satisfied with this, because I feel that the inner world is more allied to our conscious behaviour. There is a lot of talk in English literature about a particular artist's world, these days. For example, we know that Thackeray's world is very different from the world of George Elliot, and that Dickens creates a very different world from both these. We have to ask ourselves what the parameters are of an artist's world. Thackeray, compared to Dickens, uses realism and comedy. Dickens opens a wider world for us. He uses fantasy, and he uses it in a way the unconscious doesn't. It is a conscious use of fantasy and the grotesque and may be even psychic experience and so on. Yet, in art, these worlds are integrated somehow. Professor Madan was posing the problem of integration, and the artist, I think, does try to integrate these worlds. So if we think of the inner world and the outer world, we have to think of other levels of consciousness. I feel rather disappointed that you are not taking into account the contribution of the Indian mind at all. The contribution of western psychology has been the mapping out of the lower levels of the conscious-and the unconscious. But what about the higher levels of consciousness? These could perhaps be taken into account in a larger and wider framework of presentation which you might like to make some other time, in terms of what you mean by the Indian inner world.

ASIS NANDY :

I have a question about normality, I would like to relate it to the critical function of psychoanalytic thinking—not psychotherapy, which we can keep apart for the moment. I used the word 'critical' in the sense of criticism. One way of looking at the whole issue is to think of psychoanalysis as another critique of modern civilisation, and it is true that Freud did develop this critique very powerfully in some respects, a fact which is implied in the whole concept of the abnormality of normality, of the pathology of normality. What Freud called the psychopathology of everyday life can also be read as a critique of everyday normality, and this is an element we have not touched.



I have in mind something similar to what Marcuse has ventured as one of the major problems of organised capitalism, where the communication media are used to ram down the throat of the everyday man, the ideology of a state which you sustain with the help of a whole paraphernalia of child training, adult training and so on. So the whole concept of normality becomes perverted itself, and a critical awareness of the abnormality of normality is necessary. Think of the schizophrenia of a world sitting on a nuclear arsenal, the schizophrenia of the environment rather than that of the patient. It is an indication that the illness lies not in the patient, whose misery is but a reflection of the illness of the world. In fact the schizophrenic is more aware of the inner contradiction of our civilisation than the everyday man living normally and happily with that civilisation.

SUDHIR KAKAR :

I will again try and bring things together. One thing you asked about was what I mean by the inner world and certain oppositions. I think the oppositions 'good-bad' etc. are almost forced or imposed by the unilinearity of the language. Otherwise I have to keep on explaining that what I do mean by the good/bad mother is not the actual mother — it is the image or fantasy of the mother, which, inside the inner world, keeps on changing. She can have bad aspects suddenly, which change in time, sometimes coalescing into the real mother, then breaking up into the very good, very loving one. So what I meant was that there is a flux, a continuum, where the mother and her images keep on shifting in the inner world. This is one of the things I mean by the inner world. The child's inner world, I would say, consists of the fantasies, images and feelings connected with some of the important things in the child's life : birth, death, body, bodily functions and very important relationships with loved persons. As one goes on developing more and more, there is constant addition to the inner world, which keeps on getting structured. Sometimes it is the fear of losing that structure that creates anxiety. This is what I meant by the inner world and the oppositions.

Then there was the point about the universality and relativity of psychoanalysis. I think I made a distinction that there is a

method of treatment and this is very relative because a great many factors have to be considered. As a theory I think there would be differences of opinion. What I meant by the relativity of it is not that the processes, say, of separation, or the relationships and defences used against anxiety are not universal, but that they may have cultural additions. In some cultures, some defences are stressed more. In healing situations in India, for example, I find projection—that bad things don't belong inside, but are outside—a very characteristic defence. I would suggest that this is an Indian form of defence, but that does not mean it is not a psychoanalytic defence. Projection is found in other cultures also, but it seems more characteristic here.

We have also the concept of normality, and psychoanalysts, as also others, are confused about it. If one looks at a psychoanalyst's statements — a theoretician's statements — they vary greatly. They range from goallessness as the goal of treatment to very clear goals of generative loving etc. None of them, though, I think, clear the normality concept.

There was a reference to schizophrenia, and I think there is a tendency to romanticise it, perhaps as a therapist I am to blame, but when you get schizophrenic patients, it is not comfortable at all. It is not really romantic often.

Some kinds of psychoses are universal. There is much, I think, which is very rightly culturally relative, but there are certain psychoses with certain symptoms which are universal, and I would like here to repeat a story in response to Professor Madan's. There was a very anthropologically inclined psychiatrist who went to Africa to study what delusion and hallucination meant in that particular culture. Once he was with a witch doctor, who told him that he had cured a man of his hallucination and delusion. As perhaps the view could be very different, the psychiatrist asked him what he meant by hallucination and delusion. The witch doctor scratched his head and said, "Well, before he came to me he believed his uncle lived a hundred miles away although he is living here, and that his wife is the mother of God. I don't know what you call it in America, but here we call it delusion and hallucination."



The last point is about the critical part, and I think it is very important. As practitioners, psychoanalysts are often seen to be losing their critical sense, which I find is most important for theory. There is a very clear-cut ideology there that given certain values, certain things are not normal. This has to be changed. The optimism you were talking of isn't really there at all. As for declining popularity as therapy, what does it really offer? Freud's offer was an exchange of neurotic suffering for common human misery. It is not a very great offer, but it seems there are still people who are willing to take it, and this is an interesting thing. It is also interesting in another sense. Freud thought psychoanalysis was a therapy only for the morally worthwhile, and not for the morally worthless. I do not know how one makes that distinction for psychoanalysis, which is seen as all-accepting and all-tolerant. It seems Freud was not all that tolerant when he was advised cases, for he chose only those who he thought were morally worth-while. I wish we really knew what he meant by morally worthless.

ASHOK KELKAR :

I do not have questions, but a couple of statements. One is that in a way, all human sciences are living in glass houses here. The kinds of criticism that has been levelled against psychoanalysts has also been levelled against economists. For example, it has been held that pure economics is the economics of the west, and that too, in a particular stage of development, and there have been attempts to widen the frame of reference of economics by anthropological data about the economics of different societies. What does a social scientist or human scientist do in such a situation? He can do one of two things: He can correct himself by referring to data from different societies, weed out those parts of the theory which are accidental to his own culture, and sift. He can also separate his theory into two parts—a universal part applicable to the whole of mankind and a kind of provisional part which is applicable to a particular society. To give an example from my own discipline, you can have some kind of a general theory of language, and you can say that all languages have some form of negation; or you have a special theory of negation for the expression of negation in a particular

language. For example, you can show the difference between standard English where two negatives make a positive, and certain varieties of non-standard English where two negatives reinforce each other. I think psychoanalysts have been doing that kind of thing. They are not as naive as other social scientists think them to be.

Just as the particular state of western civilisation as Freud saw it was one stimulus to his theory, the other stimulus, I think, was biology and Darwinism. Psychoanalysis has one foot also in biology. There are problems faced not only by human families but also by animal families. For example one might have seen a female dog pushing away its pups, which implies that weaning is a problem not peculiar to humans. I don't think that has been very much appreciated here. Just as economics tries to find its universal roots in categories like scarce means and unlimited wants, psychoanalysts have also done that.

One last point I would like to make is that many of the problems that dissect the theory of mental health and mental cure also dissect physical health and physical cure. We have, for example, pointed out here the relativity of the notion of health. Different cultures have different notions of psychic health, and their modes of cure will be different. The same is true of physical health. There was a generation of Indians who were constantly worried about cleaning their bowels. Cultural notions of health are also changing.

RAMKRISHNA :

My question relates remotely to the first of the two cases that Dr. Kakar presented in his talk, and to Mr. Nirmal Verma's question. I am engaged in writing a long poem, a narrative about an Indian woman of my generation, who has, say, the existential characteristic of a crisis of values, loneliness, Godlessness and so on. I have shown the unfinished poem to some people and they have pointed out that the sort of character depicted is impossible to imagine in a background like India. In response to some of my earlier poems, people pointed out that even some of the male existential figures are impossible to imagine in India. Do you think there is any contradiction involved in existentialism



and India? It is my view that there is no contradiction. India has a tradition of world-negation, and also, contemporary India is a seat of a variety of cultures: it presents an absurdist picture.

ASHOK KELKAR :

The question was about any incompatibility between the existential position and the Indian ethos. I am reminded of a related question which is frequently asked. Why has not India evolved any genuine form of tragedy? People have said there is something basically incompatible between the Indian ethos and the tragic vision of life, and considering that psychoanalysis has been described as the tragic vision of life, perhaps we could also account for the fact that India could not have produced psychoanalysis.

SUDHIR KAKAR :

Psychoanalysis has the tragic vision. Its heroes—Hamlet, Oedipus—do not offer the romantic vision of life. Psychoanalysis has, on the other hand, the alleviation of the tragic vision, which is ironic. So the cure is to develop the ironic vision. In the Indian case, I think we start with the romantic vision of life—the quest. What its alleviation is, I don't really know. I don't think it is ironic. But the tragic, I would say, is not so much a part of the mainstream ethos.<sup>5</sup>

#### PROVOCATIONS

□ Take the example of a woman who has consented to go out with a particular man for the first time. She knows very well the intentions which the man who is speaking to her cherishes regarding her. She knows also that it will be necessary sooner or later for her to make a decision. But she does not want to realise the urgency; she concerns herself only with what is respectful and discreet in the attitude of her companion. She does not apprehend

5. The baffling cinematic character of *samsāra* (in the thickest possible medium) and the cyclical return even of what is rejected at a lower level, the endlessness and suddenness of realisation—all this is enormously corrective of the excesses of any partial vision—Ed.

this conduct as an attempt to achieve what we call "the first approach;" i. e., she does not want to see possibilities of temporal development which his conduct presents. She restricts this behaviour to what is in the present; she does not wish to read in the phrases which he addresses to her anything other than their explicit meaning. If he says to her, "I find you so attractive!" she disarms this phrase of its sexual background; she attaches to the conversation and to the behaviour of the speaker, the immediate meanings, which she imagines as objective qualities. The man who is speaking to her appears to her sincere and respectful as the table is round or square, as the wall coloring is blue or grey. The qualities thus attached to the person she is listening to are in this way fixed in a permanence like that of things, which is no other than the projection of the strict present of the qualities into the temporal flux. This is because she does not quite know what she wants. She is profoundly aware of the desire which she inspires, but the desire cruel and naked would humiliate and horrify her. Yet she would find no charm in a respect which would be only respect. In order to satisfy her, there must be a feeling which is addressed wholly to her personality — i. e., to her full freedom — and which would be a recognition of her freedom. But at the same time this feeling must be wholly desire; that is, it must address itself to her body as object. This time then she refuses to apprehend the desire for what it is; she does not even give it a name; she recognises it only to the extent that it transcends itself toward admiration, esteem, respect and that it is wholly absorbed in the more refined forms which it produces, to the extent of no longer figuring anymore as a sort of warmth and density. But then suppose he takes her hand. This act of her companion risks changing the situation by calling for an immediate decision. To leave the hand there is to consent in herself to flirt, to engage herself. To withdraw it is to break the troubled and unstable harmony which gives the hour its charm. The aim is to postpone the moment of decision as long as possible. We know what happens next; the young woman leaves her hand there, but she does not notice that she is leaving it. She does not notice because it happens by chance that she is at this moment all intellect. She draws her companion up to the most lofty regions of sentimental speculation; she speaks of Life,



she shows herself in her essential aspect—a personality, a consciousness. And during this time the divorce of the body from the soul is accomplished; the hand rests inert between the warm hands of her companion—neither consenting nor resisting—a thing.

We shall say that this woman is in bad faith.

—JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

□ Thus I must contradict you when you go on to argue that men are completely unable to do without the consolation of the religious illusion, that without it they could not bear the troubles of life and the cruelties of reality. That is true, certainly, of the men into whom you have instilled the sweet—or bitter-sweet—poison from childhood onwards. But what of the other men, who have been sensibly brought up? Perhaps those who do not suffer from the neurosis will need no intoxicant to deaden it. They will, it is true, find themselves in a difficult situation. They will have to admit to themselves the full extent of their helplessness and their insignificance in the machinery of the universe; they can no longer be the centre of creation, no longer the object of tender care on the part of a beneficent providence. They will be in the same position as a child who has left the parental house where he was so warm and comfortable. But surely infantilism is destined to be surmounted. Men cannot remain children for ever; they must in the end go out into 'hostile life'. We may call this 'education to reality'. Need I confess to you that the sole purpose of my book is to point out the necessity for this forward step?

— FREUD, *Future of an Illusion*

□ A test of what is real is that it is hard and rough. Joys are found in it, not pleasure. What is pleasant belongs to dreams.

— SIMONE WEIL.

□ A science which does not bring us nearer to God is worthless. But if it brings us to him in the wrong way, that is to say if it brings us to an imaginary God, it is worse...

— SIMONE WEIL

□ In the stories which Kafka left us, narrative art regains the significance it had in the mouth of Sheherazade: to postpone the future.

— WALTER BENJAMIN

□ Proust's method is actualisation, not reflection. He is filled with the insight that none of us has time to live the true dramas of the life that we are destined for. This is what ages us—this and nothing else. The wrinkles and creases on our faces are the registration of the great passions, vices, insights that called on us; but we, the masters, were not home.

— WALTER BENJAMIN

□ Love is the desire to prostitute oneself. There is, indeed, no exalted pleasure which cannot be related to prostitution.

— BAUDELAIRE

□ The most prostitute of all beings is the Supreme Being, God Himself, since for each man he is the friend above all others; since he is the common, inexhaustible fount of love.

— BAUDELAIRE

□ Theory of the true civilization. It is not to be found in gas or steam or table turning. It consists in the diminution of the traces of original sin.

— BAUDELAIRE

□ It is of course an integral part of St. Thomas's conception of the world, of the Christian conception of the world, that man may be placed in a position to be injured or killed for the realisation of the good and that evil, considered in terms of this world, may appear as an overwhelming power. This possibility, we know, has been obliterated from the worldview of enlightened liberalism.

— from 'ILLUMINATIONS', A. K. Saran



□ If the book we are reading does not wake us, as with a fist hammering on our skull, why then do we read it? So that it shall make us happy? Good God, we would also be happy if we had no books, and such books as make us happy we could, if need be, write ourselves. But what we must have are those books which come upon us like the death of one we love better than ourselves, like suicide. A book must be an ice-axe to break the sea frozen inside us.

— from 'ILLUMINATIONS', A. K. Saran

□ Humility provides everyone, even him who despairs in solitude, with the strongest relationship to his fellow men, and this immediately, though, of course only in the case of complete and permanent humility. It can do this because it is the true language of prayer, at once adoration and the firmest of unions. The relationship to one's fellow man is the relationship of prayer, the relationship to oneself is the relationship of striving; it is from prayer that one draws the strength for one's striving.

— KAFKA

□ Only he who is a party can really judge, but as a party he cannot judge. Hence it follows that there is no possibility of judgment in the world, only a glimmer of it.

— KAFKA

□ Believing means liberating the indestructible element in oneself, or, more accurately, liberating oneself, or, more accurately, being indestructible, or more accurately, being.

— KAFKA

## Section V

### EARTHQUAKE IN BIHAR : THE TRANSFIGURATION OF KARMA

Lecture by : RAMCHANDRA GANDHI

Chairman : KRISHNA CHAITANYA

#### RAMCHANDRA GANDHI :

The devastating Bihar earthquake (1934) occasioned Gandhiji's remark that the earthquake and the resultant damage, the loss and the deaths, were punishment not for what those who suffered as a result of it had done, but for what *we* (all of us) had done. *They* suffered for what *we* had done down the centuries and were doing to the untouchables in our country. This remark was a theological earthquake— an earthquake in thought whose revolutionary significance Gandhiji may not himself have been fully mindful of. This should not be surprising because I think a morally inquiring and unafraid man often says things the implications of which he himself is not fully aware of. I am not sure whether Gandhi made any efforts to take back what he said, but people might have wanted him to do that, even after his death. I don't remember any retraction by him of his words. And of course all sorts of people were scandalised. The rationalists and the naturalists said: "What utter nonsense—there is absolutely no connection between the two." They were the familiar kind of people who are scandalised easily. But there was another kind, less easily noticed, the hard-core theologians, who said; "What rubbish. How can they suffer for what we have done? They have suffered for what they have done. We have absolutely nothing to do with what has happened to them."



I shall argue that both these categories of people are mistaken. In any case, Gandhiji scandalised both, and somebody who scandalises both atheists and theists, modernists and traditionalists, does, I think, cause an important creative disturbance in the thinking of many people.

I shall be talking more about this upheaval at the very end, but I want to say that Gandhiji's remark is an important theological earthquake and a very constructive one, the details of which have not been worked out, and which not many people have taken up in any sort of direct way—what it does to tradition, how it transforms it, fulfils it.

Let us look at the variousness of suffering. In thinking and talking of karma it is very easy, especially in our country, to think of broken arms and broken legs, blind people and sick people and ruined people and so on—all these categories of misfortune are important, to understand and alleviate, but I think our country's experience of pervasive misery has made us want to exaggerate certain things and forget the deeper philosophical aspects of the theory of karma. I hope I have not scandalised moralists who might say that this precisely is the misery we must alleviate—I am with them, but I want to draw attention to the fact that at its heart the theory of karma really applies to problematic suffering, to embarrassing suffering, and not merely to long-lasting or intense suffering. It applies to what suffering does to man and his conception of life—when faith is replaced by doubt, confidence by scepticism, joy by sorrow and depression and metaphysical listlessness. These are the kinds of things the theory of karma is really about. You might say this is rubbish—look at the literature, but I think mainstream literature is often produced by those who miss the heart of a living metaphysical theory and tradition. I am thinking of that kind of suffering or misery which makes me question the assumption that there is fairness in my life or in another's life, and I shall be talking of this class of suffering primarily. Doing this is important because it lifts the subject out of its culture-specific Indian context. Moreover, those who are not familiar with the complexity of the cultural situation of India think journalistically of karma mainly in terms of large-scale poverty and social suffering, but I think karmic thought is

relevant as much in Scandinavia as it is in Delhi or any other place where there is this doubt-increasing suffering.

I want to begin with a remark of Professor Strawson's yesterday which he did not elaborate upon—regarding the notion of a natural fact. Is embarrassing suffering—and in that I include various types of pain, harm, damage, injury, dissatisfaction, etc., a natural fact? I don't want to raise the large question as to whether consciousness itself is a natural fact. I ask here only whether this suffering that makes me question the naturalness of nature, whether this suffering is a natural fact. When we use the word "naturally" there is a suggestion of obviousness of consequences following from the nature of things. Problematic, embarrassing suffering is not natural at all in that sense. It is problematic and embarrassing precisely because it does not naturally follow from anything at all. In fact all thought, and not merely logical thought, which is just one instance of thought, is in some sense not natural. The physicist's fable which Professor Kothari rejected (atomic interaction is endless time yielding philosophical discussion) is also an illustration of non-naturalness, of the reality of unlikelihood. The naturalness of nature, as it were, is difficult to grasp. I do not, however, want to go into that question in detail because I do not have the time, but may be we will, in the discussion, be able to come back to it.

Let us concentrate, then, on embarrassing suffering. And here it is very important not to be misled by the intensity or scale of a given instance of suffering. The non-naturalness of embarrassing suffering has nothing to do with its scale. Philosophically, profoundly, I think the theory of karma is about intensity-indifferent problematic suffering which is faith-assaulting even when it is naturalistically mild. If we fail to see this, we will be missing the spirit of the theory. We will question its thesis largely from irrelevant points of view and the orthodox will defend it, also, from largely irrelevant points of view. So in one very important sense of the word "natural", embarrassing suffering is not natural. Because the embarrassment of it unnaturally exceeds its pain. What is it then? Can Nature harbour self-doubt? What kind of story, however elaborate and complex, would a naturalist have to tell in order to explain the appearance not only of life and mind and consciousness



but also of this kind of self-undermining doubt? I don't think he can tell such a story, although I could be wrong. But one thing is clear. Only a very profound, a very deep-going naturalism will be able to say yes, this is possible, a naturalism which transcends itself.

In all standard naturalistic story-telling the needed principle of transformation is lacking. No one has supplied that as far as I know, and I think nobody really can. But if they can, it will be a very profound discovery. It will go beyond physics in the way Professor Kothari suggested. It would go beyond naturalism, because it would succeed in understanding nature in its totality, and, I think, in its finitude also. If nature harbours self-doubt, then it is in some sense finite, because self-doubt (not Cartesian doubt, but Cārvāka doubt) is destructive and therefore impossible to the immutable infinite. Nature will suddenly be seen as something ordinary and finite, as something shrunk. And even if there is nothingness beyond, naturalism will no longer be the all-comprehensive theory that it pretends to be now. It will be a clarifying but ultimate absurdity, a miniscule oasis in a marching limitless desert.

My quarrel is not with naturalism as such, but with its assumption that its task of clarifying its own assumptions is an easy one.

Consider scepticism. Scepticism can be profound and it can be shallow, and in surprising ways, just as the faith of the reverent can be shallow and the faith of the irreverent very deep. I am thinking of deep scepticism—the kind that makes a man question important things, and one might say the very idea of important things. How does it come about—this intensity of self-doubting or even self-affirming thought in one being? Nature seems to spread out all over—its thrust seems to be towards expansion and transition and passage—and yet, there is this peculiar concentration. Yoga, I think, is very paradoxical; it is a celebration of this unnaturalness, that there is in you and me this enormous pouring in of everything, whereas the thrust of nature seems to be an outpouring. And this is celebrated and indicated in mythology, and also, I think, in science, when one talks of process and energy and, on the dark side, of decay and

entropy. How is Yoga possible then—a reversal of the emptying wastefulness of nature? Only a profound self-transcending naturalism could say, "it is possible." The angry, impatient, ideological thought "But why not?" leads us nowhere.

One could say that problematic, embarrassing, suffering is the awareness of what you might call non-natural finitude. If I were to be surprised by an infinite kind of joy, it wouldn't be problematic in the same way. What happens is that my awareness of non-naturalness is accompanied by an awareness of my finitude, of my littleness, and this is what makes it uncomfortable. This is why, I think, the self-confidence of many non-materialists is suspect. If I am a non-corporeal soul, but a very tiny one at that, I would be very uncomfortable. It would be a bit like Buster Keaton or Charlie Chaplin, who embody the idea of the human soul in silent cinema, a very uncomfortable human soul, in the midst of forces that threaten it at every step. In the end you might say Charlie Chaplin is victorious, but he is hanging from a cliff all the time. So I worry about the intellectual self-confidence of non-materialists, because if finitude is added to non-materiality, the discomfort of being a human being becomes all the more difficult to bear. Thomas Aquinas says somewhere that the soul could not have been created incorporeal because it would have been awkward for it to be without a body in the first instance. I think that is an important thought, and if those who quickly accept their essential but finite non-corporeality were to give a thought to their finitude, they would find it very awkward.<sup>1</sup> Awkwardness is at the very heart of problematic suffering, and it has to do with the discovery of finite non-naturalness (Finding oneself naked at a banquet). But how is such discomfort possible in nature? That, I think, is really the problem of evil. Being mindful of that problem is not a matter of asking and answering such questions as "Why are there life-destroying earthquakes?" or "Why are there premature deaths?" but something else which is deeper.

If one can talk of problematic embarrassing suffering, then why not also of problematic joy, embarrassing joy? But we

1. Advaitin Ātman—Brahman is infinite and neither corporeal nor non-corporeal but attributeless—Ed.



don't think about that. Just as one can feel miserable, one can also feel suddenly happy, reconciled, even despite pain or deformation, and I think for the reflective person this is just as problematic as the other feeling. We must take note of this, otherwise our presentation would suffer from incompleteness, from the fallacy of blindness and partiality to data.

So we can be surprisingly happy about everything, and thus raise for another person the fundamental question of how such peace is possible—how it is possible to be so unworried in the world and in spite of it. It is the same problem whether it arises in my mind or in somebody else's. We must ask how this utter peace is possible, and we cannot even understand this question unless we address it to nature. And this, I think, is very important for naturalism. It would be a mistake to say that this is a subject for specialists—for naturalists—which is a bit like theologians telling believers not to worry too much about God since He was not their subject of special study, and that their thought would not be important for theology. That would be fallacious. Ordinary thinking about nature is very important for an adequate naturalism. I don't mean for physics or for chemistry, but for the naturalism of physics and chemistry.

So we can ask the naturalist how it is possible that nature, which is so restless that it is flowing out all the time, has in its midst a peace and reconciliation and joy which suggest completeness. How is completeness possible, or autonomy, or finality, or utter peace? The Buddha prior to enlightenment may have worried deeply about this. And I think the reflective naturalist should also worry about this. The answer "Of course, it is possible," is lazy, unsatisfactory—there must be no evasive self-assuredness here. And such joy and peace are not a natural fact, they unnaturally exceed the health and worldly fortune of those whom they bless.

So there is a problem of evil and also the problem of good, largely ignored by theologians. A comprehensive theodicy must take into account both. And this theodicy need not have anything to do with theism. This logical, moral embarrassment must be suffered by every thinking human being, whether a moralist or a theist or mystic or anyone. In this sense alone will I use the

word theodicy, which for me is the general enquiry into this kind of evil or good. By evil I mean embarrassing suffering, by good I mean surprising joy. The theory of karma is theodicy of this kind. It is not necessarily connected with the idea of God, although it can be—this is not excluded either. So understood, theodicy is a very essential enquiry for everyone. The cost of evading it is great—it is the trivialisation of good and evil. We cannot say that this is not a problem of a respectable theoretical kind. To do so would be to take things for granted, which has unfortunate practical consequences also. Theodicy is a moral and existential enquiry into the satisfactoriness of things, and it is unavoidable.

The theory of karma is theodicy of the comprehensive kind. But is it a successful theodicy? The arguments commonly given for and against it are largely irrelevant. I remember Professor Daya Krishna once said to me in conversation years ago that the theory of karma seeks to bring intelligibility into the moral realm. Apparently unjustifiable suffering or unaccountable joy are, *prima facie*, factors of unintelligibility. The theory of karma brings order and intelligibility in to the moral realm. But I think any attempt to bring order and intelligibility into the moral realm must satisfy, and rigorously, fully satisfy, one condition: it must itself not be morally suspect. Because you cannot bring intelligibility into the moral realm via something which is morally not satisfactory. It is not self-evident, not to me at any rate, that the kind of retributivist and consequentialist ideas that go hand in hand popularly with theories of karma are morally satisfactory. So there is something important lacking in the theory of karma as commonly understood, because the condition of not producing greater confusion in the moral realm is not satisfied by the theory in an immediate and obvious way. That is one very powerful argument against standard versions of the theory. "As we sow, so shall we reap" is the general, broad idea, but it is pathetically false in human life: a good man suffers, and a bad man seems to get away with everything. And if you talk of the next life, then what about the life after that? So the moral satisfactoriness of the standard theory is not so evident: rather, its unsatisfactoriness is.

I was rude to an old man, and therefore my old age is miserable. This is a standard sort of exemplification of the theory



of Karma. I found in America very powerful, sophisticated attempts to defend the theory of karma but an impatient rejection of the above kind of exemplification of it, a preference for examples more causally respectable, more naturalistic and unsuggestive of arbitrariness and absurdity. This was some years ago. I did not see clearly then what I do now see—that such arbitrariness and absurdity are the glory of the true doctrine of karma.

The theory of karma is profound, but it must be rescued from modern notions about it. I don't think the idea behind authentic exemplifications of it is at all that, for example, when I was rude to an old man as a child, I set in motion certain get-you-in — the — end mechanisms and causalities which in my old age made me crippled or blind or whatever. I am not in favour of a sophisticated philosophy of action coming to the rescue of the theory of karma. I have nothing against sophisticated philosophy of action, —but I think this is not the job it is meant to do. I told a lie, I was rude, so I am now helplessly without the anchor of faith. I killed an innocent living creature, therefore I am dying in despair. Somebody might say this is utter rubbish, that if you had enslaved a whole population, then it might have been right to die in despair. But why? If the principle of connection is lacking, then why should a grander kind of wrongdoing make the thing all right? The principle is that of a connection between wrongdoing and suffering. The apparent triviality or crudeness of the item of wrongdoing is no argument against the truth of the connection. If the nature of the connection is misunderstood, then however carefully we choose the item, however horrific be the chosen instance of wrongdoing associated suffering would always be able to hire the advocacy of moral and existential doubt.

I think the true heroism in the theory of karma lies in the possibility and always thinly veiled suggestion that I *invite* embarrassing, arbitrary, absurd, connections between my wrongdoing and suffering which have nevertheless their unique dimension of appropriateness. There is a relationship of matching between my problematic, embarrassing misery now and that trivial episode in childhood. The absurdity and helplessness of my condition can be done justice to only by something trivial. If you make it non-trivial, I would protest that my misery is too great.

I think the more apparently trivial and coarse and crude the item, the greater is the heroism. The heroism lies in acknowledging the absoluteness of even slight evil. It is a mere excuse to say that I didn't kill him, I only slighted him. Espousal of an embarrassing connection is not meant, in some quantitative way, to explain the degree and scale of my suffering, but to explain, as it were, the despair of it, the foundationlessness of it. A piece of wrongdoing is in human life, I think, a bit like a contradiction creeping into a formal system—it will produce embarrassment somewhere or other, sooner or later. And it is enough that the contradiction occurred some time away. Wrongdoing is not a sufficient cause of existential misery, but it is a sufficient explanation of it in a general way. Rudeness, meanness, cruelty are absolute, and must remain an embarrassment for moral man. Their instantiation may not be vast, but is absolute, and sufficient to ground this deep disturbing misery in reality. The instance may be trivial, but to say that there is no connection between it and karmic misery is hopelessly to misunderstand both the absoluteness of trivial evil and the absolute groundlessness of the kind of misery I have been talking about. But if we understand both these, then the connection is an intimate one. One illustrates the other: it is a connection of illustration, illustrating a necessity of its own kind. The variety of kinds of necessity is increasingly being recognised in modern philosophy.

The espousal of shocking connections is not masochistic. It would be so if the connection involved were to be understood in some purely causal fashion. I think this is a great mistake defenders of the theory of karma fall into. Karmic connections are connections of symbolic and metaphysical appropriateness, and so understood, far from being the result of a crude mentality, are a tribute to the wisdom and sensitivity of millions of ordinary people who embrace them. Such people do not talk about subtle and long causal processes; they simply insist on the hard connections.

I don't any more find the arguments against the theory of karma relevant. They are relevant only if the karmic connection is sought to be understood in a crude, causal way (not a crudely causal way, but crude i. e. causal way). And defences would be relevant only if what was at issue was philosophy of action. What



is at stake is a right understanding of the connection between existential, faith-shaking, misery and evil. Scale and intensity are not important here. That there is such misery and that there is evil—this is enough to establish a very intimate connection of a very special kind between the two. There isn't time to develop an exact correlate of this thesis in relation to surprising joy, but I think it can be done.

I think all sorts of resistances to Gandhi simply melt away if what I have said so far is sound. One such is the allegation that I am collectivising karma, that I am not being truthful and faithful to the individualistic thrust of the theory, that I am giving into sentimentality and the fallacy of altruism. I have often tried to resist this, and have spoken quite energetically of the merits of altruism, and I still think it is important to do this. But the question is not one of collectivising or individualising karma. If the connection between evil and misery is of the important 'arbitrary' kind which I have been trying to explain then the move from an individual to a collective context is not a questionable, unfaithful one. If the connection is of a strict causal kind and the relevant causal routes can be mapped out only in an individual life, then there would of course be a philosophical resistance to the move from an individual to a collective context.

So I think Gandhi's remark is not just an earthquake of the moral kind. It is not simply that he is a good man, who has realised how important other people are. The "unscientific" and "absurd" (in Kierkegaard's sense) character of his remark invites us to envisage the truth that continuing great or small moral wrongdoing on our part deeply roots sinfulness in human reality and by reason of a reciprocity more mysterious than causality, which could be called karma, makes others, quite arbitrary others, suffer greatly or moderately in physical intensity, but embarrassingly faith-underminingly and existentially not for specific sins of specific human beings (although these could be cited) but for the sinfulness of humanity. It was moral pedagogy that made Gandhi link the devastation of the earthquake with untouchability elsewhere and everywhere in India—he could have linked it with any instance of moral wrongdoing whatsoever.

I wish I were theologian enough to develop the theme of taking upon oneself the sins of others. It is not necessary or possible for me to do that. The espousal of karmic connections rightly understood is a way of taking upon oneself the sins of others—a way open to all heroic men. Gandhi's indication of this way is the important earthquake, not only in moral thought but also in metaphysical thought, of which the Bihar earthquake was the occasion and striking symbol.

I am reminded of a film, *The Pawnbroker*, which is about an utterly miserably unhappy post-holocaust Jew in New-York brilliantly acted by Rod Steiger, who wouldn't speak to anybody, but who changes completely on seeing a trivial road accident. Can't we all?

We were talking yesterday of Kali. If Kali is nothing but the terrible mother, I suggest the terrible mother can also be understood only in terms of Kali. If reductionism is possible, then, I think, so is expansionism possible in fundamental inquiry.

The morally important notions of treacherousness and arbitrariness are built into the theory of karma. If people are treacherous, then so are things. And this is to accept moral reality.

Gandhiji's remark is metaphysics. It is also altruism. And above all, it is something which makes us look at the theory of karma again, and at ourselves.

## DISCUSSION

### KRISHNA CHAITANYA :

Gandhi's talk today was more provocative than definitive, and perhaps that was his intention.

He asked us why we don't question surprising, embarrassing joy in the same way as problematic suffering. It reminds me of the book of Job, where Job asks himself why he can't accept suffering from God when in the past he has accepted happiness. So both go together, and we can't raise query about one alone.

Joy is less problematic than happiness, and the reason is that evolution demands the extension of the radius of self-awareness.



If evolution was just a matter of survival, then the amoeba has also survived, though it has not moved up the scale. But it is not so. Sensory organs have multiplied; our consciousness of the world has increased along many channels and has been refined through evolution. And the state of joy implies that the organism is functioning at the apex of its powers: nature is leading up to that. Energy comes out in creativity, in play, and manifests in "ānanda". One could, of course, raise the fundamental question of why the world was created to make things happy, but I will not go into that. At the level at which we find ourselves, joy and happiness are not so problematic as unhappiness or suffering because the latter seem to be debased in one respect and sadistic in another.

We have to accept that we are responsible for our brethren too. Ramu's (Gandhi) talk was pushed a bit to an extreme, whose rigorous applicability I might not accept. But I can't deny that I am with my fellow beings in a boat, and if something happens to the boat, we will all perish.

#### ASHOK KELKAR :

You must have heard the remark that it is better to be a Socrates dissatisfied than a pig satisfied. Somebody at a more profound level said, in an attack on John Stuart Mill, that the errors of great thinkers were much more illuminating than the successes of smaller ones. So this argument of mine is a tribute.

I think Professor Gandhi has taken Gandhiji's remark about the Bihar earthquake in a similar spirit. I must confess that when I heard of this remark first, I was as scandalised as others, although I am not easily scandalised. So it is not enough to say that only the easily scandalised people were scandalised.

What Professor Gandhi has done is to present some original insights which possibly the author of the remark may have himself been unaware of. Out of the muddle he has tried to create some order, and I feel there is yet some muddle left which could be cleared.

At one point he talked of the problem of evil. Evil can be at three levels. At a physical level we talk of destruction as evil, but if we imagine a world without life, we can imagine

destruction but not evil. Galaxies are destroyed, but we do not cite them as evil events. Earthquakes and natural calamities we do because they involve destruction of life, and which, therefore, involve suffering. This was dealt with at great length, and in a sense, was the critical focus of the paper. But there was occasionally mention of things like treachery, malice and so on, which is evil at the moral level.

How do we make sense of this? When Professor Gandhi talked of problematic evil, he used a number of adjectives interchangeably, and the very uncertainty of his adjectives points to a mixing up of categories which are usually kept distinct. There is a category of cause and effect involved when we talk about unaccountable suffering. For a certain kind of suffering you can give a naturalistic account. The biologist might make sense of pain by saying that it is the price we have to pay for having a nervous system, that it warns us of possible injury or destruction of the body. A psychologist who thinks in the biological spirit will say that tension arising out of need is pain or suffering, and removal of that tension is pleasure. But we do find different joys and sufferings, and I am one with him in acknowledging something like an unaccountable joy. This is one level of explanation, where joy or suffering cannot be accounted for. There is another level of suffering: undeserved suffering or suffering for which no justification can be found. I think the third level is unmeaning suffering, or suffering to which we cannot attach any meaning in the wider sense of the term.

Being uneasy about this, people have tried to account for suffering in a naturalistic way; they have tried to explain undeserved suffering in terms of retribution and sin, and thirdly, they have tried to interpret suffering as in Faust. According to the Greek notion, suffering is the price you have to pay for knowledge. Going back to my earlier remark, dissatisfaction is the price every Socrates has to pay, and therefore, this is not unredeemed suffering. So we have unaccountable suffering, undeserved suffering and unredeemed suffering.<sup>2</sup>

Although we have distinguished these three categories, it seems

2. An excellent trichotomy—Ed.



to me we cannot really separate them at the level we are operating. We have to consider them in some sense as one.

Coming to the specific points raised, the remark about Gandhiji's statement being a theological earthquake recalls to my mind another theological earthquake which took place in India several hundred years ago. Somebody asked the Buddha whether his blasphemies wouldn't lead him to hell and suffering, and the latter answered that he wouldn't mind suffering in hell if it was going to save other people. And in one blow, as it were, the whole structure of thinking that the Buddha was tackling came down with a crash. I think we have here a germ of the idea of one man's suffering in some sense connected with other people's fate.

To make sense of suffering, mostly the strict ledger book approach is maintained in tradition: that each self in the world has a separate account, as it were, and no transfer is possible. And here I think the parallel between Christ suffering for humanity and the people in Bihar suffering for what we had done, must be brought out. Gandhiji, in a sense, thus democratised this kind of vicarious suffering.<sup>3</sup>

Time and again, people have tried to point out that despite the possibility of suffering being unmerited, it is not inherent in the world, that it is somehow transient. The trouble with this view is that we have to admit in the same breath that joy is also transient, and in that sense, if suffering is not inherent in the world, neither is joy.

I think there is a way out of this, and some religions do offer a way out, by disconnecting God from morality. Christianity, of course, is not such a religion, but the Indian idea is that ultimately we have to transcend both *pāpa* and *punya*, and the notion of cosmic ānanda is quite different from earthly joy or suffering.

#### DHARMENDRA GOEL :

I would like to make a few comments on this very stimulating presentation of a very difficult subject, trying to inter-link, as it were, the moral order with the natural order. I use my own vocabulary and idiom, not necessarily accepting the kind of language that Professor Gandhi has every right to introduce into this discussion.

3. A new insight, this —Ed.

The central point mentioned was that of the intelligibility of undeserved suffering. You have taken there to be no retributive connection between my misdeed and my suffering, but by the very fact that there is no physical or natural necessity, there is an elimination of embarrassment or awkwardness. While I have great sympathy for this humanistic concern and seeking of depth, I would like to caution against easy vulgarisation and rationalisation. Sometimes, when something is analysable and plausible, then it is also claimed to be justified. The dividing line between understandability, analysability, intelligibility and justification is, at times, a little too thin.

My second point has to do with the excellent reminder that with the existence of unjustified suffering there is also the existence of unjustified joy. To that extent, intelligibility as parity, can be introduced, an inter-link can be produced in matters which are purely non-causal. These episodes of joy are as significant, morally and axiologically, as the sense of existential embarrassment, and it is in this sense that a moral leap is called for. This kind of idea is not new: Dr. Kelkar has already referred to the vicarious suffering found in the Christian tradition. Also in this connection, I would like to bring to notice the idea of hubris in Greek civilisation, the arrogance of the ego in thinking of going against fate. The idea of fate itself is an attempt to bridge the gap between what embarrassingly one finds and what one wishes.

My third point is regarding your contention that Gandhiji's remark amounted to going against the text and structure of the argument for the karmic doctrine as handed down. You very rightly desisted from going into the subtle agencies of the American pundits that lead to the concretisation of a tendency into an actual effect. Nevertheless, the karmic theory does require the doctrine of rebirth, without which it cannot stand. But I don't think Gandhiji's remark had anything to do with the theological context of the theory of karma. So it is to be seen whether rebirth was also in some sense connected with his interjection.

The last point is, can we really take this leap into faith? I am reminded of the argument that Ivan gives in *The Brothers Karamazov* where he asks whether he can believe in God knowing that the Turks were tossing new-born babes onto their bayonets. If one wants to believe, one can believe in anything. Without any



blasphemy towards the great existential act of believing and trust, to the reaching out from the mortal realm to the trans-temporal and eternal, can we really dispense with the causal interactions within the mundane, psychological and historical level? Of course, there can be a commitment not to be scandalised or provoked or angered by the injustices of human life.

The doctrine of karma has a tendency to produce pessimism or inactivism, while Gandhiji's major thrust was activity, and he did organise relief to alleviate the suffering of the Bihar earthquake.

DAYA KRISHNA :

I would like to highlight the novel dimensions opened up by Professor Gandhi and unless we take them into account, our responses might be traditional.

The first point he has brought forward is that suffering becomes philosophically and morally important only when it puts the whole ontological being into question.

The second point, which I think should be emphasised, is that the problem of suffering is not merely a problem for the theist but also a problem for the naturalist. No human being can beg the problem of suffering when it puts ontology into question.

The third point is that it is not merely suffering but also joy which can lead not exactly to a questioning, but to a different insight. Though he has put them on a par, I think the parity is of a different order. It could be a matter of finding out in what sense undeserved joy doesn't make me question the being of the world in the same way, but which makes me question in a completely different way. And if there is a difference, can they be put on a par, as he has tried to do?

Besides this, there are two interesting analogies: the first is an ontological doubt analogous to Cartesian epistemological doubt; the second is that the morally evil action is analogous to the introduction of a contradiction in a deductive system, and a contradiction at any level results in disaster to thought. Similarly, Professor Gandhi was suggesting that evil, however trivial, may have disastrous consequences. The issue of individuality versus collectivity has been bypassed with the assertion that the consequences are not

merely for oneself or for others, which is irrelevant, but are of a morally disastrous kind. Perhaps the suggestion is that there is no more or less of contradiction. Of course, the idealist philosophers have argued for a more or less of contradiction, but I don't know whether the implication will be accepted that there is no more or less of evil either. I think that will be a difficult stand to take.

The last point, which is difficult for me to swallow, although I am willing to enter into an imaginative understanding of it, is that the relation between an evil act and its consequences in the theory of karma is both an arbitrary and a necessary relationship. The idea of a necessary relationship we know, and we certainly know of causal relationship but a relationship which is both arbitrary and necessary in the moral domain? There is an idea of a fit between evil and its consequences, but after all, it is not just two isolated events fitting independently of others—there is also occurrence in time: there is a priority. Just as in logic there is a ground and a consequence, and there is a priority of the premise to the conclusion, which is not temporal priority, similarly, there is a priority in an evil act and its consequence. The deeper question that could be raised is, after all what is an evil act? When I said that the theory of karma was a postulate of moral intelligibility of the universe, Dr. Gandhi spoke of a further condition of moral intelligibility, which was about moral acceptability, and I will accept that. But what are the criteria of moral acceptability? The concept of moral evil has to be worked out in a more careful fashion, because when I do evil, I do it knowing that it is evil—there is a Satanic will involved. And this is the counterpart of the will that makes me do something good knowing that it is good and thinking it to be good.

We should not try and fight shy of these novel dimensions raised by Professor Gaudhi, but try to enlarge their scope and intelligibility.

DHARMENDRA KUMAR :

While the doctrine of karma may be helpful in preaching morality, it cannot be a postulate for it.

Professor Gandhi considered the naturalist to be no better off than the theist in the context of the problem of evil. He gave



the argument of a doubt in nature implying finitude. I would not like to use the term 'finite' because we have to specify the respect in which it is finite. Perhaps he means here some lack of perfection. It seems to me this is to take a rather naive view of nature. Nature has to be a system of laws, and laws necessarily rule out certain combinations, because if there is a proposition which is necessary then there is something which is impossible, and this impossibility might extend to one's idea of perfection. If one's idea of an ideal woman is that she should have a normal constitution and appearance but also the strength that is associated with a masculine nature, it is impossible in nature.

The third point is, how can the doctrine of karma be viewed at all as making intelligible the enforcement of morality? In order to be able to do its job, the agent must know the connection between his act and its consequences. If a person does not know why he is rounded up by the police and sent to Siberia, I do not see how it enforces a law. One must know, when rewarded or punished, the reason for it. I am not considering the retributive view of karmic punishment. One does not have to take that view or the reformative view or any other. In either case the connection has to be perceived, and in India, where the doctrine of karma has had a long run, we do not find any way of having agents associate specific karmas with consequences. In fact it is not a matter of accident that the karmic doctrine has been associated with rebirth, such that actions have their effect in future lives, where one can be assured of not having memory. Even if one did know the principle in general terms, specificity would be absent. It is also remarkable that Buddhism, although it does not postulate a substantial soul, does continue with the doctrine of rebirth in an attenuated form. It took something like 25 centuries for a man like Devātma to say there could be spiritual pursuit and perfection without rebirth and karma.

RAMCHANDRA GANDHI :

Regarding contradiction, I would like to refer to Austin's view, e. g., of what is involved in saying "I promise"—what we do *in* saying various things. There is an opposite notion of what we say in doing something which deserves some investigation. In

doing evil willfully we do not cease to believe that it ought not to be done, and we *say* in doing it, wordlessly, that it can/may be done, which involves a contradiction. If there is undeserved suffering that ought not to be there, things that ought not to be done are also done. If wilful evil can take place in some part of nature, why can't undeserved suffering take place somewhere else? I think there is a perfect matching here. Each illustrates the permanent possibility of the other, and in some way, guarantees it. The notion of what we say in doing something could be developed further.

In response to Dharmendraji's point about nature and finitude, I would grant that the notion of finitude is not a very clear notion. And yet, to doubt the satisfactoriness of something is, as it were, at least to go to the limits of that thing, of nature, to exhaust it in some sense. Doubt-harbours nature cannot be limitless or infinite.

But what does this doubt mean? I think the notion of existential doubt is closely connected with the question "Is life worth living?", with suicide. If nature harbours self-destructiveness and not just destructiveness, then the other postulates of it being fertile and productive have to be questioned in some suitably transformed non-anthropomorphic language. If there are doubts about the whole thing in myself, in this bit of nature, then I don't think we can be so confident about the reality and power of these attributes of productiveness and fertility, etc. I do think this consideration is embarrassing for naturalism in that it makes nature finite. A thorough-going naturalism cannot castigate nature—that would be suicide. Whitehead made a very fundamental methodological point in one of his books in response to charges of anthropomorphism, when he said that if man is in nature, and if natural notions are relevant in understanding man, then human notions must be unavoidable in understanding nature. So it turns the argument against the critic of anthropomorphism. If within the area of nature which is ourselves or others we do find self-contradictions and wrongdoing or undeserved suffering do indicate that then we are not debarred from thinking of large scale manifestations of this.

There was a point about parity. Of course, there are differences between the problem of evil and the problem of good, but take a



cultural situation where naturalism is taught compulsorily, and stock arguments against other kinds of thought are in the curriculum. Is it not possible that some child might question this whole world-view very suddenly and painfully, precisely in the same way in which, in a compulsorily theistic environment, the sudden awareness of unjustifiable misery may make someone suddenly question theism? In that sense there is parity, although I agree that in some other fundamental sense there might not be parity. I do not agree with the Chairman that joy is in some self-evident way natural to us.<sup>4</sup>

DHARMENDRA KUMAR :

With regard to naturalism, the question could be : Is the concept of evil intelligible without the concept of choice ? My feeling is that it is not. We can speak of evil only in the context of choice. Unless nature as a whole can be assigned a choice, the problem of evil does not arise for the naturalist. One may make the fact of evil itself a ground for rejecting naturalism. Whether that would be satisfactory or not is another matter, but to say that evil raises the same problem for the naturalist as well as the theist seems quite unacceptable to me.

K. J. SHAH :

What I have to say requires that I bring in something which may not immediately appear relevant, and it has reference to what Professor Kelkar said about Gandhiji's remark being possibly a muddle. I am not so sure at all. If it were a muddle, it would be very difficult to order it. My point is that it is important to see who made it, and for that reason it deserves consideration; it is not merely because Gandhiji was a great political leader, but because his life was what it was. A person has to gain the right to say such a thing in such a context, and not many people could have said it.

4. I can see my joy as being self-evidently legitimate only if I can see joy as being the foundation and eventual outcome of all things, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding. Private monadic joy must be suspect.  
—Ed.

The individual statement that my suffering is due to my karma is not necessarily an exemplification of a retributive or corrective understanding of the role of karma. I think the role of karma here is creative, and only a certain kind of individual can say this purposefully and meaningfully and recreate himself in the context in which he is placed.

Is this a matter of faith? I want to suggest that it is possible to feel this recreative aspect as immediately and effectively as any other experience. Also the ethos of a community may enable a man to have faith in recreative karma, short of realisation.

It is at least partly clear then that the connections one would have to make in the context of karma would have an arbitrariness. I feel the theory of karma is important primarily in relation to oneself, and if this is so, I suggest there will be an appearance of unintelligibility, of arbitrariness in the connections as far as others are concerned. But for the person who makes the connections there will be an important necessity and no arbitrariness at all, if the theory of karma is not just to be known but also to be lived. I think the separation between living and knowing which we try to make is utterly unsatisfactory and the readiness to make this separation is the source of a number of problems and difficulties in our thought and life.

NIRMAL VERMA :

I was deeply moved by Ramu's presentation, particularly by terms like problematic suffering and problematic happiness that deal with the profounder aspects of human behaviour.

I was also carried away by the beautiful point made by Professor K. J. Shah that one does not see any arbitrariness within oneself. The very fact that I am able to relate a certain awareness to a certain event in my past brings, if not a causal relationship, a very meaningful connection, and therefore the terms "arbitrary" and "causal" lose meaning. Two types of awareness stand face to face and establish each other's presence. And if that can be so within one's own life, then Gandhiji's projection of it to a whole community need not be shocking. A community can be as competent to relate to events, with its own centre of consciousness, as the individual.



Yet my doubts remain and they are as fundamental as my appreciation. Supposing we remove the concept of karma completely from our discussion, do we lose anything from what we are saying in terms of commitment or connection, in terms of the absurdity of life? And yet this absurdity, this awareness that there is no ultimate meaning or coherence not only in nature around me but also perhaps in human history, does not make us arbitrary in our moral judgements and commitments. Even if karmic explanation were removed, Gandhiji's remark would still be profoundly correct in the sense that every awareness of suffering, even when I am not directly responsible for it, makes me feel committed to the human situation and in some way responsible. There is a certain universality about evil. If a Jew is tortured in a concentration camp, there is no causal relationship that can be established with me, but through human interaction, does not the very fact of existence, of being, imply my participation in all that is happening to human beings? The labour camps in the Soviet Union were created for and with the idea of a new man: Am I not part of this concept of a new man? Whatever atrocities are being perpetrated, am I not participating? Or is it that I am a neutral observer? And here the concept of karma whether I believe in it or not, does not affect in any way my moral responsibility for the act of evil.

I will take another example of a child suffering from cancer. Here, because they did not believe in karma or rebirth, the parents' bafflement, naturally, was complete. Why did the child suffer? But even knowing the irrationality of the child's undeserved suffering and my not being responsible for it, the two facts — the child's suffering and my existence — create an arbitrary relation. There is a point when awareness in a heightened form itself becomes a form of guilt. And I would like to ask, that even if we reject the karmic connotations of Gandhiji's remarks, does it not remain just as profound?

KRISHNA CHAITANYA :

The world being an organic system, I can understand any kind of action having to do with morality in due course. If man disturbs the ecological balance in the sea and the fish die, I can say it is

man's greed which is responsible for it. But the moment you say that because Harijans were treated badly, an earthquake appeared, I feel at a loss. As a poetic myth this may have profound value in correcting lives, but we might say that obscurantist philosophy is not on a par with man's greed causing ecological imbalance. Forests are dying out, and one-third of the population derives sustenance from them, which means that in a few years we will have to suffer terribly for our actions. Of course, one can always resort to theistic intervention at every step, but I would not like that. I can accept God as the source from which nature evolved, with the condition that once created, it runs on its own, leading up to and accommodating man's freedom.

RAMCHANDRA GANDHI :

Let me briefly respond to a point Nirmal made. I think primary modes of thinking, of which we were talking yesterday, are very important, and I have a feeling there is a dialectical recovery of that mode of thinking later on, in poetry, as also in philosophy. Sudhir mentioned a girl who felt she was being lifted up when actually her twin sister was.<sup>5</sup> I think this is a very important truth: that if someone else suffers torture, then you do too. We must seriously look into the question of empathy and what it does to identity and responsibility. If our perception of another is central to our notion of identity, and if empathy is central to that, then I think it must do something to our notion of identity. I am suggesting that primary modes of thought are of very great significance, and not something rejected and not made use of again.

The other thing I want to say is that there might be a certain hazardousness about all action. Sudhir mentioned the near-perfection of the infant's environment yesterday. Let us try and understand what might be the very earliest human expectation and need and demand; that we are meant really to trust and wait, and things will be done for us. I think the baby's earliest impera-

5. According to his own story, when as infants Mark Twain and his twin brother were being given a bath in a tub by their mother, one of them was drowned — he, Mark Twain, is the one who had drowned, and not his twin brother as was universally supposed. Is there in Advaita a superior story? —Ed.