

associated Mâyâ serving only as an indicator (*upalakshana*).<sup>8</sup>

SAMKSHEPASARIRAKA VIEW : PURE  
BRAHMAN—THE UPADANA

The view of the *Samkshepasârîraka* thus deserves our attention next. In it, Brahman itself has been described as the substantive cause, and Mâyâ is regarded as a cause by courtesy only, because it serves as the medium.<sup>9</sup> The service of Mâyâ is postulated as Pure Consciousness in and by itself is not susceptible of any change, which is made possible by Mâyâ serving as an auxiliary.

<sup>8</sup> "Ishvaragatam api kâranatvam tadanugatam akhandachaitanyam sâkhâchandra-masam iva tatasthatayopalakshayitum saknoti iti tasya jñeyabrahmalakshanatvoktir iti"—*S. L. S.*, p. 63.

<sup>9</sup> "Samkshepasârîrakakritas tu brahmaiva upâdânam, kutasthasya kâranatvânupapattêh; mâyâ dvârakâranam"—*S. L. S.*, pp. 75-6. "Atra Samkshepasârîrakânusârinah kechid âhuh—suddham evopâdânam"—*Ibid.*, p. 58.

Here the question naturally arises, if Brahman alone is the material cause, wherefrom then does the insentience (*jadatâ*) of the world come in? The effect derives its characteristics from the material cause alone and not from any other conditions. But the difficulty is only apparent, as it is not at all an unusual occurrence that the effect may derive some of its characteristics from even what is only a helping condition. This is seen to be the fact in the case of a pot produced from clay. The clay is made smooth and glossy by a particular process of kneading and these adventitious attributes are seen to be produced in the pot made of such seasoned clay, though the original attributes of the clay cannot be believed to be the cause. So the world may derive its character of insentience from Mâyâ, though it is merely a helping condition.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> "Akâranam api dvâram kârye'nugachchhati"—*S. L. S.*, p. 76. The commentator explains—"akâranam api" as "aupâdânam api"—*S. L. S.-Tîkâ*, p. 76.

## THE ASCENT

(DIARY LEAVES)

BY PROF. NICHOLAS ROERICH

On ancient finger rings can be seen two spirals, one of ascent and one of descent. It is said that even a very lofty spirit can descend just as rapidly as it can ascend. This forewarning is very severe and just.

People have long understood that both ascent and descent can be extremely rapid. Nothing keeps even lofty beings from descent if they allow themselves to admit the baser desires. This path or rather leap into the abyss has more than once been dealt with both

in Eastern and Western literatures from the most ancient times. In the form of poetic productions, in epics and tales and novels—everywhere in varied aspects has been noted this truth. Evidently the popular wisdom has had a premonition as to how often it is needful to remind people both about the necessity of ascent and about the danger of downfall.

Sometimes people ask: "But what then, at downfall, becomes of all the attained refinements and perceptions?"

It would certainly seem that the once realized and assimilated could not become non-existent. In what manner are already accomplished attainments displaced into an abased state?"

Such a question is entirely logical and touches upon complex considerations. One has to assimilate very clearly the principle of transformation, both upwards and downwards. During upward transformation all possibilities and attainments are, as it were, unrolled, as in a triumphal procession the banners are unrolled and their inner signs made manifest. Likewise at transgression and downfall the banners are rolled up and the signs which were recently so gleaming are plunged into profound darkness.

Often people are amazed at the cleverness and the skill of the servants of darkness. But of course no one has said that they have always been servants of darkness. Perhaps they have taken the downward plunge, about which the above symbol has been given. In the downfall their attainments have been rolled up and transformed downwards. True, their cleverness has remained but it has been changed into evil. During ascent everything encountered, everything recognized is transformed into good. And just precisely is it in the opposite process, —everything already attained is changed into evil, is changed into injury. It will darken, confuse, and turn into chaos.

In the end it is not so difficult even for the human reason to scrutinize what is proceeding towards manifestation and creation, and what towards dissolution and chaos. Precisely as it has been said: "Examine the sum total and then each particularity will stand out conspicuously."

But judgement in perspective does not come so easily. What wise rulers they were, who left behind them the

saying: "To govern means to anticipate." Yet in order to anticipate, one has to be able to see into the distance. Even so some may be confused and mistake a distinction of horizon for self-exaltation, for an excuse to boast of his present cognitions.

If foresight and illumination can be rapidly acquired, just as speedily may come obfuscation and confusion. Man can discover a treasure all of a sudden, but so many times it has happened that people lose their treasure also suddenly and irrevocably.

A great artist and worker told me about how he lost a ring, which he valued very much, in a perfectly definite place on a smooth sea-shore, where there were no passers-by. In his own words, he sifted every grain of sand in this place. He made note of the place and went over it repeatedly but he never found his memorable ring. And another case is well-known, when a valued ring unexpectedly disappeared in a house and after three weeks was found glittering on the velvet seat of a divan.

Both discoveries and losses are very remarkable if we consider them together with their surroundings.

The possibility of ascent,—can it make a man conceited? It does not. It makes him observant, courageous, and untiring. The danger of descent,—can it turn a man into a suspicious coward, a tremulous fugitive? It does not. It only sharpens his memory, multiplies his circumspectness, and reminds him how joyful it is to hasten ahead. It is possible to adduce from different literatures beautiful words devoted to the great concept, "forward".

Precisely action continuously carried on protects one against many dangers. An arrow does not so easily reach one who is striving impetuously. He passes

between the terrors without noticing them and he increases and preserves his forces by his immutable aspiration. In his striving there will be no needless luxury. In his striving he refers good-naturedly to the jostling in the unavoidable crowd. In his impetuosity he more easily forgives much, which for a loiterer is the object of endless carpings.

Likewise it was long ago said that in action it is easier to pardon. Of course in general this accustoms one to one of the most beneficent qualities, that of forgiveness. The blossoms of forgiveness are beautiful, but a garden of affronts is an extremely repulsive spectacle. The commensurateness of great responsibility, of great preparedness for labours, and in general, of large measures, will also yield great effects. Any limitation, whether it emanates from inconsiderateness, light-mindedness, indolence, immobility—no matter which, it will still continue to grow steadily.

The progressions of growths are remarkable. In all the laws of motion can be seen the same basis. So too the progression of thinking or of not thinking, of seeing or of not seeing—all this moves and grows exactly the same. Courage, a quality which can be grown, is also multiplied in action. Just as quickly can fear be multiplied—a shameful timorousness which is terribly dominant in inaction.

Whoever placed upon the rings the spirals of ascent and descent wished to

remind continually about the possibilities, both upward and downward. It would seem that if descent is so often mentioned, people would have to take every precaution in order to avoid it. But it does not work out that way in life.

Of the loftiest and most beautiful symbols people manage to make objects which tell no one anything about life. And therefore in the movements of life itself so terrible is the necrosis, the vulgarization, which is embedded in the whole meaning of existence, dominates the entire tenor of thought, and leaves upon everything its infamous seal. Those who observe this would be pessimists if they should think only about this side. But surely the first spiral, that of ascent, must remain the first, the most attractive and the most inspiring.

Descending from a mountain always produces a sort of sadness, but the ascent is attended with great joy.

When we speak of ascent, we always have before us two powerful lofty examples: Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. The very fact of the existence of such giants of thought is already a true benefaction for mankind. How many sufferers have found often by unexpected ways relief in the sayings and writings of these great sages and thus a new ascent had its beginning. People should be full of gratitude to those who by their example led them to the summits.